

**STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 17-18, 2007  
Bend, Oregon**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Hoyt Wilson, Grazing Permittee, Princeton, OR  
David Bilyeu, Environmental Representative – Statewide, Bend, OR  
William Renwick, Environmental Representative, Burns, OR  
Stacy Davies, Chair, Grazing Permittee, Frenchglen, OR  
Pam Hardy, Vice–Chair, Dispersed Recreation, Bend, OR  
Paul Bradley, Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation, Hines, OR  
Michael Beagle, Fish & Recreational Fishing, Eagle Point, OR  
Fred Otley, Private Landowner, Diamond, OR

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Richard Angstrom, No Financial Interest, Salem, OR  
Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR  
Steve Purchase, State Liaison, Salem, OR  
Ron VanDomelen, Wild Horse Management, Powell Butte, OR

**DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL (DFO):**

Dana Shuford, District Manager, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Hines, OR

**DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL ASSISTANTS:**

Rhonda Karges, Environmental Protection Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR  
Connie Pettyjohn, Support Services Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR

**FACILITATORS:**

Dale White, Burns, OR

**PRESENTERS**

Fred McDonald, Natural Resource Specialist, Hines, OR  
Laura Dowlan, Wilderness Specialist, Hines, OR  
Tara Martinak, Public Affairs Officer, Hines, OR

**COMMENTING PUBLIC:**

Bill Marlett, Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA)  
Alice Elshoff, Frenchglen, OR  
Marilyn Miller, Juniper Group Sierra Club  
Randy Rasmussen, American Hiking Society  
Randy Drake, Public Land User

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Rob Perrin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Hines, OR  
Dan Haak, Pacific Northwest Region 6, Burns, OR  
Craig Miller, ONDA

### **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING AND AGENDA:**

The meeting was called to order and self introductions made. Only eight members were present, so there was not a quorum. The meeting was held to share information only.

### **CHAIRMAN UPDATE**

- Stacy noted Cindy Witzel submitted her resignation from the SMAC. The BLM will provide a plaque or Steens book to her at the August meeting. Her resignation will result in a need for a new representative for the Recreational Permit Holder position.
- Stacy will be absent this afternoon.

### **DFO UPDATE**

- The SMAC submitted several recommendations from the last meeting resulting in a proposed alternative for the Travel Management Plan (TMP). BLM has responded and a copy of the letter has been provided. Only one item/road was not adopted by the BLM; the remainder of the recommendation was defensible and, therefore, adopted.
- Dana noted there are four SMAC positions open for nomination including no financial interest, Burns Paiute Tribe, mechanized or consumptive recreation and grazing permittee. The nomination period closes May 31. Applications will be submitted to BLM Washington Office for approval.
- Dana noted a handout in the member's folders: Conservation System Science Plan. Burns District BLM will need to put together information for the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA).
- Dana noted House Representative Bill 2016 is proposing to institutionalize the National Landscape Conservation System. A copy of the bill and map are included in the folders. SMAC may be hearing more about this, but the bill shouldn't affect management objectives for the CMPA.

### **FIELD MANAGER REPORT**

Fred McDonald updated the members on BLM personnel changes.

- BLM is bringing in a new field manager for several months while Karla is Acting Associate District Manager.
- New staff members in Andrews Resource Area (RA) include: Rob Perrin, Outdoor Recreation Planner to assist Laura Dowlan and Brett Page, Outdoor Recreation Planner, for U.S. Forest Service Recreation Program/Service First, Three Rivers and Emigrant Creek areas.
- South Steen's loop road will be open this weekend to Rooster Comb. North Loop still has snow and will be open around the first of June. BLM will plan to blade the road three times. BLM will be removing junipers along roadways for safety and will issue free firewood permits for removal.

- The comment period for the TMP closes May 21 and then BLM will issue a decision. A FOIA has been received from Wilderness Watch. The group will have an opportunity to discuss this tomorrow.
- The North Steen's Final EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) will be completed soon and submitted to the State Office within several weeks for printing.
- South Steen's water development EA is ongoing through the NEPA process. The group may tour the area during the SMAC field trip in August.
- The Fire Use Plan is close to being completed. Fire folks will be getting with permittees to get final agreements signed. The group was briefed at the last meeting.
- Healthy Lands Initiative, which is under the President's Energy Policy, is a Bureau-wide program for restoration of sagebrush. Funding is from oil and gas drilling to reduce impacts. The majority of funds are diverted to states with sage-grouse. Burns received funding for some projects. This year's funds will go to Three Rivers RA for brush beating, fuels breaks, juniper removal, and prescribed fires. Five Creeks will receive funding.
- The protection fence along Blitzen River is to be constructed this year.
- Some Cadastral Survey work, which was funded for this year to correct errors in the Act boundaries, will be done by BLM Oregon State Office.
- FY 2007 fire rehabilitation projects have included seeding, fences, and waterhole cleanouts. This year temporary protection fences will be installed to allow permittees to continue to graze. Work will be ongoing to construct more fences, install guzzlers, and possibly reseed some areas. The weed prevention project has been submitted and funded for Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation areas to prevent noxious weed infestation.
- Laura has set up an aggressive volunteer program for work in wilderness including 7-8, week-long trips to rollup wire and do trail work during June – September.
- BLM hopes to get a new horse facility set up along North Loop Road.
- Grazing management – Permittees turned out on time. Term permit renewals are due in 2009. Staff members are working on Allotment Management Plans, Evaluations, Standards & Guides, and Proper Functioning Condition monitoring and survey of riparian areas (to be worked on this summer).
- Wildland Juniper Management Area (WJMA) – A Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sub-committee will discuss OWEB grant moneys and how they will be used. Bill suggested a need for SMAC to provide a representative for the sub-committee of the SWCD. Fred Otley was nominated to serve.

### **CMPA RECREATION AND WILDERNESS PUBLIC USE REPORT**

Laura Dowlan gave a slide presentation on CMPA recreation use for 2006 and compared the data to past years. She noted Fred McDonald has copies of the Executive Summary of Use from the late 1980s/early 1990s. An economic analysis was also completed at that time. The slide presentation provided monitoring data of campsite use in gorges and uplands, level of use and impact, impact and density guidelines, and designated trails and condition. The data revealed overall use appears to be at a historical low. Stacy asked standards not be set based on the current low use. David Bilyeu echoed the concern increased future use be taken into consideration when setting guidelines. Laura noted the

need to increase education and outreach opportunities to the public for proper use within wilderness areas to minimize use impacts.

## **HISTORIC INFORMATION/SMAC ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FUTURE INITIATIVES**

### **PANEL DISCUSSION**

A panel consisting of Bill Marlett (ONDA), Stacy Davies and Fred McDonald provided information and insight on the history of the Steens Act, past and present actions and uses on Steens Mountain including wilderness inventories in the 1980s, recreation, signing/educational information, Cooperative Management Agreements, and BLM and SMAC accomplishments.

The committee discussed differences between status quo and Act requirements to manage Steens Mountain as wilderness via the travel and recreation plans. New uses are not planned for consideration within the Travel and Recreation Management Plans, and the CMPA RMP is a public use plan to manage the various uses permitted within the CMPA. The BLM has an obligation to manage the Mountain as required by the guidelines within the Act.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Alice Elshoff, former SMAC member, commented she had met with the Chamber of Commerce regarding travel management and signing. Roads could be numbered on juniper stumps, and kiosks moved back to parking areas. These suggestions are in past sign committee meeting notes and she hopes they will be reviewed and taken into consideration when completing the Recreation Management Plan.

Bill Marlett, ONDA, provided comments regarding the TMP. He also provided field notes compiled by ONDA to verify and provide background for recommendations regarding route closures and those to remain open. He stated ONDA's recommendations v. BLM's decisions are the source of ONDA's concerns.

### **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The SMAC asked Alice and Bill questions regarding historical uses, signs/brochures, mountain bikes, adaptive management, and dust abatement on Steens Loop Road.

A suggestion was made to use the internet to provide for additional educational material to the public and possible money from OWEB to help develop a site.

### **EXISTING PUBLIC INFORMATION AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS**

Tara Martinak presented information and led a discussion about signing on the Mountain. She reviewed past recommendations and researched what was suggested for consideration by Alice in the earlier discussion. She provided copies of various brochures, information sheets and maps currently available to the public to provide information on the CMPA. The BLM also has a website providing information about the CMPA with links to various sites providing related information about uses and requirements for different types of use. Laura explained the various signs currently in wilderness at the trailheads and along the trails and roads. The wilderness signs are

posted along boundaries and closed road entrances. Campgrounds have information kiosks which may need to be updated. Overlooks have information signs and panels. There is a need to provide information that educates visitors on acceptable uses to help them follow guidelines for different types of uses.

Paul suggested using a specific radio station to provide information. Fred M said BLM has looked into this previously and also looked at handing out CDs to use on the tour routes.

Currently BLM receives information requests from the public through phone calls, emails, and letters. Tara explained current methods BLM uses to provide information to the public including free brochures, news releases, and websites. Products that BLM would like to provide include a new recreation map for the south half of the District; develop free newspaper- or magazine-style document, kiosks with maps, and consistent signs at recreation sites/campgrounds.

Three things BLM needs recommendations on:

1. Steens Mountain Brochure – Edits on text. Will be reprinted this year.
2. South 1/2 Steens and Wetlands Map – Name of map? Not a high priority.
3. Interim Needs – What else could be made available to public?

The Steens Mountain Landowner Group has reviewed the brochure and suggested providing a reference to detailed maps available.

SMAC suggestions for the brochure included:

- Help visitors “know where they are”, private v. public land.
- Make a note cows may be on roadways.
- List where water, phone service, gas are available v. what’s not available.
- Note to contact BLM for more information about private property.
- Good tires needed on all travel routes.
- Remove some of the camera icons on map.
- Remove inserted Oregon map.

### **STEENS ACT PURPOSES TIED TO PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Pam Hardy reviewed and discussed the purposes of the Act and text associated with recreation within the Act.

Each member was then asked to provide their perspective and opinion on the information presented by Pam. Main ideas expressed included: freedom, being unconfined, limit protection restrictions unless there is a problem. People want to know the opportunity to enjoy the Steens in the future will be the same as when they visited years ago when they were young.

Long-term thoughts:

- Historical use should extend to children and great grandchildren. Possibly a Term Agreement for various types of limited access on certain roads during designated

seasons for family camping and/or historical use. Provide compensation to the landowners for allowing limited public use.

- Today's values need to be available to future generations.
- Need to determine how to allow freedoms without overwhelming the area with hoards of future visitors. The TMP will deal with the onslaught of extra people in the future. The Recreation Management Plan should establish benchmarks, monitoring and guidelines for what to do when benchmarks are reached.

A discussion ensued about wilderness v. wildness. Wildness should be retained without being limited by wilderness concept. Steens has retained its wild character even after many years of use.

Landowners should be recognized for their contribution to recreation. Establish cooperative agreements between BLM and landowners for use. The public should have a sense of the cooperative relationship.

Pam suggested signs should also include points they are currently discussing.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION - DEVELOPING A VISION, TOOLS NEEDED**

Each member stated their vision. Discussion will continue tomorrow.

**May 18, 2007**

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Meeting was called to order and self introductions made.

### **APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES**

Motion was made and seconded to approve the March minutes.

*Consensus:* March minutes approved.

### **ACTION ITEMS REVIEW**

No new items noted.

### **COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION PLAN**

Pam Hardy led the continued discussion on interim needs and ideas to be addressed in the Plan.

Long term:

Term Agreements –

- cooperative agreements with landowners for access
- seasons of use
- historical family use

Benchmarks and Agreements

- What to do when benchmarks reached?

## Monitoring against benchmarks

Dana reminded the group they need to identify interim information needs that should be focused on until Comprehensive Recreation Plan is completed.

Short-Term information that needs to be made available to the public:

- Respect private lands
- Current map posted at camp grounds, kiosks
- Post basic user rules and regs (safety, leave no trace, etc)
- WSA and Wilderness info
- OHV designations
- Mileages between locations
- Trail locations and types
- Public info on WJMA
- Assure campground hosts have current information
- Public information at Frenchglen
- Non-BLM website for Steens
- Road conditions and types of vehicles
- Public sense of cooperative relationships
- List BLM partners, volunteer groups, public communication about locals
- History of CMPA
- What are acceptable locations for interim 4x8 portal signs?
- Need to encourage travelers to talk to local landowners/residents. (“Natives are friendly”)
- Private land etiquette (include under history of CMPA/partners/private land access)
- Should try to be consistent with agreement established from discussions about the WJMA signing
- Wildland fire use – education regarding the value of fire, current and past fires
- Include website on all brochures
- Kiosks near hot springs at Alvord Lake, Mann Lake

It was suggested a cooperative agreement with landowner to install restrooms at Alvord Hot Springs and Pike Creek might be beneficial to all.

SMAC recommendations to BLM for the interim:

1. Tara’s Brochure example is ok to put at kiosks.
2. Prepare a map to post at kiosks to show TMP approved travel routes.
  - BLM is currently selling Sportsman series to show roads on Steens.
  - CMPA interim map may be sufficient to post until TMP is approved.
  - Need a “you are here” designation.

**Motion made:** Stacy made the motion BLM should go forward with an interim and long-term process for public information and recreation planning. The interim process should consider the list compiled by the group (seconded by Bill Renwick).

***Unanimous Agreement (does not constitute a formal recommendation to BLM as there was not a quorum):*** The BLM should go forward with an interim and long-term process for public information and recreation planning. The interim process should consider the list compiled by the group.

Pam led the group in further discussion about the values and ideas that need to go into the initial scoping plan. It was asked whether the RMP would include non-motorized travel in addition to snowmobiles, etc. Dana stated BLM would like the SMAC to suggest types of things needed in the plan, such as snowmobiles. There will be various components required within the plan, including communication of information to the public.

Brainstorm session with SMAC members of items to include in the Plan:

- Dispersed motorized camping
- Snowmobiles
- Nonmotorized/mechanized travel
- Facilities
- Special recreation permits – commercial/competitive/noncommercial
- Loop road conditions, including dust
- Safety
- Access
- Personal accountability regarding safety and backcountry travel
- Large group recreation
- Hiking trails and OHV trail
- Interpretation:
- Multiple use/conflicts/shared use routes and ways
- OHV/horse/hiking
- Law enforcement – overuse/abuse
- Cooperative Management Agreements
- How to address changes in recreation trends
- Large vehicles
- Winter recreation/potential development
- Extreme sports/aircraft
- Sportsman education/seasonal management/ODFW participation
- Frenchglen kiosk Interpretive/visitor center
- Birdwatchers
- Horse facilities and uses
- Wild horses
- Address future needs to meet anticipated changes in levels of use
- Adaptive management strategy
- Wilderness plan – possible amendment/clarification to align with RMP
- Motorized recreation is already covered in the TMP
- Interpretation of cattle/fire/local people and culture/historical/cultural/Native American
- How to facilitate volunteer groups/agreements
- Address/recognize demographics of various user groups
- CMPA in respect to regional interconnectivity – MNWR, Private land
- Baseline: Existing overlapping designations – how well are they serving the public?
- Rock hounding
- Cost analysis and funding options: partners/creative funding
- Recreation use fees – entrance fee
- Minimum amenities required to allow fee charging
- Comprehensive public info strategy: brochures/kiosks/signs

There was a detailed discussion by SMAC to determine whether they should make specific recommendations or send the general list forward to BLM. It was suggested SMAC should discuss selected items in detail.

There was general agreement regarding the following:

- BLM has already met with the county to send out surveys for pre-scoping for the Recreation Plan.
- BLM could do scoping and come up with an outline for a management plan and then send to SMAC for review.
- BLM will use the list generated by SMAC within their scoping document.
- BLM to provide proposed/draft scoping document at August SMAC meeting.
- SMAC will continue to discuss several items in-depth.

Scoping should address:

What is the purpose of this document/plan?

What is BLM's strategy?

BLM is scoping with SMAC.

Hoyt noted some major areas that SMAC should discuss in-depth:

Signage

Snowmobiles

Facilities - campgrounds

Wilderness review/wilderness recreation

Trails – hiking/ATV

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Randy Rasmussen, American Hiking Society, Corvallis, OR spoke about the need to include the TMP within the Recreation Management Plan. He noted in the comprehensive travel plan, the motorized plan lacks vision and maintains status quo which is unacceptable. He felt it does not contain true guidance to address cumulative impacts and it is silent on increased usage. Components of adaptive management are not included in the TMP. It provides a piecemeal statement for management of motorized uses. He encourages SMAC to look at the interrelatedness of the travel issues with recreation opportunities/experiences. The TMP does a disservice to the Steens. The EA analysis does not meet NEPA requirements.

Randy Drake, public land user, complimented the job the SMAC has done. However, he feels some things have been left out. He said most users are already being charged a fee to use the public land and felt money could be used to manage existing trails, campgrounds, and signs. He stated the only means to access some areas is with OHVs, which are required to bare stickers that are paid with fees. He also stated there are grants available. The OHV community is easy to manage since they use existing, designated trails. He stated the 4x4 community would be willing to help defend against lawsuits. The area needs to be shared by all users, even those with physical limitations who rely on motorized access due to their limitations. He reminded the group people have been using the mountain for many, many years and past users have not depredated it. He thinks the area should continue to be managed by BLM and ranchers as they've done a good job. Even though the area has been used for many years, it has been managed well in previous years.

Bill Marlett, ONDA, handed out two maps revealing their travel recommendations in relation to motorized and nonmotorized recreational use. The maps show highlighted routes that should be designated for equestrian or other specific uses. A second map shows areas where they have identified a three-mile buffer around motorized routes. He offered to not take BLM to court if they hold off on the TMP and incorporate the items on the list that they put together at this meeting.

Marilyn Miller, Sierra Club Juniper Group, stated she was on the Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council and worked on Steens Mountain issues earlier and so is familiar with it. The original focus was not on motorized travel. She feels other uses have not been taken into enough consideration. She would like SMAC to take into consideration other users of the Steens and supports closing most of the trails that are in existence now. She felt roads impacted wildlife.

### **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

The SMAC asked for clarification on the maps presented by ONDA including the significance of the yellow dotted lines, non-motorized trails, and the three-mile buffer.

Stacy asked Bill how he suggests the recreation and travel plans be broken into smaller pieces? Bill responded the TMP, as it is, is a motorized recreation use plan, but needs to be balanced with other possibly conflicting uses on the mountain. Bill felt the SMAC needs to address other types of uses and all of this must be done in conjunction with accommodating inholders and their access.

Fred feels if too many routes are closed, then other routes will get excess use as traffic is limited to them. Fred asked Randy R. what his conflict with types of use or level of use was? Randy responded hikers don't want to hike in areas where ATVs/dirt bikes cause dust and safety issues. Fred commented he feels plenty of areas were set aside by the Act for hiking.

Bill shared comments with Marilyn Miller that the TMP was developed with feedback and challenges her to provide information and scientific data regarding the impact to wildlife.

Stacy noted the 20-year history showed use peaked in the 1980s and has declined since. Historical data shows a downtrend and makes it difficult to analyze a future trend of increased use. He asked Randy Drake about the current OHV charge, which Randy replied was two dollars.

Hoyt stated the SMAC is trying to establish benchmarks so they can change management practices. He noted if benchmarks being used are based on a downward trend, how do they address this?

Fred commented he opposes closing of rough and rugged roads which are important to use by some people. It is a use that has heritage and social significance and he appreciates Randy's comments regarding the need for those uses. Fred noted he disagrees with Randy

and believes the TMP does an adequate job of identifying travel criteria and site-specific evaluations.

Pam stated she hears a lot of rhetoric regarding historical use needing motorized travel and feels that nonmotorized use should be a part of that historical use since historic means of travel was via walking.

### **TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN – GRAZING PERMITTEE ACCESS**

Laura Dowlan reviewed the TMP alternatives in relation to grazing permittee access in wilderness. She reminded the group BLM needs prior notification for emergency situations, and range improvement needs should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The TMP alternatives attempted to address the extent to which permittees should be allowed motorized access.

Fred O asked that the TMP allow for flexibility for unforeseen exceptions such as monitoring and protection of the boundaries between the cattle free area within wilderness and cattle grazing areas. Public users often leave gates open and there is a need to check the gates. He asked if this can be considered emergency use. He also wanted to know if stockpiling of salt is allowable.

The group discussed options and needs related to motorized access to fence lines and gates where high public use could result in cattle getting into cattle free areas. BLM will follow up on this and needs to add this to the written comment portion of the EA.

An ATV can be used to transport supplies for major fence repair with prior approval. Minor repairs require horse use. There is a need for clarification of acceptable uses of motorized travel for various grazing management needs.

There was further discussion on the proposed alternatives for grazing permittee access. Questions were asked for clarification purposes and to determine options for changes to the currently proposed alternatives.

BLM needs:

1. SMAC response to the proposed actions
2. Written comments from permittees justifying any needs for changes to the proposed alternatives.
3. Feedback from permittees to further define “practical and reasonable” uses.

Stacy recommended BLM contact other permittees regarding alternatives in order to clarify them and receive feedback to assure their understanding of the alternatives and the effect on their operations. He felt the proposed alternatives may not be clear to them, especially regarding issues such as stockpiling.

Laura noted they need to keep wilderness guidelines in mind when recommending changes to alternatives in order to combat potential lawsuits.

**AUGUST MEETING AGENDA ITEMS**

- South Steens tour (Water Development EA, alternatives)
- Conservation/nondevelopment easements (matrix)
- Review BLM's scoping document for Comprehensive Recreation Plan
- Update on WJMA and Science Strategy
- Update on North Steens EIS
- Discuss flipcharts from May meeting (Pam)
- Wilderness characteristics inventory update

*Action Items:*

- Develop a strategy to engage the SMAC in Comprehensive Recreation Plan (Dana).
- Develop scoping document for SMAC review.
- Concerns about the proposed energy corridors – Bill to follow up with Skip Renschler.

Submitted by Connie Pettyjohn

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved the minutes as amended on August 17, 2007.

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Stacy Davies, Chair

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Date