

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

July 13, 2022

Committee Members Present: John Dehler, Lynne Breese, Tim Deboodt, Frank Porfily, Andy Gallagher, Mike Lunn, Steve McGuire

Members absent: Trent Smith, Casey Kiser, Jace Rhoden, Cliff Kiser

Guests present: Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Slater Turner (FS)

Public present: John Breese, Shelley Santucci

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire @ 4H Building.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of previous meeting minutes: John Dehler moved to accept the minutes of the June 8th meeting with corrections (spelling Dode). Lynne Breese seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Updates:

Jeff Kitchens (BLM) spoke about the beginning of fire season. Due to the cool temperatures and rain received in June, fire designation is just now entering moderate to high. The District as seen a few, very small fire starts, all total less than 100 acres. Anticipated drying over the next several weeks should see a significant change in fire risk. Recreation use levels are still high (started with COVID). Jeff reported that seasonal hires for recreation are on board. Hiring was difficult (about ½ of the positions filled). The BLM is not currently in any major planning efforts. Work load activities continue to be driven by land access issues and requests (rights-of-way, etc). Jeff reported that the District is in the process of hiring 3 new range conservationists. These are positions left vacant by retirement, job promotion and being hired by other agencies. Job announcements are about to be released for all 3 positions.

Prineville BLM District will be restructuring and creating a 2nd division at the District level. Jeff will be leaving his position as Area Field Manager and moving into the leadership role for the new Division. Lisa Clark will serve as temporary Area Field Manager during the transition.

Slater Turner provided a brief update for the Forest Service and also provided details for the resource tour being hosted by the Forest Service next week, July 19. The purpose of the tour will be to visits a variety of sites within the Canyon 66 Prescribed fire area, a prescribed fired done September, 2018. Tour participates will include the County's Natural Resources Advisory Committee and the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative. Tour will meet at the Ochoco National Forest Headquarters east of town @ 8:30 a.m.

Slater reported that the FS is expecting a court decision notice on the Walton Lake Project. FS staff is participating on a Shared Stewardship Tour today viewing various projects associated with the Joint Chiefs Project in the Maury Mtns and southern boundary of the Ochocos.

Frank asked Slater about the Wild Horse Handling and Adoption facility to be located on the National Grasslands along highway 26. Slater reported that nationally, the Forest Service no longer has an agreement with the BLM for handling and adopting horses gathered from by the Forest Service. As a result, the Ochoco National Forest is looking to create a facility that will serve central Oregon. The Grassland site is a former administrative site for the FS and the FS is in the process of conducting Categorical Exclusion (CE) review process. There was great concern from the Committee about the proposed cost and duplication of facilities. Several Committee members mentioned the change in Administration (twice since this happened during the Obama Administration) and maybe the Forest should explore reinstating their working agreement with BLM (nationally).

Agenda Items:

Discussion was held on the process the Committee uses to have the public participate in its meetings. Currently, the Committee allows public discussion on each agenda item as the Committee deals with it. Several Committee members expressed concern about the individual conduct during the June meeting when interacting with FS personnel. Frank moved to continue to have public interaction with each agenda topic. Steve seconded. During discussion John Dehler said in was for it as long as there is some control exercised to keep the discussion positive. Andy said the public cannot be disrespectful of our guests and the public should be reminded of the rules of decorum. Mike Lunn mentioned that the strength of this Committee and its meetings is that this is the only place the public has a forum and an opportunity for them to participate ... even if it might get a little ugly at times. Lynne said as the person in charge of the gavel that day, she was sorry she let it get out of hand. Motion Passed.

The Committee reviewed the tour for the North Fork Crooked River Project. Cliff Kiser, Trent Smith, John Dehler and Lynne Breese attended. Other participants were from the Ochoco Forest Collaborative and the American Forest Resource Council. John commented that he felt the tour was informative. He was concerned about the NEPA process and the FS using people who don't know anything about forestry, by their own admission. He wondered how a person work with forest specialists to make sure good questions (and answers) are asked. He was willing to wait and see. Mike Lunn responded that from his perspective, it is not uncommon for the team leader to not have a complete understanding of all details. John talked about the proposed road closures associated with the proposal, timber thinning in riparian habitats and the basal area goals of 30 – 50. Steve McGuire asked about the road closures and reminded the group that the County's GIS Department had created a map for the County of all the historical roads on the FS and BLM administered lands within the County. Tim mentioned that others on the tour had similar concerns about road closures from the standpoint of access of the public and administrative needs associated with managing grazing on the allotments within the Project boundaries.

Public Discussion:

Shelley Santucci expressed concern over how the FS won't disclose how ID teams are formed and how they function (record keeping) from the time they are formed for a project through their function during the NEPA process to how decision making is done. She mentioned that maybe the FS could be encouraged to be organized and formalize their team processes. Shelley shared with the Committee that it appears some original team members were replaced when they expressed an opinion contrary to leadership direction.

Mike thought that the Committee could help the public interact better with the agencies and also, help the agencies interact better with the public. Mike also supported the need to make sure all interactions are well documented. Having just a verbal conversation doesn't get to the record. Mike used road availability for permittees as an example. Road closure decisions need to be worked out with Permittees ahead of time.

Frank said he would talk to Representative Cliff Bentz about the Wild Horse Facility. He will ask Bentz to coordinate a discussion with national FS and BLM officials and get them to work together and stop constructing duplicate facilities. Frank will do this not as a Committee member.

Tim reviewed the following:

Oregon Dept. of Water Resources issued an update notice for the BOR water use application for stored water in Prineville Reservoir. Notice was published July 5th, 2022. Public comments received by ODWR from last summer DO NOT need to be resubmitted.

The Forest Service has announced that they are reinstating the Ochoco/Deschutes National Forest Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). This Committee approves projects for Title II funding. Applications are due in September. The County would like to see Crook County residents on the Committee. There are 3 sub-groups: Conservation and environmental users; Timber/grazing/recreation; and Government/Tribal. Applications can be found on the Deschutes National Forest Website.
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/deschutes/workingtogether/advisorycommittees/?cid=fseprd1027685>

Oregon Department of Forestry, the State Fire Marshal's Office and OSU have released the State's draft wild fire risk map. https://tools.oregonexplorer.info/OE_HtmlViewer/index.html?viewer=wildfire

Landowners can type in their mailing address to see if how their property ranks. Property owners whose property is designated as HIGH or EXTREME will be receiving letters (by tax lot) informing them of the designation. Landowners wishing to appeal will have 60 days to do so. County is encouraging landowners to do so and not ignore the notice. Properties within the HIGH and EXTREME categories may have landuse restrictions, building code requirements and insurance concerns placed on them.

Good of the Order:

Steve asked about the process for filling the position left vacant by Ston's resignation. Tim will contact the Court and see how they want to proceed. The Committee expressed a desire to not wait until the end of the year to fill it. Steve moved to forward this request to the Court. John seconded it. Motion passed.

John Dehler said he had heard that some in Congress want to repeal the Pitman/Robertson Act. John is concerned because those funds (taxes collect on the purchase of hunting and fishing gear) are used by the State to fund hunter education and other programs. For about every \$6 of State funding, the State receives approximately \$35 from the federal government. John will continue to monitor this and keep the Committee informed.

Lynne mentioned that the Watershed Council is hosting a series of workshops focusing on resource issues in the County. The first one will focus on water. It is scheduled for July 21, 2022 at Crooked River Elementary School starting at 5:30 p.m. Public is welcome!

Andy mentioned that the County's Wolf Committee will be hosting a meeting with the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District on August 30th at the Crook County Fairgrounds Pavilion. A workshop on wolf management will be held in addition to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Crook County SWCD.

John Breese expressed his appreciation for the Committee maintaining its public input process. He said that since Agencies don't seem to be able to stay the entire time (the 2 hour meeting) that the public would not get to interact with them if they had to wait until the end of the meeting to speak, ask questions or share concerns. John is concerned that with the Agencies leaving early, they miss out on important public conversation.

The next meeting of the Crook County NRAC will be held on Wednesday, August 10th. Because that is County Fair week, the meeting will be moved to the Crook County COCC Open Campus Building, 510 SE Lynn Blvd.

John moved to adjourn the meeting. Lynne seconded. Motion Passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.