

**STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 8 & 9, 2007
BURNS, OREGON**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Hoyt Wilson, Grazing Permittee, Princeton, OR
David Bilyeu, Environmental Representative – Statewide, Bend, OR
William Renwick, Environmental Representative, Burns, OR
Stacy Davies, Chair, Grazing Permittee, Frenchglen OR
Pam Hardy, Vice–Chair, Dispersed Recreation, Eugene, OR
Paul Bradley, Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation, Hines, OR
Michael Beagle, Fish & Recreational Fishing, Eagle Point, OR
Richard Angstrom, No Financial Interest, Salem, OR
Fred Otley, Private Landowner, Diamond, OR
Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR (1st day)
Steve Purchase, State Liaison, Salem, OR
Cynthia Witzel, Recreation Permit Holder, Frenchglen, OR

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ron VanDomelen, Wild Horse Management, Powell Butte, OR
Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR (2nd day)

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL (DFO):

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

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL ASSISTANTS:

Rhonda Karges, Environmental Protection Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Amy Freitag, Clerical Assistant, BLM, Hines, OR

FACILITATORS:

Dale White, Burns, OR

PRESENTERS

Karla Bird, Andrews Field Manager, BLM, Hines, OR
Rhonda Karges, Environmental Protection Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Mark Sherbourne, Natural Resource Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Tony Svejcar, USDA-ARS Rangeland Scientist, Burns, OR
Mike Morcom, Fire Management Officer, BLM, Hines, OR
Jeff Rose, Fire Ecologist, BLM, Hines, OR

COMMENTING PUBLIC:

Susie Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Inc.
Steve Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Inc.

Laurie O’Connor, Backcountry Horseman

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kelly Hazen, BLM, Hines, OR	Doug Linn, BLM, Hines, OR
Matt Obradovich, BLM, Hines, OR	Darren Brumback, BLM, Hines, OR
Steve Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Inc	Joe Glascock, BLM, Hines, OR
Rick Hall, BLM, Hines, OR	Darren Brumback, BLM, Hines, OR
Joan Suther, BLM, Hines, OR	Don Rotell, BLM, Hines, OR
Steve Morefield, BIFZ, Hines, OR	Jonathan Manski, BIFZ, Hines, OR
Terri Geisler, BLM, Hines, OR	

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING AND AGENDA:

The meeting was called to order and self introductions made.

CHAIRMAN UPDATE

- A recommendation made at the February meeting has had some email discussions. It will be added to the agenda for further discussions.

DFO UPDATE

- Dana noted the February SMAC recommendation letter was received and BLM will response within the next couple of weeks.
- The *Federal Register* notice calling for nominations for SMAC members is at the Department and there are approximately seven signatures still needed.
- Oral arguments for the RMP lawsuit scheduled in Eugene on the 22nd of March have been changed to April 10.

FIELD MANAGER REPORT

- Karla noted by mid May Rob Perrin, the new Outdoor Recreation Planner, will be here. He will be working on scoping for the comprehensive recreation plan.
- John O'Connor attended the last SMAC meeting and talked about the need for better parking and use facilities for equestrians on the north side of the mountain. Karla attended the Backcountry Horseman meeting last Monday. She noted Backcountry Horseman is interested in being involved in more long-term recreation planning for facilities benefiting all equestrians. They are also willing to continue helping the BLM with trail maintenance. They noted their concern over the Little Blitzen trail being unsafe, and would like to see it fixed. Laura Dowlan returned from Trail Maintenance training and will be leading volunteer groups.
- Karla noted there is a sheet on a hiking contest, *Best Hikes of the BLM's Conservation System Contest*, in their packets.

SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT - EA UPDATE

Rhonda Karges gave an update on the South Steens water development Environmental Assessment (EA). She discussed why BLM was proposing to analyze water developments in South Steens Allotment and provided some background information on the issue. The group briefly discussed this matter and Pam asked to see comments received during scoping. They also discussed having a field trip in August to see the area.

Action Item: Rhonda will distribute copies of public comments to Pam.

Motion made: Stacy made the motion to have all five meetings this year. If a meeting is canceled, the BLM will reschedule a meeting as close to the cancellation date as possible (Cindy seconded)

Unanimous Agreement: The SMAC have all five meetings this year. If a meeting is canceled, the BLM will reschedule a meeting as close to the cancellation date as possible.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mark Sherbourne gave an update on the Travel Management Plan (TMP). He noted maps & updated pages of the EA were handed out for review. The group discussed and commented on the first part of the EA. Mark noted their concerns and suggested changes. They also discussed and commented on how the EA is assembled.

Matt Obradovich, BLM Wildlife Biologist, gave a summary of effects to wildlife. Matt reviewed a two-page sheet distributed to the members. The issues were discussed and questions were answered.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Susie Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Inc., commented the conversation had been good and has enjoyed sitting in the back listening. She believes wildlife is a concern for everybody. She thinks that, especially on the loop road, they need to think about cattle. There needs to be notification to the public that cattle and wildlife are loose on the roads, especially on the loop road where public safety should be a concern. The speed on the road changes the safety for wildlife and the public. There are also concerns of safety from the dust. She hopes they realize, when they are putting in maintenance things in the Travel Plan, they don't have to have the standards for maintenance on the Loop Road too tight. They need to provide for safety for cattle, wildlife and people.

Steve Hammond, area rancher, commented on the travel plan. He has not missed any Steens Mountain Landowner meetings and he is thoroughly confused with the TMP. He has seen enough maps that contradict each other. He would hope they are not rubber stamping this with any standard of approval before the landowners can understand what it's done to them. He appreciates Fred and Stacy tremendously. He does not know how they can dedicate the amount of time they do to come here and deal with it, but he thinks they are doing a super job. In regards to his allotment and his private land, he has seen a lot of maps that don't show roads or show roads and classify them wrong or show roads and classify them in such a manner that he has to call the District Manager gets some qualification language to the color of the line. He worries in the future they will have a whole bunch of roads with a whole bunch of colors on them that are left under the interpretation of the person that wants to enforce his particular agenda for the Mountain. Private land access, a portion of it is the most critical to honor long-term liability on the mountain and it does have some contradictions in it. He hopes they were not okaying this private property access map in its current form. He would be more than happy to drive anyone around their private land and allotment to show them how the BLM's management and overlaying Congressional designation has affected them.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

The group briefly discussed the maps with Steve and the maps they obtained 5 to 6 years ago. The group asked a few questions to Steve concerning the maps and his opinion on their correctness/incorrectness.

There were questions about the cleaning of the barrow pits and resurfacing of the loop road. It was asked if this should be done. Karla said she would talk with the maintenance organization. A comment was made there are alternatives such as paving the road.

Motion made: Rich made the motion the BLM work with the Hammonds to determine reasonable access to the particular parcel, applying the adaptive management #5 language (Motion died due to lack of second.).

Motion made: Hoyt made the motion that Steve's grandfather's road be granted as a private property access road (Fred seconded).

Objection to the motion, role call was taken. Members voting:

Paul Bradley – yes
David Bilyeu – yes
Brenda Sam – yes
Cindy Witzel – yes
Stacy Davies – yes
Pam Hardy – no

Michael Beagle – yes
Richard Angstrom – no
Bill Renwick – yes
Hoyt Wilson – yes
Fred Otley - yes

Motion passed by vote: Steve Hammond's grandfather's road be granted as a private property access road.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTINUED

The group came back from lunch to discuss the possibility of making a recommendation on an alternative. The group discussed the alternatives and expressed their concerns.

Motion made: Stacy made the motion the SMAC alternative is, "This alternative is the most similar to the Route network currently in use within the CMPA. Base Routes (555 miles) would continue as Common Use Routes and therefore available for public motorized traffic. Most obscure routes, with the exception of two short Private Property Access Routes (1 mile), would remain available for public vehicular use. Permit Routes and Historical Routes within WSAs and on other non-wilderness BLM lands may be used to the same manner and degree that was occurring at the passage of the FLPMA on October 21, 1976. Historical Routes may be used to the extent that new routes are not developed. Permit Routes and Historical Routes in the wilderness could also be used by ranchers to the extent identified in the Minimum Decision Analysis for this alternative. All potential ATV Routes (8 miles) would be reclassified as ATV trails. Approximately 0.23 mile of the Weston Basin Road would be closed with a gate and boulders to prevent vehicle wilderness intrusions from continuing at this location (Paul seconded).

Objection, role call was done. Members voting:

Paul Bradley – yes
David Bilyeu – no
Brenda Sam – yes
Cindy Witzel – yes
Stacy Davies – yes
Pam Hardy – yes

Michael Beagle – yes
Richard Angstrom – yes
Bill Renwick – yes
Hoyt Wilson – yes
Fred Otley - yes

Motion passed by vote: The SMAC alternative is, “This alternative is the most similar to the Route network currently in use within the CMPA. Base Routes (555 miles) would continue as Common Use Routes and therefore available for public motorized traffic. Most obscure routes, with the exception of two short Private Property Access Routes (1 mile), would remain available for public vehicular use. Permit Routes and Historical Routes within WSAs and on other non-wilderness BLM lands may be used to the same manner and degree that was occurring at the passage of the FLPMA on October 21, 1976. Historical Routes may be used to the extent that new routes are not developed. Permit Routes and Historical Routes in the wilderness could also be used by ranchers to the extent identified in the Minimum Decision Analysis for this alternative. All potential ATV Routes (8 miles) would be reclassified as ATV trails. Approximately 0.23 mile of the Weston Basin Road would be closed with a gate and boulders to prevent vehicle wilderness intrusions from continuing at this location.”

Motion made: Rich made the motion to add the word members after activities and at the end reference the Act concerning the tribe. (Bill seconded)

Unanimous Agreement: Add the word members after activities and at the end reference the act concerning the tribe.

PROCESS FOR SUBCOMMITTEE – ROUTES UNDER EVALUATION (TMP)

The group reviewed why the subcommittee was formed and routes with concerns. Mark reported why the routes were under evaluation and the process for route considerations.

Mach 9, 2007

INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order and self introductions were made.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES

On page 4, December 7, 2006 should be February 2, 2007.
On page 5, Pam Harder should be Pam Hardy.

Motion Made: Bill moved to approve the February minutes as amended (Cindy seconded).

Consensus: February minutes approved as amended.

Motion made: Pam made the motion that the SMAC makes the recommendation written on the blue paper (Bill seconded).

Unanimous Agreement: Language from the “blue paper”. The BLM initiate a pilot program allowing the public to assist in photo point monitoring.

The SMAC requests the BLM to establish a series of GPS data points with photo directions and a web-based database, where the public could upload their photos and view all past photos. The website should have links to existing studies and data sets, so the public understands what is already known and the theories behind management decisions they are being asked to photograph.

The first trial would focus on monitoring ecosystem restoration tied to the North Steens EIS and WJMA where active juniper management techniques are applied and a few sites in the wilderness area where natural forces will be allowed to play out. We foresee benefits from involving the public with monitoring as a public education/outreach tool. There is a possibility a system could result that proves beneficial for monitoring using volunteers. However, there is concern publicly gathered data may not be scientifically sound, therefore, the need for a pilot project.

The purpose of the project is both to increase data regarding long-term trends and to increase public trust in BLM data by increasing transparency and understanding of long-term impacts and ecosystem restoration efforts.

The group discussed the WJMA and the photo monitoring discussed at the previous meeting.

ACTION ITEMS REVIEW:

- The treatment alternative for juniper management is complete.
- The updates on Stonehouse allotment projects are complete. It will be left on the action items list and the SMAC will be updated at every December meeting.
- Boundary adjustments - the group discussed this issue and it will be put on the agenda for the May meeting. The BLM will be providing a proposed process to the SMAC.
- The Travel Plan issues are complete.

Agenda item: Input on the mountain biking issue will be put on the agenda for the May meeting in Bend.

PURPOSES OF THE ACT – SCIENCE/RESEARCH

Bill provided a handout containing information he pulled from the Act pertaining to science. He stated science is a very important part of what happens on-the-ground. The group went through the handout and Bill discussed the points. The group discussed whether or not a science committee was needed and if it was possible to make up a science committee. Bill also went on to talk to the group about the watershed analysis.

Tony Svejcar, Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center (EOARC), gave a presentation including an overview of a progress report prepared by EOARC, EOARC's mission, and their involvement with the Steens. He also presented information on research conducted by the EOARC concerning juniper management.

WILDLAND FIRE USE

Mike Morcom and Jeff Rose provided an overview on Wildland Fire Use describing the process of fires, how they are maintained, and how decisions are made. A discussion about wildland fire use, cooperative management agreements, and fire use boundaries ensued.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Laurie O'Connor, local chapter of the Backcountry Horseman, gave some background on Backcountry Horseman (see attached). Laurie further stated, based on their personal experiences and on the experiences of horsemen in general, it is pretty obvious safety and wise use can only be protected by providing specific facilities for bare essential horse use. There is currently a total void of designated facilities for recreational stock use on North Steens, a situation that must be corrected before this increased usage arrives, which will certainly happen. While the current arrangement of assuming horsemen will find a spot, undesignated and most often privately owned, on North Steens off the Loop Road to safely park and access public lands, cannot be considered adequate in the near future. They should all work together to provide a well-planned, safe facility for public use throughout the Steens. The Backcountry Horseman makes the following recommendation to the SMAC members and the BLM staff: They ask that they provide a designated equine trailhead campground on North Steens, preferably an area exclusively designated for stock use to prevent potentially dangerous interactions with pedestrians not familiar with livestock. They ask that they work with experienced horsemen in designing such facilities, including the BCH volunteers to assure the area is adequate for anticipated equipment entering and leaving and make sure any accommodations withstand the rigors of stock use, provide basic trail head signage including maps, trail ratings and estimated mileages of routes. Work to route equine usage away from heavily trafficked areas, cautiously planning trailhead and crossings to keep horsemen and general public safe. Prioritize major trails throughout the Steens for an ongoing program of maintenance and monitoring. Steens Backcountry Horseman members are available to assist in many aspects of the project and look forward to working with everyone.

HORSE TRAILER PARKING – NORTH LOOP ROAD (INTERIM SOLUTION)

John O'Connor restated what he talked about at the last meeting - the need to have another pull-off spot and horse camp/facilities for equine use.

The group discussed possible areas that may be used in the interim. A list of possible solutions included:

Jackman Park
Pate Lake
North of Pate Lake
Moon Hill
Don Renie Turnoff
Whorehouse Meadows
Marble Place
Charlie's gravel pit
Peterson Crossing/WJMA
SW of Moon Hill turnoff

The list of possibilities will be taken back to members of Backcountry Horseman most interested in finding a solution, and they will prioritize temporary and long-term lists of the best possibilities.

PUBLIC INFORMATION BREIFING

At the last meeting the group was given a packet of information for the public information topic. This topic will be discussed at the next meeting. The group will exchange emails between the recreation-type members to begin to develop a vision.

MAY MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

- 2006 Recreation report
- Public information
- South Steens Water Development
- Update on boundaries/cadastral survey (BLM to provide proposed process to SMAC)
- Horse trailer parking area (30 minutes)
- Purposes of the Act (development private easements - tied with Public information)

AUGUST MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

- South Steens tour/water development & boundaries
- Matrix for conservation/development – CMAs (Mark)

NOVEMBER MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

- Review Wilderness/WSRs Plan

Submitted by Amy Freitag

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved the minutes as written on May 18, 2007.

Stacy Davies, Chair

Date