

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

December 10, 2018

Meeting was called to order at 10:34 a.m.

Committee members present:

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

Not present:

Brook Gray

Public present:

Lois Hoffman, John Breese, Jerry Brummer, Carolyn Chandler, John Chandler, Von Thompson, Eric Newell, Gayle Hunt, Laquinta Stec, Ruthie McKenzie, Mathieu Federspiel, Karolene Richmand, Monique Davis, Barbara L. Viese, Dan Viese, Jamie Dawson, Katie McDonald, Kirin Stayker, Paul Cuddy

Guests:

Ochoco National Forest
Kevin Keown, Shane Jeffries, Gary Asbridge, Slater Turner

NEW Business:

Committee Structure

Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair. Trent Smith moved to nominate Andy Gallagher as Chair, Mike Lunn seconded. Laura York moved to nominate Lynne Breese as Vice-Chair, Trent seconded. Frank moved to close nominations and cast a ballot for Andy and Lynn. John seconded. Motion passed

Meeting time and location: The group set the meeting schedule to the 2nd Wednesday of each month. 1:00 pm. Next meeting will be January 9, 2019

Terms of appointment were discussed. Draft bylaws call for 4 year terms. Terms assigned are as of Jan. 1, 2019:

1 year (ending Dec . 31, 2019)

Steve McGuire
Frank Profily
Lynne Breese

2 year (ending Dec. 31, 2020)

Laura York
Ston McDaniel
Mike Lunn

3 year (ending Dec. 31, 2021)

Teresa Rodriques
Andy Gallagher
Brook Gray

4 year (ending Dec. 31, 2022)

John Dehler
Trent Smith

Walton Lake Restoration Project

Shane Jeffries, Ochoco National Forest Supervisor provided an introduction of himself and staff (Kevin Keown, Gary Asbridge and Slater Turner). He addressed the group on the history of the Walton Lake Restoration project and specifically the laminated root rot disease that in 2014-15 was found affecting trees near the Walton Lake Campground. This disease results in the roots of evergreens to disintegrate and cause the tree to become unstable, falling over without notice. There is no visible sign that a tree is infected and it is a disease that is common in the forest. While it is generally not addressed through management activities, because of the proximity of this infestation to the campground and road, and the risk to human safety, the Forest Service (FS) has been working on plans to deal with a 40 acre site next to the campground.

The proposal is to remove all fir trees from the 40 acres and replant with less susceptible tree species (pine and larch).

Question: Are infected trees marketable

Answer: Yes

Initial response by the FS was to treat the area, assuming little public negative response. From 2015 until now, there have been 2 decisions that were both threatened with a challenge. FS withdrew both proposals for deficiencies in their process.

Now: To move forward, the next decision needs to be clean, do it right this time. The FS engaged the Ochoco National Forest Collaborative (ONFC) and industry (AFRC) to assist in the process. A field trip was held. The ONFC was not able to reach consensus on treatment and has written a draft letter to the FS with 3-5 alternatives to review and analyze. The issues are socio-economic and visual impacts.

FS was planning to be able to take action spring of 2019. Now more likely to be fall of 2019. The goal of the project is to make the area safe for camping/recreating while restoring the site. The proposal would also include some small diameter thinning within the campground itself.

Question: What is the rate of spread of the disease?

Answer: Rate of spread is not really understood. It is a slow moving disease, spreading by root to root contact. It stays in the soil for a very, very long time.

Question: What is the historical make of tree species within the stand?

Answer: Site would have been dominated by pine but over time, due to the lack of fire and other disturbance, fir has encroached and increased over time.

Question: What is the stocking rate for the trees?

Answer: Tree stand is dense but don't know the answer today. For pine, a 50 -60 basal area is called for. Current condition is well over that. Removing the fir on the 40 acres would restart succession and return it to an earlier seral condition.

Question: What makes the 3rd time (decision) different?

Answer: Earlier decisions had technical issues. Current forest plan has limits on size openings. If previous plans had moved forward, they would have been challenged.

Question: Where does the liability go if a tree falls on a person? If nothing is done?

Answer: FS knows people recreate there and trees fall over. There is a thing called recreational immunity and it is always being tested in the courts.

Question: This is a huge safety issue, why are we not reacting?

Answer: Have to follow the process. EIS is the route to go rather than FONSI (finding of no significant impact) and EA is harder to defend. The original effort was first a categorical exclusion, then an EA.

Question: What does the County's input mean to the FS?

Answer: Support from County and ONFC and others helps with the decision process and assures decision is more defensible.

Question: So What? What role is this committee going to take?

Answer: Helping the committee understand the problem being address (science), the issues (people concerns) and process (NEPA) to get a defensible plan.

Ston moved to have a sub-committee form that can draft a County response to the FS concerning the Walton Lake project. John seconded. Motion passed. Andy appointed Ston, Mike, and John to meet and prepare a draft response with Tim. Sub-committee will work on time and location to meet.

Meeting adjourned @ 12:10 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Deboodt

Coordinator, Crook County Natural Resource Policy