

# Steens Mountain Advisory Council

## **FINAL** November 13-14, 2014 Summary Minutes

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC) met November 13-14, 2014, in Burns, Oregon. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public. This document summarizes attendance, discussions that occurred and decisions made. 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.

### *Council members participating:*

Richard Jenkins (Recreational Permit Holder representative),  
David Bilyeu (Vice Chair, State Environmental representative, on the phone),  
Stacy Davies (Grazing Permittee representative),  
Pam Hardy (Dispersed Recreation representative, on the phone),  
Fred Otley (Private Landowner representative),  
Mark Bagett (Fish and Recreational Fishing representative),  
Cecil Dick (Burns Paiute Tribe Member representative),  
Leon Pielstick (Wild Horse Management representative), and  
Daniel Haak (Chair, Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation representative; Friday only).

### *Members not participating:*

Grazing Permittee (vacant),  
Private Landowner (vacant),  
Local Environmental representative (vacant),  
No Financial Interest representative (vacant),  
and State Liaison (vacant).

### *Other participants/observers/presenters:*

Jeff Rose (Burns BLM Associate District Manager, Thursday only),  
Jeff Fedrizzi (OR/WA BLM Fire Management Office, Thursday only),  
Rhonda Karges (Andrews/Steens Resource Area Field Manager), Designated Federal Official (DFO),  
Rod Klus (Hines District Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Thursday only),  
Chad Boyd (Rangeland Scientist, Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center, Thursday only),  
Chad Rott (Burns Interagency Fire Zone Fuels Specialist, Thursday only),  
Casey O'Connor (Burns Interagency Fire Zone Fire Planner, Thursday only),  
Angela Sitz (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist, on the phone, Thursday only),  
Dan Morse (Oregon Natural Desert Association, on the phone, Thursday only),  
John O'Connor (private citizen, Friday only),  
Brendan Cain (Burns District Manager), and  
Tara Martinak (Burns BLM Public Affairs Specialist/SMAC Coordinator).

### **NOVEMBER 13, 2014**

Tara Martinak opened the meeting with a review of the day's agenda and handouts provided to Council members/available to the public. Those in attendance introduced themselves before moving into the agenda.

Rhonda Karges asked each of the participants on the wildland fire use for natural resource benefit panel to introduce him/herself in further detail:

- Rod Klus: Been with ODFW for over 20 years and in Burns for the past 10 years as a Wildlife

- Biologist and now the District Biologist,
- Chad Boyd: Rangeland Ecologist with Eastern Oregon Agriculture Research Center (EOARC); lately been doing a lot of Sage Grouse work and most of Boyd's research deals with annual grasses and pre-fire fuel loading and how it affects post-fire recovery.
- Chad Rott: Been with the Burns Interagency Fire Zone (BIFZ) since 2001 and associated with fire for over 20 years; has been working with the Fire and Invasives Assessment Team most recently, which the SMAC will hear a great deal about in the future.
- Casey O'Connor: Started with the BIFZ in 1998 and has been involved with fire off and on since then.
- Jeff Rose: Started with EOARC in 1988 and came to the BLM as a Fire Ecologist a few years after that; is now the Burns BLM Associate District Manager (since 2011).
- Jeff Fedrizzi: has worked all over the west, even in the Burns District during the 1990s; resource benefit fires is a great and important topic.
- Angela Sitz: with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Ecological Services office in Bend; been working for FWS off and on since 1998; been working on Sage Grouse issues, primarily Candidate Conservation Agreements for the last four years.

Karges stated the SMAC has previously discussed wildland fire use for natural resource benefit and today will continue that conversation with the help of an expert panel. The agency has a "Go/No-Go" checklist to help determine when a natural wildfire could be used for natural resource benefit – basically, a 'let it burn' opportunity. The checklist helps the agency evaluate the overall risk of letting a fire burn.

Chad Boyd asked what the greater context is and what the SMAC is hoping to accomplish through the discussion. Overall, the SMAC would like a better understanding of why wildland fires are not more regularly used (allowed to burn) for natural resource benefit. Stacy Davies stated it seems that we spend too much money suppressing some fires that can do really well for the landscape. Why can't we let wildfires burn, especially in stage 2 and 3 juniper country?

Jeff Fedrizzi stated that BLM policy does indeed allow wildfires to burn, however, it is much more complex than just a 'yes' or 'no' decision. There are dozens of factors to include in determining if a 'let it burn' fire is safely and effectively possible. Our annual fire management plans need to highlight areas that are priorities for wildland fire use, and then we can look at those areas for pre-planning and potentially pre-treating for the possibility of a natural fire. The possibilities change on a daily, moment by moment basis, depending on weather and available resources (to name a few factors), so that is something important to remember, even for areas that are slated "ready to burn."

Jeff Rose stated it comes down to RISK – that is what the 'let it burn' decision is all about. It is much easier for the agencies to manage a small fire vs. a large fire. Larger fires automatically equal more risk, more time, more burning days, etc. Most 'let it burn' decisions result in a larger fire and we have to evaluate all the risks involved... where is the greatest penalty – in suppression or non-suppression?

Davies asked how we plan to prevent mega-fires in the future because suppressing every small fire is the opposite way to accomplish this. How do we get to a point where we can *use* fire for benefit? Rose stated that if we have some compartmentalized areas where we could absolutely hold a fire in a 'let it burn' situation, there would be more of a comfort level within the agency. The pre-work in some of these areas where a 'let it burn' fire would be possible and effective is absolutely necessary, important, and expensive – we are talking more time, more staff, more money. Casey O'Connor agreed with the value behind some secure boundaries where a fire could potentially be held, so if a fire was allowed to burn for natural resource benefit, there is some security in knowing it could actually be suppressed at safely and effectively at those points.

There was some discussion about wildfires from the 2014 season and which seemed appropriate for 'let it burn' or could have benefited from less suppression in some areas/on some flanks. Davies asked how to best communicate with the agency during a wildfire situation when private lands or grazing allotments are affected and the landowners/permittees would like the area to burn. Chad Rott stated a change in the culture of the fire community may be necessary... suppression is in a firefighter's blood. Fedrizzi said this type of communication and decision making must be made and in place ahead of time – PRE PLANNING, prior to the season, is the only way this could happen: get together, draw polygons on maps, make notes, document intentions and objectives, etc. Resource benefit fires are a tool, not the *only* tool, for fuels management – we need to figure out and evaluate what is the best tool for the job in each area. These are important discussions to have ahead of time with permittees and landowners.

Boyd stated that combining a "let burn" fire policy with a resource benefit policy could be complicated – you don't want to get into a situation where a 'let burn' fire gets out of control and ends up NOT being a benefit to resources. Davies emphasized the need for 'let burn' fires in wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) because of the strenuous policies governing those protected lands. Boyd stated that fire is going to be tougher and tougher to manage with the Sage Grouse "situation." We need to make careful distinctions of the areas we are "using" fire and be very specific about the resource benefits expected. Davies stated the solution to combatting mega-fires is to reduce fuels: create a mosaic of fuel loads by bringing fire back into the regime. Rose stated in any kind of 'let burn' situation, we need to be where we always have an outlet and be able to control the burn safely.

Davies stated everyone is in agreement that no one wants mega fires. For mid and high elevation areas, what is it going to take to use naturally caused fire for resource benefit? Davies understands the rationale comes down to risk to other resources...so, how do we minimize risk? Jeff Fedrizzi stated it takes a lot of preplanning and making sure resource objectives are clear ahead of season. Boyd highlighted there are both short and long term risks to evaluate and try to deal with in a fire use situation, and some of them may not be able to be minimized at all. Why not minimize risk by burning more areas through prescribed fire? Prescribed fire is a very technical and well planned out effort, which automatically minimizes a great deal of risk. Rose agreed and stated we can't rely heavily on fire use since we can't predict where lightning will strike. The atmosphere we are living under through the BLM has a de-emphasis on fire in the landscape because it is a very course tool – we are being asked to manage the landscape on a much finer scale. The key is definitely to build compartments and have areas *prepared* for a fire use situation. Preplanning! Fred Otely emphasized that too much rest for fuels is probably the biggest risk we face for the future.

There seems to be a varied response in the interpretation of managing for an ecosystem vs. managing for Sage Grouse habitat, in the short term and the long term. Davies supports managing overall for ecosystem health and letting the Sage Grouse 'stuff' fall into that.

----- BREAK -----

Cecil Dick introduced himself as the Burns Paiute Tribe Member representative. Cecil was born and raised in Harney County and has been on the Burns Paiute Tribal Council since 1988, save for a 5-year hiatus starting in 2008. Cecil said the Indians call the Steens Mountain "Cold Cold Mountain." He has worked for Bell-A grazing for over 32 years, so has experience with livestock, and is also a certified structure firefighter. The Council warmly welcomed Cecil to the SMAC.

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The discussion continued with review of one of the questions the SMAC members submitted ahead of time for the panel.

- Describe the prescription that would be followed, wind speed, humidity, temperature, etc. is it realistic that we could ever use wildfire as a treatment tool? Jeff Fedrizzi shared that prescription

fires are very complex and difficult to pinpoint in a description. It *is* realistic that we could use wildfire as a treatment tool; however, as said before, we have to be prepared ahead of time for it to be successful and safely executed. Pam Hardy suggested coming up with two or three very specific locations and going through the exercise of writing a “fire use” or “prescribed fire” plan for those areas – agree on some areas, do the preplanning and see how it works.

Otely stated that public and private entities need to be held responsible for catastrophic fuel loading. The parameter for good Sage Grouse cover is nothing more than “patchiness” of various fuels – the Steens Act encourages innovation and creative thinking, and we can’t continue on the same path we are on or Sage Grouse will be no more.

Regarding Hardy’s suggestion, Casey O’Connor stated the Steens Mountain Wilderness could be a good area to consider. There are fewer variables here, but it is still going to be difficult to confine a fire to this area. There are also several inholdings in the Wilderness that would need agreements in place to allow a fire use event. Cecil asked about the South Steens Allotment as a possibility. O’Connor took the SMAC through the Go/No Go checklist for that area. Concerns were holding lines along the river, do adjacent landowners want to participate, etc. Rose reiterated the bottom line is preparing some compartments for fire use – make the holding lines as bullet proof as possible (manage vegetation along the river, for example, to create an actual fuel break).

Angela Sitz stated she understands the risk associated with fire use. However, prescribed fire could have an important role in all elevations where there is an incursion of annual grasses. Plan, plan, plan and show the long-term benefits. Prescribed fire is not off the table – the size and the scale will determine the ability to manage those fires, and it is incredibly difficult to manage risk during a fire. Fedrizzi agreed completely and encouraged the SMAC to not get discouraged about wildland fire use, but to look at all the tools available for fuels management and know there are treatment options out there. Identifying resource objectives is hugely important. The Council discussed pretreatment options (designing a prescription) for what a prepared “compartment” might look like for a fire use event in the South Steens area.

Davies asked: what has kept the agency from doing more prescribed burning over the last decade? Sage Grouse lek proximity in some locations, which impedes any broadcast burning; policies for management within WSAs (mechanically piling trees); and funding and staff levels are a few of the challenges the agency is up against. Regardless, it is important to have the SMAC’s support for using fire as a management tool.

Rhonda Karges reminded the SMAC that the District is developing a strategy to look at each Fire Management Unit and the Sage Grouse strongholds and priorities we have for each of those areas – this is where our focus is and has to be, so the area that the SMAC is looking at right now (South Steens) for a pretreatment zone may not fall within our priorities due to Sage Grouse.

Fedrizzi spoke briefly about the Joint Fire Science Project (JFSP), and how it may be a good resource for implementing pretreatments for wildland fire use. The JFSP serves, among other things, to provide credible research tailored to the needs of fire and fuel managers. **Rose and Fedrizzi committed to gathering information about the JFSP, application deadlines for project funding, etc. and sharing that with the SMAC.** Vegetation response to prescribed fire 20 years later would be a great research project – suggested by Davies. Hardy suggested using master’s level students for some of the research work, with the funding through the JFSP. Cecil stated the SMAC should make a recommendation to continue exploring the possibility of utilizing the JFSP for a research and/or monitoring project.

Davies separated the conversation into two recommendations, one about pursuing the JFSP and the other about developing an area for a wildland fire use event.

After some discussion, Davies made a motion for the following recommendation (seconded by Fred Otley; consensus from all members in attendance; need consensus from Dan Haak at Friday's session):

- 1) The SMAC recommends the BLM create a pilot wildland fire use area on the Steens and the BLM design the boundaries and the fire breaks and the solutions to each of the go/no go questions that will allow BLM to meet predetermined objectives.

After additional discussion, Otley started a second motion, but it was deferred until the following day. See below.

#### **NOVEMBER 14, 2014**

Tara Martinak opened the meeting with an overview of the day's agenda and reminded everyone to sign in on the official attendance roster. Those in attendance introduced themselves before moving into the agenda.

#### **PREVIOUS DAY'S RECAP**

Rhonda reviewed the conversation from Thursday's session regarding wildland fire use for natural resource benefit. She highlighted the recommendation made by Davies as well. Karges reminded the group the District is developing a strategy to look at each Fire Management Unit and the Sage Grouse strongholds and priorities we have for each of those areas – this is where our focus is and has to be, so the area that the SMAC is looking at right now (South Steens) for a pretreatment zone/fire use may not fall within our priorities due to Sage Grouse. Cecil Dick stated that any recommendation that comes from the SMAC should be given heavier priority. Karges appreciated the input and gave the management perspective of having to prioritize District-wide, and that staff reaches as far as they possibly can across all priorities. There was additional conversation about when, where and why prescribed burning is used and how it is effective or not in various landscapes and situations. "Immediately suppress fire in all Sage Grouse habitat" – that is the direction we are currently getting for natural wildfires. Prescribed fire is a bit different, since resource objectives are outlined and planned for, which is why any opportunity for wildland fire use would have to be in a prepped/pretreated area.

Cecil asked where all the information is coming from for research and implementation for Sage Grouse – do all the agencies do their own thing 'in-house,' or is there some sort of measure for scientific certainty? Karges stated some of the data comes from the ODFW strategy for Sage Grouse, published scientific papers, etc. The BLM doesn't do research per say; we pull information and data from other resources that are scientific in nature. We are fortunate to have the EOARC here so we get local data – research true to our actual vegetation types, landscape, etc.

Cecil is interested in learning about the 5, 10, 20, 50 year plans for Steens Mountain. Karges stated we could talk more about that during the round table session.

After some discussion for clarification, including what a fire break should look like, Dan Haak agreed to the motion presented during Thursday's discussion regarding wildland fire use.

Fred Otley's motion from Thursday was modified by Stacy Davies and seconded by Leon Pielstick to reflect:

- 1) The SMAC recommends the BLM utilize the Joint Fire Science Project to organize/coordinate/recruit for and potentially fund a person, partner, group or organization to

analyze and report on the vegetative response in prescribed and natural fire areas in the Steens area from the past 25 years.

After some discussion such as how to possibly find and utilize a student for the research project associated with the JFSP and what the research project would look like, the SMAC members in attendance unanimously agreed to the motion as presented.

#### **REVIEW/APPROVE JUNE AND SEPTEMBER 2014 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion to approve the June 2014 meeting minutes as presented was made by Dick Jenkins and seconded by David Bilyeu. Motion passed unanimously. A motion to approve the September 2014 meeting minutes as presented was made by Leon Pielstick and seconded by Mark Bagett. Motion approved unanimously.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

John O'Connor, private citizen and Backcountry Horsemen member/chapter leader, talked to the SMAC about the work the Backcountry Horsemen have done on the Steens. The group is feeling frustrated that they can't accomplish as much as they would like in the area. They are currently applying for a grant that may help do some things on the ground, but finding volunteers is a challenge as well. O'Connor encourages the BLM to develop a place off the North Steens Loop Road for trailer parking/turnaround and horse keeping/unloading/corralling/etc. Port-a-potties are also needed in that area.

Leon Pielstick asked what the SMAC could do to help with the Backcountry Horsemen efforts. O'Connor said that showing support for the grant proposal, encouraging the BLM to develop the equine user site off the North Steens Loop Road, etc. – basically just being another entity that supports the work of the Backcountry Horsemen in the Steens Mountain area. Karges reminded the SMAC that the Backcountry Horsemen already work closely with the BLM on volunteer projects like trail maintenance. Pielstick emphasized the need for trails to be maintained (brushed/limbed) wide enough to accommodate pack stock. Stacy Davies reminded the group that the idea of the equine use development on the North Steens Loop Road was part of one of the alternatives in the Steens Mountain Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP).

On a side note, Karges noted the Cooperative Management Agreement at Pate Lake will end after this year, and the BLM will block public access to that area of private land at the close of the agreement.

On another side note, Cecil Dick suggested contracting out the road/traffic counters and data collection for the area. O'Connor also mentioned the possibility of using digital trail cameras.

#### **DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATE (Rhonda Karges)**

- 1) Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) Ruling on the Steens Mountain Travel Management Plan – Key Issues:
  - a. IBLA concluded that BLM's designation of Obscure Routes, Historical Routes, ATV Routes, and other routes does not violate the statutory prohibition against motorized off-road travel and construction of new motorized roads and trails. BLM has documented the existence of all of these routes as of October 30, 2000. Because there is no evidence that BLM has authorized the use or maintenance of any routes that never existed we find no statutory violation. So long as a route existed as a matter of record, the fact that it has become overgrown or otherwise has been reclaimed by natural processes, which affects the degree to which it might be restored to full use by blading or other means, does not render it a new route or its use a *facto* construction of new roads." Nor does BLM's authorization of blading or other maintenance of a route that existed at the time of ,

enactment of the Steens Act, either on the ground (although obscure) or as a matter of record (although apparently nonexistent), even where it dramatically improves the ability to follow the route on the landscape, constitute impermissible new construction. The use of any such route is not properly characterized as "off-road" within the meaning of the Act.

- b. IBLA stated, "We have scrutinized the methodology employed by BLM to determine existing routes, whether roads or trails, on the public lands in the CMPA. We acknowledge that BLM did not survey all of the routes designated as open to motorized travel on the ground. Nonetheless, we conclude that BLM's methodology for determining routes to be designated was appropriate to the task, and yielded complete and accurate results regarding existing routes from which it could be determined whether they were, in appropriate instances, in existence on October 30, 2000, in the case of the CMPA, or October 1976, in the case of the WSAs."
- 2) CRP – Based on the IBLA ruling, BLM has reconsidered all obscure routes and are analyzing them in a separate alternative (the No Action alternative shows all the obscure routes as open; Sub-Alternative B shows BLM's recommendation for the obscure routes: leaving ten segments open to the public; eight for administrative use only; one for only ATV use; and 14 for closure). The CRP EA will be released for another comment period in early January 2015, for comments only on new information added in the CRP.

Stacy Davies was concerned about the fact the BLM essentially "won" in court over the obscure routes, but is considering *closing* some of them through the CRP. Karges reiterated that the obscure routes were not considered or analyzed in the CRP until now, because of the IBLA ruling – there was an injunction on the obscure routes with the original IBLA ruling in 2007 and they need to be analyzed through the CRP to show we are doing a comprehensive look at travel management in order for the injunction to be lifted. Karges stated the bottom line is that we have to show a reasonable range of alternatives for travel management, including the obscure routes, to have a solid document that will survive potential litigation. Without that comprehensive range of alternatives, the BLM will lose a lawsuit based on process.

Dan Haak expressed concern that the BLM wasn't considering the SMAC's previous requests regarding if/when/how to close roads in the CRP. The SMAC developed a recommendation for road closure criteria and Haak felt this wasn't being utilized in the decisions regarding the obscure routes in the CRP. If IBLA put the obscure routes "back into existence" through their September ruling, why isn't the BLM using the SMAC criteria? Karges stated that is essentially what the BLM did – an analysis form was completed for each route, and even if the roads were visited in the past and "reviewed," there are no records to show that and we have to have that documentation to support a case in .

Davies changed the direction of the conversation to "how do we maintain roads?" Karges stated we *can* maintain roads, except for ways in WSA, which are maintained by passage of a vehicle. Davies asked for clarification of a vehicle. Tom Wilcox, Outdoor Recreation Planner for Wilderness, stated the real guidelines on ways within WSA are 1) no new surface disturbance, and 2) any use is temporary. Davies asked for clarification on surface disturbance. He also asked for a maintenance plan on every road within his allotments and agreements in place so those roads can be maintained. Karges stated the BLM engineers are looking at zoning the entire District for maintaining roads that we already know exist; the idea is that we will have an annual schedule for maintenance and can have accurate records for roads that are routinely used. Davies was concerned that there was no public input into the process and that the BLM would be the

only ones determining which roads would be maintained and when and how. Otley asked if it is the BLM's position that a Cooperative Agreement must be in place before a landowner can maintain a road on public land, even if the road is a route to private property. Karges stated yes, and encouraged anyone who is in that situation to apply for a Right of Way with the BLM, which will give the landowner more flexibility overall for use and maintenance.

- 3) Litigation Update - The BLM is working with Mr. Stroemple through an Alternative Dispute Resolution. Negotiations are continuing.
- 4) Moon Hill Prescribed Burn - The Moon Hill prescribed fire commenced Friday, September 12. The crew successfully held the fire within the containment lines, keeping spot fires to a minimum and small, while meeting objectives within the plan. The Fire Zone successfully burned 10,543 acres over four days.
- 5) Film Permit EA – The Burns District received a film permit application from a company that is filming a show called “Matt on the Run” for the Discovery Channel. For the show, three men will start at the Alvord Desert, hike to Mann Lake, hike up to the Steens summit, the hike down the ridge to Big Indian Gorge and down the gorge to eventually come out at Page Springs Campground approximately 4 days later. The three men will carry Go-Pro cameras to accomplish the filming necessary. There will be a helicopter that will fly overhead for aerial imagery. Because the activity is occurring in the Wilderness, an Environmental Assessment will be completed. Target start date for filming is December 15. This commercial activity falls within the exceptions as it will be promoting wilderness values.
- 6) South Steens Herd Gather EA – Waiting for final review from Karges; should be out for public review in January. This gather was discussed during the September 2014 SMAC conference call. See September 2014 minutes for details.
- 7) Wildland Fires –
  - a. Bone Creek Basin - Total acreage burned was 14,705; 10,880 was BLM and 3,825 was private. The fire started on September 15 and was contained on September 26. Aerially seeding and fence reconstruction are planned. Stacy Davies asked about a fence in this area and whether it was checked post-burn. **Karges wasn't sure, but agreed to look into the issue.**
  - b. Blitzen Crossing - The Blitzen Crossing fire started on September 15 and was 100% contained on September 26. Total acreage was 5,636. No rehabilitation is planned.

#### **MEMBER ROUND TABLE**

Leon Pielstick: Apologized for missing the September 2014 meeting. Regarding the use of PZP contraception for mares, where is this at? It doesn't seem to be effective, and Pielstick was wondering why this seemed to be a priority for the BLM. **Rob Sharp or Lisa Grant would have to answer those questions and the BLM will get back to Pielstick.**

Fred Otley: An Allotment Management Plan for one of their allotments is due to be written soon; there is a lot of fuel there and junipers coming in the riparian area – overall the allotment needs fire back in the system. The bottoms of many of their canyons also need to be burned because they are a death trap if a natural wildfire occurs there. Otley asked the BLM to consider and pursue a Cooperative Agreement with the Otley's and their allotments to include some of this necessary burning. The Steens Mountain Landowners Group has not met lately, but plans to get together soon.

Cecil Dick: In the interest of the Burns Paiute Tribe, what is the long term plan for the Steens? Roads? Recreation? Cultural sites? Fish? What is the general overall view for management and use for the Steens Mountain? Has the Steens Act proven to be a positive or a negative? Has it benefited the users, the people, adjacent neighbors, landowners, etc.? **Tara Martinak will provide the Steens Implementation EA to Cecil, as well as the Andrews/Steens RMP and the Niche Planning work done by the SMAC regarding the Steens area.**

David Bilyeu: The environmental constituency has talked a great deal about wildfire and Sage Grouse and maintains a lot of interest in the Sage Grouse Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendments and what that work will mean to fire policy in the future. The IBLA ruling on the Travel Management Plan and the obscure routes issues will continue to be of interest to environmental organizations, especially the Oregon Natural Desert Association. Bilyeu shared his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting in person due to weather conditions, but appreciated the opportunity to participate via conference call.

Pam Hardy: Hardy learned recently at a conference/presentation on climate change about how natural resource managers should pay attention to models of what might happen in their areas; some areas have very clear predictions. Central and eastern Oregon didn't haven't much for "radical" changes, however, some of the fallout from the places that ARE seeing big changes is that there will likely be an influx in population in areas that remain fairly static...which creates a lot more pressure regarding on use in recreational spaces. We need to continue discussing how to work with people to channel recreational enthusiasm in positive ways and be prepared for the long-term.

Hardy, in her new job with Oregon Wild, has spent a lot of time working on collaborative groups around the state. She has learned some really interesting things and would like to share them with the SMAC at a future meeting – how to make collaborative groups efficient, namely. One idea is utilizing social technology: as a group works through a difficult area ("edge" issues where there isn't complete agreement), document zones of agreement...what do we agree on that is true? With those zones of agreement, complete a project on the ground and create a starting place for accomplishments.

One of the problems with the SMAC is that it is very hard to catch up on where the Council has been or what they have done for the last 14 years, and utilizing the zones of agreement may be a good way to get better document of more concrete SMAC accomplishments. Collaborative groups also work very well with a skilled facilitator who takes the facilitator role on as their only job and makes the success of the group their top priority – works in the background to pick up the pieces and does the small things behind the scenes that really make a collaborative successful. Bilyeu recommended Hardy be on the next meeting agenda to discuss these ideas further.

Mark Bagett: Regarding wildland fire use and how it affects fisheries, Bagett remains interested and would like to learn more about it as the conversations continue.

On a side note, Otley asked how many Special Recreation Permits for commercial guides and outfitters are allowed in the Steens through the CRP? For hunting guides and outfitters, it is 5 per fiscal year in the Steens Mountain Wilderness. For all other types of permits, it is unlimited. Otley asked how many existing permits are there. Haakenson was only aware of 1, which is currently in application. Round Barn Visitor Center tours are classified differently because they are not in the Wilderness. **Otley clarified by asking how do sightseeing tour guides fall into the permitting system? Haakenson will find that information and get back to Otley.**

Stacy Davies: Has seen a lot of history and fought through a lot of public lands issues for a long time. He is more discouraged now than he has ever been. He hoped the Steens could be a model of doing things different and keeping it an example for sustainability and economics and the human element, but it

isn't happening. The vision of what "could be" isn't happening, and not just for the Steens area, but for all public lands. Davies hoped to pull the Steens out of the bureaucratic trap of "nothing happening." There was progress and success for a while, but we are at a long stall. Dick Jenkins said we just need to dig in deeper! Davies didn't feel the Steens was different and unique anymore and that it was just like any other public land that is at the mercy of politics and rules. Karges added that there are lots of people and lots of interests that the agency has to account for...we can't focus on one type of user or one side of a decision. The direction we are getting for management is not as local as it used to be, and that is a hindrance.

Dan Haak: Continues to be very active in the Off Highway Vehicle community; seeing some progress on the Forest Service side regarding travel management and nothing of concern with the BLM or the Steens area in particular. Haak stated he agrees with Davies on the burnout for excitement of the Steens and the unique opportunities that existed there.

### **2015 MEETING SCHEDULE**

The following meeting schedule was determined for the 2015 calendar year:

- January 29-30, 2015 in Burns, Oregon
- April 2-3, 2015 in Bend, Oregon
- June 11-12, 2015 in Frenchglen or Diamond, Oregon
- October 22-23, 2015 in Burns, Oregon

### **REVIEW FOLLOW UP ITEMS AND DEVELOP AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Future agenda/DFO topics:

- Road maintenance – history, TMP, SMAC road closure criteria, IBLA ruling, obscure routes, CRP
- Wildland fire use follow-up from November meeting (Rhonda Karges, DFO update)
- RMPA update/Sage Grouse (Rhonda Karges, DFO update)
- Collaborative Processes (Pam Hardy to lead)
- Brainstorm: how can the SMAC move forward with creative solutions to implement the Steens Act as it was originally intended? (Stacy Davies suggestion/lead)
- Re-elect Chair and Vice-Chair positions (January 2015 meeting)
- Page Springs Weir update (Rhonda Karges, DFO update)
- Beatys Butte Working Group update (Stacy Davies, member round table)
- Juniper development and marketing opportunities
- Issues regarding recreation at Pike Creek; need cadastral survey to see land ownership boundaries and such

Tara Martinak stated that no matter what we decide to put on the agenda, we need to determine if any work products are associated with agenda items or if a topic is just for discussion. This will help with the flow of the meeting and help the facilitator guide the group through the session.

The meeting adjourned around 11:30 a.m.

A full digital recording of this meeting is available upon request at the Burns District office.

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council approved these minutes on January 30, 2014.

Signed by Dan Haak, SMAC Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Pelstick (for Dan Haak)". The signature is written in a cursive style.