

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (SEORAC)

1301 South G Street
Lakeview, OR 97630
541.947.2177

11/8-9/07 Meeting Location:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Burns District Office
Conference Room
Hines, OR 97738

Members Present:

Group 1

Lou Davies
Tom Harris
Dick Leever
Fred Cramer NO
Vacant

Group 2

Diane Pinney
Bill Renwick
Dave Vandenberg NO

Group 3

Walt Van Dyke
Roger Sheley NO

Volunteers

None

Volunteers

Bill Robbins
Bill Olson NO
Heather Swartz

Volunteers

Ken Kestner
Cynthia Savage
Larry Hammond NO

Federal Officials:

Shirley Gammon, Teresa Raaf, Dave Henderson, Pam Robbins, Dana Shuford, Scott Stoffel and Pam Talbott

Guests:

Rich Kehr, Chris Knauf, Craig MacKinnon, Karen Moon, Tony Svejcar, Brett Page and Erica Hupp

Day One, Thursday, 11/8/07:

The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping and Agenda Review: Scott Stoffel, Facilitator

Scott had everyone introduce themselves and identify the group they were representing.

The Council was reminded of the general courtesy rules for meetings.

There was not a quorum of official members so the Council was informed they could not vote for the record.

The agenda was adjusted to accommodate a tour of the Kiger Horse adoption at Oregon’s Wild Horse Corral Facility.

Designated Federal Official (DFO) Updates:

Shirley Gammon, Lakeview BLM District Manager, DFO

The new Charter was handed out. Shirley commented that it seems shorter as much of the information is now in an attached Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document, which was also distributed.

Shirley stated that the Council is still waiting for the Secretary of the Interior to officially designate the new members. She thanked the volunteers for coming so that they could hear the speakers and be informed and ready to act at a later date.

Shirley handed out the Lakeview Resource Area update document. She informed the Council that Marubeni Sustainable Energy is scheduled to begin the construction of a biomass plant in Lakeview next April. She indicated the future of the Over-the-Horizon Backscatter Site in Christmas Valley is still being examined. The Air Force wants to dispose of it. The Air Guard and the Army Guard would like to have portions of the property and there is local and state interest in the use of the site for alternative energy development. She stated the Oregon governor has declared two Oregon Solutions projects in Lake County, the biomass plant and the backscatter site. She concluded by informing the Council that the Lakeview BLM recently conducted an emergency gather of wild horses within the Beauty Butte Herd Management Area because of the drought situation, resulting in a shortage of water and forage.

Action Item – Tom Harris and Ken Kestner will meet to discuss medical transport access for the Sand Dunes via the Over-the-Horizon Backscatter Site.

Dana Shuford, Burns BLM District Manager

Burns had a large fire season. There were 59 fires that scorched over 100,000 acres on the BLM, 84 fires on the Forest Service, 12 fires on private lands and four refuge fires. Burns is now working on rehabilitation of critical areas, which includes reseeding approximately 10,000 acres, building 25 miles of fence and cleaning 15 waterholes.

Categorical Exclusions (CEs) can be used for all allotments that meet Permit Renewals, Standards and Guidelines, and rangeland health requirements.

The Travel Management Plan for the South Steens has been revised and is ready to go. The South Steens restoration project for juniper abatement has been appealed.

Action Item – Dana Shuford will provide a copy of the Steens Management Plan to Scott Stoffel for distribution to all members.

Dave Henderson, Vale BLM District Manager

Vale is behind on their permit renewals because they are completing them on a watershed basis, which is a larger area. This year the Vale District had 53 wildland fires within its boundaries that burned 138,000 acres. The fires were very active and driven by the wind through dry juniper tree stands. The Vale District will only seed about 2,000 acres this year because seed is currently very expensive and scarce.

Teresa Raaf, Acting District Ranger, Emigrant Creek Ranger District

The Ranger District is working on alternative pastures for permittees impacted by wildland fire. The District observed that out of 100,000 acres scorched by fire this year, only 20,000 were severely burned because of the positive impact of past prescribed thinning and burning efforts. The District is also using CEs for the range allotments that are in compliance. The Nature Conservancy is looking to use Strategic Transportation Opportunities or STOPS to prevent fires.

The District is looking at all economic recovery opportunities. The Burns area is looking at potential biomass opportunities.

Ecology Based Ecosystem Restoration: Bill Renwick, Environmental Representative
Bill handed out several publications available through the Oregon State University Experiment Station in Burns. He stated Roger Sheley, Tony Svejcar, and Karen Moon are all working on restoration projects. These projects utilize ecosystem restoration plans that address the proper use of herbicides for weed control and nurse species to establish vegetation in treated areas.

The following websites were provided for reference on this subject:

<http://Oregon.gov/OWEB>

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/EOARC>

<http://www.treesearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/rmrs>

Fire Rehabilitation Grazing Criteria: Dave Henderson, Vale BLM District Manager
Dave briefed the Council on the current status of the weed and vegetation treatment Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Record of Decision is in the Federal Register for the National EIS. Oregon would still have to return to court to remove the stay on specific herbicide uses. If removed, the Oregon/Washington BLM will prepare an EIS that each District will then tier to with an individual Environmental Assessment. This effort is anticipated to be completed by 2008. Dave will bring this project before the SEORAC for input at a future meeting.

Update and Overview of the Wild Horse and Burro Program: Craig MacKinnon, Oregon State Office (OSO) Wild Horse and Burro Program Manager
Craig provided a general overview of the Oregon/Washington Wild Horse and Burro program. He briefed the Council on the geographic location, population and condition of each herd. He provided additional background information regarding the unplanned gather arranged for the Beaty Butte herd this summer because of the hot dry conditions and lack of water encountered.

A tour of Oregon's Wild Horse Corrals Facility was conducted during the remainder of the afternoon. The Council was shown how structures have been remodeled to make the facility more efficient and safe for personnel and the horses. There were Kiger Horse adoption proceedings underway at the corrals.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Day Two, Friday, 11/9/07:

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m.

Announcements/Agenda Review: Scott Stoffel, Facilitator
Dana Shuford handed out copies of a map depicting the current SEORAC boundaries. Scott reviewed the agenda and provided a summary of the first discussion topic, indicating that Chris Knauf of the OSO was present to seek input from the SEORAC on the Eastside Transportation Strategy.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV)/Transportation Strategy: Chris Knauf, OSO Travel Plan Coordinator

Chris informed the Council that the Oregon/Washington BLM is in the process of developing an Eastside Transportation Management Strategy.

Chris posed several questions to the Council for comment. Those questions and comments are as follows:

Question: What values and resources are unique in Southeast Oregon that the BLM needs to consider when making changes to OHV designations?

Comments:

Watershed Health

Road Impact

Sustainability

Public Values

Recreation (resource uses, cultural values, significance to region)

- birding
- running dogs on open land
- rock hounding
- horseback use/transportation
- solitude
- OHV (all-terrain-vehicle, large vehicle)
- over snow travel (snowmobile, cross country skiing)
- fishing and hunting
- future trends (increasing number of individuals with access issues, younger generation's interest in extreme sports)
- mountain biking
- hang gliding
- camping

Economics-impact on local communities

- grazing (permits)
- eco-tourism (special recreation permits)
- mining
- material collecting (firewood, biomass, evergreen harvest, fence post, native seed)
- mushroom hunting
- education and research
- wilderness therapy schools
- energy corridor (geothermal, wind, solar, biomass)
- energy exploration
- communications towers
- in-holders
- juniper management
- employment on landscape
- administrative costs for roads
- wild horses
- volunteer projects

Social

- fire/prescribed burn (suppression, planning, roads as fire barriers)

- emergency medical transport/search and rescue
- partnerships with private landowners
- community growth impacting public access
- tribal issues
- utilize social studies that measure public use

Question: What methods should be utilized to inventory BLM lands?

Comments:

- aerial photo database
- 7½ minute quads with user suggestions for trails
- satellites
- on-the-ground
- road density versus management outcome

Question: When considering the inventory and/or adoption of roads and trails, what resource considerations should we include that are not listed in the Strategy?

Comments:

- conditions of roads and maintenance costs
- sustainability, road stewardship, buy-in from user to help maintain
- non-threatened and non-endangered species and habitat

Question: What can the BLM do to reduce the effects of seed transport (noxious weeds) on public lands as it relates to travel management?

Comments:

- tread lightly
- ban travel across weed patches
- limit travel to roads and trails
- seasonal closures
- year-long closures
- look for temporary/permanent alternate routes
- weed prevention areas
- limit general access to areas disturbed by fire
- identify weed infested areas
- enable management agencies to treat weeds along roadways

Question: What is the best method of informing the public about the problems weeds can cause on BLM lands in Southeastern Oregon?

Comments:

- include weed identification on maps generated
- signage at key entry points
- mark infested areas
- educate on methods to clean equipment, animals, etc.
- educate public on how they are directly impacted by problem
- partnerships with businesses to educate public and user organizations

Question: What criteria would the SEORAC recommend the BLM use when deciding whether or not to retain these roads in the transportation system?

Comments:

- retain location for future use (mark as obscure route)
- consider the destination, will public comply
- assess resource risks/concerns

Other Comments

- Within Goal 1, as identified in the draft strategy, include roads for administrative purposes

Fremont-Winema National Forests Travel Management Planning: Erica Hupp, Public Affairs Officer and Rich Kehr, Forest Staff Officer

Erica briefed the Council on all public involvement activities the Fremont-Winema National Forests have engaged in relative to this effort. They have five public meetings scheduled to seek public comments on their travel management plan. A meeting will be held in Lakeview on 11/13/07 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and in Klamath Falls on 11/15/07 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Rich provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Council outlining the following planning process steps: (1) summarize direction, (2) develop purpose, (3) environmental analysis, (4) publish map, and (5) implement, monitor and revise. He informed the group that the Forests intend to formalize the plan by next spring. Public input will determine the outcome of the travel plan on the Fremont-Winema. Maps will be placed at all Ranger District offices located throughout the Forests, so people can mark the roads they want to keep. The mapping process will have several layers for all uses and concerns.

Rich explained how motorized recreation is a legitimate use of National Forests. He stated that the final plan will result in the publication of a black and white map identifying open and closed roadways, which will be made available to the public for free. He indicated it will be the public's responsibility to know the rules. The rules will be the same nationwide.

The Fremont-Winema National Forests developed the following Niche Statement to capture the overall vision of their travel management plan: "Find Yourself by Yourself in South Central Oregon".

The Fremont-Winema collected feedback from the SRORAC on the transportation planning.

Member Round Table/Liaison Reports:

Bill Renwick, Environmental Representative:

- Bill stated that the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Western Juniper Field Guide is a very good workbook.
- There are wild horse and cattle water resource development needs.
- The South Steens transportation document can help with planning on larger plans.

Lou Davies, Grazing Representative:

- Lou indicated he is making progress in establishing a contact with the Prairie City Ranger District for the purpose of forecasting upcoming issues this organization is facing that may warrant action by the SEORAC.

Tom Harris, Recreation/OHV Representative:

- No new updates.

Dick Leever, Transportation/Rights-of-Way Representative:

- No new updates.

Volunteers:

Ken Kestner: Ken requested an update on past and future topics.

Cindy Savage: Cindy said she was glad to be at the meeting and hopes she receives the opportunity to serve on the Council.

Bill Robbins: Bill requested a list of all members.

Heather Swartz: Heather informed the Council that she is working on multiple post fire management projects.

Action Item – Scott Stoffel and Pam Talbott will update the Member Contact List and forward it to the group once all new members have been designated.

Meeting Priorities:

Calendar for 2008

- 2/21-22/08 Burns
- 5/8-9/08 Lakeview; North Lake Field Trip
- 8/7-8/08 Vale/Ontario
- 11/13-14/08 Lakeview

Future Agenda Items:

- Charter discussion and review, including the SOP
- New member orientation
- Sand Dunes
- Wild Horses Sanctuaries (adoption, birth control, appropriate management level explanation, input from National Advisory Group)
- After fire management (weeds and vegetative EIS, grazing criteria)
- BLM Eastside Transportation Strategy (John Day/SEORAC input, how applied on the ground, increasing urban conflict)
- Energy Corridor
- Sagebrush Cooperative Update/Geographic Information Systems Mapping of Southeast Oregon
- Fire/Fuel Management
- WSAs (management within and without)

Public Comment:

No public comments were made.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.