

STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COUNCIL
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
December 4-5, 2008
Burns, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT

Pam Hardy, Chair, Dispersed Recreation, Bend, OR
Michael Beagle, Vice Chair, Fish & Recreation Fishing, Eagle Point, OR
Hoyt Wilson, Grazing Permittee, Princeton, OR
Daniel Haak, Mechanized Consumptive Recreation, Burns, OR
William Renwick, Environmental Representative, Burns, OR
David Bilyeu, Environmental Representative – Statewide, Bend, OR
Fred Otley, Private Landowner, Diamond, OR
Paul Bradley, Wild Horse Management, Burns, OR (2nd day)
Stacy Davies, Grazing Permittee, Frenchglen, OR

MEMBERS ABSENT

Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR
Steve Purchase, State Liaison, Salem, OR
Richard Jenkins, Recreational Permit Holder, Diamond, OR
Richard Angstrom, No Financial Interest, Salem, OR

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL (DFO)

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

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL ASSISTANTS

Tara Martinak, Acting SMAC Coordinator, BLM, Hines, OR
Christi Courtemanche, SMAC Coordinator, BLM, Hines, OR
Connie Pettyjohn, Program Analyst, BLM, Hines, OR

FACILITATOR

Terry Morton, Klamath Falls, OR

PRESENTERS

Fred McDonald, BLM, Hines, OR
Karen Moon, Harney County Watershed Council Coordinator, Burns, OR
Bob Hopper, OSO RMS & WHBP Lead, Portland, OR

COMMENTING PUBLIC:

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Frenchglen, OR
Steve Hammond, Frenchglen, OR

OTHERS PRESENT:

Joan Suther, BLM, Hines, OR
Holly Orr, BLM, Hines, OR
Eric Haakensen, BLM, Hines, OR
Heather Swartz, TNC/Sagebrush Cooperative, Burns, OR
Ronda Karges, BLM, Hines, OR
Bill Pieratt, BLM, Hines, OR
Matt Obradovich, BLM, Hines, OR
Skip Renchler, BLM, Hines, OR
Gary McFadden, BLM, Hines, OR

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING AND AGENDA:

Facilitator Terry Morton opened the meeting. Self introductions were made, housekeeping items were covered and the agenda was reviewed.

CHAIRPERSON UPDATE

The Oregon Explorer website has been funded and an update will be provided later in the meeting.

DFO UPDATE

- Appointments have been made for the expired committee positions: Hoyt Wilson, Pam Hardy, Bill Renwick, and Paul Bradley have all received their appointment confirmation letters from the Secretary's office.
- There are no decision items on the agenda for this meeting.
- SMAC recommendations for the South Steens AMP and Water Development EA were helpful to BLM as well as comments received from ONDA and ODFW. Two individuals also submitted comment letters. The comments provided to BLM were good input for the decision process.
- Land Exchange Update:
 - The Gary Miller/Rock Creek exchange is still in the appeal process at IBLA. There has been no progress since the last meeting.
 - Two other exchanges of high profile are being pursued legislatively (Campbell and Stroemple). BLM is not addressing them administratively but has been asked for information regarding resource conditions and values. BLM will not go through the NEPA process for these two land exchanges. Mr. Stroemple will be having dialog with Senator Wyden in the next week. Dr. Campbell has had recent discussions with Wyden and a Wyden field representative has been out to look at the parcels. In the future, at the point that a congressman or senator writes language for a piece of legislation that will affect the agency it must then be sent to committee who will go to the agency and ask them to look at the language and provide an analysis of its affects on the agency and its operations. The BLM will have a formal opportunity for input at the national office regarding the language of the legislation before it goes back to congress.
- Litigation Update:
 - Portions of the Steens Mountain TMP related to obscure routes was stayed by the IBLA. No final ruling has been received.
 - Regarding the North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project, BLM was basically upheld on all counts. IBLA ruled that the IMP is merely a guideline and is not a hard-and-fast rule that BLM must follow, consequently BLM can do treatments in WSAs.
 - Five Term Grazing Permit Renewals have been completed based on categorical exclusions. They have all been appealed but are on hold pending the outcome of litigation about the use of CXs in Idaho.
 - IBLA's decision on the North Steens project has been taken to the U.S. District Court by ONDA. BLM is in the process of putting together an Administrative Record.

- The Resource Management Plan has been taken to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals by ONDA. The Andrews/Steens RMP is different than Lakeview's SEORMP in that Burns has done the things that the circuit court determined Lakeview has failed to do. Burns District's attorney has declined ONDA's request to include the Andrews/Steens RMP in the settlement related to the SEORMP. The judge has not issued a ruling but has asked the parties to use mediation and BLM is working with ONDA on the settlement.
- BLM has six project level EAs that have received extensive ONDA comments which must be reviewed. They include; Smyth-Kiger AMP EA, Tired Horse Fence, West Warm Springs AMP EA, Horizon Wind Energy Met Tower EA, South Steens AMP EA, Slickear/Claw Creek Thinning Project EA.
- Pam asked Mr. Shuford if SMAC could provide any assistance to expedite BLM's response and communication with ONDA. She felt ONDA was simply looking for information and wanted their concerns addressed.
- Fred O – People are looking for technically specific information and solutions but unfortunately BLM's shortage of staffing doesn't allow them time to do things as intensively as they would like in some cases. May need to find creative ways to get through this time of staffing shortages.
- Dana – SMAC's work on the SS Water Development EA will really go a long way and may help ONDA assure they get the right people and communication to the agency what their concerns really are. Dana said he believed continuation of open dialog at the SMAC meetings would help over time.
- David - ONDA is going through a transition and believes based on his past experience they may also be trying to be more visible in the Steens area and have a sincere desire to follow through.
- Bill R – The Science Strategy is an effort to set up a framework to look at the science side of things.
- ONDA was against issuing permit renewals using categorical exclusions (cx). CXs are a decision making process that gives BLM authority to exclude the action/decision from further analysis. It is a minimal analysis method for decision making.
- Pam – Asked for clarification of ONDA's proposed settlement of the Steens RMP in conjunction with the SEORMP.
- Dana - Burns District has already completed aspects of analysis that Lakeview and Vale did not and are now being litigated against therefore Burns does not want to be included in the proposed settlement.
- Fred – Individuality would be lost if the various RMPs were grouped together.
- Dana commended the SMAC on their progress and success as an advisory council and encouraged them to get issues out on the table and thoroughly discuss them. The South Steens Water Development EA was a show case and model for how to do business as an advisory council. He encouraged them to bring their interest groups and constituents in with them for input and participation.

FIELD MANAGER REPORT

- Joan Suther, Field Manager for Andrews Resource Area, gave the update.

- Addressed wilderness characteristics concerns. Eligibility doesn't mean they must be managed or maintained as WSAs. The Wilderness Act and guidance doesn't mandate management.
- ONDA's concern is that proposed projects within areas identified for eligibility will eliminate the area's ability to meet the criteria for wilderness characteristics. However, this isn't necessarily true or is true only for a temporary period of time.
- Joan attended an Oregon Explorer net meeting recently. The SMAC will be briefed by David Bilyeu later in the meeting.
- Update on Page Springs Weir – There was a contract with an engineering firm to produce the design and specs for a future project to notch the weir for fish passage. BLM will now need to complete the NEPA documents based on the design and will put out a contract sometime in the future. The engineer's estimate for construction cost is \$180,000 - \$330,000.
- Home Creek Access – BLM land that provided access to Home Creek was traded to private ownership and no easements were retained. BLM has been visiting with Roaring Springs Ranch and exploring the possibilities including a Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA).
- Land Exchanges – There are a lot of people who are looking at the worst case scenarios, however she believes that the two Steens land owners who are looking for exchanges may becoming a little more realistic about their options.
- Stone House Allotment update – Eric Haakensen, BLM Range Specialist, has compiled photos which Joan shared with the SMAC. He has collected GPS data at the photo points. Most livestock use was light to moderate. Areas of heavy use included areas along Deep Creek, Coyote Creek, and a mile in a Riddle private pasture. Heavy use encompassed less than 1% of the allotment. The heavy utilization fell within the 41-60% range which is within the allowable use levels for BLM. Sierra Club began their monitoring this year. Several hundred acres were burned lightly during the Five Creeks Project burn but did not include juniper.
- The current juniper management activities taking place around Frenchglen are on Refuge property however forty acres of BLM was also cut which has resulted in some concern. BLM has an MOU with the Refuge for the project. The project was started a year ago and the CX for the project was signed in March 2008. BLM will be holding a public meeting regarding the project. Joan will provide SMAC members with a map of the project area. The Refuge portion includes a total of 1500 acres and BLM acreage planned is about the same. This area will be open to firewood permits.
- Three Rivers Resource Area update – The Five Creeks project was implemented last year. Another area was cut in preparation of burning in the fall of 2009. An additional 5000 acres will be cut for a future burn. Coyote Creek pasture had not been cut and had lower results. Overall the objects were met.
- Smyth-Kiger AMP – The proposed decision went out last week. BLM appreciates SMAC recommendations and many were put in place in the AMP.
- The SS AMP EA proposed decision will be out this month. SMAC put a lot of work into the recommendations they submitted to the BLM. The BLM will finalize a response letter to SMAC.
- Community events – Ranch Art Gallery has a new artist showing every Thursday. Rhojos serves dinner Thursday and Friday evenings.

Dana – Howard Delano was the Burns District Manager from 1953 – 1958. The BLM Retirees Association recently honored his accomplishments and the work he did in procuring funding from the Washington Office for the Steens Loop Road. A celebration was held in Portland a few weeks ago. Delano is still very active and submits letters to the Oregonian addressing significant issues. He recently submitted an article to the Capital Press regarding the wild horse issue. A bronze plaque was provided to the Burns District Office to place in the Steens. SMAC could discuss location options and provide BLM with a recommendation.

WJMA INTERPRETATION SIGNS UPDATE

Fred McDonald and Karen Moon briefed the council members on several ongoing projects; WJMA signs and Wilderness Characteristics inventory. Moon obtained a \$30,000 OWEB grant for signing the WJMA project and producing informational brochures. BLM inventoried 420,000 acres for wilderness characteristics last fiscal year.

Sign mock-ups were provided and SMAC members were asked to note their comments on the mock-ups regarding text, layout, photos, etc. prior to finalization. The mock-ups will then be sent to a professional graphics designer for finalizing. The planned installation date is June 2009. David Bilyeu suggested posting the signs and text on the BLM and Oregon Explorer websites as well.

Stacy Davies suggested they include as many names as possible on the list of contributors to include conservation groups as well (ONDA, Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, etc). Karen noted that the current list includes everyone who has contributed to the project to date. Stacy recommended that interested conservation groups be contacted and encouraged to participate or contribute so their names could be included as a means of demonstrating the collaborative nature of the project and the breadth of support.

Fred Otley noted that another person to contact is Jill Workman of the Sierra Club who has been involved historically and had a vision for Steens Mountain.

Bill Renwick recommended holding a public grand opening ceremony when the signs are installed.

WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Holly Orr, BLM Realty Specialist, has been working on a variety of wind energy projects and reviewed BLM's current policies and provided SMAC members with wind energy policy handouts defining current guidelines. Applications for a right-of-way grant may be submitted for one of three types of wind energy projects. The three types of wind energy testing projects that are currently authorized on BLM lands are:

- 1) Site specific – allows MET tower installation without acreage.
- 2) Site specific with acreage associated – locks up an area so that it is exclusive to the applicant for development.
- 3) Wind energy development/wind farm – requires a separate application if testing provides data that is acceptable to actual development.

A BLM instruction memorandum provides additional guidance for MET towers that will be located around Sage-Grouse habitat.

Ongoing activity on the Burns District:

1. Horizon Wind Energy set up a MET tower on the Stinkingwater Mountains but has relinquished their ROW and decommissioned the tower. The project provided BLM with an example of post testing impacts. Before and after photos of the MET tower site were provided for SMAC members to review.
2. Horizon Wind Energy also operates two MET towers in the Pueblo Mountains with a wind testing and monitoring area that encompasses 17,517 acres. BLM policy allows a three year testing period after which an application to develop a wind farm must be submitted or the testing towers removed. This site has proven to be an acceptable area for a farm. BLM has completed an EA and received comments from ONDA. BLM will do a feasibility study which could be affected by sage grouse and air traffic.
3. Six additional project applications were received this summer. Oregon Power Solutions submitted applications to set up a tower at Roundtop Butte, Little Glass Butte, and Jackass Butte. Third Planet Wind Power submitted an application to set up MET towers at Wagontire Mountain, Jack Mountain, and Buckskin Mountain. Most of the district's areas with high wind potential have now been locked up by the applicants.
4. In the Stockade area Columbia Wind Partners is working with Harney County and State Lands for additional opportunities.
5. Skip Renschler, BLM Realty Specialist, has held a pre-application meeting with Harney Electric Cooperative regarding transmission of the energy that will be generated.
6. Columbia Energy Partners has secured Harney Electric Coop as their transmission company and BLM is working with them regarding route proposals for transmission lines across BLM. Malheur Refuge, the Army Core of Engineers and BLM will be involved in the project. BLM will be actively involved with NEPA, roads, and access actions.
7. Bill Renwick noted that Harney Electric is in business to serve its customers and Columbia Energy will be required to pay up front for services and development.
8. BLM has developed an MOU to present to the military requesting they set their routes higher in the wind testing areas to eliminate interference and safety concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches Inc. -

Susan asked if anyone has reviewed the old minutes to assure that SMAC recommendations from previous years have been carried through or documented the process that was taken as a result of the recommendations. Is there is a process to track the outcome from the recommendations. Dana Shuford responded that this has been done in the past and can be resurrected and modified for future meetings.

In respect to the current land exchange proposals, she is concerned that the cattle industry is not being protected. She would like to encourage the SMAC to provide input into the congressional considerations while taking into consideration the cattle industry and economy. The balance of sustainable ranching on the mountain may not be protected with the current exchange proposals that are being pursued congressionally. She would like SMAC to help assure protection through their recommendations.

She suggested that the lack of use at the campsite below the WJMA project area is due to the new law and people's fear of law enforcement.

It would be helpful if the meeting agenda's list of BLM employees giving presentations could include their contact information.

Steve Hammond, Hammond Ranches Inc. -

Multiple changes in personnel and inconsistency in management poses challenges. It would be good to define the acceptability of herding cows in the cattle free area on the Steens. Historic use patterns and the cow free wilderness without a fence poses a problem for the local land owners. The BLM range rider's resolution to cattle straying into the river isn't acceptable to the cattle owner. The range rider is moving them to land not belonging to the livestock owner. Steve would appreciate BLM contacting him to take care of the stray cows rather than the range rider moving them to an unknown area or on another land owner's property where the owner has difficulty finding them in a large area far from their home range. The livestock owner is then unaware of the possible locations of his stray cattle. Steve asked SMAC to provide BLM with input and suggestions.

SMAC response to public comments:

Pam H - asked for clarification regarding Susan Hammond's concerns about sustainable ranching. Susan suggested SMAC should be upfront with their input rather than waiting. She is concerned the cattle industry isn't being considered in some of the decisions regarding exchanges. The currently proposed land exchanges are for lands in completely different areas. Stacy D - asked if Susan knew of any past recommendations that haven't been followed up on. Susan did not have a list but suggested that a brochure or list be created. She suggested publishing an annual report of the recommendations that had been made and solutions implemented during the year. She stated that a list would also provide historical data for new council members.

Terry M - The GAO Report acknowledged monitoring as a means of determining the success of advisory council efforts. Monitoring can be used to show improved conditions on the ground or the effectiveness of the group. The heightened information would help show their effectiveness.

Stacy - Every official recommendation made to BLM is sent back to SMAC in letter form and so should be possible to track.

Pam H - suggested compiling and publicizing the official recommendation letters.

Dana noted that this was historically included in the minutes and there was a standing agenda item for all recommendations. BLM could resurrect the last list and use it in future meetings.

Tara will locate and compile the historical listing which was actually an action items list.

After limited discussion, Dana recommended Steve Hammond's topic be added as an agenda item for a future meeting. A briefing paper should be developed to address questions such as: How bad is the problem? In what locations does it occur within the CMPA? What are the BLM standards and/or protocol for dealing with it and what are possible solutions?

Break

Wind Energy Development Update (cont)

Pam - Asked for clarification of the BLM's involvement with transmission lines and right of ways related to the pre-application meeting with Harney Electric. Holly Orr reported that BLM will have a lead role and the project will include the NEPA process. It is currently too early for

the public to get involved. There will be an EA later with a public comment period. Access is currently by a two track road. The ROW application will include GPS data of the road. A plan of development would include all developments such as road access, transmission lines, and proposed turbine location.

SMAC response to public comments (cont):

Fred Otley - There has been a great effort by the current BLM staff to listen to all points of view.

Hoyt Wilson – What is the status of the Gary Miller Exchange? (It is in appeal).

Pam – Suggested adding BLM staff's role and office phone number to the agenda.

SMAC – Short discussion regarding the WJMA campsite (signing or not).

Stacy – Should SMAC submit a letter to the congressmen or senator to ask them to involve SMAC in the land exchange discussions? The letter could be in the form of a recommendation and could be done with a simple majority since it will be a SMAC administrative decision and won't be an official BLM recommendation.

Dana – SMAC is chartered to advise the Secretary of the Interior, not to advise the congressional delegation. So it could be stepping outside the role of SMAC.

Stacy – SMAC is a congressionally enacted body designated to oversee activities in the Steens area. As such, they would like to be involved in the land exchange process in order to give the Secretary good advice throughout the process and keep the Secretary of Interior informed of local concerns regarding actions affecting the Steens.

SMAC RECOMMENDATION (simple majority)

The SMAC agrees and recommends submitting a letter to Congressman Walden and Senators Wyden and Merkley asking them to involve the SMAC in the land exchange discussions. Chairwoman Pam Hardy will draft the recommendation letter.

Discussion follow-up items as noted by the SMAC Facilitator:

- 1) Land exchanges and letters to congressman/senators – Pam will draft a letter.
- 2) WJMA campsite – Should it be part of the WJMA plan and posted with a sign or left as is?
- 3) Agenda staff listing – Dana will take SMAC's suggestion for additional contact info under advisement. BLM will review this internally to determine the best format.
- 4) Outcome listing of SMAC recommendations – Dana/BLM will follow-up on this.
- 5) Agenda item for future meeting - Briefing paper regarding BLM standards for dealing with stray cattle in the cattle free area of the CMPA.

2008 RECREATION STATISTICS

Fred McDonald reported summer visitation statistics to help illustrate the effect of high fuel prices on visitor use on the Steens. Traffic counters are set throughout the district and formulas are used to establish the number of visitors. One new counter was purchased and set up on the North Loop Road. These numbers can be compared from year to year to view trends. The data reveals that the Steens and CMPA are important to visitors and they are willing to spend the additional money to visit the area. Key recreation visitation statistics are listed below.

FY2007 - 234,000 visits in CMPA (based on a formula)

FY2008 - 226,000 visits in CMPA (based on a formula)

Data is collected at 32 sites. Visitation numbers are listed below for some of the Steens sites.

Mann Lake – 4,429

South Steens – 9,000

North Loop Road – 23,800

Page Springs Campground – 17,500

South Loop Road – 16,800

Fish Lake – 10,300

Loop Road Total – approx. 40,000

Jackman Park - 293

24 Steens Recreation Permits were issued

24 Permits = 817 visitors

User fees from outfitters - \$4,136

Total Steens campground fees collected - \$32,500

Chickahominy - \$9452 fees and 43,000 visits

General analysis shows that use this year was consistent with past years regardless of fuel prices. Many visitors come back year after year.

Bill – Is there any indication how many visits were from hunting traffic?

Fred - Fall is typically the busiest time of year because of the fall colors as well as hunting.

Fred informed the group that Michelle Franulovich from Alaska will arrive January 13 to fill Rob Perrin's position and assume the duties related to the Recreation Management Plan.

OREGON EXPLORER UPDATE

Bill R - An OWEB grant for the portal was approved and a kick-off meeting was held November 12th in Bend. The group in Corvallis is ready to go. There were discussions about what will be incorporated in the portal. There was a strong desire for highlighting the CMPA as the feature story for the entire portal. The designation for the Steens was done nationally and the story would spell out why it happened and how it happened. A Natural Resources Institute representative suggested conservation projects be separated between private and public lands. The message was delivered to them that part of the reason for the successes of the conservation projects was because they were cooperative projects between private land owners and public lands and they would like that represented on the maps. Bill will continue to advocate for this. Writers and editing staff will be hired to work on the site.

David Bilyeu - The Oregon Explorer (OE) site (public part) was launched in 2007. Oregon Explorer Phase II funding is \$225,000. He noted that we were in the right place at the right time to secure the funding and participate in the project. This will be the first presence of the area east of the Cascades. The Deschutes and Lakes Basin portals will be completed with this funding. February 11 will look at the Lakes Basin portal shell and various tools will be developed and the shell content will be determined. The SMCMPA will be the feature story and the Oregon Explorer group would like SMAC approval. The date for public launch will be announced. April 30, 2010 is the contract end date. The OE sub-committee will continually be on the SMAC agenda to provide updates. Project objectives include; bibliography, digital archives, multi-media story on Steens, and the Quiet Invasion video on juniper management. The OE working group will be putting together key topics to be addressed on the portal. The feature story will rotate and the preliminary list includes; sagebrush and juniper, wetlands, Steens Mountain, basic plants, fire archeology, and wild horses. In addition to contracted writers, they could also engage local writers to generate local support and interest. Developing the bibliography of information will be

a challenging aspect of the site and will be a major feature of the portal. Bill R and Janine Salwasser will be speaking to the OSU library system, the local library and the EOARC regarding the availability of information. David Bilyeu will be assisting as well.

Fred O – A good start would be providing historic as well as current photos of the area.

Bill R – There will be a core group who will have editorial oversight of input to the website. A lot of the things that will be put on the map are things that Heather has synthesized. The conservation practices are a cooperative effort and this message was conveyed to the OE group. There is an inherent interest in riparian and wetlands but they would like to include the entire watershed.

December 5, 2008

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING AND AGENDA:

Facilitator Terry Morton opened the meeting. Self introductions were made, housekeeping items were covered and the agenda was reviewed.

AGENDA REVIEW

- The change in WO administration typically provides funding for resource upgrades. Burns is planning to submit a request for restoration project funding for the Steens Loop Road and would like a recommendation letter from SMAC.
- Post comments on WJMA sign mockups.
- Review/read the recommendation letter from yesterday.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES

Stacy Davies moved to approve the minutes as amended. Bill Renwick seconded the motion. **The September minutes were approved as amended.**

Letter to Oregon Congressional Members

Pam read the letter she had drafted based on the previous day's discussion. The group agreed to submit the letter with suggested modifications.

CHARTER REVIEW

Charter item #10 was of concern and members asked how to properly abide with the qualification. Stacy pointed out that congress required membership from land owners with conflict of interest holdings. He suggested an annual general disclosure by the land owners be submitted. Pam suggested that if an agenda item directly affects a member they should disclose the conflict prior to discussion.

Dana suggested asking the Washington Office to delete item #10 since the Steens Act calls for the membership make up to include Steens land owners.

In Item #12, Science Committee refers to a group of professional scientists. However, it is difficult to obtain services of scientists without considerable cost. The SMAC Science Subcommittee is working well.

SMAC Motion :

Stacy moved that the Charter be approved as written, with the exception that BLM ask the WO to delete the sentence in item #10 that states “No council or subcommittee member shall participate in any specific party matter including a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct financial interest.”

Mike Beagle seconded the motion. The Charter was reapproved with the proposed amendment.

Joan provided a map of the juniper removal and cutting area near Frenchglen that includes FWS and BLM lands.

WILD HORSE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Bob Hopper, OSO Range Management Specialist and WHBP Lead, gave a power point presentation that included an overview of the history and management of the WHBP.

- The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was enacted in 1971.
- Herd Areas (HA) were established by the 1971 WHB Act; Herd Management Areas (HMAs) are the geographic areas where horses are currently being managed.
- A 1978 amendment authorized BLM to euthanize excess unadoptable animals if there was no adoption demand by qualified adopters.
- A December 2004 amendment to the 1971 Act provided BLM with the option to sell “without limitation” horses older than 10 and those younger that have been passed over for adoption at least three times.
- BLM doesn’t currently utilize either of these authorities to any great extent.
- Since 1971 BLM has adopted 235,000 animals.
- In FY2008 horse gathers were limited due to lack of funding and holding space.
- Long term holding is consuming 70% of the \$36.2 million national WHBP budget.
- Currently there are 30,000 horses and burros in short and long term holding with an additional 33, 000 on public lands which is approximately 5700 over AML.
- Oregon has 9% of the total WHB population with 18 HMAs (17 BLM and 1 BLM/USFS)
- OR BLM manages 17 HMAs in southeastern Oregon which encompass 2,673,314 acres.
- The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the 17 HMAs is 1,340 – 2,655 animals.
- FY2009 gathers in Oregon have consisted of an emergency gather of Alvord Tule/Coyote Lake and Heath Creek/Sheepshead HMAs. Their herd population was almost double their maximum Appropriate Management Level (AML).
- Horse slaughtering has been banned in the U.S. for all horses resulting in people turning horses out onto public lands if they are no longer able to take care of them.
- The Burns Wild Horse Corral Facility now has a 1000 head limit as a result of recent modifications to comply with CAFO requirements which were a limiting factor in the past and had restricted capacity to 500 head.
- In FY2008 about 50% of the horses presented at Oregon adoptions were adopted. Oregon’s average for adoptions is 239 horses per year and gathers are around 637 horses per year.

- The National WHB Advisory Board met recently and provided nineteen recommendations to BLM concerning topics such as; increase adoptions, fertility control, sex ratio adjustment on HMAs, dedicated funding, and implement 1971 Act amendments.
- Mr. Hopper remarked in his conclusion that BLM is at the point where they need to ask congress to amend the Act or provide more funding to manage the program

Stacy asked if there was anything the SMAC could do today to assist with the wild horse issue, if not, he would like to add this to the agenda for a future meeting.

A GAO Report provided five recommendations to DOI: 1) Finalize the Handbook, 2) Improve Census Technology, 3) Upgrade database to track and inform public of treatment of WH&B, 4) Develop alternatives to LTH, 5) Address non-compliance with amendments to the 1971 Act. The SMAC members were asked to review the GAO report and recommendations prior to the next meeting.

Paul B had attended the recent Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) meeting in Reno. Several insights he came away from the meeting with are; 1) the GAO provided a good analysis of the program, 2) the bottom line is that it's important to look at a holistic approach to managing public lands, 3) possible changes needed in the conditions of adoption. He listened to 20 presentations limited to 3 minutes each regarding concerns individuals had with the program. Mrs. Pickens offered to adopt the 30,000 head that are currently in captivity.

Paul Bradley will consolidate his notes and draft a SMAC proposal regarding the Wild Horse and Burro Program issues for discussion at the next meeting.

Detailed information on the WHB program is posted on BLM's National Wild Horse and Burro and GAO websites at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro.html and http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/app_processform.php respectively.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

BREAK

Review of remaining agenda items:

WHBP Issue and possible SMAC recommendation for herds within the CMPA
2009 meeting calendar

Plaque for DeLano

SMAC location suggestions:

SS campground at roadside outhouse

One of the entry portals

WJMA site

Campground or Kiosks

Rooster Comb pullout

It was decided that BLM will select a location and install the plaque at an appropriate site.

Juniper cutting on the Refuge: Shane Theall from the Malheur Wildlife Refuge was available to respond to questions from SMAC regarding the ongoing juniper cutting near Frenchglen. The area directly around Frenchglen will be piled and burned. The Refuge plans to burn the piles but will not broadcast burn the area. Firewood cutting will be permitted. SMAC members noted that they would like to retain an area where the public could have access for an extended period of time. The Refuge is planning to keep an area open for an extended period of time for wood cutting.

Recreation Management Plan

SMAC members expressed a desire to move forward with the CRMP and determine an area they would like to submit a recommendation on. Dana said BLM's new recreation planner, Michelle Franulovich, will be developing a game plan and time line. Topics SMAC should look at during the next meeting include; 1) the steps for completing the plan, 2) the general time frame, 3) what are the public involvement points, 4) scoping documents.

BLM completed a number of scoping efforts in the past year but still needs to document a schedule. The BLM recreation staff will develop a time line. The SMAC needs to go back and brainstorm recreation issues and prioritize the issues they want to work through. BLM offered to pull out the list that was generated in a previous meeting.

There were questions related to the TMP appeal at IBLA and whether it would be completed in time to guide the discussions on the CRMP. If SMAC does not address any travel issues this may not be a concern. BLM will keep SMAC informed of any substantive changes related to the appeal.

Fred Otley would like to receive a copy of all EAs that are sent out. He will be added to the mailing list.

Steens Loop Road Upgrade: Letter

Dana – Upgrades will include restoration work to; pull in the shoulders, ditch repair, reshape the crown, and replace base rock in some areas. The improvements would not extend beyond the current footprint. The Rooster Comb section would receive additional work with widening and shaping due to its hazardous condition and the letters of concern BLM has received regarding this section of the road.

SMAC Motion:

David Bilyeu moved that SMAC submit a recommendation for the Steens Loop Road restoration work to include a statement requiring use of quality materials and work to be done in a tiered approach to prioritize the areas of greatest need. The motion was seconded and approved.

SMAC RECOMMENDATION

The SMAC recommends going forward with the Steens Loop Road restoration work using quality materials from local selective rock sources and recommend that work to be done in a tiered approach to prioritize the areas of greatest need if there are budget constraints.

Dana will write a memorandum to the state program lead and include SMAC's recommendation from excerpts of the minutes. The SMAC will submit a letter of recommendation to BLM.

Terry Morton will be compiling an official report and response to the GAO Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests, Committee on Energy and Natural Resource, US Senate, dated February 2008. The report was on Natural Resource Management and the opportunities that exist to enhance federal participation in collaborative efforts to reduce conflict and improve natural resource conditions. She will contact members via phone or questionnaire for input and asked them to consider what generated the change in the SMAC to give support to its recent successes. She noted that local leadership has a big impact on the success of advisory groups.

2009 Meeting Dates and Locations

Feb 12-13 Burns

Apr 9-10 Burns

Jun 4-5 Bend

Sep 3-4 Frenchglen

Dec 3-4 Burns

Agenda Items for the NEXT meeting:

- ✓ Update on Oregon Explorer
- ✓ WHB brainstorm/recommendation
- ✓ Recreation management planning – prioritize issues, time line
- ✓ Recreation Management Recommendation
- ✓ TMP – IBLA update
- ✓ Management of livestock free area and estray livestock
- ✓ Action Item Review
- ✓ DFO or FM report will include: Status of EAs, WJMA Update

Dana Shuford's retirement party will be held January 16 @ 5:30 p.m. at the golf course. Please RSVP to Tara Martinak.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Next meeting date: February 12-13, 2009 in Burns, Oregon.

Submitted by Connie Pettyjohn.

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved the minutes on February 13, 2009.

Signed by Pam Hardy, SMAC Chairwoman /signature on file/