# STEENS MOUNTAIN ADVISORY COUNCIL
# APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
# August 16 – 17, 2007
# Frenchglen, 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, Bend, OR
Paul Bradley, Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation, Hines, OR
Michael Beagle, Fish & Recreational Fishing, Eagle Point, OR
Fred Otley, Private Landowner, Diamond, OR
Richard Angstrom, No Financial Interest, Salem, OR
Brenda Sam, Burns Paiute Tribe, Burns, OR

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Steve Purchase, State Liaison, Salem, OR

**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
Connie Pettyjohn, Management Program Analyst, BLM, Hines, OR

**FACILITATOR:**

Dale White, Burns, OR

**PRESENTERS**

Rhonda Karges, Environmental Protection Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Tara Martinak, Public Affairs Officer, BLM, Hines, OR
Mark Sherbourne, Natural Resource Specialist, BLM, Hines, OR
Rob Perrin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM, Hines, OR

**COMMENTING PUBLIC:**

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Frenchglen, OR
Heather Swartz, The Nature Conservancy, Burns, OR
Cindy Witzel, Frenchglen Foundation, Frenchglen, OR
John Witzel, Steens Mountain Packers, Frenchglen, OR
John O'Connor, Back Country Horsemen, Burns, OR
Alice Elshoff, Frenchglen, OR
Bill Marlett, ONDA, Bend, OR

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Brian Maguire, Back Country Hunters
Phil Kessinger, Burns, OR

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, HOUSEKEEPING, AND AGENDA:**

The meeting was called to order and self introductions made. There was a quorum.

**CHAIRMAN UPDATE**

Nothing to report.

**DFO UPDATE**

- Oregon BLM has been going through a streamlining process for functions and activities as a result of budget constraints. As part of this process, 3 grazing allotments within the CMPA previously managed by Three Rivers Resource Area have been reassigned to Andrews so coordination with SMAC will be assured regarding any actions and/or decisions. In the future all decisions will be reviewed and signed by the Andrews Field Manager and the entire RMP will be under one field manager. The Five Creeks project will also be overseen by the Andrews Field Manager.
- Burns District had an opportunity to use fire as a management tool on August 12. It was decided not to use fire as a management tool due to other major fires occurring on the District.
- Update on the lawsuit with ONDA. Judge Aiken ruled in favor of BLM on 5 of 6 counts. She ruled the information in the Travel Management Plan (TMP) should have been included as part of the comprehensive Transportation Plan in the RMP. Consequently BLM rescinded the decision on the TMP to incorporate non-motorized trails. A proposed decision was reissued and will go through a protest period for the grazing-related decisions. It is anticipated the decision record for all implementation decisions will be completed in September.
- The Kiger HMA gather was postponed until October in order to utilize FY08 funds. There are currently 252 horses in the wild horse corrals from an emergency gather of Beatys Butte HMA (approx. 132 horses from North Catlow/120 horses from the southern area of Beatys Butte). Lakeview BLM is working with Sheldon/Hart Mountain Refuge managers to coordinate management and gathers of the two areas for more efficient management.
- Two additional SMAC positions are being advertised – wild horse and special recreation permit holder. The four earlier positions advertised are back in Washington for approval.
- The new Associate District Manager has been selected. Brendan Cain from Wyoming will be on duty August 27.
- Ron VanDomelin passed away recently and a card will be sent from the SMAC members.

**FIELD MANAGER REPORT**

Mark Sherbourne updated the members on the following topics:

- Recent BLM personnel changes.

- Stonehouse allotment water developments were cleaned last summer (2006) and filled this past spring. Riparian pasture reviews were June 15 in accordance with the AMP (Allotment Management Plan). Trend surveys show willows are growing in the riparian areas. Sierra Club will be doing a field trip to the allotment over Labor Day weekend.
- Two mules have been added to the BLM pack string to be used in wilderness. Wild horses will continue to be used for saddle stock.
- Ankle Creek Inholder Access decision from IBLA (Interior Board of Land Appeals) was received after 3 years and affirmed BLM's decision to authorize and limit motorized access in the Ankle Creek Basin to private inholders. A copy of the document is included in the member packets.
- The TMP proposed decision was mailed on Monday. It covers the grazing-related changes and provides a 15-day protest period. A final decision will be forthcoming regarding grazing and all other elements of the TMP, including common use routes.
- Volunteers are being used to maintain 5 miles of hiking trails along Little Blitzen, Big Indian, and Blitzen River.
- The Running Camp was a success this year and no impacts were noted; therefore, BLM will reduce the monitoring trend level.
- The 25th Anniversary of the Chris Miller Memorial Steens Mountain 10k Rim Run on August 4, 2007, had 250 participants. The run will be continued under Nick Miller's management.
- BLM is actively working with 3 landowners with inholdings totaling 300 acres. Negotiations include fair market value of the parcels as well as title clearances.
- BLM has negotiated a one year Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) with Dan Jordan on his 40-acre parcel at Pate Lake so public camping and picnicking can continue. The one-year CMA can be extended if agreed on by both parties. BLM will continue to look at other CMA opportunities with private landowners.
- Page Springs weir project to consider removal for fish passage continues. Engineer report should be back this fall and EA will be ready this winter.
- The East Steens seeding project with Hoyt Wilson proposes a vegetation conversion of 500 acres of private land to create fire breaks to slow and/or stop wildfires. Initial project is on private land but BLM also hopes to apply treatment to public lands.
- The Final North Steens EIS was released to the public last week. The Record of Decision will be issued in September.
- The Oliver Springs fuel treatment will continue after fire restrictions are lifted.
- Other fuel treatment projects are in progress.
- Skyline Trail Riders were issued a special recreation permit for 110 people.

Fred commented on the need to get together with Bill Renwick's subcommittee of the Harney County Watershed Council to discuss the Wildland Juniper Management Area (WJMA).

**REVISIONS TO STEENS MOUNTAIN AND MALHEUR WETLANDS MAP**

Tara Martinak provided an update on the proposed revisions to the Steens Brochure and the old Burns District South Half Map based on suggestions received at the previous meeting. SMAC members will have an opportunity to review the new map which currently has the proposed name of Steens Mountain and Malheur Wetlands. Tara asked SMAC members to review various aspects of the map including trails (readability), location, and placement of symbols, trailheads, wild horse locations, and fishing. Tara provided examples of items used on past maps and asked members to provide suggestions for adding items/text/photos to the side panels of the new map.

The new map and panel text may provide information from the following list:

- ✓ Covers area from Burns to NV
- ✓ Provide summary of south half of the District
- ✓ Summary of Steens Mtn area
- ✓ WJMA
- ✓ Backcountry Byway, Steens Diamond Loop
- ✓ Donner Blitzen River
- ✓ Ranching History
- ✓ Wild horses
- ✓ Windows to past world – Riddle
- ✓ Sense of Wildness – general summary of Wilderness and WSA
- ✓ Wildlife
- ✓ Plants
- ✓ Know before you go – Safety re: weather, backcountry use, road closures
- ✓ Recreation – general info
- ✓ Refuge specifics

SMAC suggestions for the side panels:

- √ List other resources available about the area such as books and websites
- √ Contact information for local businesses and outlying areas
- √ Redband trout information
- √ Details about recreation areas
- √ Small general vicinity map
- √ Partnerships, volunteering activities, public interest involvements
- √ Historic trails
- √ Indian history
- √ BLM is working on quality checking roads, tour routes, trails, ownership, text, photos
- √ Alvord, Trout Creek, Pueblo information
- √ Wildness in all areas, not just WSAs or wilderness areas
- √ Wildness etiquette
- √ Off-road travel - where its permitted and not
- √ Geological information about the area
- √ N½ and S½ sides of map should overlap somewhat

Tara will compile the suggestions and submit a draft at the next meeting.

BLM will forward a letter to the Oregon State Office signed by the SMAC chairman providing SMAC's recommendation for a name change.

**SMAC RECOMMENDATION: MAP NAME**

SMAC recommends renaming the recreation map to better reflect the entire high desert area covered by the map. After discussion and several suggestions, two names were voted as the top two choices as follows:

1. Northern Paiute Great Basin Region (Steens Mountain/Malheur Wetlands/Alvord Desert/Trout Creek and Pueblo Mountains)

2. Harney County High Desert Country (Steens Mountain/Malheur Wetlands/Alvord Desert/Trout Creek and Pueblo Mountains)

**TRAILS**

Tara explained there are a variety of specific trail maps and brochures currently available to the public. The committee provided the following list of suggestions and observations regarding trails and trail information:

- Adding trails may increase use and result in more lost people and expenditure of money for search and rescue efforts.
- Trail info needs to reveal classes of trails and level of difficulty and safety concerns.
- Note not all trails are day hikes.
- The High Desert Trail is not a definable trail on the ground.
- Include all trails on the list Tara presented except Kiger Gorge and Wet Blanket.
- The entire area is open to cross country travel and discovery.
- Trails across private lands may not be open.
- Provide regional trails v. shorter localized trails.
- Trail info on maps may result in more public inquiries and increase opportunity for BLM to provide additional hiker education.
- List only trails developed and maintained.
- From hiker perspective it's helpful to have a separate trail map with all details and not include them on the general area map.
- Reference other maps available for information on hiking trails.

The following trails will be added to the draft recreation map for SMAC to review at the next meeting:

Wildhorse Lake/Canyon
Big Indian Gorge
Little Blitzen Gorge
Nye
Steens Summit
High Desert Trail
Pike Creek
Blitzen River
Ankle Creek
Wilderness Trail
Dry Creek

**CONSERVATION/NON-DEVELOPMENT EASEMENTS MATRIX**

Mark Sherbourne presented a draft form for SMAC review. The purpose of the internal form is to record initial conversations with landowners regarding acquisition proposals and provide them with BLM's response and likely timeline expectations.

The group suggested adding another section to the form to address: What is the landowner's objective? What is BLM's objective?

BLM may need to quantify the Public Benefit measurements. Currently BLM makes this determination based on location of the land and features, as well as other issues.

Stacy Davies noted it is actually a 4-6 step process and the form Mark presented should be part of a larger package. Other steps in the process that he noted are: 1) Conversation initiated by landowner; 2) Landowners receive info packet to start thought process; 3) Completed application is returned to BLM; and 4) Acquisition Proposal completed together with BLM.

Hoyt Wilson suggested BLM may also need to address CMA proposals and provide an application process and forms.

**SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT EA ALTERNATIVES**

Rhonda Karges presented information and maps for proposed water developments within the South Steens Allotment. Four pastures are involved in the project. The purpose and need of the project has been reviewed by a BLM multidisciplinary team. The proposed project would provide reliable yearlong, live water sources for wild horses and livestock. The Donner und Blitzen River has been the historic water source. In 1997 grazing along the river was disallowed by Judge Haggard's decision. One fence has been built and another will soon be built to exclude livestock access to the river. The fences result in wild horse exclusion from the river as well.

The proposed alternatives are:

- √ Alternative A – Retain existing condition of the reservoirs, springs, and dugouts of which 29 are not reliable.
- √ Alternative B – Provides maximum water distribution for horses and livestock. (see Rhonda's purple handout)
- √ Alternative C – Developments to be constructed along the roads/ways only.
- √ Alternative D – Developments to be constructed along the edge of WSAs.

Five additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from further consideration because they did not meet the purpose and need for action. BLM wildlife biologists have visited with ODFW biologists.

Further discussion was tabled until after the scheduled tour.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches, said she's glad to see Kiger Gorge trail removed from maps. She is concerned about weather conditions and variances for hikers. Regarding cooperative agreements and acquisition proposals, she asked whether previous landowners had been presented with other alternatives available to them besides purchase or exchange. She recommends all acquisition proposals include all alternatives available to landowners, including cooperative agreements.

Heather Swartz, The Nature Conservancy, stated she is the new coordinator in southeastern Oregon as part of a sagebrush cooperative. Their goal is to provide better

sagebrush management and conservation. It involves agencies, research institutions, interested groups, funding organizations, and private landowners. They will be hosting a workshop this fall and invite participation of SMAC members. She is based at the Northern Great Basin Research Center near Burns.

Bill Marlett, ONDA, had no comments other than he is stepping down from his current position with ONDA. Brent Fente will be taking his place.

Cindy Witzel, Frenchglen Education Foundation, stated the Education Foundation is a newly formed organization to solicit funding to cover budget shortfalls. Fundraising activities/projects include a new DVD about Frenchglen History. Frenchglen students did the filming and interviews. The Foundation is trying to reach out to various organizations that hold functions in town. They held a fundraising auction at the recent Sky Line Trail Riders event.

Dana Shuford presented Cindy Witzel with a gift of appreciation for her six years of service on the SMAC. She had been with the SMAC from its inception and recently resigned from her position.

Bryan Maguire is attending the meeting on a break from his antelope hunt to observe the meeting and gain information.

**RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Heather Swartz was asked for more information about her organization and their purpose, goals, strategies, and activities. She gave clarification and several examples of the types of activities she would be involved with such as juniper removals, weed prevention areas, aerial reconnaissance, and workshops.

**SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT TOUR**

Joe Glascock and Rhonda Karges led the group on a tour of several reservoirs within the South Steens Allotment as well as sites proposed for development.

# August 17, 2007

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Meeting was called to order and self introductions made.

**APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES**

**Motion Made:** Bill Renwick made a motion to approve the minutes. Hoyt Wilson seconded.
***Unanimous Agreement:*** Minutes were approved.

**ACTION ITEMS REVIEW**

- Action item: Matrix form for conservation easements will be left on the open list.
- December 2005 Implementation Plan – BLM has completed WO requirements for initial steps and is waiting for WO follow-up.

- March 6 – Research by Bill Renwick is ongoing.
- Dana Shuford reported BLM is unable to implement the web database with monitoring photos due to lack of resources.
- The May 2007 Scoping Document is on today's agenda.
- No new items were noted.

**THOUGHTS FROM SOUTH STEENS WATER DEVELOPMENT TOUR**

SMAC members felt they needed more information as well as some analysis in order to formulate a recommendation. The group recommended BLM look at decision factors as they work through the process.

David noted there are a lot of different ways to provide water and there is a huge possibility of mixing the alternatives presented. Ultimately the decision as to what meets the objective must also meet any legal requirements. He felt there is no need to cover ground unnecessarily if the proposals don't meet the legal requirements. The committee needs legal ground rules in order to proceed on a solid basis to achieve something that could be implemented without large legal issues. They also need more information about wells, their impact and upkeep, and pipelines. He felt the tour was helpful to get a general idea of reservoirs. He noted the reservoirs use part of a natural cycle of water runoff and could supply 90% of the need. Politically he felt it will be a tough sell to develop water in a WSA. There are a number of wildlife issues, such as disease control.

Mike thought there might be some flexibility allowed within the Wilderness Act. He felt they should try to remember families making a living in the area and try to meet their needs too. He questioned what waterhole storage might do to downstream sources such as cold water springs, redband trout, cold water fisheries and suggested checking with ODFW and BLM fisheries specialists. Other concerns were mule deer habitat, bitterbrush, and sage-grouse effects.

Rich stated the tour was helpful. He would like BLM to include ODFW staff and have them do a presentation. BLM should consider how this enhances or distracts from wilderness values to help members get a good read on whether the different alternatives benefit or detract from those values. Other items to be discussed include the Steens Act and WSA Policy and their provisions dealing specifically with cattle and water. Case law or prior settlements within other WSAs could be reviewed for additional reference. He suggested that when the Wild and Scenic River designation was initially made and the river was to be fenced that there was a provision for providing alternative water sources for livestock. He would like to review earlier judge decrees regarding use of the River. The group needs to review past obligations which are also important to consider. BLM should provide results of past studies from water gaps, reservoirs, and recovery of habitat around reservoirs to help get a good sense of what the impacts are and how they affect wilderness habitat. Good scientific studies may be available to help members review this tough issue. He felt the last dam toured did not seem to have a minimal effect to the landscape. He is not opposed to the water issue, but it needs to benefit the wilderness values. A good solution would benefit the wilderness values and take care of cows at the same time.

David asked if the Owyhee water project group might be able to share information about their solution to supplying an alternative water source for livestock that could provide helpful insight for further SMAC discussions. Bill suggested the Watershed Council may be able to provide additional information, and reminded the group the Owyhee project dealt with one well and pipeline, so may be a totally different issue.

Stacy said they need upfront opinions from members and suggestions as to what additional information is needed to help in the review and discussion of the proposal.

Mike suggested the Carhart Center has done some training for BLM folks and they may be able to provide help for this group too.

Pam noted one thing she'd like BLM to do in relation to water objectives for horses, wildlife, and cattle is to propose objectives that pertain to wilderness values and requirements. BLM needs to be sure to address this topic in the alternatives. Ultimately this will be one of the main issues and difficulties with going ahead on this. There's a lot of science she doesn't know the answer to and feels ODFW could provide helpful information. She would like to read wilderness case law and will do some research and provide information for discussion. From a dispersed recreation perspective she is not thrilled about seeing big steel tanks, solar arrays, and generators in the area.

Brenda expressed concerns from a cultural perspective and felt a need to determine if any proposed sites are within cultural areas. Other concerns/questions she has are: 1) Will a cultural person be onsite for development? 2) Would appreciate pictures of pipelines, wells, etc. 3) How much noise does a generator make? 4) Will cultural sites be disturbed? In addition, she has many of the same thoughts as others have already expressed.

Paul thought it was a wonderful tour and it was a good way to get things started. He would like to see reliable developments. He asked if dams can be built in a way that is not visually impacting and what could be done for noise mitigation such as keep generators in a building. He agreed there is a need to restore water that was removed from permitted grazing and felt there is a need for more grazing to reduce extra fire fuels. He suggested aesthetically pleasing structures be built, and asked if windmills might be an option. He felt they would be a historic tool as well.

Hoyt noted there are two problems. 1) Stacy has allotment without water. 2) Part of it is in a WSA, which is committed to preserving wilderness values. He felt the least intrusive of the alternatives is reservoirs. He is not a fan of water gaps because cattle push fences and they are always standing in the creek. Wells are high maintenance and need frequent checking. Pipeline projects require a 5000-gallon storage tank on a high hill and pipelines are problematic. He feels the benefits for livestock and wildlife are pretty important and asked if there is a way to do the project without degrading wilderness to an unacceptable level. He reminded the group BLM has an obligation to protect rancher's rights per the Steens Act. His preference of alternatives would be the reservoirs.

Fred believes good quality and well dispersed water have great ecological values to getting utilization and distribution that is needed. BLM should be sure to state the project has a lot of value for wilderness-type purposes. He stated due to dry years and numerous wild horses, Stacy is required to manage his cows around the horses and is unable to achieve uses his permit provides for. He has managed to preserve those values by type and season of use. He is currently achieving objectives by managing his permit with fewer cattle than allowed. Each water hole has a maintenance level of 10-15 years and a well constructed one would be good for 30 years. If all cattle and horses congregate on a few water holes, the area looses its aesthetics. This needs to be portrayed accurately by BLM, so we aren't just evaluating perceived effects. Wild horses may need to be allowed to use their original territory within the no livestock area and suggested there may be a legal possibility within the Act. BLM needs to provide a sustainable water source for livestock and meet the permit's allowable usage level. He suggested using a few wells in the right locations with pipelines to secluded troughs. There is a need for strategically located good quality water sources. He believes the final solution has to include more water holes to reduce impacts to existing water sources and there is a need for strategically located, good quality water sources. Without further developments they will have to maintain existing ones more frequently.

Bill noted several members asked about a legal review and stated the unique thing about the project area is the specific policy requirement for BLM within horse management areas in relation to the Wilderness Act, Taylor Grazing Act, and Wild Horse Management guidelines. He also noted water quality is a key concern and the type of development needs to address this. Quality is just as important as quantity. He is a strong proponent of wells because they can be used on an as-needed basis. The downside is cost, maintenance, and aesthetics. The desire to maintain riparian habitat and water quality encourages the use of off-stream water sources. Waterholes appear to be the least cost method of providing water needs. The question is how all this fits within a WSA and SMAC needs to find out. Other conversations he heard during the tour mentioned BLM needs to consider all possible objections. They need to maintain an open process and anticipate other possible conflicts. He feels this issue is interesting due to potential conflicts/overlays. SMAC would have an opportunity to resolve conflicts which makes this an interesting issue to work on.

Stacy clarified all gates are left open so horses have access to the area. However, they just don't go there on their own. The alternatives presented are the first he has seen. Alternative B reflects everyone's wish list and is a combination of input from numerous people. Everyone needs to see the entire wish list. There are two main issues: 1) safety – water availability for horses and livestock in really bad situations. The past three dry years have severely reduced supply. Currently the only options for water sources are to use the river or to haul water. 2) How the 3 pastures within the project area are used affects the remaining operation at the ranch. If the ranch can't use these pastures, the cattle are moved to Kiger Creek, which is critical fish habitat. The water development issue can have a worse effect elsewhere if you look at the bigger picture and the overall effects. Landscape management is a big part of the Steens Act and an important thing to

keep in mind. SMAC has the opportunity in this particular case of considering all points everyone thinks is right. For example, a 1960s Vale pipeline project type is considered offensive and a huge intrusion. However, that was the standard method in the 1950-60s. He would like to look into ways of supplying water with minimal visual impacts, like burying storage tanks and rehabilitating disturbed areas. He wants to restore water access in a way to please both sides of the issue. Cost is a big factor and they have an opportunity to spend more money on this and do the right thing. He has a concern if they try to answer each question asked by all members, the research will occupy most of their time for the next few meetings. His question to the group is whether they want this topic to supersede other issues currently scheduled to be discussed in upcoming meetings.

The SMAC discussed how to proceed with this issue and the time required. It could be an opportunity to provide creative new ideas/solutions. This issue also has the potential of having a landscape level solution and novel approaches and benefits to fish and game. The question was raised, "What does policy advice look like compared to real, on-the-ground solutions? This issue can help SMAC members become educated in a particular area and find solutions that will affect other areas as well. This topic could provide future value/education for the group in dealing with later issues.

**REVISIT FLIP CHART NOTES FROM MAY MEETING**

Pam Hardy led a discussion to review May's notes taken in preparation for the recreation plan. A key question is how to relate Steens Mountain to its visitors.

Some key values noted are:

- Freedom, sense of open space, limited restrictions.
- Biologically robust systems.
- Private landowner's contributions.
- Public sense of cooperative relationships.
- Sense of current and historic cultural history.
- Multiple uses provide a need for balanced relationship of uses.

Additional items to be addressed:

- Adaptive management to allow for flexibility to deal with unknown/unforeseen issues.
- River activities on Donner und Blitzen.
- Basic need facilities - public and private (gas, food, campgrounds).
- Initiate efforts to mitigate conflicts between various uses.
- Existing conditions for users and public demand.

**COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION PLAN SCOPING DOCUMENT AND SMAC INVOLVEMENT**

A presentation was given by Rob Perrin, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner. Many years have been spent trying to provide quality experiences for the public on Steens Mountain. He has researched various documents addressing recreation management on the mountain.

Rob provided the following handouts:

- Segments of an EIS written 25 years ago. Rob reviewed original objectives and goals established.
- Data from public user survey in 1982. Rob reviewed input received from the survey.
- Steens Mountain Recreation Study. Rob reviewed study results. Internet access has created national and international awareness of the mountain.

He noted Steens Mountain is usually a primary destination spot and not just a stop along the way to somewhere else. There are a lot of repeat visitors; reasons for visiting include scenery, had visited before and chose it again, favorite fishing, group travel arrangement, and less crowded than other options.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Susan Hammond, Hammond Ranches, Frenchglen, OR, commented she would like to see comparisons. She believes the Act has changed the demographics of the entire area. She stressed the need for consideration of private property and the goals/objectives of landowners to minimize potential conflict. There is a need to develop public respect for private property. She reminded everyone that Rhonda's EA proposal was purely a draft.

Alice Elshoff, Frenchglen, OR, wants to remind SMAC water development alternatives will cause a huge impact on the landscape. Fences affect wildlife and reservoirs are potential problems for West Nile Virus. These are livestock reservoirs not wildlife reservoirs. Pipelines on private property are a different issue than on public lands and she wants to remind SMAC of the difference.

John Witzel, Frenchglen, OR, stated that fences and waterholes can benefit wildlife. Need to weigh the benefits as well as bad effects related to both livestock and wildlife. The public needs to know before they come, there is still multiple-use on the Steens. Lack of information causes conflicts. More information provided to the public can help reduce conflicts between hikers, horseback riders, campers, etc. The road was a low clearance passenger vehicle road in earlier years as old photos can show. He feels the road needs to be maintained back to its historic level. It has been neglected for too long. If BLM restricts any use, it will change the demographics. Access restrictions to the river have changed the level of use by rafters. Foreign visitors have been coming for many years. Commented the group needs to look at the bigger picture and ask whether a project is beneficial to other uses/aspects within the allotment.

Bill Marlett, ONDA, stated he feels Roaring Springs Ranch was made whole during earlier negotiations related to the Act and the need for the project should be viewed in that context. Judge Haggerty's decision regarding Blitzen River implemented a set of conditions on the land that preceded the Act. The Blitzen protection fence was built as a result of his decision. Conditions had changed on the ground going into the Steens Act and Blitzen was already off limits to livestock. Subsequent to the Steens Act, public process, SMAC went through a long dialog regarding implementation of the various provisions of the Act, including removal of livestock. ONDA worked with BLM and

Roaring Springs Ranch to take care of the ranch. He feels the Act already made all landowners whole. SMAC will receive a huge amount of resistance over this project. He can guarantee this project is DOA. SMAC could go forward with creating ideas, but they need a sense of reality and shouldn't waste their time. He understands Pam will be doing some research, but he can share the Beatys Butte deal, which wasn't in a WSA, failed. He warned SMAC they are heading into a hornet's nest. Bill has better things to do than waste his time on this. BLM could make significant adjustments to feral horse populations. The Kiger herd is ok, but he feels BLM should take the rest of the feral horses off Steens Mountain. He provided SMAC with some history and stated this EA proposal came before SMAC because BLM received complaints about trespass cattle in the Blitzen corridor. The sequence was the corridor was fenced, Roaring Springs Ranch appealed, Dana Shuford and Stacy Davies reached an agreement to do an EA. He feels the water issue had been resolved for the ranch within the Act. Ranchers could have sold their permit to conservation easements. They could have put them on the market for conservation groups to bid on. He suggested that West Nile Virus will become more of an issue and BLM will need to review their policy on reservoirs. Sage-grouse will be listed as an endangered species within 2-4 years. The SMAC should take a comprehensive look at the entire area.

John O'Connor, Back Country Horseman, Harney County Chapter, said he is working with Dan Jordan to put a trailhead parking area on Jordan's property at Whorehouse Meadows which will be in addition to his agreement with BLM at Pate Lake. They would eventually like to work with BLM to put in a permanent horse camping facility similar to South Steens Campground. His group is actively clearing trails. They've had problems with 4 wheelers on Jordan's property which will be excluded as an allowed use.

**RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Rich asked Bill Marlett if the allotment had been ok'd for grazing and if there were any limitations under the Act on how BLM was required to manage it where cattle were an allowed use. Bill replied as long as the permittee follows guidelines, then livestock management is ok. If an activity enhances the wilderness values, then ONDA will be all ears. ONDA cannot affect existing grazing activities, however, BLM has a duty to address that and must operate under guidelines of the Act and be extra sensitive to ecological values. Rich noted management can be completed within guidelines established by the Act, so they can manage cattle if they stay within those guidelines. Does ONDA see an opportunity to disperse livestock use in a way to reduce impacts? He doesn't see this as an opportunity to make one company whole, but rather as a way to help BLM get through conflicts that might affect other areas within the CMPA. Grazing is allowed so what is the best management practice to maintain or enhance the wilderness values? There is a need to define philosophy. He feels this is an opportunity to provide framework for problem solving for future use/issues. Bill Marlett reminded the group BLM has a duty to manage current uses. The Act constrained people's ability to do what they want to do. Based on their experience, spreading water around is not a good thing.

Stacy asked John O'Connor if BCH is willing to be a part of the recreation plan and if the arrangement with Jordan will last for a few more years. John explained Dan wants users

to know it is private property and can be used by the public; however, no motorized use will be allowed. Stacy noted equine use could be an individual EA (3 years) or could be a part of the bigger recreation plan (5 years) and asked if the agreement with Jordan will last for 5 years until the recreation plan can be completed? John replied affirmatively.

David asked for clarification of the last alternative listed on the South Steens Water Development EA Alternatives Outline handout.

Fred O commented there will always be differences of opinion and the group needs to keep their eye on the ball. Grazing is allowed and so they need to focus on managing it. There is an opportunity to help BLM advance the grazing issue as well as improve habitat within the allotment in a manner to move things forward as a feature of the wilderness area. Each member will have their own focus related to this and they can all work together to help BLM.

Bill Renwick said he noted far more evidence of horses than cows on the tour and agrees with Bill Marlett's suggestion that BLM could reduce the wild horse population.

**COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION PLAN**

Rob Perrin continued his information sharing and provided handouts. The main theme is the public wants and enjoys the natural area. A public scoping letter was reviewed. Scoping for the new plan will include reviewing past recreation documents and public surveys. Rob shared past research and background information with the group. Formation of the new recreation plan will involve assessment of background, planning area, goals/objectives, and sideboards.

The recreation plan should be completed in alignment with other plans already developed and will promote SMAC involvement. BLM and SMAC will need to review Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers plan to determine guidance related to recreation when developing the new plan. It will not need to readdress guidance already developed through other plans for the CMPA.

Scoping process will probably be lengthy (1 year) and include issues for individuals and groups. Some potential issues were listed within Rob's handout. He can take information from the two studies completed in the past and use them in conjunction with a newer short form survey, if needed. The County Court has agreed to help BLM with recreation surveys. Stacy encouraged SMAC members to engage their recreation constituent groups to provide input and assist with surveys. There are likely to be OHV issues and previous management decisions need to be reiterated.

Fred M pointed out past recreation development was litigated (South Steens Campground, winter recreation, development of overlooks, re-graveling of the road) and so litigation can be expected with this plan also.

SMAC's role in relation to the development of the Recreation Management Plan will be:

- Brainstorming list created at May meeting provides good input.

- BLM will encourage SMAC feedback throughout scoping process.

**SCIENCE STRATEGY**

Bill Renwick reported on purposes of the Act and how it relates to science. He recommended SMAC should designate members for a science subcommittee. Two things have happened recently: 1) Jeff Rose was designated as the Burns District point of contact for Science and Research matters; and 2) BLM is required by March 2008 to develop a science plan. Bill encourages establishment of a SMAC science committee to work with Jeff Rose and Tony Svejcar of the Agricultural Research Center. All National Landscape Conservation System units are required to develop a science plan to establish mechanisms for incorporating science into their management plans. SMAC can make recommendations for scientific needs and possibly help secure funding.

The group discussed this further and noted science needs to be objective and therefore needs freedom from political influences. It also needs a means of funding. The Science Committee could provide a bibliography of other studies completed and a list of ongoing relevant studies. A literature review is a good beginning step to determine; what is the existing knowledge, what research is relevant, what issues don't have ongoing studies and might warrant new study?

Dana offered the science committee and plan would not be one that requires NEPA or litigation, but rather would be engaged with area specialists to develop a viable plan.

In summary, it was agreed the sub-committee will consist of a variety of people and may include: 1 SMAC, BLM, ODFW, T Svejcar, J Rose, and The Nature Conservancy representative (Heather). SMAC will vote on the committee and the scope within the SMAC bylaws.

Other guidelines established include:

- Will be called a Technical Subcommittee.
- Define the members needed.
- Establish a lead to report to SMAC.
- SMAC will direct the subcommittee regarding projects to be worked on or work to be accomplished.
- Bill and Fred are designated as SMAC subcommittee members and will do a ½ hour presentation at the next meeting.
- Dana will assign Karla as the lead for BLM.

Fred McDonald commented the NLCS will establish a database program to share research. He said many people conduct research on the mountain and do not contact BLM. Perhaps the committee could get a grasp on that and find out who and what is being done and their findings.

**BIN ITEM**

Dana suggested SMAC involvement with water development is very important.

**Motion made:** Hoyt moved that SMAC pursue the water development topic of discussion. (Bill seconded).

Stacy expressed concern about his future participation and declared a potential conflict of interest.

***Unanimous Agreement:*** The SMAC recommends they continue discussion about the water development EA. There was no further discussion and no objections.

**AGENDA SETTING for the December 2007 meeting.**

- Review Steens Act, FLPMA, WSA policy and guidelines, (case law, Haggerty's ruling, Owyhee case, WHB Act and Plans).
- S Steens Water EA- educational update.
- Review Wilderness/WSRs Plan regarding trails.
- Comprehensive Recreation Plan update.
- Half hour presentation by Technical subcommittee.
- Half day field tour to view on the ground examples of water developments.
- Field accomplishment report.

Stacy asked the group how they can best provide information to members to facilitate further discussions on the water development EA. The group suggested providing past case law and IBLA decisions for legal background and asked for more on-the-ground examples of wells, pipelines, solar systems, and water gaps. They suggested looking at other items of concern as well, such as weed control. For the first meeting in 2008 they would like to hear ODFW's perspective and see the draft water EA.

Next meeting date: December 6-7, 2007 (This is a date change and will require a *Federal Register* notice.)

Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Connie Pettyjohn

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved the minutes as amended on _____