

**Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council**  
**October 16-17, 2017**  
**Lakeview, OR**

**October 16, 2017**

**Present:** SEORAC members Mia Sheppard, Slim Stout, Dan Morse, Ken Poole, Richard Watts, Don Hodge, and Pete Runnels; Don Gonzales, Vale DM and SEORAC DFO; Jeff Rose, Burns DM; James Price, Lakeview BLM; Larisa Bogardus, Lakeview BLM; Todd Forbes, Lakeview BLM; Phil D'Amo, Lakeview BLM; Susie Koppert, public.

Field trip to Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Center, then visit Eagle Butte Sunstone Mine near Plush in the afternoon. No business conducted.

**October 17, 2017**

**Meeting called to order at 8:05 a.m.**

**Present:** SEORAC members Mia Sheppard, Slim Stout, Dan Morse, Ken Poole, Richard Watts, Don Hodges, Pete Runnels, and Brent Beverly via telephone; Don Gonzales, Vale DM and SEORAC DFO; Jeff Rose, Burns DM; Loretta Chandler, Lakeview ADM; Brent Grasty, Vale BLM; Larisa Bogardus, Lakeview BLM; Todd Forbes, Lakeview BLM; Phil D'Amo, Lakeview BLM; Josef Porter, Lakeview BLM; Susie Koppert, public.

**Unable to approve prior meeting minutes due to lack of a quorum.**

**Designated Federal Official and Agency updates**

- Don Gonzalez, Vale BLM District BLM Manager (briefing attached)
  - Richard Watts asked why sage grouse numbers were down, yet population figures were up. Jeff Rose said the male counts are down, as is potential cover due to drought.
  - Dan Morse asked when the Grassy Mountain Plan of Operations would be make public. Don Gonzalez said cons identified
  - Ken Poole asked about the Pelican Point airstrip, which is popular among recreational pilots and has experienced several crashes. Don Gonzales said there are problems with access due to a Wilderness Study Area. Don Hodge and Richard Watts said the county would be willing to work with landowners and the BLM to address this.
- Jeff Rose, Burns BLM District Manager (briefing attached)
  - There is considerable interest in mountain biking opportunities outside the Bend area, and also Portland and Boise. BLM staff are working with Oregon parks and trails groups to identify opportunities for development.
  - Dan Morse asked when the Oregon sage grouse AIM data would be posted. Jeff Rose replied the data was in the process of being entered.
- Loretta Chandler, Lakeview BLM Associate District Manager (briefing attached)
  - Todd Forbes reported the RAC's letter regarding management of the Highway Well rest area was presented to the Lake County Commissioners and incorporated in the process of a jurisdictional transfer back to ODOT which is now pending approval.

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**Fire Season 2017**

Vale District had fewer fires than 2017, mostly lightning-caused on the Malheur Resource Area and human-caused on the Baker Resource Area. They had trouble staffing engines, four were not staffed all season. Rural Fire Protection Associations played a key role in suppression. 35,000 acres of fire was in sage grouse habitat, but only 25 acres in a sage grouse focal area. Restoration from 2016 fires is primarily focused on invasive grasses and vegetation. Ranchers are concerned about fuel loads for 2018.

Burns had 60 fires impacting 60,000 acres. Emergency Stabilization and Recovery plans are at the WO for review. Many fire personnel assisted with late-season wildfires in California.

Lakeview had a very active fire season, with the Ana Fire threatening homes and impacting a sage grouse priority area of concern.

**Josef Porter, BLM, gave a presentation regarding the agency's sage grouse Causal Factors Analysis process.**

**(PPT attached)**

The Causal Factor Analysis process is a tool that guides assessment of factors. Lakeview's Picture Rock PAC was identified for a soft trigger in May. A CFA team looked at size, conifers, infrastructure, grazing, weeds, recreation and other factors. Primary factors appear to be the isolation of the PAC, its size (40,000 acres, compared to a typical PAC size of 330,000 acres) and juniper encroachment (The Ana Fire occurred in July and will likely impact next year's review). Teams are comprised of GIS, biologists, field managers, range, botany and recreation staff, and partners, including ODFW and FWS.

Don Gonzalez explained hard-trigger analyses are more state-office driven analyses, while soft triggers are more local. It may be difficult for the RAC to keep up with all analyses. It might be easier to identify particular PACs to monitor, or how to participate in the review process.

Dan Morse said he's concerned the public has no ability to participate in the CFA evaluations or actions, which don't consider the economic impacts on communities. He suggested focusing on hard triggers or pivotal action items.

Don Gonzalez suggested the RAC focus on population factors rather than habitat, which is usually affected by fire, over which there is little control. For example, the Cowl Lakes PAC hit a hard trigger due to habitat loss.

Todd Forbes noted that many actions identified must still go through the NEPA process, which offers the public and the RAC opportunities to provide feedback, before they are implemented.

Slim Stout noted that stakeholder groups like the OHC community would be very interested in how PACs are determined. He felt there were 2 points: 1.) RAC input into the CFA itself and whether or not something was overlooked; and 2.) Potentially participating in the monitoring process.

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Dan Morse noted that the Trout Creek CFA recommended seeding non-native vegetation where necessary for fuel breaks and roads. He's concerned it's too vague in terms of what the BLM can do and suggested the analysis format be changed to note which actions would require NEPA, and also more detail regarding what was learned through the analysis.

Jeff rose suggested the East Side Steering Committee discuss the matter and bring a proposal to the RAC's January 2018 meeting.

**Tri-State Fuels**

Don Gonzalez provided copies of a recent report to the state director. Implementation would be prioritized over time and he would appreciate the RAC's input in the prioritization process.

**Public Comment Period**

Susie Koppert expressed her appreciation for the Monday field trip, and said she would share what she learned with others.

Dan Morse said he was very disappointed in the RAC shutdown earlier in the year and that he was offended when the Secretary of the Interior said BLM employees were not loyal to the flag. He thanked all BLM employees for their work and care for public lands.

Katherine Cramer said she greatly enjoys and appreciates public lands, which also benefit disadvantaged young people and adults.

**Back Country Conservation**

Mia Sheppard said her employer, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, submitted a proposal in 2012 to address all traditional uses and active management. In 2017, the BLM issued guidance for Back Country Management, which can be included in Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Planning.

**2018 Meeting Calendar**

Mia Sheppard proposed adjusting the meeting schedule to allow for weekday travel days so members would not have to travel on a Sunday to attend a Monday meeting.

After some discussion, a calendar of Jan. 30-31 in Burns, March 15-16 in Ontario, June 7-8 in Lakeview and Oct. 11-12 in Burns was established.

**Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Subcommittee**

Dan Morse said the subcommittee has identified three areas of emphasis: 1. Adjacency to other areas designated LWC, Wilderness Study Areas, or Wilderness; 2. Vegetation – Ecological integrity, primarily in terms of perennial grasses, but also shrubs; 3. Perennial and intermittent streams identified as functioning, at risk or non-functioning. The subcommittee is giving each area a value ranking of 1, 2 or 3.

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The Vale and Lakeview districts were able to continue moving forward with the Resource Management Plan Amendment process during the RAC hiatus, but now the RAC is in the position of not being able to complete its work and make a recommendation in a timely fashion. The RAC did, previously, support the selection model being used in a letter to the State Director.

Brent Grasty said he'll begin drafting the range of alternatives in November and expects to release them for public input in January. He deliberately separated the staff interdisciplinary team and RAC reviews to allow more organic development of recommendations, but the outcomes are very similar. They haven't merged, but some overlap is apparent, as well as some differences.

The subcommittee is still not completely reconciled, Dan Morse said, and he is stumped as to how the RAC can make a formal recommendation, as there is not a quorum present. It was decided to hold another subcommittee teleconference Dec. 20 in hopes of reaching a consensus to present to the RAC at the January 2018 meeting and make every effort to have a quorum present.

**Wrap up, bin items**

It was decided to establish a standing subcommittee teleconference meeting the second Wednesday of each month from 1-4 p.m. MT

Don Hodge suggested the RAC look into wolf management and invite ODFW to present at the March meeting. There was also a suggestion to invite the Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition to present at the March meeting. Other future topics include Julie Weikel reporting on the national Wild Horse and Burro program, sage grouse and the Vale weed treatment plan.