

**Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council**  
**January 13, 2021**  
**Meeting held via Zoom**

**ATTENDANCE**

SEORAC Members - Kat Teufel, Richard Watts, Mark Doverspike, Jeremy Austin, Tim Davis, Jason Kesling, Ken Kestner, and Stan Shepardson.

BLM - Rick Roy and Jearred Foruria (Burns District), Todd Forbes (DFO), Pat Ryan (Vale ADM), Shane DeForest (Acting Vale DM), Steven Boyer (Presenter), Rob Sharp (Burns), Lauren Lasch (Note Taker), and Lisa McNee (Lakeview PAO)

Public - Brieanah Schwartz and Kindra J De'Arman.

**CALL TO ORDER 9:00 a.m.**

**Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping, Review Agenda**

- Icebreaker Question: What was your first model of a cell phone and when did you get it?

**Review and approve past meeting minutes:**

- No edits on previous minutes.
- Vote on approving minutes: Everyone voted in favor.
- Need a quorum to elect chair but minutes can be approved without a quorum.

**Designated Federal Official Report/District Updates:**

Todd Forbes, DFO and Lakeview District Manager, Update:

- Outcome Based Grazing – The Coyote Colvin Outcome based Grazing Project is one of elven in the nation. Range improvements including a new well and pipeline have been constructed for additional water. The national office is working with us and the permittees and contractor to produce a video of the project highlights and folks involved. The goal is to start filming in the spring.
- Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Facility – The district will be meeting with the facility members next week to discuss plans for the year. Currently the WHB position is vacant. Plans are in place to start a detailer into the position in March and will fly the position permanently as soon as possible.
- Prescribed Fire/Warner Wetlands – The district has plans to continue prescribed fire in the Warner Wetlands. The objectives of prescribed in the Warner Wetlands are to create more open water habitat for waterfowl, reduce hazardous fuel loads, and improve access for noxious weed treatments. Last fall we burned 1,500 acres and have plans to burn an additional 800 acres this winter.

- Prescribed Fire/Clover Flat – This project is gradually removing post-settlement juniper from a 19,000-acre project area near Valley Falls, Oregon. To date approximately 6,000 acres of juniper treatment and 4,500 acres of Prescribed fire (pile burns) have occurred in the Clover Flat Area to restore Sage Grouse and Mule deer habitat. The district has plans to continue burning this winter.
- Brattain Fire – This nearly 51,000-acre wildfire threatened the town of Paisley, OR and began on September 7 and was contained on October 6. The fire started on Forest Service land south of Paisley, then burned through private and BLM lands. The BLM lands burned were approximately 10,000 acres. Suppression repair has been completed on BLM land and an Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan has been submitted and approved. Funding has been received to conduct treatments including herbicide, seeding and fence rebuilding.
- Lakeview Vegetation Management EA – This project seeks to approve some additional vegetation management projects for the Lakeview Field Office. This includes three general areas of consideration:
  - Maintenance of Existing Projects and Facilities – manual and chemical control of vegetation around campgrounds, trails, admin areas, and some past projects.
  - Human Health and Safety – Manual and chemical vegetation control around Dams and Wildland Urban Interface areas.
  - Habitat Improvement and Protection – Juniper reduction for sage-grouse and mule deer as well as vegetation management projects for Special Status Wildlife and Plants.

Rick Roy, Burns District Manager, Update:

- Bridge Creek Area Allotment Management Plans – This project involves four allotments on Steens Mountain, between Frenchglen and Diamond. The BLM advertised for available forage (1,500 to 2,500 AUMs) in April 2020 and received 4 applicants. One applicant withdrew in September. Because there was more than one applicant, the BLM followed the process for competing applications outlined in the Grazing Regulations. On December 8, the Burns District Posted an EA for public comment. Comment period ended on December 20, 2020. The EA analyzed 5 alternatives. A Proposed Decision was posted on ePlanning on December 31, 2020. The proposed decision was signed by the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals, Casey Hammond. The proposed decision allocated the forage within all 4 allotments to Hammond Ranches Inc and selected Alternative 2. Currently the Proposed Decision is within a 15-day protest period (ending January 15, 2021). The BLM will address protests and sign a Final Decision.
- NEPA in PROGRESS –
  - Nature’s Advocate Inholder Access EA: This EA responds to an inholder request for motorized access to their property within the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA) and Steens Mountain Wilderness. The

EA has been updated and aiming for a release for public comment this calendar year.

- Alvord AMP EA: This is an EA to renew the grazing permit and develop an AMP for the Alvord Allotment. The BLM is working with USFWS service to complete Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation for Lahontan cutthroat trout. The EA is very near being released for public comment.
- Pike Creek Parking EA: The BLM is proposing to improve an access road and develop a small (1/3) acre parking area on general use public lands at the entrance to Pike Creek canyon on the east side of the Steens Mountain CMPA. The BLM is working with USFWS and ODFW to develop the best method for vehicle crossing of Pike Creek to minimize impacts to Lahontan cutthroat trout.
- Newell Creek Sanitation CX: The BLM proposes to selectively harvest dead, dying, and diseased trees (sanitation-salvage) on a total of 101 acres. Three separate units would make up the total acreage and lie within the House, Newell, and Mountain Creek drainages of the Upper Silvies River watershed.
- Stinkingwater Fuel Breaks Pilot Project DNA: This DNA is in the beginning stages and proposes 76 miles of conifer fuels treatments and 90 miles of invasive annual grass treatments within the strategic fuel break project area of the Stinkingwater Mountains. This project was identified in the Programmatic EIS for Fuel Breaks in the Great Basin Record of Decision (March 2020).

Shane DeForest, Vale District Manager (Detail), Update:

Range - The field office currently has several vacancies in the program. Applicants that are determined to be qualified for the position, as well as retention continues to be an issue for the field office. To address this, the field office is reaching out to entry-level applicants, outreaching to local community colleges and 4-year institutions. Adjustments in two of the positions within the range program have also been made to allow for career ladder opportunities to a full performance rangeland management specialist. The Natural Resource Specialist – Range Management Emphasis – (NRS) was announced on USA Jobs and is intended to seek those applicants that have natural resource backgrounds that are interested in range management but lack the education requirements to qualify for a rangeland management specialist series. The office is currently completing the hiring process for the NRS positions and expect the successful applicants to report to Vale by early April 2021.

An Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) continues to work on Louse Canyon GMA NEPA analysis. Formal scoping and a 30-day comment period occurred in September 2019. A Draft EIS is in development but is pending to allow the Vale District to complete the SEORMP Amendment process. Given the RMP Amendment process, and the complexity of the analysis and the alternatives being considered, issuance of the DEIS has been postponed to calendar year 2021.

Monitoring in Spring Mountain and Mahogany Mountain allotments within the Cow Lakes Project Area to support OR/WA Standards and Guidelines was scheduled for completion during the 2020 field season. Due to the diversity of the landscape and ecological sites, as well as a wet spring, the completion of monitoring for Spring Mountain will be postponed until field season

2021. However, the Cow Lakes IDT completed an evaluation for a small group of individual allotments within the Cow Lakes project area which will be released in 2021. Mahogany Mountain was a priority for completing monitoring in a coordination effort with Boise District BLM's evaluation of a neighboring allotment where both offices share the permittee.

The MFO range program is involved with NW Malheur sage-grouse project implementation. The temporary grazing closure process continues. Discussions with permittees continue and permittees affected by temporary closures in the 2020/21 grazing year have applied for non-use within the treatment areas. Discussions for out-year temporary closures also continue with affected permittees before agreements and/or grazing decisions are issued. These discussions will also occur for those areas affected by the 2020 fire season such as the Indian Creek fire.

The field office has drafted a re-evaluation of the Cottonwood Creek allotment (#OR00226), which is under the "custodial" management category. All standards continue to be met, and no changes to the grazing permit are proposed. The office is considering the use of the CX authority to renew grazing permits where all standards are met or if existing livestock grazing is not found to be a significant causal factor for non-attainment of a given standard or set of standards. The field office is scheduled to complete the proposed and final grazing decisions to have a fully processed grazing permit completed in early calendar year 2021 for the one grazing authorization associated with the allotment.

Botany – Vale is continuing to partner with Institute for Applied Ecology and Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) to grow sagebrush for restoration activities, 61,000 sagebrush plants grown by inmates will be planted on the Indian Creek fire this fall.

Wild Horses - Wild horse populations continue to increase across the district with no FY 2021 removals authorized. The District proposed a gather and removal in Sand Springs to apply a booster and primer of Gonacon and requested funding for proceeding with field darting in a fourth herd in Oregon. The field darting program contracted with a local nonprofit organization, High Desert Strategies, finished darting in Hog Creek HMA with 23 of the 25 mares darted. The wild horse specialist is in coordination with the WO WHB program to set up a nationwide agreement to be in place to provide the opportunity to partner with nongovernmental entities to expand the darting fertility control program.

### **Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment Update**

The Draft Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment has been posted for final State Office and solicitor review prior to the scheduling of a briefing with DOI headquarters. The amendment contains six alternatives that focus on addressing provisions for a 2010 Settlement Agreement including the management of Lands with Wilderness characteristics, Off Highway Vehicle Use, and Grazing permit relinquishment. The District estimated date for publishing the draft for public comment is February 2021.

### **Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment Update**

The SEORMP Interdisciplinary team (IDT) is completing the review of comments by local managers, the Oregon State Office, and Regional Solicitor's Office and finalizing the responses

to approximately 600 substantive comments on the Draft EIS. The IDT has re-engaged and is nearing completion of the FEIS. The District intends to complete the administrative draft FEIS this month (January) and begin briefings of the State Director, Headquarters Office, and the Department immediately afterwards. Current documents (Scoping and DEIS) on the Southeastern Oregon RMP Amendment are available on the ePlanning website: at <https://go.usa.gov/xnsQx>.

### **Wild Horse and Burro Update:**

- 950 animals received from unplanned gathers in September and October 2020. 200 plus came from South Steens on private land and the rest came from Paisley Dessert HMA. November and December staffed prepared animals for adoption starting the New Year. High demand from the public. Staff preparing animals to go to Germany for training, about 30 animals will go in February. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/bureau-of-land-management-oregon/homeward-bound-americas-wild-horses-arrive-in-germany/1719531138068678/>
- The Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Facility visited last weekend and picked up six horse to train at their corral near Adel, OR. [beatybuttewildhorses.com](http://beatybuttewildhorses.com)
- There is still at about 900 animals at the Burns Wild Horse Corrals which is near full capacity.
- The BLM has had several issues with animals moving from HMA to private lands. Winter precipitation is closely watched for water limitations and is historically low on water.
- Access this time of year is difficult to bait trap animals.

### **Great American Outdoors Act (Steven Boyer BLM, Senior Engineer Detail):**

- Signed into law on August 4, 2020 the bill that would fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and restore our national parks.
- Revenues from energy development to provide up to \$1.9 billion a year for five years.
- Provide needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and American Indian schools. Correct the backlog of Deferred Maintenance.
- Use royalties from offshore oil and natural gas to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the tune of \$900 million a year to invest in conservation and recreation opportunities across the country.
- Only 35% of funds can be used for Transportation type of projects.

#### **Funding for Deferred Maintenance Backlog:**

- The act sets aside a total of \$1.9 billion a year
- 5% of the funds go to the BLM
  - \$95 million for all of BLM
  - Oregon/Washington gets approximately 25% based on percent assets (roads, recreation sites, administrative facilities) within the BLM

- Initial State Allocation \$16.5 million from GAOA for Fiscal Year FY 2021
- Future years (FY22 and beyond) projects will be competed (no set allocation).

FY21 Final Project List for Southeast Oregon RAC Area:

<b>Projects</b>	<b><u>Project Cost</u></b>
<b>Burns</b>	
Warm Springs-Stinking Water Access Road Repair	\$ 1,161,000.00
Burns District Office Radio Tower Replacement	\$ 218,000.00
<b>Lakeview</b>	
Eastside Road Surface Rock Replacement	\$ 596,000.00
Lakeview Field Office Road Resurfacing	\$ 597,000.00
Westside Rock Replacement	\$ 459,000.00
<b>Vale</b>	
Burns Junction Fire Station Repair and Renovation	\$ 2,688,000.00
National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center Energy Conservation (Phase 3 of 3)	\$ 1,035,000.00

**Other RAC Business**

- Future Topics/Topics of Discussion for Group:
  - Wilderness Study Area Updates
  - Recreation Impacts in districts with influx of visitation due to COVID/Fires
  - Outcome Based Grazing and getting more details, how does it differ to other grazing

**Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.**