

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council Meeting

Aug. 21, 2019

Meeting convened at 9 a.m. via teleconference

Members present: Jason Kesling, Richard Watts, Jeremy Austin, Ken Poole, Ken Kestner, Tim Davis, Don Hodge, Mark Owens, Anne Hiller Clark

Agency Reps and others: Todd Forbes, Lakeview District Manager and Designated Federal Official; Jeff Rose, Burns BLM District Manager; Don Gonzalez, Vale BLM District Manager; Larisa Bogardus, Vale BLM PAO; Brent Grasty, Vale BLM Planner

Public: Susie Koppert, rockhound; Michael O'Casey

NOTE: Due to the lack of a quorum, the RAC could discuss items on the agenda, but could not vote on them.

Southeastern Oregon Resource Mgt. Plan Amendment

Chairman Jason Kesling reminded everyone they were sent a draft comment letter via email to start the discussion with.

How will we address that these comments are not unanimous? The letter will note there are some discrepancies between the RAC recommendations and Table 1 of Alternative D.

Brent Grasty said the district can stipulate the RAC didn't address OHV use outside lands with wilderness characteristics and didn't address grazing at all.

A revised comment letter was sent to the group for final review during the meeting. Once the comment letter is finalized, an electronic copy will be submitted to eplanning and RAC members. A signed hard copy will be submitted to Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez.

Time for public comment and response

None.

Finalize formal comments regarding the Southeastern Oregon Resource Mgt. Plan Amendment to be submitted by the RAC

Final document attached. Approved by consensus, as the RAC lacked a quorum for a formal vote.

Round table

General discussion of vacancies and recruitment.

Jason Kesling asked about Sen. Ron Wyden's work on the Owyhee Basin Stewardship legislation. Wyden staffer Kathleen Cathey said the plan is to draft a bill by November to avoid the proposed monument designation.

Jason Kesling said the tribes would like to discuss the proposal with Vale BLM. Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez said it would be more effective for tribal representatives attended one of the Owyhee meetings to discuss it. Kathleen Cathey added that the senator plans to meet with the tribes. The intent

of the legislation is to help the economy while protecting the environment against encroachment. There is some potential for loop roads to accommodate the volume of traffic into the area from Idaho. A draft bill will be sent to the McDermitt and Burns Paiute tribes. Mark Owens expressed concern that part of Harney County will be included in the legislation.

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council

Donald Gonzalez
District Manager
Vale District, Bureau of Land Management
100 Oregon St,
Vale, Oregon 97918
August 28th, 2019

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

As Chair of the Southeast Oregon Resources Advisory Council (SEORAC), the council has asked that I provide comments on the Draft Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft EIS (EIS). I would like to point out some of the activities that the SEORAC has worked on while creating a methodology that identifies public lands in the planning area which should be considered for protection of wilderness characteristics.

- The 2014 SEORAC provided recommendations to BLM on a methodology to identify public lands outside of Wilderness Study Areas which would receive protections for wilderness characteristics. BLM utilized those recommendations to develop BLM's Alternative D in the Draft Southeastern Oregon RMP Amendment/EIS. Using this methodology, identified units would be managed to maintain or protect wilderness characteristics. The spring 2018 SEORAC supports selecting Alternative D with regard to which units were identified to have protection for wilderness characteristics.
- The 2014 SEORAC supported by unanimous vote the BLM's use of vegetation condition, hydrologic function and connectivity in the development of a methodology for evaluating each of 76 units found to possess wilderness characteristics. The recommendation intentionally proposed a methodology that would provide flexibility for BLM to implement management actions that could improve resource conditions while maintaining wilderness characteristics. In other words, the SEORAC did not suggest specific management actions, but deferred to BLM management on how to accomplish restoration while protecting the wilderness characteristics of an individual unit.
- Alternative D identified 33 wilderness characteristics units for protection based on the SEORAC's 2014 recommendation to consider the hydrologic function, vegetative condition and connectivity to other areas which possess wilderness characteristics and values.
- The SEORAC's recommendations encouraged an approach that would support restoration efforts where necessary and protect areas that are largely intact, while recognizing the importance of - and relationship to - resources in adjacent areas that support the movement of wildlife and other desirable species and activities.
- The SEORAC has also reviewed BLM's proposed management allocations and actions for wilderness characteristics units identified for protection in the Draft EIS and RMP Amendment. Those actions in protected units are the same in Alternative D as well as in Alternatives B and C. A majority of the fall 2018 SEORAC supports these proposed management actions as it pertain to lands with wilderness characteristics that are identified for protection.

I would like to further report, that SEORAC has met and discussed the RAC's comment on the Draft EIS on two separate occasions: on June 13th in our regularly scheduled meeting and August 21st on a phone

conference. The result of the two meetings has been that the RAC continues to support Alternative D as the BLM's future Final EIS and Proposed RMP Amendment. Specifically, the SEORMP Amendment addresses several issues; however, the SEORAC only provided recommendations on a) a process to identify units for protection of wilderness characteristics and b) future land use planning level allocations which would protect those wilderness characteristics resources. The SEORAC could not come to consensus to fully endorse Alternative D.

The RAC has spent more than 8 years discussing a methodology and has fine-tuned a recommendation for management of wilderness characteristics. BLM adopted these concepts in Alternative D and a majority of the SEORAC members support this approach. It is worth noting that this process has taken a diverse group of individuals and created an agreed methodology to determine which public lands possessing wilderness characteristic are important to protect.

If there are questions regarding this recommendation, please contact the SEORAC at any time.

Sincerely,



Jason Kesling, Chair
Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council

Current Members

Ken Poole, Vice Chair
Don Hodge
Richard Watts
Tim Davis
Jeremy Austin
Anne Hiller Clark

Stan Shepardson
Mark Owens
Ken Kestner
Jason Radinovich

2018 Members

Don Hodge
Ken Poole
Brent Beverly
Sean Cunningham
Ralph Stout
Dan Morse
Julie Weikel
Mia Sheppard

Pete Runnels
Jim Bishop
Phil Milburn
Anne Hiller Clark
Richard Watts
Stan Shepardson