

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council
April 29, 2021
Meeting held via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

SEORAC Members - Kat Teufel, Jeremy Austin, Tim Davis, Ken Kestner, Ken Poole (on phone), Don Hodge, and Stan Shepardson.

BLM - Anne Marie King (BLM HQ), Todd Forbes (DFO), Jeff Rosa (Burns DM), Shane DeForest (Acting Vale DM), Brent Grasty (Presenter), Rob Sharp (Presenter), Brett Smith (Presenter), Eric Knerr (Presenter), and Lisa McNee (Lakeview PAO)

Public - Jason Kesling

Pre-meeting Ethics Training: All current SEORAC members in attendance completed the required ethics training presented by Anne Marie King, Ethics Attorney Advisor for the Bureau of Land Management. Training Materials: [Federal Advisory Committees and the Ethics Responsibilities of BLM Resource Advisory Council \(RAC\) Members.](#)

CALL TO ORDER 9:04 a.m.

Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping, Review Agenda

Review and approve past meeting minutes:

- Vote on approving minutes: Everyone voted in favor.

Designated Federal Official Report/District Updates:

Todd Forbes, DFO and Lakeview District Manager, Update:

- Outcome Based Grazing Authorization – The Coyote Colvin Outcome based Grazing Project is 1 of 11 in the nation. The intent of OBGA is to improve BLM’s management of grazing on public lands by offering livestock operators greater flexibility to respond more readily to changing on-the-ground conditions, such as drought or wildfire. One required component of the OBGA is a cooperative monitoring agreement. The national office is working with us and the permittees and contractor to produce a video of the project highlights and folks involved. Interviews of the permittees and BLM employees will be conducted in May and will be incorporated into the video.
- Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Facility: We currently have a 120-day detailer in the Wild Horse and Burro position and are working on filling the position permanently as soon as possible. The training facility is fully funded through the remainder of the year with plans to institute a new agreement to continue funding the facility into the future. To date about 50 horses have been trained and adopted from the facility. Some horses from the

facility participated in the local St. Patrick's Day parade this year. The facility continues to have growing interest on horse adoptions from the facility.

- Prescribed Fire/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 1500 ac. We had plans to burn an additional 800 acres this winter/spring, however extremely dry conditions have prevented us from being able to do so.
- Prescribed Fire/Clover Flat – This project is nearly complete and has aimed to remove post-settlement juniper from a 19,000-acre project area near Valley Falls, Oregon. The area has been treated to restore Sage Grouse and Mule deer habitat. There are only 37 acres of juniper left to be cut while approximately 2000 acres left to be burned. Herbicide and seeding to promote the native vegetation community will continue over the next couple of years.
- Brattain Fire – Funding for Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation has been received for the Brattain Fire. To date, the herbicide application has been completed with approximately 3,500 acres treated to prevent the spread of invasive annual grasses. Seeding and fence rebuilding are still to come. This nearly 51,000-acre wildfire threatened the town of Paisley, OR and began on September 7th and was contained on October 6th. The fire started on Forest Service land south of Paisley, then burned through private and BLM lands. BLM lands burned were approximately 10,000 acres.
- Lakeview Vegetation Management EA – This project seeks to approve some additional vegetation management projects for the Lakeview Field Office. We hope to release a DRAFT this summer. The EA 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:

- Forestry - Through the selective harvest of dead and dying trees in three parcels of BLM-administered lands near Silvies Valley, about 44,300-board feet of ponderosa pine was recovered and taken to Malheur Lumber in Grant County. Last summer, staff found several species of bark beetles infesting pine stands along House, Newell, and Mountain Creeks in the Silvies watershed. To reduce the spread of beetles within these stands the District initiate a sanitation-salvage harvest to remove many of the dead or dying trees. Sanitation cutting is a method of harvesting trees to remove insects or disease from a specific stand to prevent nearby spread. Salvage is the process of logging trees that have been damaged by natural disturbance to recover economic value that would otherwise be lost. In combination, a sanitation-salvage operation ensures the removal of infected or

diseased trees and the recovery and sale of the resulting timber. Below is a list of the future project within the Forestry program.

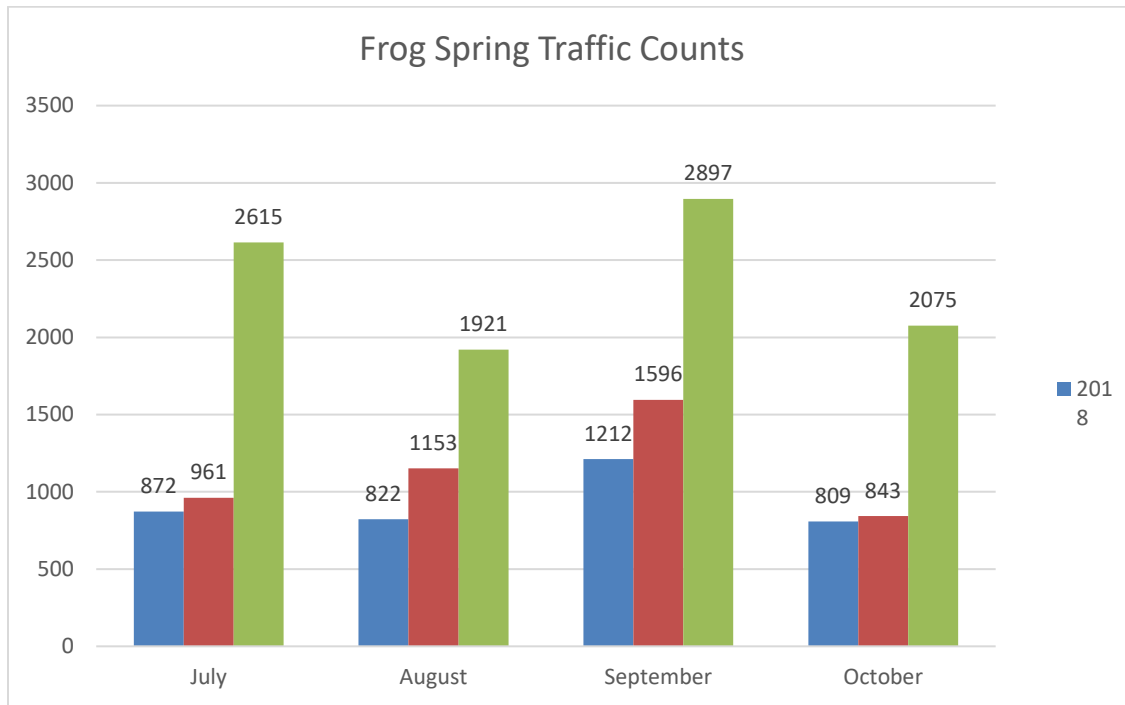
Forestry Project Name	NEPA	Acres	Comments
Newell Sanitation	#OR-B050-2020-0014-CX	101	CX has been completed and signed. Contract has been written and negotiated locally. In progress. Complete 2022.
Horton Mill PCT 3	#OR-B050-2010-0022-EA	321	PCT and Machine Pile Ponderosa Pine and Juniper woodlands. Contract is at SO for completion and award. Start work late summer 2021.
Rattlesnake/Silvies Forest Health Fuelwood	(CX) 516 DM 11.9.C(8)	100	Salvage Commercial Fuelwood project. CX is being written and should be completed and submitted to e-planning end of end of April 2021, negotiated and contracted locally by end of May 2021. Start operations June 2021
Slicear Stewardship	#OR-025-08-017	332	PCT/Machine Pile/Timber Harvest/Aspen Mahogany Restoration. Fieldwork to be completed by June 31, 2021. Contracting Winter 2022/Award Summer 2022/Start implementing late Summer, early Fall 2022
Burns Aspen/Otis Aspen Restoration	Otis Mountain/Moffet Table	183	Use existing EA to implement an Aspen Restoration Project Timber Sale on the same ground thinned as part of Otis RMEF Aspen.
Gus Well Timber Sale/Stewardship	(CX) Ag. Improvement Act	300	Start process of implementing project summer 2021; layout and map units, cruise timber 2021-22. Get clearances, complete writing and CX approval 2022. Contract and begin implementation 2023.
Riddle Bros Ranch	North Steens Ecosystem	70	Hand cut and pile Juniper removal. Unit has been flagged and needs clearing. Task order for completion is tied to IDIQ contract for fuels work. WSR funding. Work to be completed Fall 2022
Special Forest Product Sales			Establish firewood and pole cutting areas for public sales Spring 2021. Process information needs for public on fuelwood website. Prepare for Juniper bough sales.

- Recreation - 2020 saw an increase in number of visitors to the Burns District. The largest increase was seen on the Steens Mountain and the Alvord Playa. The Alvord Playa saw a 200% increase in vehicle counts throughout the year. Frog Spring Road traffic counter showed an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) this year of 56.8/day; up from 19.8/day in 2019. Recreation Use Permits (campground envelopes) increased by more than 20% across the district and Page Springs Campground was at full capacity for many of the summer/fall. The District went through more than 40 additional cases (4000+ rolls) of toilet paper than we do on a typical year/previous year. Anecdotally there were also a greater number of dispersed camping in the last year. Camps have been observed across the district in places with no record of prior camping. With an increase in use comes an increase in trash. Recreation Maintenance rounds doubled this year from previous years (park rangers filled in as rec maintenance help for the summer) and still had a hard time keeping up with the trash. More than 12,000 pounds of illegally dumped trash was picked up from the Radar Hill OHV area this summer with help from the Harney County Juvenile Dept. Currently the Burns District is working on a draft Recreation Business Plan to evaluate recreation fees at the District's fee sites (Campgrounds). The draft will be ready to review in May. Recreation fees have been the same since 2004 and there will likely be a suggested increase.

- Bridge Creek AMP - The Bridge Creek AMP involves 4 allotments on the 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. 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. On February 26, 2021, the Senior Advisor to the Secretary Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Assistant Secretary Land and Minerals Management rescinded the December 31st decision. The BLM was instructed to reevaluate the EA and address submitted protests. The District has completed the analysis of the protests and determined is working to determine the appropriate NEPA process to follow from this point.

- 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. BLM is working with USFW 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*: 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. 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. A Temporary Road Closure will be instituted to address resource damage on private lands adjacent road accessing the parking area.

- Frog Springs Traffic Counter Data 2020



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

- Louse Canyon EIS- The Draft EIS was sent to the State Office for review. The document informs grazing permit renewals and restoration activities.
- Botany – Vale is continuing to partner with Institute for Applied Ecology and Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) to grow sagebrush for restoration activities in 2021.

Assistance agreements are in place to continue sensitive plant work with cooperators. Institute for Applied Ecology will be completing a 10-year study on Mulford’s milkvetch and provide the BLM with a final report in January 2022. Oregon Department of Agriculture in continuing to develop germination protocols for Owyhee clover and smooth mentzelia and will soon start work on seed increase and container growing for the species.

In 2020, a “seed crop” field of Douglas dusty maiden and hoary tansyaster, both sage-grouse preferred forbs, was established through a contract using seed collected on the Vale District. These are species that are difficult, if not impossible, to purchase commercially with genetics appropriate for the Vale District. Vale has received the seed from the first harvest resulting in 20 lbs. of Douglas dusty maiden and 48 lbs. of hoary tansyaster ready for use on sage-grouse restoration projects.

- Wildlife - Another lek counting season is wrapping up at the end April.

The Information Bulletin for the Status of 2020 Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse Adaptive Management Triggers came out on April 12th. In the Vale District, the Baker and Cow Lakes PACs continue to trip a hard trigger and Trout Creeks PAC continues to trip a soft trigger. In 2020, the sage-grouse population in the Crowley PAC increased 17%, reversing the soft trigger that tripped in 2018. The Soldier Creek PAC tripped a soft population trigger for the first time in 2020 due to >40 percent decline in a single year. While declines were recorded in five other PACs in 2020, the sharpest decline (52 percent) was observed in the Soldier Creek PAC.

ODFW did find a few new leks in the Soldier Creek PAC this year while performing aerial surveys. Similar declines (and subsequent triggers) were observed in 3 PACs in 2019 that bounced back in 2020, reversing the population trigger. Perhaps we'll see this for the Soldier Creek PAC, too.

Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment Update:

Draft Lakeview RMPA –The amendment contains 6 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. At the end of May we anticipate requesting the required Department Level review prior to publishing the DRAFT.

Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment Update:

SEORMP Amendment - Vale is completing revisions to the Proposed SEORMPA/FEIS in preparation for review by the Oregon State Director. The Proposed RMPA reflects the 4,000 submissions (emails, letters, and postcards) received on the DEIS, changes in guidance from the Washington Office and Administration, and meeting the BLM's obligation to promote multiple uses in the planning area. We expect to release the PRMPA/FEIS in early Summer of 2021.

2021 Fire Outlook: [2021 Fire Season outlook](#)

Fire Readiness: Trent Wilkie, Acting Deputy Fire Staff for the Fremont-Winema National Forest and Lakeview District BLM discussed resource readiness.

Wild Horse and Burro Update: [Proposed and Ongoing Gathers FY 2021 Wild Horse and Burro Removals](#)

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 1:44 p.m.