

Steens Mountain Advisory Council

FINAL October 22-23, 2015 Summary Minutes

The Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC) met October 22-23, 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 recuse themselves from the meeting when the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

Council members participating:

David Bilyeu (State Environmental representative),
Stacy Davies (Grazing Permittee representative),
Fred Otley (Private Landowner representative),
Leon Pielstick (Chair, Wild Horse Management representative),
Owyhee Weikel-Magden (Local Environmental representative),
Kali Wilson (Grazing Permittee),
Nathan Hovekamp (No Financial Interest representative).
Mark Baggett (Vice Chair, Fish and Recreational Fishing representative, Friday only), and
Richard Jenkins (Recreational Permit Holder representative),

Members not participating:

Rod Klus (State Liaison),
Karl Findling (Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation representative), and
Cecil Dick (Burns Paiute Tribe Member representative).

Other participants/observers/presenters:

John O'Connor (private citizen, Steens Mountain Backcountry Horsemen),
Colby Marshall (private citizen, Silvie's Valley Ranch),
Gerard LaBrecque (private citizen, Friday only),
Anna (last name not given; private citizen, Roaring Springs Ranch, Thursday only),
Rhonda Karges (Burns District BLM Andrews/Steens Resource Area Field Manager),
Brendan Cain (Burns District BLM District Manager) (Designated Federal Official (DFO)), and
Tara Thissell (Burns District BLM Public Affairs Specialist/SMAC Coordinator).

OCTOBER 22, 2015

Tara Thissell opened the meeting with appreciation for folks attending on time. After reviewing the meeting agenda and member information packets, SMAC members and others in attendance introduced themselves for the record.

Field Manager's update (Rhonda Karges)

Litigation update –

- Steens Comprehensive Recreation plan litigation was combined with the Steens Transportation Plan litigation so there is only one lawsuit there to deal with instead of two, since both cases covered the same issues.
- North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project (North Steens Project) – On September 28, the District Court signed a supplemental judgment that says BLM cannot use motorized or mechanized vehicles off road in Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) to implement the North Steens Project. The BLM has reviewed the North Steens Project Record of Decision and removed any reference to this type of activity. This ruling only affects the WSAs within the North Steens Project area as it is identified as an ecological restoration project. In order to remove trees in the

North Steens Project area, we have to stay ON roads...we can continue to cut with chainsaws and hand pile and burn those piles, but we aren't able to move off-road with equipment. Perhaps there are some unique solutions to this issue – mechanized machinery instead of a motorized vehicle?

- At the end of the BLM fiscal year, we report on “widgets.” One of those is reissuing term grazing permits and processing them through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The BLM has authority to use the Categorical Exclusion (CX) process through the NEPA to reissue permits in good standing. The Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) has protested these actions. The BLM is working on a response to the protest; these actions are essentially “pending” at this time on ONDA’s basis of ‘not enough data provided in the analysis to make a categorically excluded decision.’ Stacy Davies asked if the CX Authority had been challenged in court...Rhonda answered “not yet,” and that she thought the Burns District was the only place that has been using the CX Authority for permit renewals.
- There is currently litigation on the Kiger/Riddle Mountain Wild Horse Gather Environmental Assessment (EA). No stay was requested and the gather went forward. It was completed on November 6 with 139/62 horses gathered from Kiger and Riddle Herd Management Areas, respectively.

Other –

The South Steens Herd Management Area Population Management Plan was signed, approved and not appealed, so we are set to move forward with actions in the plan as opportunities and funding are available.

The Beattys Butte gather starts November 2, 2015, with 1400 horses planned for gather and removal from public rangelands.

Campbell Inholder Access (Nature’s Advocate) – have had some meetings with the project proponent and plan to relook at their proposal (with them) before moving forward. This may be a topic for discussion at the next SMAC meeting.

National Landscape Conservation System Sign Plan – the campground signs and portal signs have been ordered and will arrive on or before November 20.

Fire rehabilitation efforts – Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) efforts were completed on Holloway and Miller Homestead fires this year; last year of monitoring wrapped up as well; sprayed for cheat grass; seedings look good. Aerial weed treatments completed on House Creek fire; rehab efforts continue on the Bone Creek Basin fire area – the ONDA and Sierra Club helped do some planting and erosion control in that area; approximately 4200 acres were aerial seeded (wilderness) and 380 acres were drill-seeded in Bone Creek Basin fire area as well (weed treatments will happen in 2016). Stacy encouraged the BLM and Rangeland Management Specialists to reach out to permittees to help them find supplemental or alternative forage when their public allotments are damaged by wildfire.

North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project: Blitzen Stewardship Contract continues (in 4th year) – 5 units are complete and unit 6 is underway. Work continues at the Riddle Brothers Ranch historic site (juniper treatments). Continuing to cut and pile juniper in the Tombstone Pasture of the South Steens allotment as well.

Burns District Geologist Rick Wells discovered there are a couple of hazardous adits (abandoned mine shafts) on the east side of Steens Mountain (one near Pike Creek). We know they exist and we have to complete the NEPA process to implement any action on the ground to remedy these concerns. We have all the materials purchased and will get the adits addressed as soon as possible.

The Andrews/Steens staff completed Standards and Guidelines monitoring/review on over 800,000 acres

in fiscal year 2015!

Rhonda provided hard copies of the NEPA documents associated with the Greater Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan amendments to those interested.

Stacy inquired about the recreation season, visitor use, etc. Rhonda stated there will be a full recreation update at the first meeting in 2016.

Rhonda welcomed back to the Burns District, Michael Kelly, as the Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist for Recreation. Emily Erwin also joined the Burns District as the Planning and Environmental Coordinator, and Holly Orr returned to the Lands and Realty program.

Designated Federal Official update (Brendan Cain)

- Each Thursday, the U.S. Drought Monitoring Report is released; Harney County is listed as a D3 or “Deep Drought” – consistently since May 2014. We did get good precipitation throughout the summer and had a fairly moderate fire season. A handout on 2015 Burns Interagency Fire Zone stats was shared and reviewed.
- A few fire rehabilitation efforts were discussed. Emphasized the Invasive Plant Management EA and how valuable utilizing more herbicides will be in the future.
- Kiger/Riddle Mountain Herd Management Areas adoption – 113 horses adopted at “Kiger Khrome” event and the remaining are currently available for online adoption at www.blm.gov/adoptahorse. Adoption fees gathered at the in-person event were approximately \$93,000.
- On July 30, 2015, the Burns District celebrated the 30th anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System with a work project at the Riddle Brothers Ranch. The historic willow corral was reconstructed with help from the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, the Northwest Youth Corps, the Sierra Club, and a handful of local volunteers.
- OR/WA State Director Jerry Perez accepted a new position as the State Director for the California BLM.

Stacy Davies brought attention to a handout in the SMAC packets called “National Wild Horse & Burro Rangeland Management Coalition” and emphasized their efforts to urge Congress to address the existing over-population issues. The Coalition is made up of a wide range of sportsmen’s, livestock, wildlife, and land conservation organizations and professional societies who focus on commonsense, ecologically-sound approaches to managing horses and burros to promote healthy wildlife and rangelands for future generations.

After the Designated Federal Official update, the SMAC spent two hours at a “Greater Sage-grouse ‘not warranted’ finding” discussion/presentation at the Harney County Community Center (led/hosted by Paul Henson, Oregon State Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.).

No Livestock Grazing Area fencing

Rhonda Karges – we are working on the process for fencing within the wilderness. There are four alternatives – no decisions are being made, just discussion on ideas:

- Alternative A, No action: would not construct any new fence, but would continue to maintain existing fence.
- Alternative B, Construct fences based on topography (may have some on public lands and some on private lands), Proposed Action: fence construction would follow topographic features of the area surrounding the private inholdings. This is the proposed action because it makes the most sense on the ground.
- Alternative C: Fence constructed exactly on the property boundary line (requires cadastral

- survey).
- Alternative D: Fence constructed within wilderness (off-set from wilderness boundary, based mostly on topography, but only on public land) using minimum tools.

The EA reviews project design elements such as different types of fence materials (buck and pole, barbed wire, let down fence, some metal panels, etc.) that could/may be used; Sage-grouse nesting habitat concerns (timing of fence building); noxious weeds and invasive plant mitigation; cattleguard installation where necessary, etc.

Rhonda reviewed a map and discussed various fencing boundaries and options with the SMAC. In using topography to construct fences, the number of acres in the wilderness/No Livestock Grazing Area could be different than it is now. Extensive discussion occurred on fence boundaries and there was a significant emphasis on just using common sense in making a final decision. Stacy stated that is exactly what the SMAC should be doing: using common sense to come up with a creative solution for the fencing issue. The map was referred to several times, discussing the different colored lines, what each of them met, and exactly where they fell on the ground. Rhonda stated some of the fence that already exists in the area is not functional and would need to be removed and replaced (but maybe not on the exact same boundary).

Rhonda stated she met previously with the landowners with inholdings in the Steens Wilderness and will meet again with them in December to discuss their preferences for where the fence should be built, what makes sense, etc. Stacy stated it is important to really consider the snow conditions and how they could impact the effectiveness of what kind of fencing is used and where it is placed. Stacy asked how the SMAC could help and what is the timeline. Rhonda said she would like to have the EA out for public comment and a decision made in spring 2016. After the Decision, the fence lines have to be marked on the ground; then, cultural, botanical, wildlife and maybe cadastral surveys have to be done; then a contract has to be written and sent out for bid and award; hoping to get all this accomplished by the end of the fiscal year and just maybe begin construction in fall 2016 at the very earliest.

Owyhee asked about a letter the SMAC received in their packets and wondered if all the fence was built on private land, would the BLM still have to go through NEPA and the long timeline to get this accomplished? Yes, because any project using appropriated funds where the BLM is the decision maker (whether it is done on public land or not), must be held in review by the public and follow agency policy. The ONLY exception would be if the BLM could give funding for the work to the County and have them be the decision maker for the entire process. Anytime the BLM has any decision space or if there is any federal nexus, NEPA applies.

David Bilyeu asked why private landowners would be care one way or the other, regarding the fences existing on their private property vs. public land, if the timeline won't be more swift one way or another. Stacy stated the landowners want the fences to go up as quickly as possible and are open to any way that can happen. The typical BLM process doesn't fit comfortably with this issue – it needs a creative solution and something that works for everyone. If expediency is the goal and the BLM is hamstrung, is funding the issue for landowners and why they don't just build the fence themselves? Funding could be part of the problem, and the landowners would likely want to be reimbursed, however, the real issue is the recognition of accountability for the fence construction and maintenance by the BLM – the Steens Act states as such and it is important to the landowners for the BLM to accept and assume this responsibility.

Rhonda suggested “what if the private landowners did build the fence?” It would still be a federal nexus that would require NEPA, but perhaps we could do a CX and a Rangeland Agreement (Cooperative Management Agreements are authorized through the Steens Act, so this could be an option, too) for the fence maintenance. The CX process is much simpler than a standard EA, so could be timelier.

David said he doesn't hear a lot from his constituency about livestock intrusions into wilderness, but there is a lot of heartburn over any loss of acreage from the wilderness system. Stacy asked if a "no net loss" agreement would be acceptable to the environmental community... some acres lost in one area due to topography, but others gained nearby. David would need to bring constituents out to look at things on the ground for buyoff on that idea.

Owyhee wondered why Alternative D was not the proposed alternative. Rhonda stated from the strictest sense of the word in the Wilderness Act, we should not have 'installations' in wilderness. Also, we have to consider using minimum tools, which will prolong the effort and increase costs overall. This may, however, be an acceptable alternative to the environmental community.

Stacy wanted clarification on what all the options might be – through discussion and thinking out loud, the SMAC made the following list:

- Continue with the NEPA process
- Find/provide alternative forage/AUMs for the landowners who want to graze their inholdings until fences are built
- Federal funds to a non-governmental organization/third party for fence building
- Do a Cooperative Management agreement for the construction and solicit directed appropriations from Congress for fences (no NEPA for directed appropriation)
- BLM provide herding (via contract) for livestock grazing on inholdings until fences are built, or in perpetuity
- BLM pay private landowner to do their own herding
- Non-governmental organization/third party pay for the fences and construct them
- Landowner construct fences and be reimbursed by BLM
- Lease/purchase just grazing rights from landowners (this would change the tax base of the inholdings to non-ag deferral; would have a recreation base)
- Lease grazing from landowners with part of the lease terms being for the permittee/landowner to construct fences (BLM pays a higher lease price for this term)
- BLM provides monetary reimbursement for non-graze in No Livestock Grazing Area inholdings

BREAK

Public comment

John O'Connor – a temporary solution to the fencing issue might be to have the BLM figure out an AUM exchange for the current inholders who aren't able to use their unfenced properties at this point. The SMAC thought this was a creative option to consider. Then, once the fences are constructed, withdraw the inholdings from ever being able to be purchased by the BLM so they can always retain their ownership rights. There is still quite a bit of fence in the No Livestock Grazing Area that needs to be rolled up and removed. Stacy asked John if the remaining fence is still usable – yes, much of it could be reused, especially the posts. John also stated that in many areas when fencing is an issue, people just herd their animals. There are many places doing this successfully. John will find some contacts for reference and share them with Stacy.

The Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument came to be when President Clinton left office...but not one single AUM was lost there. The Steens is unique because of the No Livestock Grazing Area, but a good bit of AUMs still exist and aren't lost in the rest of the wilderness.

Colby Marshall – appreciates the SMAC's interest in and the BLM's efforts to work through issue of fencing in the Steens Mountain Wilderness. Colby reiterated the intent of the Steens Act and all the agreements that were made through that Act – and how those agreements were never intended to change how private lands were used before and after October of 2000.

Silvies Valley Ranch/Nature's Advocate has been requesting the BLM carry out its fencing responsibilities for several years –written conversations, phone calls, etc. We've had a great amount of dialogue without any action and have missed out on economic opportunities on the private inholdings – which does directly against the intent of the Steens Act. Silvies Valley Ranch does not want to slow or inhibit the forward progression of the fencing conversation and EA process and wants to serve as a resource to the agency to provide advisement on where to put fences and of which type (will also provide a 'free of charge' easement for BLM access for fence construction and maintenance). The fencing around Fish Creek and the edge-holding piece for Nature's Advocate are of most importance. Colby said that any fencing material should hold up under extreme conditions (weather); should prevent incursion of horses onto private land; and, should keep livestock off public land. A GPS property boundary is acceptable to Nature's Advocate, as opposed to the more costly cadastral survey.

The Steens Act is clear...cooperative management is KEY. Cooperative Management Agreements are defined in the Act and can provide the BLM with a significant amount of flexibility to move forward on planning and implementation of projects on the ground.

John O'Connor asked Colby if the Nature's Advocate inholdings were fenced, how they would use them. Colby responded with "however we want." John agreed with the value of private property rights and emphasized the need to always protect resources. Colby refocused the conversation to the intents of the Steens Act and the fact that private property rights should be the same now as they were before the Act was passed. Colby further discussed current access to private inholdings and trailing permits. Silvies Valley Ranch and Nature's Advocate very much appreciate the SMAC's position on motorized access and are working very closely with the BLM on an EA to discuss just that.

No Livestock Grazing Area fencing (cont.)

Fred emphasized the need to use fencing materials and techniques that can withstand the weather conditions on the Steens.

Stacy asked around the table to see which SMAC members generally support which draft alternative in the fencing EA.

- Nathan Hovekamp agreed most with Alternative B (using topography to determine fence locations), with no net loss to acres in Wilderness, but is also interested in the herding idea and not building fence at all.
- David Bilyeu stated Alternative B would take some real information and education with his constituents to help with the understanding of the topography issues – the loss of any acres of wilderness will be a problem. David definitely wants buy-in on any decision from his constituents and to avoid litigation in the future. Alternative C would be agreeable, but maybe not make the most sense. Alternative D would not be suitable to the environmental community.
- Kali Wilson stated it would be a shame to put any fence on the mountain that would have to be reconstructed every year because it was not put in a 'smart' area – most supports Alternative B.
- Dick Jenkins said it seemed like there was a lot of ground work to do before even considering any of the alternatives – especially need some cooperation from the environmental groups.
- Owyhee Weikel-Magden recognizes the difficulty of fence maintenance and the long term challenges any installation presents. As a general concept, Owyhee supports Alternative B, but wants to know if the landowners support where those fence lines will be; and there can be no net loss to acres on either side (public and private lands).
- Leon Pielstick is most in favor of Alternative B, but also supports the herding concept.
- Stacy Davies agreed most with Alternative B, as long as there is no net loss to acres. The opportunity is there for litigation either way, but with equal arguments on both sides. Alternative C isn't the best solution, but could legally get through the system. Herding could be an option – a

complicated one – but could happen. Although this isn't common in our country, it is successful in many other parts of the world.

- Fred Otley thinks using Cooperative Agreements and pushing for no net loss of acreage is the best way to go. Though it isn't necessarily just an acres issue...the BLM needs to pay attention to all resource values gained and lost (public/private).

With the information provided by the SMAC, Rhonda wants to look through the alternatives and work with GIS to actually determine any acreage changes with the proposed fence lines. We will continue moving forward with the process. Stacy inquired about any other creative solutions or thoughts. Some clarifying discussion occurred, and more talk around the existing list of ideas. Rhonda reminded the group that private inholders are not the only ones affected by decisions made in this process – the public and public lands will also be impacted in some way. Fred agreed and said there are options that would be a win-win for everyone.

The meeting adjourned for the afternoon at this point in the discussion.

OCTOBER 23, 2015

Tara Thissell opened the meeting and SMAC members and others in attendance introduced themselves for the record. Tara introduced Aimee Kent, Office Automation Assistant for the Burns District. Aimee may be helping with SMAC minutes in the future.

Previous day recap

SMAC Chairperson, Leon Pielstick, gave a quick summary of the No Livestock Grazing Area fencing discussion and together the group reviewed the creative solutions list compiled the previous day. Some of the conversation was repeated to loop-in SMAC member Mark Bagett (attending Friday session only).

Around the table for a recap of the dinner conversation and preference on which creative solution:

- Stacy Davies: For 15 years, it seemed that this problem might go away with a land exchange or purchase. That never happened and probably won't, so here we are – this issue has to be dealt with. Property has multiple layers of value. A purchase for just the grazing rights may be an option; however it would be a complicated process to determine values for sale vs. values that remain with the base property. One of two things will likely happen: either the BLM and landowners will come to an agreement on a creative way to fund and build the fence; or the BLM goes down the path of doing an EA and it takes a long time and livestock graze the No Livestock Grazing Area for the next several years. Or, could you lease the grazing from the landowners with one of the terms of the lease be for the landowner to construct fences – another idea.
- Owyhee Weikel-Magden: Learned a lot of the history on this issue over dinner last evening; does not want to completely push-away the option of herding. If the environmental community could be brought into the fold up front about where the fence may lie, this may prevent potential litigation in the future. It doesn't seem right for the landowner to lose any land by putting the fence on private property, and even though installations aren't "allowed" in the wilderness, if everyone agrees on it, perhaps there can be an informal agreement that won't be brought to court. If we are stuck building a fence, there needs to be a genuine effort to make the best possible agreement and situation for all the stakeholders.
- Mark Bagett: Given all the options, it seems most agreeable to figure out a permanent easement with monetary reimbursement or alternative forage/AUM exchange.
- Kali Wilson: Agrees that the BLM and landowners need further discussion on the issue, and certainly about the SMAC's list of creative solutions. It doesn't seem to be in the landowners' best time interest to go through the NEPA process.
- David Bilyeu: Did not think all the proposed fences – some, but not all – would be an issue with the environmental community. Fencing in general is an unfortunate thing. It changes the feel of

the mountain in a way and leaves it not quite like it was at the time the Steens Act was passed. David cannot find a quick solution for how to get federal funds into private hands to accomplish this task! One of the interim solutions should be offered to protect the No Livestock Grazing Area. The idea of purchasing grazing rights should definitely be considered and discussed with the landowners. Regarding David's constituents, he wants to work hard on finding a way to make something with the fencing issue agreeable and acceptable on all fronts. The major sticking point will be losing any acres in the Wilderness. It will be helpful to bring some folks on the ground see what their suggestions might be. Rhonda said the ONDA has provided input on that very subject, but their input doesn't necessarily work the best for on the ground conditions.

- Nathan Hovekamp: Appreciates the great comments so far. Representing no financial interest, Nathan wants to think and talk about the land itself and other resources out there. With the fencing, it isn't necessarily a desirable thing, but a necessity. Any fence should follow topography – that just makes the most sense, and it would be really stupid to put a fence where maintenance is a nightmare and unrealistic. Where the wilderness boundary seems hard and congressionally fixed, the boundary of the No Livestock Grazing Area and private property could potentially be massaged to achieve no net loss and accommodate the needs on the ground.
- Fred Otley: Different types of fence may be required in different areas (panels in some areas; regular fencing in others) – this will be important to include in discussions with landowners and in the EA. The BLM should also say that the old, established fence lines that were based on topography will stay in place...they were established before the Steens Act through agreements with landowners.

Stacy asked if there a place for an intermediary in the discussions between the BLM and the landowners affected in this situation, and if so, who would that be. Tara summarized the discussion and how they could move forward with a recommendation either now, or at the January 2016 meeting. David Bilyeu felt the recommendation for now would be to make sure the SMAC's list of creative solutions is brought to the December meeting between the BLM and the landowners. A bit of discussion circled around easements, purchases, property rights, maintenance, liabilities, and agreements.

Stacy motioned the following recommendation: **Meet with private landowners regarding the No Livestock Grazing Area fencing issue and provide a report or summary on that meeting to the SMAC, prior to their January 28-29, 2016.** Owyhee seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

Stacy motioned the following recommendation: **Include at least one member of the SMAC in the meeting with private landowners to present creative solutions to the No Livestock Grazing Area fencing issue as compiled by the SMAC.** Leon seconded the motion. Discussion: Rhonda stated a good discussion would include all parties – the landowners and anyone that might litigate in this situation. David thinks the landowners have a real interest in involving the SMAC. All in favor. Motion approved.

The landowners/BLM meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 4, at 1:00 p.m.

Prioritizing projects for the Steens Mountain Comprehensive Recreation Plan

A handout was provided that reviews projects proposed for implementation through the Steens Mountain Comprehensive Recreation Plan. It seemed the best idea to prioritize the projects in each category first, and then take the top choice from each category to prioritize overall. David asked if there were funding issues to consider. Rhonda said not at this point, and to just focus on what the group felt was most important. This discussion won't get into the details of what the signs will look like or how the information will be read or presented – just overall priorities.

Information, signing and interpretation:

- 1) Fields kiosk – to be located in Fields, near the Fields Station. Already have agreement with the

owners of the Fields Station; need easement or Cooperative Management Agreement; will provide map of the area, recreation information, etc.

- 2) South Loop kiosk – to be located at the intersection of the South Loop road and Highway 205; will provide a map of the area, recreation information, etc.

Dick Jenkins wanted to make sure we don't lose our brochures or written information with the introduction of new kiosks.

New campgrounds:

- 1) North Steens Equestrian Campground
- 2) Penland Campground

BREAK

Public comment

Gerard Joseph LaBrecque (Joseph's Juniper, Inc.) – contractor for the Blitzen Stewardship Project; wants to spend more time listening to the meeting before sharing information or providing input. Owyhee asked if we could make a bit of time later in the meeting to see how the ruling on the North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project would affect operations like Gerard's. Gerard said the ruling doesn't really affect him or the company since the Blitzen Stewardship Project doesn't deal with Wilderness Study Areas. He does feel there are ways around the ruling – like horse logging or using mini-towers to yard trees through the air. Fred encouraged the BLM to work with Gerard as much as possible, especially while he is in the area on the Steens. While he has his equipment down there, maybe see what other work is within his reach.

Prioritizing projects for the Steens Mountain Comprehensive Recreation Plan (cont.)

Existing developed campgrounds:

- 1) At South Steens Equestrian – install a day-use parking area 100' by 100' in the front of the campground. (Mark Bagett asked if it was common practice to install round pens in campgrounds – yes, but only for dedicated equestrian areas (not in general/family campgrounds).) Also a number one priority, at South Steens Family campground – enlarge the day-use parking area to approximately 20' by 75'.
- 2) At South Steens Family – install a camping pad, potable water, and sanitation tanks for a camp host.*
- 3) At Fish Lake Campground – develop camp host site with camping pad, potable water and sanitation tanks below ground.*

*It is difficult to get campground hosts at the remote sites at Fish Lake or South Steens Campground since there are no electrical hook-ups.

Overlooks:

- 1) Upgrade East Rim and Kiger Gorge overlook trails to be accessible paths.
- 2) Enlarge East Rim and Kiger Gorge parking areas to accommodate 8 more vehicles.

Dick discussed the emphasis of the addressing handicap needs and making the trails more accessible to most users. Fred agreed, and David added it would be great to focus use on a single accessible area for safety and thus, stop some of the multiple path developments. Kali added if the parking lots were developed first, that might entice more people to come to those areas – the trails should be upgraded first to accommodate that potential use.

Access points:

- 1) Keuny and Black Canyon – develop approach off Highway 205; construct a road and parking

- area; install an information sign
- 2) Three Mile Canyon – already has an approach; develop parking area; install signs to notify public where the private land boundary is.

Water developments:

- 1) Riddle Brothers Pipeline Ext. and pump house – extend a pipeline from the current Riddle Brothers Ranch well to provide water to the Honeymoon Cabin. Rhonda added that the BLM is currently looking into maintaining the Ranch access road, and it only makes sense to put the pipe in before/during the road maintenance.
- 2) Cold Springs re-development – clean out the existing head box; maintain existing overflow pond. Fred asked if the box would be upgraded at all, as he would like to see it done for longevity. Rhonda stated it would only be cleaned out and left as-is, as long as it is functioning in its original condition.

Vault restrooms:

- 1) Turkey foot junction – install restroom (will be designed in a way that blends in with the surrounding environment...will be very unique)
- 2) Wildland Juniper Management Area – install restroom
- 3) South Steens Loop Road – install restroom

Dick Jenkins said he frequently hears compliments on how clean the existing restrooms are at BLM sites in the Burns District. Fred wanted to make sure no matter where a restroom is installed, that waste/garbage facilities are included.

New trails:

- 1) Levi Brinkley – trail already exists on the ground; place a memorial plaque for Levi Brinkley and Prineville Hot Shots
- 2) Fred Riddle – trail already exists on the ground; brush removal off the closed two-track road.
- 3) Huffman – trail already exists on the ground; David wondered why this trail needed to be marked. Since this is near Three Mile Canyon, there is a very close proximity to private land. Signage might be important to keep users on public land.

After reviewing all the number one priorities, the SMAC made this overall priority list:

- 1) Turkey foot junction vault restroom
- 2) North Steens Equestrian Campground
- 3) East Rim and Kiger Gorge trail accessibility upgrades

Member round table

- Leon Pielstick – for the horses that come off of Beatys Butte, they are going to hopefully be made available for some research projects this winter/spring.
- Fred Otley – Medusahead remains a topic of concern. Fred appreciated the field trip from the June meeting and wanted to stress the priority of treating the infestations on the North Steens Loop Road. Rhonda said funding has been set aside particularly for that effort. Fred reiterated the importance of intense and frequent treatment on Medusahead and having the necessary tools/herbicides available for use. *Side note:* Tara Thissell wanted to make sure Fred noticed the information in the SMAC packets on the Malheur Wire Lettuce – follow up from the previous meeting.
- David Bilyeu – has heard some conversation about the quality of the inventory between districts regarding lands with wilderness characteristics. There has also been quite a bit of discussion on the Greater Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan amendments and a possible exemption for energy developments. David hasn't read the document to verify the rumor about the exemption.

Brendan Cain offered there are some exemptions on geothermal and wind energy developments in priority habitat. David added a recent conversation with ONDA resulted in the question about having a public call-in line to SMAC meetings to oblige those who cannot attend in person. This may be a possibility. David will follow up with ONDA to see about their further interest.

- Nathan Hovekamp – inquired about resolution on whether or not to have a SMAC person attend the BLM/private landowner meeting in December. Yes...will address following the round table session.

David volunteered to attend the BLM/landowners meeting on behalf of the SMAC. Rhonda will get in touch with the landowners and give them a heads up about David's inclusion.

June meeting minutes approval

Brendan Cain suggested a couple of grammatical and typographical corrections, Leon Pielstick asked for a correction on his information about mare spaying (p. 9), and Kali Wilson added her attendance at the June meeting on Thursday only (p. 1). With these amendments, Leon motioned to approve the minutes. Owyhee seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion approved.

2016 Meeting Schedule

January 28-29, 2016 in Burns, Oregon

April 28-29, 2016 in Bend, Oregon

June 16-17, 2016 in Frenchglen, Oregon

September 29-30, 2016 in Frenchglen or Burns, Oregon

Next meeting

No Livestock Grazing Area fencing – potential for SMAC recommendation?

Recreation/visitor season use report – Field Manager's update

NLCS Sign Plan– Field Manager's update

Niche planning/collaborative processes – tentative

Campbell Inholder Access – Field Manager's update

Comprehensive Recreation Plan projects implementation – Field Manager's update

- Design of the Turkey Foot vault restroom (potentially not until the April 2016 meeting, or later)
- Kiosk design
- Fact sheet text and maps

Tara encouraged the SMAC to bring meeting topics to the BLM from their constituents.

David inquired about the SMAC's vacant "Dispersed Recreation" representative position and encouraged SMAC members to reach out and have names of interested people in the hopper, ready to apply when the position is open for application. **Tara will work with the State Office to determine when the announcement will go out to the public.**

Fred Otley thanked Gerard LaBrecque (Joseph's Juniper, Inc.) and Colby Marshall (Silvies Valley Ranch) for their attendance.

Nathan Hovekamp motioned to adjourn the meeting. Fred Otley seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned. 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 April 29, 2016.

Signed by Leon Pielstick, SMAC Chair:

