

# New River ACEC Management Plan Update Public Open House Summary

March 9, 2016

## Overview

On March 9, 2016, the Coos Bay District Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) held an open house at the Langlois Cheese Factory from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The objectives of this event were to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the many different resources that are managed by the BLM within the New River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), as well as solicit feedback on what types of management actions the public would like the BLM to consider for the New River ACEC Management Plan Update. This open house was held as part of a larger effort to engage the public in an inclusive and transparent planning process for updating the current management plan.

Forty-two attendees representing local, state, and federal government agencies, adjacent property owners, local businesses, and interested community members attended the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The following is a summary of the open house event and stakeholder feedback. It should be noted that specific comments or recommendations conveyed as part of this summary do not necessarily represent the views of any particular entity involved in this effort, but reflect collective views based on what was captured during stakeholder interviews and the open house.

## New River ACEC Management Plan Update: Stakeholder Assessment

In order to prepare for the open house and understand the public's questions and concerns relating to the New River ACEC, the BLM contracted the Langdon Group to conduct a stakeholder assessment (December 2015). Through interviews, twenty-two stakeholders described their perspectives of current management actions, as well as ideas or concerns they had for future consideration. Throughout the assessment, three key issues were identified as being particularly important to the community: the management of snowy plover habitat, the breaching of New River, and recreational access. BLM staff relied on the results of this assessment to tailor informational material at the open house.

## Meeting Format and Materials

To encourage dialogue between BLM staff and members of the public, the open house featured stations that attendees could visit at their leisure and interest. At least one member of the New River ACEC Management Plan Update Interdisciplinary Team was present at each station. Team members are subject matter experts; their stations included ACEC history, snowy plover habitat, fisheries, vegetation,



recreation, and breaching. Near the breaching station, an adjacent property owner also provided an exhibit highlighting the potential impacts of flooding when breaching does not occur. An aerial photo series revealing landscape changes between 1929 and 2014 was displayed as well as a fly-over video along New River, which showed the most recent (November 2015) naturally occurring breach at New River.

## Public Feedback

All participants were encouraged to submit feedback on management for the BLM to consider during the planning process. Comment forms were offered to all attendees and were available at the display/information stations for Interdisciplinary Team members to document comments; additionally, BLM and consultant staff also captured dialog throughout their conversations with participants. Generally, attendees asked more questions about the management of resources within New River as opposed to providing specific comments on potential changes. Based on the stakeholder assessments and the open house feedback, below is a list of suggestions the BLM was encouraged to consider during the management plan update process.

- Enlarging the parking lot at the boat ramp location
- Eliminating the seasonal gate closure and providing year-round access to the boat ramp at Storm Ranch
- Allowing the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife access for fish sampling
- Providing beach access for Croft Lake residents
- Increasing access to and from Muddy Lake
- Preserving and maintaining a functional weather station
- Allowing breaching to occur naturally
- Analyzing additional breaching sites, with more flexible permit restrictions
- Supporting research of geologic formations at New River
- Growing the educational program and increasing outreach
- Increasing the signage describing endangered species habitat protection efforts
- Developing crowd control methods
- Dedicating additional campsites along the Oregon Coast Trail
- Increasing public/private coordination with respect to riparian restoration on private lands along New River
- Funding studies for addressing invasive fish species (specifically largemouth bass)

## Management Plan Update Next Steps

The BLM will soon move into a formal planning process in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Public scoping will be the first step in this process and will include a formal solicitation of input from the public on the type of management actions that would best protect or maintain the New River ACEC. There will be additional opportunities for the public to engage in this planning process, such as a guided public hike and a public open house intended to explain and discuss the Draft New River Management Plan and proposed management actions. For more information please see our website at [www.blm.gov/or/districts/coosbay/plans/newriver](http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/coosbay/plans/newriver).

