

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

May 8, 2019

Committee members present:

Steve McGuire, Frank Porfily, Lynne Breese, Teresa Rodriguez, John Dehler, Trent Smith, Mike Lunn, Andy Gallagher

Member absent: Ston McDaniel

Public present: Lois Hoffman, John Breese, Charlene Henderson (Ochoco Trail Strategy Group), Dwain Miller (Ochoco Trail Strategy Group), Gayle Hunt, Melinda Kestler, Cliff Kiser, Teal Purrington (BLM), Johanna Kovarik (Ochoco NF), Slater Turner (Ochoco NF), Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Jerry Brummer, Wayne Elmore.

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Andy Gallagher @ Crook County COCC Open Campus Building, Prineville

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes: Frank moved to approve minutes. Lynne seconded. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

Old Business:

OHV subcommittee: Mike and Trent reported on the meeting held to discuss the direction the subcommittee would go. Subcommittee felt that in order for it to be effective, it needed to first understand the current travel management plans of the Prineville BLM and Ochoco FS. Trent mentioned that within the County Natural Resource Policy, statements around OHV use and travel management are not clear and in some cases might be conflicting. He suggested that in the future, a review and update would be appropriate. Trent said that he would provide the group with examples. Subcommittee suggest that at this meeting, FS and BLM provide a brief overview of existing travel management plans. No action taken.

FS Update: Slater Turner and Johanna Kovarik provided an update of FS activities. Fire crews are finishing training, timber crews are getting ready to go to the field and they are almost caught up from the furlough this winter. Lookout District is planning to publish the draft EIS for Bear Creek AMP in June. The wild horse draft plan is scheduled for public release in early summer and FS is planning public meetings with OFC sometime in June for the Walton Lake Campground. Public meeting will provide information on the campground, usage, root-rot disease, project history and seek input on the public safety issue.

Questions from the committee to the FS regarding the County's input to Walton Lake Campground indicated that Slater was not sure if he had received anything from the County. Jerry Brummer

commented that the Court had received the Committee's input and acted on it. He was not sure how that action was moved forward to the FS but promised the committee to find out.

Teresa asked that at the public meetings held by the FS and BLM that they include a piece on how citizens can write an effective letter for input, how to write a letter of substance.

Johanna reported that seasonal employees are coming on board. Logging activities are gearing up and Wolf Creek campground will experience a temporary closure as a result. Rager Ranger Station is being decommissioned. Buildings are being removed and work should be finished within a month. A few, historical and buildings still in use will be saved. Water system will be left in place. Internal discussions are starting about the future use/direction of the site.

BLM Update: Teal provided an update of BLM activities/projects. No new movement on trespass project, Road Department rock permit is moving forward, comment period has closed and they are responding to alternatives. Grazing renewal projects are moving forward, Chimney Rock campground improvement project is moving forward. BLM is working with landowner/applicant on the Teaters Rd. issue. Lisa Clark talked about fuels project, 45,000 burning/juniper removal over the last couple of years. Millican area will become a firewood designated area. Jeff Kitchens reported that today was Chip Faver's last day, he is retiring. Lisa Clark will be acting area manager for the east side of the District. Bill Dean is moving to Medford. The BLM held its first ever, lower Crooked River permit meeting with outfit and guides. Jeff reported that it was a successful meeting. There is an upcoming Wildland Firefighter Memorial Run.

Travel Management: For BLM, 2005 Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan put interim travel management into place for 3 areas, Prineville Reservoir, LaPine and Powell Butte. ID open roads, seasonal/year round closures with the intent to do more planning in the future. Cline Butte planning revealed planning costs and implementation costs associated with travel management. Planning did not account for new types of OHV that are popular today. With Prineville Reservoir, BLM has seen increased use with increased development of private subdivisions. People moving next to public lands see those lands as an extension of their private property. New residents are not aware of existing TM plans. Signage is usually destroyed near urban areas, with vandalism being a big problem.

BLM, recognizing these problems, has worked with landowners/homeowner associations to brief groups on plans and what can and cannot be done. Jeff suggested that first education in partnership with local/state and other federal agencies is important followed with enforcement (limited resources for the large area being impacted). The Agency is trying to balance demand for use with resource conflict and damage.

There was discussion about the difference of OHV's. Motorcycles, 4 wheelers and side-by-sides. Some vehicles able to travel at excessive speeds, creating safety issues. Jeff commented that each has its unique characteristics (single track vs. double track). Trent asked about the legal implications of illegal use. Jeff commented that it is dependent on the Agency to have signage first, before enforcement.

Mike asked about agency contacts for this group. Slater said that for the Ochoco FS, it would be Chris Joosen and Jeff Kitchens will be the BLM contact.

Ochoco Trail Strategy Group:

Dwain Miller provided an overview of this groups activities with the Ochoco National Forest. The OTSG was initiated by the FS and Prineville Chamber of Commerce 2 years ago. The initial concern was growing the access to the forest while not creating the issues that the Deschutes Forest has experienced. Want to avoid trail creation (off trail that suddenly becomes an existing trail). The discussions include creating loop systems that provide both day and overnight experiences. There are multiple groups, landowners, agencies and permittees involved with the OTSG. COIC is providing facilitation for the group. The work of the group was presented to the Court and public during meetings held in September, 2018. In January, 2019 the group provided its work to the Forest. The proposal utilizes existing but unused trails/roads to create new opportunities. Conflicts with bikes and horses has been worked out to create different trails with different priorities (who has right of way) for trail respect. All trails will be open to all types of non-motorized use (ex: hiking, biking, horse).

The OTSG meets the first Tuesday of every month at noon/Chamber of Commerce office. Proposal is moving internally within the Forest and has been shared with the Regional office. Dwain and Slater stressed that there has been no NEPA done yet. The proposal is for non-motorized use and bikes are not allowed in the designated wilderness areas. Volunteers will be used to help build/maintain the system. Education will be a big part of plan development and implementation. Hoping that 2020 will be the year that this moves forward. Somethings might be able to move forward since they are already covered by existing NEPA and workloads. Examples are conflict on Lookout Mtn trail (blind corner fix) and Allen Creek just needs signage.

Committee asked what the group wants from them. Attendance at monthly meetings would be great. See Facebook page of group for more info. <https://www.facebook.com/OTSGonline/>

Committee Activity:

Trent reported that in his reading of the NR Policy, he was surprised at the contradiction in the policy. He would like to schedule a review of the plan and do some housekeeping on the plan.

Steve reported that as a key author of the policy, some contradictions were intentional. Policy calling for salvage logging might be against FS policy. Steve reported that he is no longer the chair of the Crook County Natural Resource PAC.

Andy reported that he was at a sagegrouse meeting in Lakeview. Sage grouse status update will be done by group of state agencies in the western US, not USFWS. Finding of this group will not be binding.

Public comment:

Commissioner Brummer suggested that the agencies and committee work with planning department to implement education about public land use with land use planning activities. Help to create a good neighbor policy with new subdivisions. Perhaps help to create/improve educational material.

Cliff Kiser addressed the Firewise program and the need to work with neighborhoods in creating defensible space. Fire fighters are having to make decision whether to fight a structure fire based on prior preparation by landowner.

Closing:

Tim told the group that BOR, the City of Prineville and OID are scheduled to attend the next meeting to talk about recreation, reservoir operations and the possible development of hydropower at the dam. Frank moved to extend the time for the next meeting to 3 hours. (1pm to 4 pm). Steve seconded. Motion passed.

Teresa moved to adjourn. Trent seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting ended at 3:00 p.m.