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Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council Meeting

May 10-11, 2007 - Ontario, Oregon

Business Meeting, Thursday, May 10

In attendance: Tara Martinak, Sally Nelson, Dana Shuford, Dick Leever, Bill Renwick, Pete Mehringer, Dave Henderson, Tom Harris, Lou Davies, Diane Pinney, Bob Kindschy, Walt Van Dyke, Chris Knauf, Dave Vandenberg, Carol Benkosky, and Roger Sheley.

Facilitator Tara Martinak reviewed the agenda and noted the approval of February minutes will be tabled until a later date due to no quorum. The Designated Federal Official and Chair will approve the February meeting minutes within 90 days.

Lee Fledderjohann officially resigned as the Commercial Timber representative for Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (RAC). The position is already out for application since the term expires in September 2007.

Designated Federal Official updates

Dana Shuford shared the following information for the Burns District:

- Staff at Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility began distributing horses to other holding facilities in the northwest to prepare for the June-August remodel. The cost of the remodel project is estimated around \$1.3 million. Adoption events will continue through the first weekend in June.
- Prescribed burn efforts are underway. In addition, the District received a \$1.6 million grant to complete rehabilitation work such as fencing and seeding from 2006 wildfires.
- Through the Healthy Lands Initiative, the District received \$150,000 for fuels treatment projects within the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management Protection Area (CMPA). These funds will go toward treatment of 2,000 acres of juniper in the Five Creeks project area, located on the northern edge of the CMPA.
- The hearing for the ONDA vs. Dana Shuford, et al. case (against the Andrews Management Unit/Steens Mountain CMP Resource Management Plan) was heard in Eugene in April. A decision is anticipated by the end of May.
- Regarding permittee involvement in allotment monitoring: for the last two years, letters specifically inviting participation in monitoring activity have not been sent to individual permittees. Letters were sent to all permittees inviting them to pre- turnout meetings, which would include discussion of monitoring. There is an average range of 5-20% permittee participation the meetings and no complaints have been received on District regarding the opportunity to help with allotment monitoring. The District has worked cooperatively with the Harney County extension agent to provide workshops for permittees educating them on the monitoring process. During the workshop, permittees are provided a kit that includes appropriate tools for monitoring. These workshops are advertised on local radio and the Harney County Chamber of Commerce sent notice letters.

ACTION – Tara Martinak will get the monitoring workshop mailing list from the Harney County Chamber of Commerce.

Carol Benkosky shared the following information for the Lakeview District:

- Distributed Generation Systems (DisGen) from Sacramento has been observing a 20,000-acre area around Warner Rim and Hog Back Road for alternative energy sites. Tribal and sage grouse issues are expected. The area tribe has already met with DisGen group and opposed their proposal. 14,000 acres in the Coyote Hills area is being tested for wind development. Ridgeline Met Towers has expressed interest in the Coleman area, north of Lake Abert. No applications have been submitted at this time. The Backscatter site continues to draw a lot of interest since the power lines and infrastructure are already in place. The Oregon Solution Project has solar biomass energy grant money opportunities available. The Biomass plant, a 13 mega-watt plant in Lakeview at the Columbine Mill site, is moving along rapidly. A cooperative Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be signed next month.
- The hearing against the Beaty's Butte Allotment Management Plan was held in April. A decision is pending.
- The East and West Gulch Environmental Assessment will be sent out soon.
- Standards and guidelines for permit renewals are on track for 2007 and 2008.

Comments and discussion followed on right-of-way permit use and regulations that grant approval. It was clear that both opposing and supporting issues are taken into consideration before any approvals.

Dave Henderson shared the following information for the Vale District:

- The Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan litigation is still in the 9th Circuit and no decisions have been issued.
- The Owyhee Wild and Scenic River decision on grazing still continues to be an issue.
- The District continues to work with permittees on monitoring. Currently Vale sends out a letter with each turnout packet, inviting permittees to meet with the range cons and discuss needs. Participation is similar to Burns where the same folks participate each year, and the number is very small. Personal calls seem to work better than invitations by letter.
- Vale is currently working on developing three Rural Fire Associations. This concept has been difficult for private landowners to embrace. Oregon Department of Forestry and Gordon Foster have been key in the development of Rangeland Associations. Vale hopes to sign the first Rural Fire Association agreement in July and another in August.
- Permit renewals continue to be a problem in Vale due to the large geographic area, but the District expects to complete them by the 2009 deadline.

Lou Davies gave positive comments regarding permittee involvement with monitoring. He encourages continued growth in relationship building with the agency. Discussion followed on the process and implementation of the Rural Fire Associations, drought and fire forecasts for 2007, and reseeding accomplishments in Sand Springs Herd Management Area.

Carolyn Wisdom shared the following information for the Freemont/Winema National Forest:

- The “ONDA 4” lawsuit with the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife did not affect livestock numbers (Animal Unit Months) and seasons of use were not disrupted. In 2005, six of the eight claims were dismissed. The 2007 summary judgment dismissed the last two claims based on the agreement that no livestock would be allowed in the area until consultation was completed. There has been no appeal on the dismissal.
- Regarding permittee involvement in allotment monitoring: the Freemont/Winema National Forest offers a cooperative rangeland memorandum of understanding with the Public Land council. The purpose of the MOU is to increase general monitoring, short and long term, with consenting permittees. Currently no permittees have signed on. Some permittees do volunteer on an informal basis and letter-style invitations to participate in the MOU are sent out yearly. Carolyn stated that permittees may not sign on due to their already-consistent ability to meet utilization and remain in compliance.
- Travel management planning for the area has just begun. A formal partnership has been established with BLM to obtain an inventory. Issues have been difference in time frames and consistency on the boundaries between districts. Three grants from the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department will assist in NEPA planning. A 50% agency match is required. Currently 40% of the non-registered roads have been inventoried. A GIS layer will be created using compiled data. This will assist in allowing public involvement to determine designations and travel routes. Completion is anticipated by April 2009.

Discussion followed on how to obtain public input for the Oregon/Washington transportation planning strategy. It was stated that terminology and positive wording will alleviate negative public input and misconceptions. It was agreed it will continue to be a controversial subject. Outreach efforts have been positive. Concerns were raised about invasive species control. A new Environmental Impact Statement on this matter will be completed in 2008 addressing the possibility to use previously banned chemicals. Education will be important in the relationship between weeds and travel management.

Mike Montgomery shared the following information for the Malheur National Forest:

- The 16 Roads project has been a collaborative process. This will be the first stewardship contract for the Malheur National Forest, and they hope to award it in September/October of 2007. Logging will occur this winter.
- A John Deere Implement Company demonstration project is being sponsored by the local timber industry and demonstrates the use of equipment that can retrieve small diameter trees with low impact on the environment. More information on this project can be obtained from the Malheur National Forest.
- The Malheur National Forest is undergoing several litigations effecting grazing, Clean Water Act, and endangered species. The primary litigator has been ONDA.
- The National Forest workforce has been limited with two District Ranger positions vacant at this time – a one in Prairie City at the Blue Mountain Ranger District and one in Hines at Emigrant Creek Ranger District.
- Permittee involvement in allotment monitoring efforts on the Malheur is following a new process, designed by Oregon State University and Eastern State University. Currently three permittees are participating. Before the new process was implemented, opportunities

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for involvement in monitoring efforts were discussed with permittees during scheduled, in-person meetings.

Interest in the John Deere demonstration was voiced and members were encouraged to participate.

Chris Knauf, OR/WA BLM State Office, discussing the Transportation Strategy for eastern Oregon:

Before Chris began his presentation, Dana gave a brief overview of the national goals for transportation planning and emphasized the importance of all road/route/way/use designations be evaluated for proper classification. With such a large amount of public land and little inventory completed to date, this will be the primary stage of the plan. Once inventories are completed, the ability to outreach to environmental, recreational, and local groups will be more available. This is much easier to complete on a small scale basis, one piece at a time. It has been recognized that a consistent and systematic framework will be needed so the whole management plan feels and looks similar to all others. Dana turned the presentation back over to Chris to review what the framework will look like.

Chris handed out packets with information on the OR/WA Transportation Strategy (for eastern Oregon). A work session will be scheduled at the next meeting for Council members to discuss comments and provide recommendations on the plan. All modes of transportation, both motorized and non-motorized, will be taken into consideration.

Council members discussed concerns regarding the transportation planning process and the allocations of monies to such a controversial subject that may not have clear objectives or truly allows public input or recommendations from such groups as the SEORAC. Chris reaffirmed that the Interdisciplinary (ID) Team's focus is to take all items into consideration from all groups. The strategy will cover eastern Oregon while the Western Oregon Plan Revision will address similar issues in western Oregon. The ID Team (working on the eastern Oregon transportation strategy) is looking for content based comments at this time. Comments are due within two weeks prior to the next meeting so Chris can organize the facilitated discussion.

Members continued with discussion addressing environmental justice, enforceability, inclusion of various recreational groups, re-claimed roads, forested areas, right of ways, temporary closures to revive vegetation growth, and wording for the strategy. Historical use is difficult to stop therefore change will be difficult for some. The committee did agree that establishing a criteria base for each road/route/way/use designation will make sense to the public, and educating the public is critically important.

All comments on the Transportation Strategy should be sent to Tara Martinak for submission to the transportation sub-committee, and then on to Chris in preparation for the August meeting.

ACTION ITEM – Tara Martinak will establish a due date for the comments.

Mike Montgomery, Malheur National Forest, discussing Transportation Planning for the U.S. Forest Service:

In 2005, the U.S. Forest Service received national direction to manage recreation uses (the national direction provides for more consistency between Forests/offices). A product of this direction is a motor vehicle use map where special use areas and open roads will be identified. Project completion is expected in four years. An example map from the Malheur National Forest was shared with the committee and is updated annually. Currently the Malheur National Forest has over 5,000 miles of open road. Temporary emergency closures are permitted by a line officer with the agency. Mike explained that using maintenance levels to classify roads and the already existing Malheur National Forest Plan have eliminated the need to complete additional National Environmental Policy Act measures to address closures or other types of transportation planning issues.

The committee discussed the various organizations and individual groups that transportation planning effects and how valuable each entities' input will be. Concern was expressed that there is no established method for suggesting change to the annual map updates. Other areas of concern that were discussed were dispersed camping, definition of motorized, definition of play area, and use limitations.

Public comment opened at 1:00 p.m. None present.

Fred O'Ferral, OR/WA BLM State Office, discussing the Energy Policy Act

Fred dialed in to conference call with Jon Styduhar, Eric Hoffman, and Jim Harder - Minerals, Lands and Realty staff from the State Office. After giving a brief career history and how he became part of this venue, Fred reviewed timeframes of when the Energy Policy Act was passed, and gave an overview of the laws and major goals, trends, and priorities. Expanding diverse energy types, security, and ensuring environmental protection are all goals that are immediately being implemented. The main issues are renewable resources and tapping into them, such as wind, solar, nuclear, and geo thermal. Fred stated currently there have been 19 applications filed with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for hydroelectric sources. A web site addressing access, budget, and energy issues can be found at www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy/epca_chart.html. Budget constraints have affected our ability to implement action to just some of the required items. We will be receiving \$19 million to fund this effort, with \$3 million set aside for geothermal efforts. Cost recovery, leasing, and lease transfers are just some of the ways to fund energy requirements. Lifting the moratorium on oil sales is also being explored to assist with dollar disbursement. Seven pilot offices will be established for high priority items. Oil leases with categorical exclusions, right of way corridors, and drilling applications and permits were just a few of the items discussed. Additional funding will be dispersed to these pilot offices for implementing projects.

The committee discussed energy corridors (pros and cons), potential limitations to recreation, deadline expectations, how this effects current Resource Management Plans already in place, areas already utilizing energy resources, level of direction (national, regional, or local), stewardship contracts associated with biomass use, permitting costs, leasing requirements, and how land ownership is involved. The trend of nuclear power plants and their potential to revive was also discussed briefly. There was question to whether the RAC could recommend for the agency to move forward with amendment proposals. It was noted that if a letter is drafted to the

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regional office for funding support, it could be carbon copied (cc) to other parties eliminating the 'funding from one source' issue. Dana tasked a sub-committee to draft a positive recommendation for cost recovery.

ACTION- Tara Martinak will find out if the SEORAC can provide recommendation for amendment proposals.

ACTION- Dick Leever, Walt Van Dyke, Fred Cramer, and Bill Renwick will draft a recommendation letter for cost recovery efforts (energy).

Juniper Management Video Presentation

A video presentation on Juniper Management was shown after a brief introduction from Council member Bill Renwick. Copies of the video are available for your viewing from Tara Martinak. After viewing the video the committee discussed juniper eradication on a large scale to keep up with the rate of spread. Dana stated this has been a topic of discussion for a long time, but it's been difficult to find any interest in taking on such a large project due to budget constraints. The committee recognized that unless projects are completed on a larger magnitude you cannot get ahead of the problem. Discussions continued on time lines to take into consideration, market sources, other eradication methods, other juniper species, and water source consumption. Bill encouraged everyone to watch the bonus features on the video, which addresses more scientific information.

Round Table, Constituent Updates, Liaison Reports, Subcommittee Reports

Tom Harris:

- On the Burns District, NEPA on the Five Creeks Restoration Project is complete.
- Also on the Burns District, the Eagle Pitcher (diatomite mine) expansion project is beginning. This will occur on both Federal and private land.
- Tom has not had an opportunity to touch base with the Fremont-Winema National Forest for an update.

Roger Sheley:

- For his participation on the Council subcommittee on invasive species, Roger is creating a short questionnaire requesting information about invasive species needs locally. Dave Hendersen responded this would be in good timing since the weeds program review coming up next week. A proposal is currently being written to fund research in southeast Oregon, southwest Idaho, northwest Nevada, and the northeast portion of California. Supporting letters from the SEORAC would be helpful in gaining support for funds in our area. Restoration needs/areas will also be included in this endeavor. The Council agreed to provide a letter of support for the funding.

ACTION- Roger Sheley will send a draft letter of support from the RAC for the funding proposal to Tara Martinak.

ACTION- Tara Martinak will route the letter through Council members and agency administrators for agreement and issue a final version to the Agricultural Research Service before the end of June.

Dick Leever:

- For the Lakeview District, the Klamath Resource Area will have their Draft Resource Management Plan out for comment in July 2007 with a record of decision to follow in the early part of 2008.
- Also for Lakeview, summer projects have involved noxious weeds, aspen restoration treatments, five prescribed burns and fuels treatments, and seven ongoing prescribed wildlife treatments in the Round Valley lek area.
- Also for Lakeview, Gerber boat ramp construction is underway. Currently they will be sealing roads and maintaining trails in this area.

Diane Pinney:

- Diane expressed concern with a recent marketing event called the “Extreme Mustang Makeover.” She felt this event was not good public relations when the potential for failure was high. Her suggestion for improvement is to extend the time frame to break a horse from wild to ‘calm and manageable in three months’ to a more realistic time frame of six to nine months.
- The Kiger wild horse gather will happen in September 2007 with the adoption event to follow in November. This event attracts interest from around the world.

Walt Van Dyke:

- Lek counts in Malheur County are down 22 percent. There is a slight decrease in concerns of West Nile.
- 320 blood test strips from harvested sage grouse were provided by 2006 sage grouse hunters. Only 2 birds had potential antibodies to West Nile (subsequent testing found these to be false positives). Walt reminded everyone that so far all the West Nile testing of sage grouse has not found any antibodies to the disease, meaning that if they get it, they will die.
- Recently some proposals for wind testing sites/energy develop south of Burns Junction were denied. The Department of Defense denied the proposals because the proposed location was in a military over-flight area.

RAC Recruitment

Currently there are several vacancies or positions up for reassignment on the committee.

- Commercial timber
- Environmental organizations
- Historical and/or archaeological interests
- Local elected official
- Local Indian tribes
- Public-at-large

The Council agreed on the importance of trading member rosters and meeting minutes between RACs to keep better informed of overlapping issues on other geographical areas. Tara indicated that all Council minutes are posted to the internet and will send out the web link to all members.

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ACTION- Tara Martinak will send out the internet address for the OR/WA Resource Advisory Councils.

Personnel changes have occurred all over the state resulting in new contact information for liaison assignments. Reassignments were made to disperse a more even workload among members. Replacement liaisons that were unknown at this time will be researched and members will be informed of contacts. Lou Davies chose to make contact with the Prairie City Ranger District and Roger Sheley requested a weeds/supervisory type liaison with the Forest Service.

August agenda items

- Travel Management
- Weed Management

The August meeting was rescheduled for August 2-3, 2007 in *Burns* in anticipation of increased public involvement (for the transportation strategy discussion). Subsequent to this, a telephone conference call was conducted.

Meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

On Friday, May 11, the Council spent the day touring the Leslie Gulch area. Friday's session adjourned at 3:12 p.m.