

**SOUTHEAST OREGON ADVISORY COUNCIL
SUMMARY OF MEETING**

April 2, 2012

The Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 12:05 P.M. on April 2, 2012, at the Gathering Place, Lakeview, Oregon. Brendan Cain welcomed attendees, and presenters, Mike Lawrence, Reid Sherwin, and Tom Rasmussen.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

Council members present:

- ✓ **Mona Drake /Developed Recreation & OHV**
Donald Hodge/Transportation/Rights-of-Way
Wannie Mackenzie/Grazing Permittees
- ✓ **James Walls/Commercial Timber**
- ✓ **David Whitson/Energy & Minerals**
- ✓ **Anne Hiller-Clark/Archaeology & History**
- ✓ **Mike King/Dispersed Recreation**
- ✓ **Matthew Little/Environmental Groups**
- ✓ **Bill Renwick/ Environmental Groups**
- ✓ **Dr. Julie Weikel/ Wild Horse & Burro**
- ✓ **James Bishop/Public-at-Large**
- ✓ **Chad Boyd/Academician**
- ✓ **Craig Foster/State Resource Agency**
- ✓ **Peter Runnels/Elected Official**
- ✓ **Stanley Shepardson/Public-at-Large**

Federal managers attending were:

- ✓ **Brendan Cain**, Burns District Manager
- ✓ **Don Gonzalez**, Vale District Manager
- ✓ **Tom Rasmussen**/for Lakeview District Manager
- ✓ **Mike Montgomery**/for Malheur Forest Supervisor
- ✓ **Rick Newton**/for Winema-Fremont Forest Supervisor

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Council members absent themselves from the meeting when the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

Others present for all (or a portion) of the meeting were:

Devon Comstock, Mike Lawrence, Reid Sherwin

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Welcome; facility logistics and agenda review.

DFO REPORT

Burns (Cain) – North Steens Ecosystem restoration project still in litigation; discussion ongoing to find solutions. Downer Kiger Gather case awaits a mediation session. North Steens transmission line process awaiting mitigation plans. Horizon Wind Energy proposal was withdrawn. Pueblo Valley Geothermal Land Exchange Proposal near Borax Lake was denied. The final EIS for the Celatom Mine Expansion will be released to the public after solicitor review is complete.

Lakeview (Rasmussen) – The plan amendment for the Lakeview RMP is the largest focus for the District right now. They're very active working to complete wilderness character inventories and identify existing roadways. The late-season grazing issue has been reviewed; now looking at alternatives for Horseshoe Pasture. The step-down on the herbicides EIS is paused during a transition in the State EIS team. Tucker Hill Mine expansion project EA is being reviewed at the Resource Area. District is waiting for the sage grouse conservation guidelines before completing their analysis. Wind development interest has diminished in the area; Oregon Community Wind put their project on hold, and Sacramento Municipal Utilities District is now determining if they will proceed on their temporary right-of-way. The South Warner Habitat Restoration Project treatment will begin with 15,000 acres this year. Sucker Creek Geothermal Proposal is deferred for now. Central Oregon Desert Racing Association proposed 400-mile race EA is on hold, awaiting the final proposal.

Vale (Gonzalez) – An attorney from the Western Governors Association inquired about why the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line takes time. Vale is gathering domestic horses from the range, and auctioning those has been successful, though some of the horses end up coming back. A re-alignment of Vale District's Table of Organization includes reducing one Field Manager job and adding a Range Specialist. Vale will follow the national/state guidance for sage grouse with the SE Oregon plan amendment, and they hope to release a draft to the public in mid-October.

Malheur (Montgomery) – The Forest is doing a lot of stream habitat restoration, and trying to reach appropriate levels at the Murderer's Creek Herd Management Area; they have rounded up 339 horses since 2008. Their travel management plan draft EA notice will be issued soon, with the comment period expected to occur through June/July 2012; the Notice of Decision could be issued in August. They're largely documenting current uses of forest roads; no wholesale changes. The Blue Mountain Plan Revision draft EIS will open for public comment this summer. Recovery funds have been directed to landscape restoration/roads/culverts. The new Landscape Collaboratives are a valuable element of the Forest's management implementation efforts.

CHAIRMAN UPDATE

Glad to welcome new members and have a quorum in attendance. The agenda is mostly general for this first time, to allow RAC to define their agenda. The Collaboratives have been a great model for getting

this type of work done, as stakeholders from all sides have bought into finding shared solutions. Funding for these projects is competitive nationwide, making it necessary for the groups to be very well-prepared if they wish to be considered. Two of the current awards went to Oregon projects. Energy projects have gone through a struggle because of vagaries in the market. Juniper expansion is a challenge for the agencies, and studies and treatments continue on a landscape-level. The best outcome of the RAC is to devise consistent, scientifically-based recommendations to move the issues forward.

SAGE GROUSE INITIATIVE UPDATE

The BLM EIS on sage grouse will modify six plans (three each in Burns and Prineville). Lakeview and Vale are revising their RMPs, so that guidance will be included in that process. Public meetings have been held, and the goal is to complete the EIS process by November 2014. A briefing was scheduled for the end of March, but no information has been distributed yet. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife conservation strategy was adopted in July 2011, and will remain in place for five years. Core habitat designation was the biggest piece of that guidance. Ninety percent of the birds are found in 38 percent of the occupied range of the bird. That land contains some low-density areas and core habitat areas. State mitigation policy will recommend specific actions for core areas if any development is to occur there. Decision makers will be the Federal agencies, County Commissions, etc. Deciding factors will include what action, how much area would be affected and for how long. NRCS may provide funds for mitigation and/or remediation for private landholders. One specialist is stationed in Burns, and one in Lakeview. The website is available for FS/BLM sage grouse habitat information. A new alternative is being added to the Boardman to Hemingway proposal that stays outside core habitat entirely. Lakeview District is still considering how they'll mesh the core habitat data with the national technical team findings. An Instruction Memorandum provides guidance for interim strategy, and targets May 2014 for the BLM plan. The Fish and Wildlife Service can then evaluate it before their September deadline. With a national strategy and the conservation strategies, the conditions will vary from one locale to another.

Considerations: Will the BLM have the flexibility to deal with area-specific situations (fire at different elevations, capping oil wells, etc.)? How much anthropogenic activity is allowable before it counts as discrete disturbances? How do you define developments (water, fencing) in a way that captures the full array of concerns?

There is a scoping effort occurring right now, as well as several different initiatives to make listing unnecessary. Landowners are developing Cooperative Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCA-A) to conserve the grouse or create "safe harbor" situation so that landowners can make long-range plans that retain the integrity of the landscape. Other tools have also been used to conserve species, so great effort is being invested to get landowner buy-in on this concept.

COMMENTS Wondering how applicable the Wyoming rule is, based on bird population and the rate of habitat degradation. Wonder why agencies cannot just move ahead to desired conditions if all agree with keeping the landscape functioning; there is much that can be agreed across the board, but the impacts of a fragmented ecosystem will hit different areas more harshly than others. Concern is there, but solutions are not programmatically-based. Much activity is taking place in many areas to address those issues on a landscape basis.

WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORIES UPDATE

Three maps were distributed to the RAC. In the John Day-Snake boundary, there are a few sites; in Southeast Oregon, there are more than 200. Areas with potential for wilderness compare very closely with core habitat areas for sage grouse. The managers would like the RAC to help determine what the Vale District should recommend for managing those parcels with potential wilderness character. If the RAC could develop a screening system for taking a closer look at an area, it could be a great start for the BLM to sift through and prioritize which areas to consider as a group.

The subcommittee did some brainstorming in September. It may be important to look at retaining beneficial flexibilities on an area if it is designated as wilderness in the future. Members need to know the definitions of wilderness; what is permissible within a designated area; and who would be a logical group to convene an initiative for wilderness. Is there another designation that can protect the ecological integrity of an area with less restriction than a wilderness designation?

COMMENT Important that the District consider known industrial mineral deposits and historical mining activity in this area as well.

Members were polled about their willingness to develop a structure for the BLM to use for evaluating wilderness proposals as part of the RMP revision. There was unanimous concurrence that the RAC will work on making this framework. Discussion about whether it should be tackled as a subgroup or by the RAC as a whole. A subgroup might be needed to define the need and how to develop a course of action. What issues affecting each different polygon on the map should determine how the agency should manage that piece of ground? It is necessary to keep the decisions within the purview of the RAC; managers decide how they'll manage the landscape, but the RAC can provide useful benchmarks to assist with that decision-making. It would be wise to have scheduled reviews of how that criteria has been working, and adjust if needed. It would be helpful for the RAC to see the data layers BLM is using, so that they can make well-informed standards to work through.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Joan Suther introduced herself and noted her availability for questions regarding Burns District.

CHILOQUIN TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

Public comment on the Forest's travel management plan centered largely on the area south of Chiloquin, as that has been a destination for many off-road recreationists. Members of the public were invited to assist in planning trails for that project, and it covers a broad array of the interest groups. They've drafted a charter and have met regularly to determine how to implement this project. Their work is subject to FACA, so they would like the Southeast Oregon RAC to sponsor them as a subgroup.

Proposal is that the Fremont-Winema Supervisor would include an update from the working group in each manager update, and that the RAC host this subgroup. Mike Lawrence will send website info and updates to Tara for dissemination to the RAC, and the Fremont-Winema will always have a manager at the RAC's meetings to report out.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 P.M.

April 3, 2012

The Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 8:35 A.M. on April 3, 2012, at the Gathering Place, Lakeview, Oregon. Brendan Cain welcomed attendees, and presenters Mike Lawrence, and Tom Rasmussen.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

Council members present:

- ✓ **Mona Drake /Developed Recreation & OHV**
Donald Hodge/Transportation/Rights-of-Way
Wannie Mackenzie/Grazing Permittees
- ✓ **James Walls/Commercial Timber**
- ✓ **David Whitson/Energy & Minerals**
- ✓ **Anne Hiller-Clark/Archaeology & History**
- ✓ **Mike King/Dispersed Recreation**
- ✓ **Matthew Little/Environmental Groups**
- ✓ **Bill Renwick/ Environmental Groups**
- ✓ **Dr. Julie Weikel/ Wild Horse & Burro**
- ✓ **James Bishop/Public-at-Large**
- ✓ **Chad Boyd/Academician**
- ✓ **Craig Foster/State Resource Agency**
- ✓ **Peter Runnels/Elected Official**
- ✓ **Stanley Shepardson/Public-at-Large**

Federal managers attending were:

- ✓ **Brendan Cain**, Burns District Manager
- ✓ **Don Gonzalez**, Vale District Manager
- ✓ **Joan Suther**/Acting Lakeview District Manager
- ✓ **Mike Montgomery**/for Malheur Forest Supervisor
- ✓ **Dennis Scott** /for Winema-Fremont Forest Supervisor

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Council members absent themselves from the meeting when the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

Others present for all (or a portion) of the meeting were:

Todd Forbes, Devon Comstock, Paul Whitman

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Introductions, housekeeping details

LAKEVIEW RESOURCE AREA RMP AMENDMENT

The District is very early in their travel management process, and is eager to have the RAC's assistance with the RMP amendment and the travel aspect of District planning. Lakeview's planning area is the Lakeview Resource Area (RA) plus some of Harney County. The settlement agreement that prompted this effort requires a new look at grazing, wilderness inventory and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. The wilderness characteristics inventory is about 80% complete, and the data is available online. The results of that analysis will help drive the scope of the analysis in accordance with the settlement agreement. Sage grouse habitat has emerged as an issue and will also be addressed in this plan amendment. There will be at least three alternatives in the plan that will address OHV travel. Very little of the Resource Area is closed to OHV, so some closures or other restrictions will be included in some of the alternatives.

The Travel Management Plan (TMP) will include area designations and decisions on routes in those areas. Current designations are: open, closed, or limited. The TMP will build on the framework of the RMP. The District is working these plans in parallel to finish the process sooner; the TMP will be an appendix to the RMP and will include motorized, horse, hiking and other travel means. Lake County sponsored four open houses for the public to view the route inventory to assure that all information was captured on BLM maps. Those events were well-attended and got 117 comments that were adopted into the Commissioners official record and forwarded to the BLM as the County's input. Scoping will likely include Burns, Bend, and Lake County locations. National policy is leaning toward limitations where travel is not already established. The Lakeview process is very similar to the Vale plan amendment.

Lakeview will release their scoping report, and when the Sage grouse guidance is available, they will adapt that information and move ahead. Hopefully the draft will be ready by September for a 90-day comment period. It's possible to have the draft alternatives available for the RAC's June meeting. The planning team encouraged the RAC to help with development of alternatives, so all elements get considered. Noxious weeds are another factor in the RMP amendment and will be considered, so that invasive species are not spread from one area to another.

MEMBER ROUNDTABLE/SUBGROUP REPORTS

Stan Shepardson: There is much more encroachment of Medusahead in the Owyhee drainage. The RAC should consider an onsite visit to areas there with specific ecosystems relevant to the RAC's focus and subgroups could tackle specific topic areas.

Matt Little: ONDA is planning more than 30 restoration projects across the area (fence pulls, tree planting, and weed eradication). Most trips are full, but you can check online for details. The Oregon Desert Trail project is in a *map draft* concept, connecting landmarks of SE Oregon so that visitors know what is out there to hike to, and how to travel safely. They're doing a complete on-the-ground inventory, and working with agencies to avoid any conflicts or hazards.

Anne Hiller-Clark: Working with Klamath tribes on education and heritage issues.

Craig Foster: Sage grouse; wilderness inventories

Julie Weikel: getting oriented with how the RAC works; she has some ideas about proposals for managing wild horse herds in today's environment. The issues are large, but they overlap.

Chad Boyd: Busy with *Ecologically Based Invasive Pest Management* (EBIPM): working with Brennan Smith of the Lakeview Resource Area and EBIPM.org to launch pilot projects on Medusahead infestations. They're testing methods to move plant communities to desired condition by containment/restoration. Part of the work plan brainstorming. Humans have large brains to deal with complex problems, so we need to interject wisdom into a process that is so procedural; wisdom for the long-term rather than crisis to crisis.

Pete Runnels: Managing beyond boundaries is a challenge: one neighbor's efforts may be undermined by a neglectful neighbor's conduct. Groups from every perspective consider it MY public land.

Jim Bishop: The market for pellets is glutted right now. Wineries in California are using Juniper posts for vine supports, and there is a market for the wood in landscaping because it doesn't tend to rot. Activity is up on the BLM lands by the recreation public.

Mike King: He's representing a new category, making contacts to get that constituency's input.

Mona Drake: Thanking Lake County partners for their support on responsible recreation with OHV; their anti-litter campaign in schools is very effective. WARN Industries provided support with materials, etc. to promote responsible use of public lands. Clubs built three miles of trail in the Cline Buttes area.

Jim Walls: Lake County established an informal partnership for conservation and protecting access to public lands. Vandalism and litter problems are being addressed jointly by individuals, businesses, county, schools and State/Federal agencies. Forest collaborative efforts are directed toward dealing with slash piles, to regain any value that's left and reduce hazard in what's left, since the biofuels market has slumped. Many factors affect those markets. Lots of work going on with funding for nine years: culverts, road improvements, etc. The use of pellet heat is very effective in reducing costs for cities, hospitals, etc.

David Whitson: Happy to participate with the RAC and the challenge of the issues before them. Off-road activity has great potential for destruction, and this type of forum might help move us beyond the legal morass; important for all to listen to each other to find solutions. Expressing the views from all perspectives helps all of us understand the issues more fully.

Bill Renwick: During new member orientation, we talked about collaboration, though the RAC is not required to be a "collaborative." That is not a tightly-defined term. A functioning collaborative is not meant to rubber-stamp agency proposals that have already been formulated. Initiatives that are built on common ground among a diverse set of viewpoints have great potential for success. Areas with big potential for contention can be confronted if the group is well-facilitated and the focus is on the greater good. Be creative and innovative to see how the RAC can add to solutions. Screen-out criteria for the wilderness recommendations will be a big but important task.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No visitors wished to share comments.

PROGRAM OF WORK

Brainstorming topics: Need more information on SEORMP amendment definitions; Wilderness character inventory criteria; Chiloquin Ranger District TMP; Vegetation EIS tier-down effort in the future; consider EBIPM structure to expand if warranted; placeholder for Three Rivers Resource Area plan update; Boardman to Hemingway; Blue Mountain Forest Plan updates; Sage grouse EIS; Cooperative Conservation Agreements (w/Assurances); socio-economic trends that may impact agency management direction; acceptable Juniper management in Sage grouse habitat and wilderness character areas; airborne particulates following slash burns of juniper

SCHEDULE FOR 2012 MEETINGS

June 11-12 in Burns, Oregon

September 10-11 in Ontario, Oregon

Nominations for vice-Chair: Chad Boyd nominated & elected.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

/signature on file/

Brendan Cain
Burns District Manager

/signature on file/

Bill Renwick
Chair, Southeast Oregon RAC