

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council Meeting

Monday, January 12, 2015

Designated Federal Official Updates

Lakeview District (see handout for more detail)

- Two recent proposals on expansions; Tucker Hill and Sun Stone Mine. If you have some questions or concerns on either of these topics please give us a call.
- Beauty's Butte Group has had a change in the facilitator of this group. There is another meeting going on in Lakeview on the 28th and everyone is invited. **(Please send out this information to the entire group)**
- The appropriations bill has amended FLIPA saying that we have CX authority for the permits that are going to be the same operator and are meeting standards. There has been no guidance or direction from Washington Office, so there will be more information to come.
- Reference in the handout to "hand cut" juniper projects generally refers to using a chain saw. We complete an EA prior to doing any of these actions. We have been talking to and keeping the local ranchers in the loop regarding all of these actions. Why do we not cut in WAS's? This is not due to the limited number of tools, but more due to how we are managing these lands.
- Lakeview is holding back a little on the RMP to see what is going to happen with the Sage-grouse plan.

Vale District (see handout for more detail)

- Focus right now is on fire rehab.
- USFW is part of the grazing and fire rehab decisions due to the cutthroat Trout.
- We are working with the prison organization to produce seedlings for us. This is all under agreement. They don't do the seed collecting for us, but every year they are expanding so hopefully they could start providing for others. The program is too new to know about the survival rate once transplanted. In Burns the FFA has had agreements to grow for the BLM in the past.
- The budget passed by congress included a rider that said the USFWS will not include any rules that would list or restrict the sage-grouse. The interpretation by the DOI is saying that the information and work to determine if the bird can be listed, is not considered a restriction, but only action taken after the listing would be a restriction.

Burns District (see handout for more detail)

- For the Steens Mountain CRP the Burns District has decided the 14 of the 33 segments of obscure routes will be closed due to them not discernable on the ground. The analysis on these segments will be out today. The county has every road lined out, but we are not sure how these 33 obscure routes line up. We don't anticipate them lining up because then we would have documentation of these routes.
- Programmatic CCA was signed. Burns has several others still in the hopper for a total of about 1 Million acres. Burns is developing a template for use by other districts. Lakeview's letters should be out soon. Vale currently does not have plans to send out these letters. Vale's concern is about being able to accomplish on the ground monitoring.

- These are all volunteer documents, so the BLM can't hold your feet to the fire and make you do something. The RMP states what you MUST do and these actions are no longer voluntary.
- Burns weed EA should be open for comment in April.
- Buzzard ESR is moving forward and we are currently fixing fences.
- The people that were going to walk across the Steens Mountains has come and gone.
- The Wagon tire project is a combination of BLM and private land.

Malheur National Forest (see handouts for more detail)

- They are currently putting a team together to work on the murders creek horse management plan.

(Please attach Handout to notes)

Member Interest Area Updates

Mona Drake

- Putting together a meeting at WARN Industries Inc. on Jan 17th, to talk about what it means when you say an ATV can have use of a road. Why does law enforcement not show up when there are people misusing the roads/trails?
- Please use ATV grant systems for law enforcement. This meeting will help explain how you can get the grants or use the grants for law enforcement.

Jean Findley

- There is a new plant species described in the Vale area. Mostly found in the Leslie Gulch area. *Monardella Angustifolia*. Common name is *Narrow leaf monardella*. This is a little perennial shrub.
- Wannie Mackenzie has requested that Oregon State come and do an inventory on their land because they know that they have some endangered and threatened plant species. They are going to cut some juniper and are working with Oregon State to do the studies to see if it will help the endangered and threatened plants. He is trying to prove by Range management these plants will thrive.

James Bishop

- There is a juniper saw mill that is looking to increase production, but the only limitation is in getting juniper logs.

Julie Weikel

- The proposal was grouped with some other proposals. These are all proposals that deal with permanent sterilization in females. We should have a decision by the end of this month. The project was changed to represent the 3 different stages of pregnancy. It looks like the open mares would be done first and hopefully this spring.
- There is now a published collaring trial about collars that work with horses. There are some trials planned for Oklahoma to start in mid-February, which the RAC supported.
- We need to let the BLM manage the horses and stop letting the horses manage them. We need to look at all alternatives to make things change. Something has to be done.

- Can the Oregon Cattleman get behind this proposal? **Request was made for Wannie to take this to the Oregon Cattleman.** Jean believes that the wildhorses are far more destructive force than the grazing of Cattle ever is.
- Can we get collaboration between RAC's to assist with support of these proposals? Two county courts have written letters regarding the Beaty's Butte issues.
- Those who hold the view that wild horses should not be on public lands will never get any place. There is a certain lack of insight and courage at the BLM at some levels to make some of these decisions. We need to make decisions based on the resource and rangeland health.
- The information that is out and being distributed to the public is very inaccurate. **Perhaps we write a letter and shop it around to all of the other RAC in the US and see what the consensus really is. Write this as an open letter that is published as well as sending it out. Should the letter include some pictures showing some of the issues that they face?**

Active Subcommittee reports

Leslie Gultch Fence Subcommittee

- Would like to build a fence to keep the horses away from an ACEC and the big horn sheep. There is a concentration of horses in this area. This would be a 6 mile fence. By creating a fence you are just going to create a huge sacrifice area of public land. The thought is that if you keep it open you may sacrifice some ACEC, but it is just better for the land. The recommendation is to eliminate the Wild Horse and Burro area. The subcommittee has not been able to confirm how much of the ACEC the horses have impacted. According to Wannie he could not see any major impact on the ACEC. Does the RAC support the building of the fence?
- **A decision will be made at the next meeting. Invite John to the next RAC meeting with a decision made on the second day. Request Shanney to be at the meeting as well.**
- The HMA's are part of the RMP's. So to change or remove an HMA would be a decision made in the RMP's. There could be amendments to the RMP's but we would have to have the people. And the thought to remove an HMA would be met with major opposition.

Public Comment Period

American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign:

- Asking the RAC for support of their recommendations.

They recommend...

1. We implement continued use of PZP
2. Fair share of resources within the HMA's. The AML's for wild horses must be raised to help support the population. This would include compensation to ranchers.
3. Oppose destructive measures of control .

- Hoping we can help find a happy medium in how we manage our wild horses.
- Personal experiences with PZP with returned to freedom group has seen a 90% success rate when administered correctly and funded adequately. You can give PCP via darting or by feeding it.
- Any human interference is going to alter heard behavior.

- Question from the RAC was; This county is 88% public land. So how do we fund roads, schools, etc, if 88% of our land is not being used for economic growth if we advocate for higher AML's for horses?
- The 11000 signatures in 4 days was collected online.
- Question from the RAC was how many of these people who signed the petition understand that when a ranchers cow grazes they are only there for a small amount of time, where the horses are there for 365 days?
- These horses are generally just horses that have been let loose and never gathered. These are not something that is really native to the west like the deer and elk. There are arguments that horses are native, but were extinct for a while.
- Even if you were to compensate ranchers or expand the AML's available to the horses, this does not deal with the issue of over population. The campaign agrees that there is a population issue, but they are asking that we move AML's to the number of animals that are currently on the land.
- An offers was made to sit on any subcommittees.

Letters to the Committee:

- One person does want the use of PZP
- against PZP (2 letters)
- Do not use PZP (9 letters)
- Against surgical spaying (5 letters)
- Against gelding (5 letters)
- Let horses run free (4 letters)
- Stop round-ups (4 letters)
- Against roundups (2 letters)
- Doesn't want taxpayer dollars spent to put horses in holding facilities (1 letter)
- Stop hunting and slaughtering mustangs (1 letter)
- Consider all options other than extermination (2 letters)
- Cut subsidies to producers (1 letter)
- Release horses in holding (1 letter)
- Terminate all grazing (1 letter)
- Research actual scientific data (1 letter)
- Help our wild horses survive (1 letter)
- Manage horses as written in the law (1 letter)
- Strong Leadership is needed (1 letter)

(All letters will be scanned and sent out to the RAC along with the Petition)

A form letter from the RAC will be sent out to the letters saying that we have received your comments and is a part of the record and will be an agenda at the next meeting. Include the time for public comment.

Final Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (see handouts for more detail)

- There was a task force put together to help the listing team wrap their brain around the impacts of fire and invasive species. They came up with a matrix that classifies land relative to its sage

brush cover and resistance and resilience of the plant community. They found a way based on soil temperature to map the resilience of an area.

- What the BLM is doing right now is using the R&R concept in the development of plans or with prioritization of projects.
- Resistance and resilience of an area would not change, regardless of fires.
- The model works. It looks at different characteristics from a resistance and resilience perspective. If an area is managed for restoration or managed for disturbances could it maintain consistency with its neighboring units?
- Do we need to write a letter that documents the categories from the RAC or do you have enough to move forward with the RMP's. Grasty believes that we have enough information and don't really need a letter, but would like to get Don's option regarding the needed information in the RMP's.
- Sage brush cover is considered in this model. Did this create a bias in the model? The model is only as good as the input data, and the truth is that the input data is not always really that good. This is not meant to be a substitute for local knowledge.
- As a RAC we are not limiting your decisions in RMP's to only this information, but this is just meant to be additive for your decisions.

Letter to Jerome Perez regarding wilderness characteristics

- There are concerns with the language in the letter, using general terms and language, and saying things like what should be or shouldn't be allowed.
- The intent is to hopefully help us manage our wilderness better and to move forward. Several years of not managing this area and left it overrun with weeds.
- Conversation centered on the use of capitalizing the work "wilderness characteristics".
- **Invite Jerry McGee. out to the RAC meeting to help with some clarification on some of these conversations.**
- Remember that we are not talking about WSA's. We can not change policy on WSA's, but what we are doing is trying to give direction on how we think lands with wilderness characteristics should be managed.
- The RAC really wants to show that they envision merging the concept of ecologically-based stewardship, with that of management for wilderness characteristics.
- **Recommend that we simplify the letter and just use the last 2 paragraphs.**
- **The details of the letter will be worked out through email with all members of the group. Email comments to Chad Boyd and then physically sent out prior to the meeting.**
- **Have the resilience model provided to the RAC.**

Letter – SEORAC Grazing Management Input

- Congress passed an act in December stating that the BLM is to consider grass banking for any open allotments.
- The purpose of this letter is really to just get the door open. But the BLM really needs to change things, like the seasons of use, to help manage the lands.
- Is the role of the RAC to educate the Oregon State Office? Regarding this letter, the RAC is offering to facilitate the conversations. The general role of the RAC is to advice. Are these letters really helping the process? These letters could help with uniformity across the state. These letters can also help the DM's and support the DM's in the conversations at higher levels.
- **Letter is approved as written!**

- The subcommittee is losing a member, and there needs to be a conference call with the BLM regarding the material that is talked about in this letter. Request a representation is in the conservation group. Subcommittee members don't have to be a part of the regular committee, so Matthew Little will continue along with Julie Weikel as members with Chad Boyd and Wannie Mackenzie and a representative from each district.
- If the Oregon State Office agrees, how would this be implemented and what would be the next steps.

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Update

- Power Point Presentation was given.
- Fewer people are showing up for the public meetings than before. Everyone agrees that we need a transmission line, but where to put it is the question. People are still concerned about the amount of private land involved. We hope that the micro sighting will help with some of the concerns.

Tri-State Fuels Project Update (see handout for more detail)

- Scoping meeting with the agencies in Boise on Jan 21st. There should be some specific information on the proposed action.
- There also is a project initiation letter that will contain a timeline. This letter should be out soon.
- This project will be on the East side of hwy 95.
- The recommendation is to ensure that they are in contact with the tribes and to start tribal consultation.
- The plan is that these will be long term fire breaks.

Tuesday, January 13' 2015

Transportation Planning Update

Malheur National Forest

- At this point in time they are waiting for the forest management plan to be completed before they move forward with the Travel Management Plan. They are working on getting the counties on board with the forest management plan. Restart the analysis as soon as the forest management plan is completed. No dates yet but don't expect anything too soon. Currently working on developing the maps so they are ready. The maps will help them develop alternatives for the travel management plan. First this plan will go for an internal review and then it will go out to the public.
- Heard through the grapevine that the Malheur is closing roads in the timber areas. Typically they are closing roads that are essentially self-closed due to vegetation. Or some of the closing could be due to wildlife closers or due to the road being too close to a stream. The Malheur has rec person in Burns, his name is Mr. Speeg. You can contact him for more information.

Sage Grouse Resource Management Plan Update

- No changes. Still waiting on the National Office to make some decisions so at this time we are still waiting.

- We really don't have a feel for when we should hear back from them.
- The location that Wannie is ranching has great habitat for the Sage Grouse but he is close to the Idaho Birds of Prey location and then was hit by West Nile, so his Sage Grouse numbers are not what they should be. The question is if the Districts feel they have a lot of Sage Grouse habitat. The response from the Burns and Vale Districts was that we have burned a lot of habitat and are lacking some habitat, but we do still have some core habitat. In Baker we have more habitat than birds, and the birds continue to decline. Lakeview has been lucky because they have not had large fires.
- The main issue with the Sage Grouse is not really the number of birds, but the rate at which the habitat is being lost.
- Are we going to come up with one standard definition for sage grouse habitat? If the bird gets listed there will become critical habitat, but at this time everyone keeps changing their verbiage.
- Concern that with the Republican Congress they will slow the progress of the Sage Grouse plan. The Secretary of the DOI has said a decision would be made in 2015, but Congress has said that no decision can be made for 2015.
- In the BLM the fuels treatment dollars has been shifted from the West side to the East side. This translated to more initial attack resources and aviation resources last year.
- Wannie shared that he had 3 fires this year, and has never had the BLM beat him to a fire, but this year the BLM aircraft beat him to the fire twice. They did a great job! The resources that the BLM showed up with were great.

Vegetation Environmental Assessment Status

- This EA is only for truly invasive and noxious weeds. This EA does not deal with or allow us to use herbicides in our recreation sites or on native plants. Thus, once this process is complete, we will turn around and work on allowing us to use herbicides in recreation sites. We would like to be able to use this so we can do things like treatments around power poles and other locations as fire breaks.
- Next week the Burns district will be working on formal training on writing effects analysis.
- By each district doing their own EA, this does put a little more work on the tribes because now they have to travel around as each of the districts work through it. But, at least in theory, the issues should be about the same.
- Your input as a RAC was reviewed and considered and comments were sent to the State Director.
- Does the RAC have any interest in reviewing that document? The feeling is that the RAC has already weighted in, so they feel there is no need. If there are any issues that come forward please come back to the RAC.
- Public scoping happened in 2011 so they are working off of that.
- What were the differences between the districts that caused the need for four different EA's. There was an issue with turnover of project managers at the SO because once hired they would then move one. This is also tied to workload issues at the district level that made it difficult.

Develop Agenda for Next Meeting

- Update on Biofuel
- Update on Beaty butte.
- Burns District Radar Hill OHV presentation
- Sage Grouse

- Freemont Winema – use of grant dollars on travel management plan that closed roads. How was the grant money used? Where are they at with the travel management plan?
- RAC members comment on the public comment letters received.
- Field trip for LWC's and how they work with them.
- Open letter to other RAC's to see what support or consensus there is for the management of wild horses.
- Invite John to give a presentation on the Leslie Gulch Fence.
- Invite Jerry McGee to the RAC meeting for a conversation on wilderness characteristics
- If the Oregon State Office agrees, what are the next steps and implementation of the grazing management letter?

Closing Thoughts

Wannie

- Yesterday at the public comment period we were reading letters. I feel that some organizations that are out in the public they have a very poor image of the ranching community. I'm not sure why. There are some ranchers that are bad, but 90% are really good. Ranchers have to take care of the land, animals, horses, etc. because if they don't it is the ranchers that are really losing out. Wish we could get the trust back with these organizations. The Ranching community needs to do a better job of educating people. Thanks to Matthew Little for his view point and participation in the RAC and hope in the future he trusts the ranchers.

Ben

- There is an organization in Idaho called the IIRC who's mission was to educate the public on the benefits of ranching and how they help out the local communities. This organization was pushed through the Cattle growers association.

Julie

- It is true that there are problems in the Ranching community that hurts the image of the rancher. Right along with preaching our story about the "good guys" but we need to address the "bad guys" as well. Until the ranching community is ready to acknowledge these issues they will continue to have an image issue. People are feeling empowered to start to report abuse of cows and horses. People feel that they can report an abused dog and cat, and now they are feeling that they could report cows and horses. The truth is that the cattle industry has got to BE the good guys as well and start putting pressure on the "bad guys"
- The Eastern Oregon mining association has done just that, and a lot of the pressure resulted in some of these people to fall out of the group, but at least now when you think about the Eastern Oregon Mining Association you know they have their act together.
- The RAC could look at some of the things that Ranchers are doing on federal lands (ex would be the hauling of water for horses, or rotation of cattle for sage grouse), and start publicizing some of these things. Cooperation between the Ranchers, RAC, and Agencies, in conjunction with a consistent message and actions from the Ranchers.
- If you are a good rancher you are a good steward, if you are a bad rancher you are a bad steward.

Mona

- There are 90% of good OHV people and there are 10% bad OHV people! It is the same thing as with the Ranching community.

Other Comments from the group

- RAC request a list of the rotation of positions and dates for all of the positions on the RAC.
- With the new boundaries of the RAC, please communicate the need for the Malheur to be here or not. They are no longer on the map, so is it needed?
- The positions with no applications are Matthew Little, Mike King, and the currently vacant position in commodities. We are always looking for more than one applicant so that there is a choice.
- Should the RAC have the conversation about what type of position they would like to have on the RAC? Should we look for someone in timber? Range? Renewable Energy? Oil and Gas? We can't change the overall category, but we can change the lower lever category under it.
- When does this group decide that for non-participation a member should be replaced? The answer is that if someone missed 2 meetings they can be formally notified that they are going to be replaced. **Agreed that the next time someone has missed twice it will be a topic on the agenda for discussion.**
- **Please send out to all RAC members a calendar schedule of all of the meeting dates for this year. Please include all of the action items from this meeting.**
- For future meetings should we have a public comment period on both days? There is no rule about both days, but there is the rule that it be on the federal registrar. Recommend that the DFO make an appropriate determination for each meeting.

Review/Approve Meeting Minutes

- **Min for last meeting, the date for this meeting needs to be changed to the correct date. Also, in the second paragraph is should read "Members and BLM and FS officials in attendance".**
- **Meeting notes are approved.**

The RAC agreed to allow a brief comment from the Public.

- Willing to help with the health and welfare. Please take her card and she is willing to help anyway she can.