

Notes

SEO RAC

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

In-person at 431 Patterson Bridge Rd., John Day, Ore. 97845 and virtually via Zoom

Attendance:

RAC Members Tim Davis, Tom O’Leary, Thom Batty, Kat Teufel, Philip Milburn, Stan Shepardson, Ken Poole, Mary Jo Hedrick, Michael O’ Casey,

Agency Representatives: Designated Federal Official Wayne Monger, Vale BLM; Baker Field Manager Joe Aragon, Vale BLM; District Manager Todd Forbes, Lakeview BLM; District Manager Jeff Rose, Burns BLM

Agency Staff: PAO/RAC Coordinator Kaitlyn Webb, Prineville BLM; Recreation Planner Kyle Wanner, Burns BLM; NEPA Coordinator Brent Grasty, Vale BLM

Public: Don

Minutes: Kat requested that her name be spelled correctly on page 1. The meeting notes were approved with that one noted change.

Designated Federal Official Report/District Updates:

Vale District (attached) – Wayne provided a Vale District briefing. Highlights included

Suggested a future field trip to McDermitt area with a Geologist to discuss lithium. Discussed fire suppression successes on Willow Creek Fire. Question from Mary about infrared cameras . Soldier creek wildlife assessment finishing up and installing traffic counters. No major gathers this year darted 12-30 mares. A lot of wild horse and burro gear stolen this year unfortunately, some of the electronics taken have trackability so BLM may be able to prosecute. Additional Sage Grouse amendments are being developed now. The RAC will be notified when they are made available to the public.

Burns District (attached) – Jeff provided an update on the Alvord AMP, the district signed the final decision on March 31, 2022. District pulled back the decision to address public comments related to wild horse and burro management.

The district conducted a helicopter gather on the South Steens HMA, 763 head were gathered and an additional 9 horses were removed from adjacent private lands. Currently there are 400 horses left on the HMA. 20 mares will be returned.

The district collaborated with High Desert Partnership and other private, federal, state and county partners to treat 60,000 acres of invasive annual grasses through the Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency Project.

Lakeview District (attached) – Todd Forbes, Lakeview District Manager implementing 2015 sage grouse plan, launching EA soon to figure out the best way to implement. What would need to

fenced, how those fences impact SG. Zayo Prineville to Reno project nearing completion. Notice to proceed, waiting on final cultural reports, notice to proceed for NV already, anticipate notice to proceed in OR next 3 to 4 weeks, CA to follow after that. HMAs census flights this year, close to AML, Beatty's gathered in 2015, over AML, not grossly. Working on a nuisance gather in the HMA on the Cascades/Klamath River, 80,000 acres, 20% of land is federal, rest is public. Challenged in court by Wild Horse Fire Brigade. Lake County/Lakeview had large fires last year, still working on stabilization and rehab, drill seeding this fall, noxious weed treatments this fall. Received solar proposal, 5,000 acres near Fort Rock. App received, reviewing to see if it is complete. Litigation is still ongoing: 2015 Sage grouse plan, one grazing case related to a grazing permit. Michael O'Casey asked about grazing loss with solar projects. Mary Jo Hedrick asked about issues with pronghorn related to the Sage Grouse EA.

Fee Proposal: Recommendation regarding Burns District Business Plan, Fee Increase Proposal and Fee Amendment (attached) – Kyle Wanner shared an updated on the Burns District's proposal to increase fees at all fee sites and requested a vote from the RAC. The public comment period was extended from 30 to 90 days. The district received 5 letters and 21 emails. 15, generally positive emails, 6 generally negative emails 1 generally negative letter, 3 generally positive letters, 1 neutral letter. Primary concerns included how the money would be used and whether or not the character of the sites would be changed. Fees will be used locally, and the funding would not be used to change the nature of the sites, rather keep them well maintained. Supportive comments noted that the increase seemed reasonable, and it was justified to upkeep the sites.

The original proposal was to increase fees from \$8 to \$20. The district decided to lower the fee to \$16 based on public feedback and due to the fact that the increases haven't been phased in overtime. The intent moving forward is to examine fees more regularly and to adjust with inflation as appropriate.

Stan asked why the fee proposal was dropped to \$16, Jeff explained they felt it was more reasonable to double it and the district received several comments noting that they would pay \$15-16 for the site but thought \$20 was too much.

Michael asked about a QR code option for payment and noted the inconvenience of paying \$16 instead of an even \$20. South Steens Campground piloted a scan and pay program, it wasn't widely used. Fish Lake will pilot the program too. Generally, the district wants to move towards a scan and pay, so there are more options.

Ken Poole proposed to approve the fee increase to \$16, Mary and Stan both seconded the motion, and the fee increase was approved unanimously.

Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment: The draft was issued in May of 2019. The district received 2,000 comments and analyzed five alternatives. Burns received support from state director and national office to move forward with the amendment. Primary concerns include wilderness characteristics, off highway vehicle designations, two livestock grazing issues. The district is actively working on a final Environmental Assessment and are consulting with the Tribes on the final product. Anticipate finalizing it the end of this year, publish early next year.

Stan asked how Senator Wyden's wilderness bill might impact the process? That is dependent on if it passes. The district is still in the planning process, once the proposed amendments are published and they have concluded the analysis, it may impact lands with wilderness characteristics.

Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment: Todd provided an update on the Lakeview RMP amendment. Primary concerns include wilderness characteristics, off highway vehicle designations, and livestock grazing issues including permit relinquishment. The district hasn't released a draft plan yet. After a draft is released, next steps will include a 90-day public comment period, making any necessary changes, and release of the final plan. The district is analyzing six alternatives, one of which is a hybrid, this decision was made based on feedback Vale received during the Southeast Oregon RMP analysis. The three categories for wilderness will include prioritizing wilderness characteristics, prioritizing other values and not managing for wilderness, and managing for both with wilderness and other values holding equal weight.

Fire and Fuels – 2022 fire season summary (attached): Jeff Rose presented a 2022 Wildfire Season summary. Highlights included the total number of wildfires and acres burned in 2022 compared to the 10-year average, 2022 wildfire ownership nationally, 2022 wildfires by area nationally, 2022 wildfire and acre totals the Pacific Northwest, Burns, Lakeview, and Vale units, and staffing across the districts.

Jeff suggested an update on the tri-state and other fuel breaks in the future.

Public Comment and Response: None

Roundtable: Philip wanted to express his gratitude that the Burns District is addressing the Paige Springs weir located in the wilderness. It is a historical structure located in a wild and scenic corridor, among other challenges. Burns is working in collaboration with the Desert Partnership to get a design and project proposal to give us options of how to remove it. Blocks passage for smaller fish. Grateful that the Burns District is address the project.

Future agenda topics: Stan suggested a discussion on grazing (acreage, more latitude, timelines, monitoring, etc.); Jeff suggested the tri-state fuel breaks.

Future Tours: Michael suggested exploratory lithium mines and Lower Owyhee Recreational area discussion/tour, below the below dam

Bin items: None

Action items: None

Next meetings: Feb 28-March 1 in Burns with tour to Burns Corrals; June 27-28 in McDermitt with a tour of McDermitt Caldera.