

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council
April 10-11, 2017
Ontario, OR

April 10, 2017

Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m. MT

RAC members in attendance: Dan Morse, Slim Stout, Don Hodge, Jason Kesling, Sean Cunningham, Rich Watts, Julie Weikel, Phil Milburn,

BLM staff: Larisa Bogardus, Don Gonzalez, Seth Flanigan, Cara Hastings, Cindy Fritz, Lynne Silva, Michele McDaniel, E. Lynn Burkett, Jake Ferguson, Don Rotell, Pat Ryan, Mark Mackenzie, Pete Torma

Public: Susie Koppert, Scott Hauser (Upper Snake River Tribes)

BLM staff gave a brief overview of the Soda Fire, treatments, and recovery efforts, after which the group departed for the field to view work on the ground.

April 11, 2017

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

RAC members in attendance: Dan Morse, Slim Stout, Don Hodge, Jason Kesling, Sean Cunningham, Rich Watts, Julie Weikel, Phil Milburn, Ken Poole, and Mia Sheppard (via telephone).

BLM staff: Larisa Bogardus, Don Gonzalez, E. Lynn Burkett, Holly Orr, Brent Gratsy

Public: Susie Koppert, Alexis Malcomb (Upper Snake River Tribes), Larry Meyer (Argus Observer)

Designated Federal Official and Agency updates

- Holly Orr, Burns District BLM Associate District Manager:
 - Briefing attached
- ELynn Burkett, Lakeview District BLM Manager:
 - Briefing attached
- Don Gonzalez, Vale District BLM Manager:
 - Briefing attached

Discussion and impressions from Soda Fire tour

One member said he didn't foresee some soils being able to achieve the 20 percent objective for mixed bunch grass cover. Another point was made that cattle and wild horses were removed, but it might not be appropriate to return them at the same time, because wild horses occupy an area year-round, while cattle are governed by AUMs. Some questioned why crested wheat was seeded instead of native grasses. The answer was that crested wheat is more fire resistant and the BLM is trying new treatment strategies. Also, there were some problems getting the preferred native seed within the time frame needed. Several RAC members stressed the need for robust monitoring to go along with innovations, and quick corrective action if needed.

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Tri-State Fuels Project

A concern was the ability to maintain fuel breaks in the long term., it would be better to have fewer, well-maintained breaks. Feedback submitted from the Upper Snake River Tribes attached. BLM staff to review and respond. Scoping was completed in March, with 42 responses received, Phil Milburn reported. Alternatives are now being drafted. The subcommittee may be asked to review the draft. Dan Morse observed that this could also tie into the RMP revision.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Subcommittee

The committee met by teleconference in March and is in the process of formulating a matrix to be used by BLM staff when reviewing individual units. Some units can be grouped by common factors or proximity to other LWC/WSA units. A ranking of 1, 2 or 3 will be used in several categories. A question was raised regarding access and land exchanges. Holly Orr explained that such issues are already required to be addressed through the NEPA process.

Motorized use was also discussed as something “near and dear” to the public. It was noted that some two-tracks could be closed to casual use, but still available to BLM staff in the course of their work. Motorized use was acknowledged as diminishing the values of LWC. Much of this will be determined through the Travel Management Process, which is separate from LWC.

It was decided the subcommittee would need to meet more than once prior to the October RAC meeting in order to finalize a recommendation. Dan Morse will work with staff to set monthly meeting dates and times and draft a Federal Register Notice.

Sage Grouse Causal Factor Analysis

A letter from the State Director in response to the RAC’s interest in participating in the CFA process raised some questions regarding at what point in the process the RAC can play a role. Holly Orr offered to ask for clarification and report back. Baker Field Office is currently working through the analysis process and feedback from the (state) Local Implementation Teams is that recreation and other factors have not been adequately addressed. It is likely the review will be completed by the end of May.

Public Comment Period:

Susie Koppert said the Soda Fire field trip was very informative. She is interested in recreational rock collecting and asked if that would be affected by the LWC ranking process. Dan Morse clarified that the ranking process is a framework for review, not a designation.

Wrap up, bin items, round robin

Don Gonzalez reported the call for nominations for Resource Advisory Committees is open through May 26. The SEO RAC has one vacancy in the public at large category due to a resignation. It was discussed that eight members’ terms will expire in April 2018. Larisa Bogardus was asked to determine whether or

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not those members should submit their applications during this cycle. Chairman Phil Milburn will work with staff to draft a letter to the editor outlining the need and opportunity for RAC applicants.

Next Meeting Topics:

- June 5 -- RAC Field Trip to Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Facility
- June 6 – RAC business meeting: Burns Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration Programmatic EA; Calico mine processing plant/Vale; Baker CFA; website review; Backcountry Conservation Management.

Future topics/October meeting location:

Mine site visit and discussion regarding mining and public lands. Possible field trip to Grassy Mountain. Location TBD, Ontario or Burns.