

**Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council**  
**January 20, 2022**  
**Meeting held via Zoom**

**ATTENDANCE**

SEORAC Members - Jeremy Austin, Ken Kestner, Don Hodge, and Mark Doverspike.

BLM - Todd Forbes (DFO), Jeff Rose (Burns DM), Wayne Monger (Vale DM), Kathryn Dyer (Presenter), Emily Lent (Presenter), and Lisa McNee (Lakeview PAO)

Public - Jason Kesling, Ken Poole, Mary Jo Hedrick, Michael O'Casey, Stan Shepardson, Tim Davis, and Philip Milburn.

Congressional – Jessica Keys (Senator Merkley's Office) and Kathleen Cathey (Senator Wyden's Office)

**CALL TO ORDER 8:05 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:

**Research Natural Area Grazing Closure EA Scoping** – Per court order to continue implementing the 2015 Sage Grouse Plan while the 2018/19 amendments are enjoined, the BLM Lakeview Field Office has initiated a public scoping period for an environmental assessment to close Research Natural Areas to grazing. The public scoping period ends February 18, 2022.

**Beaty Butte Wild Horse Training Facility** – Blair Street has been hired as the new Wild Horse and Burro specialist in the Lakeview District. We implemented a bait trap gather this past fall and removed 40 horses. Horses have been brought to the Burns facility for processing. Starting this week, some of those horses will be brought back to the local facility in Adel for training and adoption.

**Clover Flat** – All juniper cutting and burning are complete across this 19,000-acre project near Valley Falls, Oregon. The area has been treated to restore Sage Grouse and Mule deer habitat. Herbicide and seeding to promote the native vegetation community will continue over the years as needed to maintain the restored habitat. Additionally, juniper fuels treatments in the project area proved effective in slowing the spread and intensity of the Cougar Peak Fire that came off the forest and burned approximately 6,000 acres of adjoining BLM land in the project area.

**Lava Solar Project** – Last week the BLM Lakeview Field Office received an application to develop a 5,000-acre solar project on BLM land in the Fort Rock area south of Cougar Mountain. The application is in the beginning stages of processing and, due to the current administration's focus on renewable energy, is high profile with the state and headquarters offices.

### **Litigation / Protests / Appeals**

**ONDA v BLM** – On September 27, 2019, ONDA filed suit challenging the BLM's decision to reverse the key RNA grazing closures in the 2015 SG plan amendment. In October 2019, the District Court in Idaho enjoined BLM from implementing the 2019 amendments and ordered BLM to comply with 2015 plans. In January 2020, the BLM issued letters to the affected permittees, providing two years' notice of the potential changes to their permit.

Jeff Rose, Burns District Manager, Update:

**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). Past efforts to allocate the forage have been litigated. December 3rd, 2021, BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and notice of 30-day public scoping. The district received scoping comments from 37 individuals or groups. Currently the district is reviewing and categorizing the comments. The district anticipates publishing a draft decision for 60-day comment period late summer or early fall of 2022. There is still an active appeal related to the January 2021 EA decision. However, that appeal should not affect the 2022 EIS process.

**DRY MOUNTAIN SALAVGE** - The Big Meadow fire burned 2,628 acres on September 9, 2022. The fire started on BLM administered lands and rapidly moved to the east, burning onto Forest Service and private lands. Approximately 600 acres of BLM was burned in the fire and about 200 acres of the burned area was forested. The Burns District is proposing to salvage 200,000 board feet of timber from the burned area. Currently the district is preparing a categorical exclusion (CX). The CX will be available to the public in mid-February with the goal of implementing the salvage operations later this spring.

**RECREATION** - Recreation use appeared to drop below the 2020 levels based on campground receipts and traffic counter. However, the levels were still above the long-term averages. Page Springs, Fish Lake and South Steens Campgrounds had moderate to heavy use throughout the spring and summer. Use of Chickahomay Campground had below average use, but that was attributed to low water levels. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) removed bag limits for trout at the reservoir in April of 2021.

**TRAVEL MANAGEMENT** - The Burns District will begin travel management planning on the Steens Mountain. This is the first step in larger travel management planning project that will ultimately cover the entire district. A Blanket Purchase Agreement Task Order was awarded on September 20, 2021, to Advanced Research Solutions Inc with a Period of Performance date through 10/31/2022. They will begin initial work in October 2021. We foresee work beginning with reviewing previously collected route inventories and performing needed confirmation on-

the-ground, as weather allows. Under one of the tasks in the task order we will solicit information from landowners for any routes that were never previously inventoried. Once all routes are inventoried (GIS/on-the-ground) the BLM will begin route analysis and determinations on a route-by-route basis. These determinations will begin the Travel Management Planning process. The BLM will engage the SMAC during the route inventory and evaluation process and during the CMPA travel management NEPA process.

**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. A Temporary Road Closure will be instituted to address resource damage on private lands adjacent road accessing the parking area.

**Three Rivers RMP:** The district, with the help of the Oregon/Washington State Office conducted a periodic review of the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan. The last RMP was completed in 1992. The review included all program areas and results will help determine if a new RMP/EIS is warranted. Currently information is being reviewed.

Wayne Monger, Vale District Manager, Update:

**Louse Canyon EIS** – The Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area Rangeland Health Management Actions Draft EIS is being prepared. Public review and comment is planned to begin in mid-2022.

**Tri-state Fuel Break EIS** - The Idaho/Oregon Tri-State Fuel Breaks Project FEIS was released March 2020, with Alternative 5 identified as the preferred alternative. Boise District issued their Record of Decision for the project May 2020, Vale District has postponed issuing a Record of Decision until after the SEORMP Amendment is signed. In 2022, Vale District will be developing a ROD for signature and keeping Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and interested Tribes updated on the project.

**Lytle Boulevard Public Safety Fence and Cattleguards** – A Final Decision was issued to authorize the construction of the Lytle Boulevard Public Safety Fence. The fence was proposed due to increasing motorized vehicle traffic, high number of reported near-misses, and repeated

vehicle-livestock collisions). The Decision was issued on January 7, 2022. Construction of the fence is tentatively scheduled to begin in the spring of 2022 if the decision is not appealed.

**Botany** – Vale is continuing to partner with Institute for Applied Ecology and Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) to grow sagebrush for restoration activities in 2022. Last year 61,500 sagebrush were planted in the Indian Creek Fire to jumpstart rehabilitation of sage-grouse habitat.

Assistance agreements are in place to continue sensitive plant work with cooperators. Oregon Department of Agriculture is continuing to work on seed increase and container growing protocols for Owyhee clover and smooth mentzelia.

**Wildlife** – Vale will be participating in the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout interagency meeting in January and mid-March through April we will be conducting sage-grouse lek counts. Our wildlife biologists have been collaborating with the Avian Knowledge Network to create tools for migratory bird analysis.

A scoping letter seeking input on alternatives to exclude grazing from Key RNAs designated as “Unavailable to Grazing” through the 2015 Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA). The scoping letter provides a 30-day comment period and can be found on ePlanning.

**Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment Update:**

Draft Lakeview RMPA – 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. At this point, we are working on updating Chapter 3 based on State Office feedback.

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

SEORMP Amendment – The Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in 2019 with four action alternatives and the No Action (continuation of existing management) Alternative. BLM received approximately 4,000 individual comments on the Draft. Since that time, BLM has responded to substantive comments and developed an administrative review draft of the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS (PRMPA/FEIS). Vale District has initiated briefing BLM leadership on the PRMPA/FEIS. Once approved to proceed, a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register will be published, beginning a simultaneous 30-day Public Protest period and 60-day Oregon Governor's Consistency reviews. Once completed, BLM will respond to public protests and the State of Oregon's review and develop a Record of Decision. The Vale District will continue to provide updates on the timeline and process as the process proceeds.

**Outcome Based Grazing Presentation by Kathryn Dyer:**  
[Outcome Based Grazing Presentation January 2022](#)

[The Need for Flexibility Video](#)

Looking for more information, visit <https://www.partnersinthesage.com/outcomebased-grazing-video>

Contact Kathryn Dyer at [kdyer@blm.gov](mailto:kdyer@blm.gov).

**Wild Horse and Burro Update by Emily Lent:**

[2022 Purposed Wild Horse and Burro Gather and Fertility Control Schedule](#)

[BLM RELEASES ANNUAL PLAN FOR WILD HORSE AND BURRO GATHERS AND FERTILITY CONTROL OPERATIONS](#)

- 454 horses were placed into private care through both adoptions and sales from [Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility](#) in 2021.
- Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility re-opened January 3, 2022. They are booked every day for adoptions through February 3 and have already adopted 115 horses this year.
- Four Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in Oregon are at Appropriate Management Level (AML). Sand Springs and Stinkingwater HMAs are now at AML after the gathers; Cold Springs and Hog Creek HMAs are already at AML.
- Two HMAs received fertility control - Cold Springs and Hog Creek for a total of 86 mares darted.
- There were 296 compliance inspections in the Vale, Medford, and Burns districts.
- There are two partnerships, High Desert Strategies & Beaty's Butte Training and Fertility, assisting in on-range and -off range management.
- 2021 Oregon Gathers:
  - Stinking Water Gather -- 401 horses removed
  - Palomino Buttes -- 253 Horses removed
  - Barren Valley Complex -- Ongoing--1672
  - Beatys Butte -- 41 horses removed
- Mustang youth challenge events:
  - Washington Mustang Madness Aug 4-7, 2022, Cle Elum, WA.
  - Mustang Adoption Challenge Sept 3-4, 2022, McMinnville, OR.

**Other RAC Business:**

Future Topics/Topics of Discussion for Group:

- Wilderness Study Area Updates
- Drought on vegetation and how local BLM is working with adaptations
- 2022 fire preparation
- Grasshoppers and treatments
- WH&B – adoption numbers nation-wide? And off-range numbers?

2022 Meeting Schedule:

- April 20 and 21
- June 22 and 23
- October 19 and 20

Update on RAC Appointments:

- The Southeast Oregon RAC received eight nominations to the Fall 2021 Call for Nominations. Two of those nominations were re-appointments. All eight nominations have been forwarded to BLM Headquarters for vetting.
- Three new appointments have been made. Those three are still pending receiving official appointment letters.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.**