

**STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COUNCIL
FINAL MEETING MINUTES
May 1, 2008
Bend, Oregon**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pam Hardy, Chair, Dispersed Recreation, Bend, OR
Michael Beagle, Vice Chair, Fish & Recreational Fishing, Eagle Point, OR
Hoyt Wilson, Grazing Permittee, Princeton, OR
Daniel Haak, Mechanized Consumptive Recreation, Burns, OR
William Renwick, Environmental Representative, Burns, OR
Stacy Davies, Grazing Permittee, Frenchglen, OR
David Bilyeu, Environmental Representative – Statewide, Bend, OR
Fred Otley, Private Landowner, Diamond, OR
Richard Angstrom, No Financial Interest, Salem, OR
Steve Purchase, State Liaison, Salem, OR

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL (DFO):

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

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL ASSISTANTS:

Kevin Thissell, SMAC Coordinator, BLM, Hines, OR
Connie Pettyjohn, Program Analyst, BLM, Hines, OR

FACILITATOR:

Terry Morton, Klamath Falls, OR

PRESENTERS

Fred McDonald, Andrews Supervisory Recreation Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Rob Perrin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM, Hines, OR
Terry Slider, USFS,
Rhonda Karges, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, BLM, Hines, OR
Joe Glascock, Range Management Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR

COMMENTING PUBLIC:

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches

OTHERS PRESENT:

Julie Wiekkel, Burns, OR
Chris Knauf, Oregon State Office BLM, Portland, OR
Bill Pieratt, BLM, Hines, OR
Rob Perrin, BLM, Hines, OR

Laura Dowlan, BLM, Hines, OR
Tara Martinak, BLM, Hines, OR
Matt Obradovich, BLM, Hines, OR
Bill Marlett, ONDA

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING AND AGENDA:

Chairperson Pam Hardy introduced the meeting facilitator Terry Morton from Klamath Falls where she has lived since 1981. Terry is the Executive Director of a non-profit organization called the Klamath Watershed Partnership. She has previously served as the SMAC's facilitator on an interim basis and will be assisting at several different sessions. Self introductions were made and housekeeping items were covered.

CHAIRPERSON UPDATE

Pam Hardy noted there had been several recent events concerning the SMAC. She asked SMAC members to read the GAO report which provides an overview of previous accomplishments and common goals so the group could discuss how to best use the information to evaluate their vision, process and effectiveness. The report addressed evaluating the collaborative process and projects however it did not evaluate time frames nor judge effectiveness by the time involved in developing cooperative relationships. The report does not provide procedural recommendations to improve effectiveness and success in the collaborative process.

According to Dana Shuford the report stated advisory groups are a good model for natural resource issue problem solving. It recommends that agencies continue to employ this model as it is a worthwhile method of dealing with issues. He noted the SMAC is formed for a slightly different purpose than other similar groups and vast opportunity exists to enhance natural resource management. The current group is functioning very differently than the original group that was interviewed for the GAO report. It has a lot more open and frank collaboration and opinion sharing, and a much higher degree of respect for each other. There are opportunities for this group to grow further and take it to a higher level. The selection criterion differs for various groups and sometimes is politically based which can result in difficulties when trying to find solutions. It is important to find people who want to solve problems and aren't tied in with vested interests which can affect the decision making progress. The current method of selecting members should possibly be reviewed.

Vice-chairman Mike Beagle gave the group an overview of the National Landscape Conservation System Act – H.R.2016. The NLCS was developed to recognize natural resource crown jewels and will be used to manage about 10% of BLM lands. Congressman Walden initially had concerns about whether this act would supersede the Steens Act. He had initiated, but subsequently pulled, an amendment to exclude the SMCMPA. H.R.2016 assures BLM has clear direction, gives formal recognition by congress, makes the NLCS permanent, and makes it a priority. According to Mr. Shuford the NLCS Act will not affect the CMPA Science Strategy and will not escalate its level of importance.

Fred Otley reminded the group that a court action can change the intention of an original Act or legislation. He noted that ranchers had received letters stating that the Wild & Scenic River Act would not affect their grazing rights (the current uses), however it has. Special interest groups took the issue to court and grazing was eliminated as an acceptable use. This has caused ranchers to be hesitant about the initiation of an NLCS system.

Dana assured understanding of Fred's concern and shared the example of a past Oregon Senator's explanation to a group at a 1990s BLM Leadership meeting where the phenomenon of the court's interpretation of the Endangered Species Act resulted in implementation that was different than the author's original intent.

DFO UPDATE

- BLM has reviewed the five recommendations that were made at the last SMAC meeting and submitted to BLM in a letter dated March 20, 2008 and signed by Chairperson Pam Hardy.
- The SMAC needs to clarify the amended Grove Creek Road recommendation to include the left fork/south side of the cherry stem road as an open route. It doesn't require a motion just a clarification of the recommended motion.
- The four membership positions being advertised will close today; Dispersed Recreation, WHB, Grazing Permittee (Hoyt), Dispersed Recreation (Pam's position). Incumbents are not able to continue within their positions until they are re-approved by The Secretary of the Interior. This causes a lapse in time for some positions resulting in a lack of continuity and the inability to have a quorum at meetings.
- Status of litigation and appeals:
 - On April 10th ONDA filed a motion for reconsideration of the June 2007 ruling regarding the RMP. Their motion is based on the fact that they consider new information has come to light that has a bearing on the case. BLM presented the case that their analysis for the 2005 RMP was adequate. ONDA says there are new methods of reviewing wilderness characteristics and would like those methods used for this also.
 - ONDA had six points they were trying to make regarding the TMP. They were denied in part and granted a part in the request to stay. The court found that there is a likelihood they may prevail in the aspect of their appeal pertaining to obscure routes so the court stayed BLM on that part of the decision. The effect is that any new maps made available to the public will not show obscure routes.
 - ONDA appealed the term grazing permit in the Chimney Allotment. A pre-hearing teleconference will be held in May to discuss details of the case and establish the future schedule of hearings.
 - The Rock Creek Land Exchange was appealed by a neighboring private individual. The case rests in IBLA; no stay has been requested or granted. The case is controversial because of an exchange which was initiated 5-6 years ago. Private lands were secured within the CMPA and were offered

in exchange for private lands that are in association with other grazing lands/permits that will be affected. The neighbor felt that several parcels offered in the trade (private to public ownership) would affect their ability to access private lands for recreational purposes. A business they plan to operate would be adversely affected if the land becomes public.

- No stay has been issued for the North Steens EIS and there is no known time frame as to when IBLA will make a ruling.
- Some permit renewals have been appealed.

FIELD MANAGER REPORT

- Fred McDonald, acting Field Manager for Andrews Resource Area, gave the update. He expressed his gratitude to David Bilyeu for hosting the recreation plan scoping open house at COCC.
- The land acquisition process has been completed for the 20 acre Bordy property. A handout summarizing Steens land acquisitions was provided to the members.
- BLM will be submitting their answer soon and feels very good about their case for the Rock Creek Land Exchange.
- Fred has the lead for the in-holder access issue which affects lands within the livestock free zone of the CMPA and involves the loss of farm deferral status. Burns District is taking a pro-active position and will write an EA for a trailing permit that will allow passage through a no grazing area. Scoping for the EA closes on May 5, 2008 with one comment received to date. The district is trying to put the EA process on the fast track and get a quick decision. Dana noted that the no grazing area designation affects grazing and farm deferral status for the in-holders. IBLA has ruled that BLM has discretion as to how it provides reasonable access, the timing or season of use and other restrictions. Since movement of the livestock won't take more than one day it is considered more of an access issue. BLM plans to approach this with a letter of authorization providing access or with a letter of cooperative management to determine how access will be made. BLM is trying to complete the necessary NEPA work in anticipation of receiving requests from land owners in the Ankle Creek area, to assure they aren't held up when requesting access to their lands. It is the livestock owner's responsibility to keep their livestock from trespassing onto BLM lands when trailing. BLM's fence removal projects have complicated this situation.
- Fred Otley pointed out that there were historically livestock trailing corridors prior to the Taylor Grazing Act which could possibly have some influence on the issue as well.
- Personnel - Bill Pieratt was hired as a staff supervisor for the range and biology staffs. They are planning to hire a park ranger SCEP. Several seasonal employees will work this summer and a contract employee has been hired to help with the wilderness characteristics inventory.
- An interpretive plan has been completed for the WJMA which encompasses 3000 acres along the north loop road. Karen Moon received an OWEB grant to fund a contract with a professional company for interpretive signs. BLM successfully applied for challenge cost share funding to match the OWEB funds in FY09. Signing should be up in late summer. They will do a mock sketch to scale that

will be made available for people to view and comment on. It will be posted at the BLM office and at a SMAC meeting.

- A deferred maintenance project will take place this summer at Page Springs Campground. The Page Spring Weir work will be done through a contract with OTAK of Lake Oswego who will be providing a final report so that BLM can complete the NEPA document and have the specs to put out a bid solicitation.
- Term permit renewal – BLM had submitted a CX to allow renewing for 10 years and received appeals to two of them. There is a pending case in Boise on a similar situation. ONDA solicitors asked if BLM would submit a brief to IBLA to put the Burns cases on hold pending a final decision on the Boise case, which could set case law and negate the need to continue with the Burns cases. On May 7th there will be a conference call to request the judge to put the Burns case on hold. The Pueblo Mountain and Chimney allotments have AMPs in place.

SOUTH HALF MAP DISCUSSION

Dana shared some general feedback.

- a) The map name, Steens – High Desert Country, that had been submitted by the SMAC was accepted.
- b) BLM's interpretation regarding the TMP partial stay related to the obscure routes is that the obscure routes will not be shown on the new South Half map.

SMAC Comments

Fred O - Suggested leaving the obscure routes on the map until a final decision is made. Keeping them off the map could provide a lot of confusion as to whether the public can use the routes and it could affect the result of the litigation by removing them in advance of a decision. Removing them from the map gives the assumption that they do not exist. BLM should include all roads on the map with a note that they may be subject to closure pending result of a legal stay. All roads are currently open and should be included on the map. Including them all on the map would also encourage feedback to BLM from the public users regarding the routes and wouldn't necessarily increase their use.

Bill R - A lot of the obscure routes have not been previously mapped. They could leave the routes that were already on and not add the others. Based on what has been previously published on maps – don't remove and don't add routes.

Pam H – It's confusing to the public to map some routes and not others. She would like to see a map that actually shows what is on the ground and not be concerned about the political aspects of the territory. Would like to show closed roads on the maps, but designate them as closed with symbols. SMAC needs to review the stay and see how it will affect the current recommendation or if there is a need to modify it. BLM could include a note on the map regarding the date it was published and the status as of that date. People looking for the obscure routes to use will make them not obscure any longer consequently they should be left off the public map. Private land owner and historic uses should still be allowed and would maintain their status quo.

Richard A - The court ordered stay is on the determination of whether the obscure routes can be used. It is on the determination of use rather than whether they should be printed on a map. So the real question is how to develop a map for the public. BLM could include obscure routes on the map with a note about the lack of a final determination of the right to use them. (Dana agreed that this could be considered as an option for printing

the new South ½ Map). The group should honor their original position on this. In areas where it is not known what is on the ground, let BLM deal with it. They can handle each situation on a case by case basis. The stay affects the original recommendation, but the group should go with BLM's determination regarding the open status of obscure routes rather than SMAC deal with each individual route. Private individuals or ONDA can deal with individual route issues through BLM and the solicitors.

David B - Not sure the suggested option tells the public anything and it restricts the map to a limited time of usefulness. This may not be the best thing to do.

Dan H - Previous meeting notes show that the group already arrived at a decision and recommendation regarding obscure routes so the group just needs to vote on it with a quorum. They will need to determine how the stay affects this recommendation. Based on discussion at the last meeting; open routes should be on the map and closed routes should not be on the map. When the stay is resolved in the next 3-4 years a new map can be published based on the judge's decision. (Tara noted that BLM plans maps for 10 year time spans and quantities and would incur extra costs to order smaller quantities).

Stacy D – The map and roads discussion has been ongoing for eight years. Historically SMAC wanted a map that showed every road on the ground and showed whether it was open or closed to the public. The way to fairly do this is to split the obscure routes. SMAC had made a recommendation to leave the door open for future discovery. He recommends that BLM send staff out to inventory the obscure routes and make a determination whether they exist and whether to put them on the map.

Dana S – BLM is in the same position as they were on 3/14/08 and will take SMAC's discussion and suggestion, as well as the partial stay, into consideration. BLM will resolve this issue and report their determination back to SMAC. Fred McDonald was tasked with putting together a proposal based on a previous SMAC discussion, now with the nuance of incorporating the stay. He would like SMAC to wait for the results of the proposal before continuing any further discussion.

Regarding the South Half Map and motion, Richard requested that it be added as an agenda item for a future meeting. He noted that administrative judges accept recommendations when building their cases so SMAC should submit a recommendation to show how they balanced the competing interests in making their recommendation.

BREAK

COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

Rob Perrin shared comments regarding previous scoping efforts. Since the last meeting he had the opportunity to speak with business owners involved with Steens Mountain and discuss some of the issues as released on the original scoping document. He received their suggestions and input and felt they contributed good detailed comments. Tara will be putting out more press releases to news papers, interest groups, and has sent a press release to groups with club magazines,

The open house that was arranged by David B and held last night at COCC was a good venue. Thirty people signed in and twelve written comments were received. The majority of the comments were related to travel management rather than recreation management. There is some confusion over the differences between the two management plans which

may require an adjustment of scoping strategies due to the controversy associated with the TMP . SMAC and BLM may need to find different approaches and a method to separate the two that would help assure getting better comments directed at the recreation plan during the scoping process.

Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized are being revealed in the scoping, which is both travel and recreational related topic. BLM could also do focus groups to help determine what people value on the Steens.

SMAC Comments and Discussion

Suggestions and comments presented by the members are listed below.

- Many forms of recreation are travel related so the two topics overlap. Scoping comments may have been the result of the current stay affecting the TMP.
- The Rooster Comb section of road has been a repeated concern within the comments received.
- Generally people seem to like things the way they are currently. A number of comments were received regarding developed overnight camping sites, however overnight hiking and horse trail comments have been few.
- People need to be encouraged to give site specific input.
- Opportunities exist for trail development, increasing the number of sites within the current sites, non-motorized trails and facilities, equine trails/campsites, signing, and accessibility issues.
- Recommend using a high level of outreach during the scoping process. Scoping efforts will need to be blunt about aspects that are off limits within the CRMP since they have already been dealt with in the TMP.
- The average public is very intimidated by the large process. Creating specific questions would help direct the public's comments. The process requires detailed interaction with the public.
- The original scoping document identified eleven issues for the public to comment on as well as encouraged them to submit any additional issues.
- BLM will need to clearly state in the recreation scoping documents that routes and their uses were already dealt with in the TMP and that the recreation plan has another focus and purpose. Congress has said that there will be no off-road travel. The travel related issues and routes open for motorized travel have already been dealt with under the TMP. Signing issues and winter motorized use are the only issues that can be addressed within the scope of the CRMP.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

SMAC Comments and Discussion continued

Additional comments and suggestions:

- Are special recreation permit holders a part of the CRMP and if so, to what extent? Has there been a needs assessment completed regarding permits and permit requests?
- A BLM special recreation handbook provides guidelines and states that BLM can set limits on the number and type of Special Recreation Permits. Some side boards are

already in place as a result of wilderness guidelines, such as permitting requirements. The scoping process should assure engagement of the affected permit holders.

- Roaring Springs would like to exchange easement/access on Home Creek and the Skull Creek Dunes for easements/access on Diamond Ranch. They are willing to give an easement on Home Creek/Skull Creek in exchange for closing the easement on Diamond Ranch and have had some discussions with BLM. Don't foresee proponents being willing to attach an easement to their land exchange.

- Dana shared that an easement exchange would not fit under adaptive management because it's more of a real estate transaction. BLM would review it based on the individual merits of the proposal. The planning document could include a general statement that opening up Home Creek would be a good thing and administrative action would spell out the details. The current situation is due to a mapping error as it was originally open to the public. SMAC could make a recommendation that BLM actively pursue obtaining access on Home Creek. Administrative land exchanges take about 3 years so there would be time for the public to research and comment on the proposal.

SMAC RECOMMENDATION

Motion Made: David Bilyeu moved that BLM open discussions and negotiations to create public access from the highway to Home Creek Canyon. Pam seconded the motion.

Motion passed by unanimous agreement with a quorum. Stacy abstained.

SMAC Comments and Discussion continued

- Determine best method to pique public interest and generate their involvement and comments. The marketing plan/technique needs to be designed to assure effectiveness.
- Scoping is the first stage and is sometimes nebulous. It may help to focus the input and comments by using the 11 scoping questions.
- Before the proposed action is formulated, BLM could present draft alternatives for the public to comment on to help encourage more specific comments. The Steens recreation plan is an activity plan and so needs to be as specific as possible.
- In the comprehensive plan it's important to keep things as general as possible. Specifics should be taken care of administratively.
- The Steens Act includes snowmobiles as an acceptable use however they are restricted to roads only. The Transportation Plan states the Loop Road is gated closed however the North Loop Road is open to the snow line for winter recreation. The Winter Recreation Program already allows people to obtain keys from BLM for winter use. Snowmobiles may access the North Loop road to Kiger Overlook along the snow poles. There is no access beyond that point for motorized use. These specifics were in the LUP amendment from the 1990s.
- In 2007 fourteen groups asked for gate keys, 4-5 of them were snowmobile groups. In 2008 fourteen groups asked for keys including 4 snowmobile groups and 20 machines. Snowmobile use is very limited and BLM is searching for ways to manage the use cost effectively. The CRMP can change the current designated allowed use areas. The RMP allowed an opportunity to make subsequent decisions related to winter recreation use. Consequently the winter recreation program can be considered within the CRMP and is

not limited to the RMP. The TMP also provides limitations regarding location of allowed use.

- The RMP calls for reconsideration of the winter recreation program during development of the CRMP. BLM should finish scoping the winter recreation issue. They could provide a fixed staging area along the North Loop road. BLM is currently operating under the 1993 Loop Road Management Plan.
- There is concern about extreme sports within the winter recreation areas and whether BLM and Search and Rescue are prepared to handle extreme sports.
- Recommend using some of the roads along the South Steens loop road however current management guidelines may restrict the opportunity to do this.
- BLM will re-look at the transportation plan under the SMCMPA and the travel management plan (TMP) to accurately determine the allowable uses and locations.
- The Steens Act limits motorized activity to roads and routes. The Transportation Plan, Travel Management Plan, and Winter Recreation Program all provide sideboards to motorized use and acceptable locations of use.
- SMAC members would like to see a recommendation go forward to evaluate the opportunities.
- Dan Haak could get the snowmobile group involved in the scoping process.
- Kevin Thissell reminded the group of a formal SMAC recommendation previously made and will assure that it is included.
- Will carry this discussion forward to the November meeting and contact the snowmobile group regarding the discussion opportunity. BLM will do more research prior to the meeting.

LUNCH

DEMOGRAPHICS PRESENTATION

Terry Slider, Recreation Planner, USFS, gave a presentation of the changes and trends in recreation demographics to provide insightful background for moving forward with recreation management discussions. He shared a broad scale Geospatial Demographic Analysis of the area surrounding the Steens Mountain CMPA. Some key points of the presentation were:

- ✓ Value Mapping currently has very limited data for southeastern Oregon and the Steens area.
- ✓ Oregon is 56 % public lands and 77% of the public land is in SE Oregon.
- ✓ Market Zone Creep - Can look at where people came from and compare the percentage of use for both previous and current areas. Terry showed graphs of the National Forest Market Zone “Creep” areas to help give a perspective of the demographics that could be coming to SE Oregon Recreation Areas.
- ✓ Central Oregon is known as, “Fun in the Sun, On the edge of Solitude”
- ✓ Develop a theme. “Find yourself by yourself” is the Winema NF theme.
- ✓ Look at who is using the recreation area to get a vision for the future.
- ✓ Bend has been in the top ten retirement communities for the last 18 years. It is a geographic concentration zone and has the most overpriced real estate in the U.S.
- ✓ Southern Oregon is seeing a large movement from California of the high income and retirement age class.

- ✓ Boise is growing at 4% above the national average and is rated as the 8th best place to live in the United States. People moving in are from outside of Idaho and are well educated. Currently there isn't much overflow into Oregon for recreating. However, we could see an overflow to Oregon in the future.
- ✓ Strong economic changes are occurring in ID/WA/OR.
- ✓ People will normally drive 8-9 hours distance to recreate.
- ✓ Need to find out what the motivations are for individuals who recreate in our area.
- ✓ People move when they retire because of:
 - Aesthetics of the area.
 - Medical services provided.
- ✓ OR and WA are the #4 & #5 favorite states for retirees to move to.
- ✓ OHV Capacity/Distribution – SE Oregon has the best potential for growth and use based on ownership patterns and laws.
- ✓ Recreation/Riparian Interface Capacity/Distribution – the SE area is most open for potential. This refers to recreation near water (Bird Festival, Wildlife Refuge, Fishing).
- ✓ Dispersed Recreation Capacity/Distribution – SE Oregon can better handle this type of recreation better than anywhere else in the NW.
- ✓ NW Recreation Activity Trends for the market zones based on USFS information in surrounding areas include:
 - Viewing Nature and Wildlife
 - Walking for Exercise
 - Bird watching
 - Fishing
 - Hunting
 - Dispersed recreation
 - Driving for pleasure
 - Motorized recreation
- ✓ There is a downward trend and reduction in the percentage of Oregon Population participating the following activities:
 - Picnic
 - Fish
 - Hunting
 - Backpacking
 - Boating
 - Camping
- ✓ The largest provider of recreation information/maps/RV Guides is Walmart.
- ✓ The USFS is dispersing their funding to regions based on supply and demand for activities rather than dividing it equally between all regions.
- ✓ Harney County has the oldest average population age, housing is least expensive.
- ✓ Baby Boomer retirement will affect type of use and level of use. A 28% increase in outdoor exercise is projected for the next 10 years.
- ✓ Projected retirement locations currently include the Bend area, but not Harney County.
- ✓ Boise and Bend growth areas could overflow into Harney County and increase recreational use from the overflow.

- ✓ The most endangered species in the PNW is: Children in the Woods.
 - Children are not going outdoors as much as in the past.
 - USFS studies show there is no one in the woods in the 16-19 age group.
 - Indoor lifestyle is affecting IQs, mental and physical health, attention deficit disorder. Children's life expectancy is down due to obesity and mental health.
 - Their range of play has reduced from 6 miles to 100 feet. They spend 44 hours on electronics per week which is causing a lack of future ecological appreciation for the outdoors.
- ✓ Terry recommends including children in the planning vision for the Steens.
- ✓ Another endangered species in the PNW is: The wild wild west.
 - The influx of people is changing the value system. They are locating near public lands causing a displacement and loss of open space.
- ✓ Recreation Management Vision for the Steens should include planning for:
 - Any opportunity for exercise/walking.
 - Inclusion of 16-19 age group in activities.
 - PNW rec survey showed that the preferred activities were local activities.
 - Oregon has the 5th highest gas price in the US, which will keep people more locally focused.
 - The fragile economy.
 - Harney County has low legal concerns and is a high safety area.
 - The Hispanic population will increase dramatically in many areas. Different ethnic groups recreate differently, have different motivators/values, more camping and group recreating.
 - Population density variances tend to give people different perspectives regarding acceptance of people and the acceptable level or number of people within an area.
 - Harney County is leading the US counties in low density with 3/4 person per sq mile. Oregon had 35 people per sq mile. The US had 80 people/sq mile. Portland had 3939 people/sq mile. Seattle had 6941 people/sq mile.

Key points Terry re-emphasized to SMAC from his demographics presentation regarding Steens planning:

- Population growth/settlement pattern creep.
- Outside influence to our "valued way of life".
- Social carrying capacity is sensitive (could double very easily in the near future).
- The silver Tsunami wave is breaking, resulting in influx of retirees.
- No kids in the woods – consider how to include them.
- Health, exercise, accessibility for users.
- There is minimal crime in small, under served populations.
- "The way the west used to be" – Steens is reminiscent of this which is a big plus.
- Think big, think strategic.
- Gain a strong social view of the future.

SMAC Comments and Discussion:

- Low land values have caused: 1) poor people to move in 2) people to sell higher valued property elsewhere and purchase a larger land base in Harney County.
- Climate is not conducive to retirees seeking a warm weather environment.
- Motivation has changed and is affecting movement to Central Oregon. The Bend influx is coming from larger western Oregon cities due to retirement, quality medical services, internet/technology capabilities for working from anywhere, vitality of the area is attractive to retirees.
- BLM should access these types of demographic studies and information for the Steens area.
- Terry recommended finding out what's going on around us. Learn the demographics of current users to help make good guesses on potential future uses and determine the need for changes and the need to understand an area as well as what's going on inside and outside the area to properly develop a management plan.
- This type of analysis is 95% recreation/public-use driven and isn't watershed or ecologically driven. It's more of a social and recreation perspective.
- Biological/physical/economic aspects overlaid with the social aspect can help with developing management strategies.
- Terry's information was based on a very large scale but can be used to help determine where BLM and SMAC want to go and determine their vision for Steens Mountain.

SMAC identified key links between the presentation and the vision for Steens Mountain CMPA with the following most significant take home message points:

- ✓ Kids are not recreating outdoors. Determine how to include them. The future isn't going to be like we are or know it now. Their time spent outdoors and the affect on IQ/ADD should be considered.
- ✓ Short term planning will be affected by baby boomers and the increased RV use.
- ✓ For long term planning the RV mode of travel will go away. Younger generation will be using a different mode of travel (airplane) or be more locally oriented.
- ✓ Financial status/stability will affect travel method and frequency.
- ✓ Increased use of technology and toys.
- ✓ Should we plan for what we want or do we accommodate the public demand? Consider a belief in 'If you build it, they will come' and how this will affect the next 10-15 years.
- ✓ Energy/economy constraints.
- ✓ Western Idaho population is coming to Eastern Oregon to recreate.
- ✓ The gray Tsunami wave is going to overpopulate the highway with RVs and reduce the current solitude of the area.
- ✓ The reasons (motivators) for people coming to Bend is connected to public land use on the Steens:
 - Aesthetics/scenic setting
 - Medical services
 - Climate
 - Cost of living and real estate values
- ✓ Overflow from Bend will affect Steens Mountain.

- ✓ Land use changes over time. A good study of the types of Steens' users could help BLM set priorities for use and gain more specific information for the mountain to help manage it now and in the future as indicated by trends.
- ✓ The presentation gives an indication of the outside influences on the Steens. It highlighted a need for determining the social values and capturing them in the context of how BLM can manage for those values.
- ✓ The TMP and now the CRMP give BLM opportunity to manage regarding social values and issues.
- ✓ The south eastern corner of Oregon is the least developed area in the US.
- ✓ Consider the unique attributes of Steens that doesn't exist elsewhere in US. The lack of population is one of these. Would like to see this uniqueness maintained.
- ✓ If we want to accommodate the recreating public we will need to provide a good travel road (fix loop road) and provide designated walking/hiking trails of 1-2 hour hikes.
- ✓ The demographic data can cause you to go two opposite directions depending on your values and perspective. There are perception differences to consider.
- ✓ Need to consider the capability of the social structure that is currently in the area.
- ✓ Public land decisions drive the economic condition of the area. Services will be developed to accommodate the influx of visitors which impacts social and economic infrastructure of the community.
- ✓ Integrate social/biophysical/economic aspects of the area.
- ✓ National politics could focus attention on our area if it is more preservation oriented. Wilderness values could have more national significance and would cause more focus on our low density population area.
- ✓ Two choices: 1) protect what's there now; ranching/natural environment, 2) focus on development/economic drivers.
- ✓ Regulations and third party lawsuits (litigation) affect current economics and social demographics.
- ✓ There has been a precedent set with the timber industry. Timber production and private timber land has evolved into a resort/service economy.
- ✓ SMAC should develop their own vision statement for the Steens and use it as their guide within the context and goals of the Steens Act. BLM needs to answer the question, "What features or aspects do people value most?"

SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT EA

Rhonda Karges and Joe Glascock gave a brief overview of the planning efforts of the ID team. BLM staff specialists have analyzed the alternatives and developed a Proposed Action. Each specialist summarized the overall results of their analysis for their particular resource. The issues that were identified and considered are as follows:

- Sage-grouse nesting habitat (residual habitat)
- Late season use of bitterbrush
- Live water for horses year-round
- Enhancement of wilderness values (ecological benefits)
- Maintenance of new water developments in WSA
- Late-season water in reservoirs

Rhonda share specifics of the Proposed Action and opened the floor for questions.

Questions asked by SMAC members and BLM staff responses were as follows:

Question: How is BLM balancing wilderness characteristic impacts related to the different water development options?

Response: BLM gleaned guidance from various regs/acts/policy documents in developing their alternatives. Some development proposals are outside of what is allowed within a wilderness area.

Question: How is wilderness value enhanced by each proposal? SMAC needs to be able to defend their decision and recommendation in relation to wilderness enhancement.

Response: Interim Management Plan (IMP) requirements do not allow permanent developments unless they are enhancing the WSA. This would include considering what the footprint is as well as the benefits and trade offs in relation to wilderness characteristics. BLM will also need to review the hierarchy of competing laws when analyzing the project as well as considering the effect on wilderness values.

Question: What consideration has been given to a water shortage and the impact of wild horse use resulting from inadequate water sources?

Response: Rhonda said all specialists considered this and recommendations will be in the full EA document.

Question: Is BLM balancing the different values correctly? They need to quantify the problems and determine how much they should push the wilderness value issue to solve the problem.

Response: The Water Development EA is in fact requiring a “push back” (compromise) of wilderness values and needs to be analyzed and justified. BLM will provide SMAC members with a copy of the analysis document and will describe how the laws, regulations and policy interplay.

Question: Did the analysis consider the fact that more sources of water would improve horse dispersal and have less impact in each area and less total acreage impacted?

Response: Two potential negative impacts to wildlife were identified:

1. Bitterbrush could be more impacted by dispersed water which allows late season use.
2. The additional spreading of grazing can affect sage grouse nesting areas. Proposed project locations are outside of the allowed sage-grouse lek buffer of 6/10 mile.

Facilitator Terry Morton would like the SMAC members to provide their analysis and feedback of the group process and effectiveness and suggested changes for improved effectiveness.

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May 2, 2008

APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES

The minutes will be amended to clarify and better reflect the intention of the motion amendment regarding the Grove Creek Road. Bill Renwick moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mike Beagle seconded the motion. **The March 14, 2008 minutes were approved as amended.**

SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT EA (cont)

Much of the group's discussion and concern surrounds details that are not yet available. Stacy suggested that SMAC could wait until the full EA is available for members to review before continuing this discussion. The facilitator suggested that members could highlight specific concerns they would like to assure BLM addresses when working on the final draft of the EA and encouraged members to thoroughly read the draft EA prior to the next meeting.

Dana stated that BLM would like to hear from SMAC regarding the points they believe should be very thoroughly addressed within the EA; from background, to purpose and need, to alternative developments. SMAC could help the BLM ID team considerably by providing input.

EA Purpose and Need Discussion

The current alternatives have been developed as a result of the existing purpose and need stated in the EA. If there is much shift in the purpose and need it will affect, and require modification of, the proposed alternatives. The main purpose and need are:

- ✓ Provide reliable late season water sources for wild horses and livestock.
- ✓ Numerous acts, regulations, and litigation have affected the ability to fully utilize the allotment.

SMAC concerns and points they would like addressed:

- Any proposal is going to affect wilderness values so members need to understand the full extent of the problem.
- In the 2001 EA water issues for livestock were addressed – how does this relate?
- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife should be included in the assessment.
- A few heavily impacted areas already exist and affect the aesthetics in the wilderness. The current negative impacts should be included in the analysis information.
- Current wilderness value impacts should be fully analyzed in relation to the above statement.
- Don't want to reduce the quality of the wilderness so that it doesn't qualify as wilderness. What actions will impede Congress's willingness to designate the area as wilderness? What actions will impede the wilderness experience?
- What is the current number of reservoirs in the 170,000 acre Steens wilderness?

- The proposed actions will be scrutinized by people (an audience) who are more detail oriented than Congress will be, so SMAC and BLM need to assure they have considered all options.
- If horse impacts are not mitigated, BLM should consider allowing horses back into the no grazing area to reduce the density of horses.
- BLM should broaden the proposed actions to include additional alternatives to accomplishing the goals. The EA sounds like a good idea but will it accomplish the goal?
- The issues within FLPMA and the Steens Act have not been addressed fully so they can be clearly presented and defended to constituents. The multiple historical pieces have not been pulled together sufficiently so they can be presented to people as “here is what we are solving”. There are missing pieces that some members would like to learn and are willing to take the time to learn from Stacy and Fred’s background, history and knowledge of the area. It was suggested to develop a subcommittee to help members better understand the history and issues.
- The Donner und Blitzen lawsuit originally shut off the river and subsequently affected the water supply for the area. Initially they still need to know how big the problem really is and would like to see thirty different ways to solve the problem and then pull from them for the solution.
- The group had agreed previously to take this on and would like to continue with it. The members could divide into smaller groups to work on this for the September meeting. This will be a contentious issue and so everything needs to be well thought out. They will need to submit a letter of justification from the SMAC regarding the process that is defensible in court. A goal would be to develop a creative solution that all members could gladly sign off on.
- The grazing allotment cannot currently be fully utilized to the allowed capacity. There is a need to be able to use the allotment and preserve the integrity of the land. In order to preserve the economic integrity of the land BLM will have to develop alternative water sources.
- At the next presentation SMAC would like BLM to go through each alternative and state the reason and effects of the proposed actions and water development placements on a site by site basis.
- Members expressed a desire for everything to be documented in writing. All questions, options, alternative sites, reasons and effects. They would like to see a more completed/developed draft of the EA by July to use as a working document. They would like an on the ground tour of sites. The SMAC will create a vision and methods of minimizing effects on wilderness and present their suggested alternatives. They would like to be able to make a recommendation at the September meeting.
- Need to increase the level of specificity through an on-the-ground tour of the specific sites. Roaring Springs ranch invited SMAC members to take a tour. Stacy wants the group’s buy-in on the project and doesn’t want to move forward without it.
- Steve Purchase, State Liaison, noted that SMAC members should thoroughly read the document BLM has prepared before proceeding with the discussion.

A two day tour was planned for a fact finding committee who will visit as many key sites as possible to help them understand the full scope of the project and affected area.

Roaring Springs Ranch offered to provide committee members with room and board for the tour on July 16-17, 2008. Tour attendees will read the EA documents and hold discussions with their constituents prior to the tour. Those volunteering to attend are:

SMAC: Richard, Mike, Dan, Pam, David, Stacy

BLM: Joe Glascock, Laura Dowlan, Bill Pieratt

Dana reiterated to SMAC members that a history of events has led to an undesirable situation on the South Steens allotment and there is a need for a SMAC recommendation to accomplish the goals and objectives of FLPMA and the Steens Act. This is a case where agency policy (the IMP) is preventing the goals from being obtained. This is an opportunity for SMAC to help develop creative solutions to resolve the issue.

Fred McDonald noted that SMAC may never come to consensus on this project and that it is a big workload for BLM staff to re-analyze. SMAC should put forth their best recommendation and allow BLM do the analysis.

Facilitator's summary of key thoughts and action items for the next meeting:

- Quantify need
- Quantify impact
- Read, think, talk, question
- Better integrate SMAC & BLM in development of EAs
- The challenge is to integrate the laws and rules governing grazing and wilderness to optimize the benefit and enhancement of both.

INHOLDER ACCESS - LIVESTOCK

Mr. Shuford commented that BLM anticipates the need to meet in-holder needs within the livestock free wilderness area. His intent is to accomplish writing an EA that will help determine a reasonable means of obtaining access for the in-holders. The current scoping closes on May 5, 2008. A letter of authorization can be issued after EA development explaining the options for the in-holders.

The ODFW will provide input regarding classes of livestock. Environmental groups will be concerned about the impacts of livestock in a no grazing area and BLM will strive to mitigate impacts to keep them to a minimum.

BLM's goal is to get letters of authorization to the land owners prior to their needing the access. One landowner has already made a request to BLM and another landowner will be sent the letter if no request is received.

IBLA has given BLM discretionary decision making flexibility/opportunity/responsibility via the Ankle Creek Access decision.

Bill Renwick stated that historically there were designated stock trailing routes (stock driveways) and asked if they still exist and where they are located. He is concerned about the impact of the county's decision on the land owners and hopes the impact can be alleviated by SMAC/BLM recommendation and action.

Pam has visited with the Harney County Assessor who has expressed/indicated his intent to question the true intent of the property owners to make a profit from agricultural use in determining the farm deferred status of their properties.

According to the Steens Act, BLM is responsible for protecting the livestock free area however the actual interpretation of this is not clear and will need to be determined if in-holders decide to graze their properties.

OREGON EXPLORER

David Bilyeu provided an update regarding the website that is a joint effort between the OSU Libraries and various institutes of natural resources. The Science Subcommittee has been working with BLM on the Science Strategy (SS) including points within the document and methodology considered to deliver it to the public, which included the Oregon Explorer website.

The SMAC intends to provide BLM with recommendations for the five key points that were agreed on at the March 13, 2008 meeting.

1. What information does SMAC wish to be available on the site?
2. Develop a statement explaining the goals of the Steens Mountain portal.
3. How do people find the site?
4. Who can add information to the site?
5. Should the Science Committee focus on populating the site with Steens specific information or broaden the scope to other areas of the Lakes Basin?

The subcommittee made a trip to OSU to meet with the Oregon Explorer staff on April 15, 2008 to learn more about the goals and development plans of the website's larger working group as well as portal information for the Science Strategy, which include:

- Integrate the social and economic aspects.
- Expand the educational component.
- Add mapping tools and increase the interface.
- Develop standards for gate keeping policies and procedures.
- BLM will create a bibliography of documents that could be added in the initial stage of a Steens portal.
- Materials going into the scholars archive are not copyrighted.
- Bibliographic links to copyrighted material can be made available.
- Determine the scope of the portal (watershed regions, Lakes Basin).
- Initial partnerships.
- Development phases and time frames.
- The geographic scope can be expanded to additional areas, however would like to keep the focus on Steens Mountain and surrounding area, including the socio-economic aspects.
- Portal cost is approximately \$50,000. Funding options may include OWEB grants which could fund the majority of the project. The subcommittee will bring a proposal to the September meeting for SMAC recommendation to forward a grant application to OWEB by October 2008.

- The Steens Act authorized twenty five million dollars but did not appropriate the funding so none is actually available to assist with this project. BLM could submit a BPS project as an additional effort to gain funding. This would be a long term effort and funding is needed in a short time frame to get the initial goals met.
- Oregon Explorer's goal is to be the "go to" place for scientific information which fits in with the SMAC/BLM science strategy goal.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches – Prudent managers manage ahead of time for worse case scenarios. The only give and take in the South Steens allotment has been the cows. The cow free wilderness is to manage without cows but the sustainability of the ranchers also needs to be considered. Regarding wild horse management, there is the potential for horses to die if cattle are managed as allowed by the permit and law. There is an increased need to manage for the worse case scenario to reduce that chance of horses dying. Regarding the no livestock wilderness area, the fence to enclose the area would not have been supported if fencing was not to have been maintained by the federal government. The lack of a perimeter fence around the no livestock zone is causing a lot of problems for livestock owners. Currently cattle are removed early to help control them and prevent them from going into the cattle free zone.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill Haak asked if the fence is in place in the no grazing area. Susan replied that it is not, however BLM is continuing to work on it. Stacy stated that part of the perimeter uses natural geographic boundaries and there have been ongoing trespasses in the wilderness area due to the lack of fencing in areas.

The issues and options related to wild horse management were deliberated at length and included questions regarding; reducing AML to reduce impacts, BLM's limited options after removing horses resulting from full capacity LTH facilities, low adoption success and recent legislation regarding processing plants.

There are many legal, political, and environmental aspects of wild horse management that can potentially impact the South Steens Allotment and could be used to provide justification for water development according to Stacy.

Bill Marlett wanted clarification from Stacy and asked him if his support for the South Steens water development is in part predicated on his assumption that the American public will come to their senses and allow the federal agencies to properly manage problem feral horses. Mr. Marlett expressed concern that Stacy's projection for the future is based on BLM's current litigations and constraints for managing feral horses. He further questioned Stacy's willingness to support the expense of a water development in part to postpone a potential disaster and that he is resting support of the project on the assumption that BLM will better manage wild horses in the future.

Richard stated he would like a commitment from BLM to maintain the horse population at the current level in order to justify his support of the water development project.

Bill Renwick noted that there are other considerations and issues beyond wild horses such as Big Horn sheep.

There was additional concern that increasing the water supply would justify increasing the horse population and would provide potential for BLM to increase the total number of horses on the range.

The South Steens Allotment was originally 320,000 ac, the D&B river corridor fencing cut one large pasture in half, the Steens Act removed sections of the allotment permanently from grazing and land exchanges removed more acreage. The allotment use has reduced from 20,000 aums reduced to 8000 aums.

Dana noted that BLM will maintain proper management of horses by gleaning funding from other programs if necessary to supplement the wild horse and burro program. The ecological integrity of OR/WA rangelands is a high priority to BLM.

GAO REPORT FOLLOW UP

Pam Hardy led the discussion and expressed her desire for the group to think about what is getting accomplished at their meetings. With the South Steens Water EA they have ventured into uncomfortable territory and have reached into looking at the real problems and searched for creative solutions.

The GAO report was based on the prior composition of the SMAC group. The new group is effective and could be more effective. Issues need to be presented. A detailed agenda helps focus the discussion. In-depth discussion such as the Water EA helps all members understand the entire issue.

The report mentions the lack of the \$25M that did not get allocated. How can SMAC address this? Is there a possibility to leverage the report to obtain the funding? Karla Bird will be discussing with the BLM State Office the importance of SMAC and the need for funding and report back to the group. A well designed packet/project needs to be developed that can compete nationally for funding.

Pam stated that good facilitation is vital to the SMAC's success.

Possible discussion items for next meeting:

CRMP – Rob Perrin said the USFS has used a structured process of working with advisory groups to solicit their values. A team helps the group refine their ideas and goals and can help provide a starting point for developing alternatives. Through Niche Based Planning an outside team can help SMAC determine what the niche of the Steens is.

South Steens Water EA - Richard Angstrom would like to break down the decision making points for the Water EA so that SMAC can arrive at a recommendation.

Bill Pieratt, BLM Supervisory Resource Specialist provided some closing thoughts for the group that he felt might be helpful to them. His previous work as a facilitator for a working group taught him the importance of:

- Establishing goals and objectives.
- Landscape understanding.
- Tools necessary to accomplish the goals.

- Understanding and trust that is science based helps the collaborative process.

Agenda Items for the September 11, 2008 meeting:

- ✓ TMP S ½ map – IBLA Stay, formal recommendation letter
- ✓ Winter recreation/legalities/access/safety-rescue (BLM will do more research on current management plan sideboards for winter recreation mechanized use.)
- ✓ In-holder Access/update/legal challenges
- ✓ SS Water Development – Update from field trip, SMAC proposed consensus alternative
- ✓ Oregon Explorer Update and SMAC recommendation to seek OWEB funding w/grant application
- ✓ CRMP

Next meeting date: September 11-12, 2008 at Frenchglen, Oregon

The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Connie Pettyjohn.

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved these minutes on September 12, 2008.