

Notes

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council Meeting November 19 and 20, 2024

Tuesday, November 19, meeting:

Regular Meeting:

RAC members - Thomas O’Leary, Joe Tague, Ken Poole, Alison Cole, Mary Jo Hedrick, Mark Salvo, Don Hodge, Stan Shepardson, Kristen Shelman, Thomas Batty, and Michael O’Casey (virtual),

Agency representatives: Designated Federal Official/Lakeview District Manager Todd Forbes; Vale District Manager Shane DeForest; Burns District Manager Don Rotell; Lisa McNee, Lakeview PAO/RAC coordinator; and Kristen Tull OR/WA Legislative Liaison.

Public: Allison Burenheide and Nathaniel Slinkert.

Minutes: Notes from the August 2024 meeting were approved.

District Updates:

Lakeview –

- **The Lakeview Proposed RMP / Final EIS is out for public review. The protest period ends December 9, 2024.**
- Key RNA Grazing Closure EA – This EA is being drafted to modify livestock grazing practices in three allotments containing key Research Natural Areas. The EA analyses alternatives to remove grazing from all or portions of the key RNAs. These analyses are necessary to address the site-specific resource issues and potential on-the-ground effects of closure alternatives prior to issuing any required site-specific grazing decisions.
- Habitat Restoration and Fuels Management EA – An environmental assessment has been drafted to analyze proposed future vegetation management activities to restore natural vegetation habitats and control the amount of excess fuel to reduce the risk of wildfires across the field office area. BLM has received public comments on the draft and are currently working through addressing those comments.
- Ongoing Sage-Steppe Habitat Restoration – A portion of Picture Rock Sage Grouse and mule deer habitat restoration juniper treatments have been completed. This project covers treatments of post-settlement trees with light to moderate density over approximately 10,000 acres. Burning of piles is planned for this Fall. Juniper cutting/piling treatments in the 10,000-acre North Warner Project area are complete with pile burning planned for this fall. Within the smaller Loveless Creek project area, juniper piles and pile burning are

complete. Additional contracted juniper treatments are being planned for the Monument Rock project areas.

- Solar Projects – The Lakeview Field office currently has 2 solar project proposals. The Lava Solar Project is a proposed 5000-acre project located near Cougar Mountain in Fort Rock. The application for this project has been approved however there are still multiple steps including NEPA that need to occur prior to issuance of a ROW grant. We recently received a new application for a 12,000-ac solar project and are still working through the application approval process with the proponent.

Vale

Tribal Consultation

The Vale District is pleased to announce it will be filling a permanent fulltime Tribal Liaison position. This position will be offered at the GS-09 and GS-11 levels with a duty station of Vale or Baker City. The primary responsibilities of the Tribal Liaison will be to support the District's land management mission through coordinating government-to-government consultation with interested Tribes. The successful applicant must be able to develop professional relationships with people and organizations with expertise on tribal histories, treaties, protocols, customs and traditions, natural and cultural resources, relevant economic enterprises, and issues of tribal sovereignty.

Key duties of the Tribal Liaison include:

- Act as a primary representative of Vale BLM to build relationships with Tribal Governments, tribal council members, staff, and leaders.
- Establish and maintain respectful, long-term, positive relationships with interested Tribes.
- Assist Vale BLM's mission through notification, coordination, and government-to-government consultation with Tribes.
- Serve as a contracting officer's representative (COR) for Tribal contracts within the district.
- Prepare and deliver presentations and briefings on Vale BLM projects, initiatives, or undertakings to Tribal officials, staff, and members.

In-depth knowledge of cultural or natural resources is not required. Instead, the successful candidate will have the following characteristics:

- Respect for tribal priorities regarding natural, cultural, and historic resources protection and preservation.
- Understanding of the best practices for outreach and engagement with Tribal governments.
- Skilled at establishing and maintaining cooperative working relationships with BLM leadership and Tribal governments.
- Use of discretion with confidential and sensitive matters and protected information.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in applying, please pass this announcement along to them. We expect the position will fly on USAJobs by the end of the calendar year. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or want additional information on the position.

Planning

Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Line Project

The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared in response to an Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands (Standard Form 299) submitted by Idaho Power Company (IPC) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service (USFS), Department of the Navy (Navy), and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation).

The Applicant proposes to construct, operate, and maintain the B2H Project, which is an approximately 300-mile-long (depending on the route selected), single-circuit, 500-kilovolt (kV), alternating-current, overhead electric transmission line and ancillary facilities. The transmission line will connect the Longhorn Substation, a substation planned by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) approximately 4 miles east of the city of Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation near the city of Melba in Owyhee County, Idaho. The goal of this project is to provide additional electrical load capacity between the Pacific Northwest region and the Intermountain region of southwestern Idaho. It would alleviate existing transmission constraints and ensure sufficient electrical capacity to meet present and forecasted customer needs.

The proposed B2H Project would cross federal, state, and private lands in five counties in Oregon and one county in Idaho. The proposed transmission line will cross federal lands administered by multiple federal agencies, including the BLM and the USFS. The B2H Project would potentially affect lands and assets administered by the Bureau of Reclamation and may affect lands of the Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman and associated military Special Use Airspace administered by the U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy).

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were signed in November 2017. As expected, litigation occurred, and the project was put on hold for the federal process during this time. With the litigation completed, work began again in 2021 to meet the terms and conditions of the right-of-way grant and ROD.

Status — Two Supplemental NEPA Documents are being prepared for Right-of-Way (ROW) amendments addressing five (5) total project modifications.

A Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) is being drafted for four of these modifications, all located within the ROW survey corridor but outside the legal land description. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for the fifth modification, initiated by a private landowner, which changes the route taken across BLM-managed lands, but is still within the route selected during the FEIS process.

Multiple outstanding issues are affecting the construction start date for the B2H Project, including Tribal consultation, pending state and federal permits, and reclamation bonding. The BLM and IPC meet weekly to discuss the schedule and outstanding requirements.

Baker Field Office (BFO)

South Fork of the Walla Walla (SFWW) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan Update

Baker Field Office is moving forward with development of an Environmental Assessment (EA) to update the 1992 Management Plan for the SFWW ACEC.

Changes in uses and environmental conditions of the ACEC warrant analyzing these changes, which could lead to updating and clarifying future management of this important and treasured area. Specifically, a catastrophic flood in February 2020 severely damaged the road accessing the SFWW trailhead and trail, including complete washouts of the trailhead access road where the trail transitions from BLM-administered land to the Umatilla National Forest.

Currently, the interdisciplinary team is in the critical stage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process of identifying issues that may need to be analyzed and developing alternatives. As the BLM works to finalize its Proposed Action for analysis and consultation, we anticipate that a draft EA will be available for public comment in the spring of 2025.

Although the area is open, vehicular access is prohibited. Vale District is patrolling and monitoring weekly.

2024 National Public Lands Day

Saturday, September 28, the Vale District Office hosted its annual National Public Lands Day event at Spring Rec in Huntington, OR. We had approximately 30 staff and volunteers attend the event, beautifying our campground and recreation site. This site gets a lot of use from anglers and boaters along the Snake River. The crew worked to spread gravel, replace picnic tabletops, and clean fire rings. We would not be the same agency without our volunteers. Thank you!

Kast Auburn Plans and Occupancy (Sundog & Hidden Nugget) Environmental Assessment

Baker Field Office is reviewing a proposed action for placer mining operations on approximately 55 acres of BLM-administered lands in the Auburn area of Baker County. Mining operations have been conducted on the site since at least the 1860s, initially associated with the development of the town of Auburn. Mining activity appears to have occurred intermittently on the site until at least the 1960s, when a large reservoir and dredging occurred within the French Gulch drainage. Exploration by Mr. Kast has been conducted on the site since 2017 under mining notices 69884 (Sundog) and OR68984 (Hidden Nugget) and have consisted of excavation and concurrent reclamation of test pit and excavation of small processing ponds including groundwater source ponds. Disturbance under the notices is estimated to be less than 5 acres. A 30-day public scoping period ended in March, and the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) started the analysis in April. Mr. Kast has updated his plan of operation, and we are working to ensure the updates are incorporated and impacts are analyzed appropriately. The EA is anticipated to be completed in spring of 2025.

Denton Gold Danser Plan and Occupancy Environmental Assessment

Baker Field Office is currently reviewing a proposed action for placer mining operations on BLM-administered lands in the Burnt River historic gold-placer district of Baker County. The operator, Mr. Denton, currently operates under a Notice Level of Operations (Notice) and has submitted the Plan for exploration beyond the five acre and 1,000-ton Notice limits and initiate mining level activities. A 30-day scoping period was completed in March 2023. All comments received were reviewed and will be considered in the EA analysis. Mr. Denton has updated his plan of operation, and we are working to ensure the updates are incorporated and impacts are analyzed appropriately. The EA is anticipated to be completed in spring of 2025.

Weed Assistance Agreements

BFO weed and range staff have been working with Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area in preparation for upcoming non-native annual grass treatments in the Big Creek and Table Mountain allotments. These projects will treat approximately 1,000 acres of BLM-administered lands and are expected to be completed October 10. Both treatment sites have native bunchgrass and likely will not require a follow-up seeding.

Bensel Road Emergency Stabilization & Rehabilitation

Weed staff, along with Umatilla County Weed Supervisor and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, inspected the Russian Olive herbicide treatment project and determined the site would require additional treatment due to the level of sprouting occurring from the treated tree stumps. The Umatilla Weed Supervisor recommended the BLM investigate using domestic goats to treat the new growth. We are looking into this option.

Virtue Flat Weed Wash Station Environmental Assessment

The Finding of No Significant Impacts and Decision Record for the Virtue Flat Weed Wash Station EA were signed and posted to ePlanning August 19. No appeals were filed during the appeal period. The Baker Local Implementation Team and BLM are now looking into potential funding sources to pay for the construction.

Recreation

Baker Field Office recreation staff were busy this summer posting fire prevention and informational signs across 6 counties, at approximately 43 different locations. We also supported fire suppression and repair work.

In addition to maintaining developed and dispersed recreation sites, we have dealt with transient camps at multiple locations in Umatilla and Malheur counties. Most recently, at the Oasis Boat Ramp, we loaded and dumped 880 pounds of trash.

Malheur Field Office

Rangeland Management Program Updates

Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area - The Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area (LCGMA) Rangeland Health Management Actions Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is anticipated to be released for public comment before the end of the 2024 calendar year. Management actions analyzed within the DEIS will analyze alternatives for livestock grazing management as well as restoration actions that allow the district to make progress towards meeting Oregon/Washington Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management as specified through 43 CFR 4180.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation - The range program is working closely with the district's post-fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) program in developing herbicide, seeding, and other stabilization or repair treatment proposals as well as fence maintenance needs across rangelands impacted by wildfire during the 2024 fire season. BLM has participated in community meetings that focused on recovery efforts across the county, as well as hosting meetings with livestock grazing permittees directly impacted by wildfire. Treatment objectives and temporary livestock closure processes are currently being developed. Coordination with affected livestock grazing permittees will continue as ESR treatments are planned and implemented across the district.

Energy and Minerals Program Updates

2025 Geothermal Lease Sale - On March 8, 2025, the Oregon/Washington State Office will conduct a Competitive Geothermal Lease Sale. The geothermal industry nominated for sale two parcels totaling 4,895.33 non-contiguous acres directly south of Vale along Lytle Blvd. The act of selling geothermal leases does not have the potential to cause environmental effects as it only involves the rights to explore for and develop the resource. The Lease Sale does not authorize any ground disturbance within the nominated parcels, and we do not know if any of the nominated parcels will receive bids, if leases would be issued, or what types of lease operations might be proposed in the future, if any. The MFO is completing an Environmental Assessment to analyze the impacts of the sale on sensitive resources. We anticipate a draft EA will be ready for a 30-day public comment period by December 2024.

HiTech Minerals, Inc – McDermitt Exploration Project - Vale District is finalizing a draft Environmental Assessment analyzing the impacts of HiTech's proposed McDermitt Exploration Project located in the McDermitt Caldera. We are coordinating closely with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. As of early October, we expect to have the Environmental Assessment ready for public review and comment in November/December 2024. For more information on this project, feel free to email: blm_or_vl_lithiumhitech@blm.gov

Calico Resources USA – Grassy Mountain Mine Project - On Monday, April 18 the Vale District opened a 30-day public scoping period for the proposed Grassy Mountain Gold Mine Project south of Vale in Malheur County. Our office hosted public meetings to discuss the project in

Vale and Jordan Valley. In total, the BLM received approximately 40 separate comments from members of the public, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. Most of the comments regarded access, potential water impacts, and milling processes. BLM specialists are reviewing the comments and incorporating them into alternatives that will be analyzed in the eventual EIS. For more information on this project, feel free to email the team at:

blm_or_vl_grassymtn@blm.gov

Malheur Works Interns

The Vale District entered into an assistance agreement with the Malheur County Educational Service District this year to participate in the Malheur Works Internship Program, which places recent high school graduates who reside in Malheur County in internships that line-up with their career interests. The Vale District hosted three interns through this program: one as an administrative assistant, one as a fuel's technician, and one as a biological science aid for wildlife. The interns worked with BLM staff for nine weeks to learn about the resources the BLM manages and build skills to help them further their career opportunities. They worked on a variety of projects including vegetation monitoring, testing fuel moisture, greeting customers, records management, and public education.

This internship program is a great opportunity to introduce local youth to the BLM and show them the wide range of careers available. Ideally, after completion of the internship, they will apply for temporary positions next summer. One intern indicated he would be applying for a wildland firefighting job next year, a job he was not previously interested in. When asked what skills the interns learned from their work with the BLM, they all identified improved communication and work ethic. The interns also agreed the Vale office was a friendly environment and would recommend the internship to others. The Vale office is looking forward to continuing the partnership with Malheur Works and introducing more youth to careers with the BLM.

National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

Since reopening Memorial Day weekend, we have seen 25,450 guests come through our door to experience the center. Many of these guests watched our movie, attended a ranger program, and walked the trails of the site.

Native American Exhibit - A new Native American exhibit and gallery updates reflecting Native American perspectives were installed in September. From a Native American perspective, the Oregon Trail represents not just a route of westward expansion but a pivotal turning point that reshaped their lives and sovereign lands. Understanding this perspective offers a more comprehensive view of the complex and often painful history underlying the westward expansion of the United States.

Accessibility information on our website - We've updated our website, oregontrail.blm.gov, with photos and comprehensive information about accessibility options available to visitors.

Haunting on the Hill - Our second annual Haunting on the Hill will be held Saturday, Oct. 26, from noon to 4 p.m., with stories, games, crafts, and a spooky wagon train and house. This event is sponsored by our partner group, Friends of NHOTIC. We look forward to seeing all the children dressed up in their Halloween costumes.

Emergency Stabilization & Rehabilitation (ESR)

The Vale District ESR program has developed 11 new ESR plans following the 2024 fire season, including plans for the Board Corral, Dry Lake, Little Valley, River, Huntington Mutual Aid, Cow Valley, Durkee, Badland Complex, Hole in the Ground, Soldier Creek, and Town Gulch fires. All 11 plans for the Vale District were approved at the National level and are now awaiting funding to begin Fiscal Year 2025 projects.

Contracting was completed and funding was secured in Fiscal Year 2024 to complete aerial herbicide treatments during September and early October on Board Corral, Dry Lake, Little Valley, River, Badland Complex, Soldier Creek, and part of Hole in the Ground burned areas.

Current and future ESR treatments planned for this fall include drill seeding, aerial seeding, and sagebrush plug planting on the 2022 Willowcreek Fire; drill seeding on the 2022 Vines Hill Fire; and aerial seeding on the 2022 Hat Top Fire. Vale District Fire crews are beginning to repair fence that was damaged in the Huntington Mutual Aid, Little Valley, Cow Valley, and Durkee fires. Seed purchases and contracts are being worked on to start additional work on 2024 fires.

Treatment success monitoring was completed on the Leslie Gulch, Black Butte, Indian Creek, Baldy, Saddle Draw, Drummond, Elbow, Joseph, and Hat Top ESR treatment areas. Monitoring data will be compiled and entered this winter.

Facility Operations

Baker City Fire Crew Quarters Replacement is a Fire Facilities Deferred Maintenance funded project valued at approximately \$2 million and involves work-life separation through improvements to floor plan and living quarters. The project was awarded and is scheduled to begin by the end of Calendar Year 2024.

Vale District Office Renovation is a GAOA-funded project valued at approximately \$5.7 million and involves replacing an outdated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system with new technology that will improve energy efficiency and reduce overall energy consumption. Work also includes replacing the thermal envelope (roofing, siding, doors, and windows) with greater insulation values to reduce energy transfer through building materials, replacing data/communication backbone, disposal of a temporary office trailer, and modifications to office floor space for improved facility security attributes. The project is currently in the planning phase and scheduled to go into design phase in Quarter 2 of FY25. The BLM National Operations Center has agreed to assist in development of Design-build contracting process.

Malheur Radio Communication Site Repairs is a Deferred Maintenance project valued at approximately \$450,000 and involves installing improved radio equipment grounding materials to eliminate safety concerns identified by the Radio Infrastructure CASHE program. Work involves grounding improvements at two fire stations and three mountain-top communication sites. The project has been awarded, with anticipated completion by the end of 2024.

Juntura Potable Water System Repairs is a Deferred Maintenance project valued at approximately \$350,000 and involves replacing the well pump, improving the electrical system components to the potable water system, and installing a water filtration system at the Juntura Fire Station to provide improved water quality and flow rates so that fire crews can utilize quarter's facility water and fill fire engine tankers simultaneously. The project is awarded and scheduled to begin by the end of 2024.

Ontario Air Base is a combination Deferred Maintenance and Fire Facilities project valued at approximately \$7 million and involves construction of a Fire Aviation control center for fixed and rotary wing aircraft to address fire retardant disposal corrective measures and a strategically located air base at the City of Ontario Municipal Airport. Project involves an Ontario City land lease and construction of a 7,700 square feet operations building, fixed wing aircraft ramp, helicopter landing pads, and fire-retardant mixing and disposal systems. The project is currently under design with an estimated construction completion date of Quarter 3 of 2026.

Rangeland Seed Drilling is a combination of multiple Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) projects within the Vale District valued at approximately \$400,000 and involves planting native and non-native seed utilizing seed drills from the National Rangeland Drill Shop. The purpose of this project is to stabilize soils and promote and restore healthy ecosystems through revegetation of approximately 8,000 acres of rangeland burned by wildfire. This project is currently in progress, with an anticipated completion date of December 1

Burns –

Fall Rx burning – The Burns Interagency Fire Zone is midway through burning machine piles on the Burns District. The piles are located within project areas in the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area and in stands of ponderosa pine woodlands on the Harney Valley front range in the Three Rivers Field Office. The objectives of the efforts are to reduce fuels generated by cutting and thinning for habitat restoration and fuels management purposes.

Suppression Repair/ESR – Suppression repair is in full swing on portions of the Falls, Telephone, Porcupine, and Sagehen fires in the Three Rivers Field Office, and on the Solomon Fire in the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management & Protection Area. Suppression repair typically consists of pulling in the berms and building water bars on control line, as well as seeding dozer line, staging areas, and other areas disturbed by fire suppression. Additionally, approximately 8,000 acres of Emergency Stabilization aerial herbicide treatments were completed earlier this fall on rangelands burned in the Falls and Telephone fires, and around 2,500 acres of aerial ESR seeding on the BLM administered lands in the Porcupine Fire will be implemented this month. Suppression repair activities and the initial phases of ESR are expected to conclude around the end of November. A salvage logging and hazard tree removal CX is being completed for implementation in the spring.

Skull Creek Road Project – The Skull Creek and Horton Mill Road(s) Project was scheduled to conclude in 2024, however the date for completion has now been pushed back to early summer 2025 due to Falls Fire activity and associated closures. The road maintenance project graded, added gravel, and improved culverts on Skull Creek and Horton Mill roads north of Burns and Hines. These roads are important access points to approximately 500,000 acres of BLM and Forest Service lands. Prior to this project, these roads can be impassible during most of the fall, winter, and early spring. BLM closes access to the road during this time for public safety and to protect against resource damage. The maintenance project will not make the road a four season road but will help the BLM increase the amount of time the road will remain open during the year.

Steens Mountain Rockslide Stabilization – The rockslide stabilization project that was planned about one mile above the Big Indian Gate on the South Steens Loop Road has been completed. The project involved scaling material about 150' above the center line of the Steens Loop Road within designated wilderness. No bolting of rock to the cliff surface was required for stabilization of the slope. Through a service contract, a cluster of large boulders and rocks were scaled from the slopes and cliffs near the Rooster Comb Research Natural Area. That material was hauled by heavy equipment from Burns and Vale Districts to pullouts on the Loop Road. The Steens Loop Road was fully opened on 10/7/2024.

Bridge Creek Area AMP EIS - The Bridge Creek Area Allotment Management Plans Draft Environmental Assessment is currently under review with a Notice of Availability planned for December or January release. This Draft EIS only considers alternatives related to grazing within the Bridge Creek Area allotments. It does not allocate grazing preference or issue a grazing permit to any specific individuals.

Burns District Programmatic Stabilization and Restoration EA – Burns District will begin scoping on a potential programmatic EA that will focus on stabilization and restoration of sites that need active management to move the site towards a healthy ecological condition, across the district. While actions typically tied to ESR would be analyzed, the EA would not be ESR focused but would consider implementing actions both on sites disturbed recently, no matter the cause, as well as on sites where the damage was done historically, and restoration actions were minimal or unsuccessful.

Page Springs Weir Removal – Andrews / Steens Field Office has acquired services of a contracted writer/editor, a project lead and several support functions like wilderness specialist, and fish/riparian specialist for planning what is expected to be an Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS would consider effects of the removing the Page Springs Weir from the Blitzen River Wild and Scenic River Corridor and the Steens Mountain Wilderness. The Page Springs Weir is a concrete structure in the Donner und Blitzen River within the Steens Mountain Wilderness Area near Frenchglen, approximately one mile upstream from the Page Springs Recreation Site. The weir was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp in 1937 for the purpose of measuring water flow. US Geological Survey still uses the structure as a stream gauging station. The structure is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register is anticipated in the Spring of 2025.

New Burns District Manager – Don Rotell was announced by OR/WA BLM as the new permanent Burns BLM District Manager in late October. Don was previously the Andrews / Steens Field Manager at Burns District and has been working for BLM in eastern Oregon since 2003. Thank you to Tom Beaucage and Bruce Loranger for serving as acting District Managers during the selection process.

Public comment: There were two members of the public that attended the meeting virtually but they had no comments.

Page Springs Weir Removal Update by Calla Hagle and Christi Denton

Project Background – The Page Springs Weir Removal Project is near Frenchglen in southeastern Oregon in the upper segment of the Donner und Blitzen Wild and Scenic River.

The project area is within the Steens Mountain Wilderness designated by the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000 (Steens Act).

Historic Site – The weir was constructed by the CCC in 1937. There is an active USGS stream gaging station, within a dry-laid stone instrument house 50 ft upstream of the weir. The weir and instrument house are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Redband Trout Reserve – The Steens Act expanded the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) and designated the upper Donner und Blitzen WSR as a Redband Trout Reserve. The weir is a partial passage barrier to native migratory redband trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and a full barrier to other aquatic organisms as well as modifies the natural river processes and geomorphology

Project's Purpose and Need – The project's purpose is to restore fish passage and natural river processes and enhance the quality of the Steens Mountain Wilderness and the Donner und Blitzen Wild and Scenic River.

The weir does not allow passage of native migratory redband trout and other aquatic organisms and inhibits the natural river processes and geomorphology of the Donner und Blitzen River.

The Steens Act that states, “The Secretary shall remove the dam located below the mouth of Fish Creek and above Page Springs if removal of the dam is scientifically justified and funds are available for such purpose.”

Oregon Fish Passage Statutes requirements are to restore fish passage for “all native migratory species” (ORS 509.585(1)).

Summary of Alternatives

	Alternative 1 <i>(No Action)</i>	Alternative 2 <i>Partial removal; rudimentary methods</i>	Alternative 3 <i>Complete removal; minimal motorized and debris left in-stream</i>	Alternative 4 <i>Complete removal; helicopter, power tools and small blasting charges</i>	Alternative 5 <i>Complete removal; heavy equipment and temporary road construction</i>
De-construction Method	None	Hand tools	Motorized tools/spider excavator	Motorized tools, small blasting charges	Excavator, motorized tools
Debris Removal	None	Pack animals	Leave concrete in-stream	Helicopter Alt. 4A. Sky-line yarding	Dump truck or UTV
Route	None	Page Spring Trail	Overland, minimal path (UTV); in-stream (spider excavator)	Air	Overland, road created

Resource Issues - The analysis will need to consider:

- Redband trout and other native aquatic species (including the western ridged mussel)
- Health and hydrologic processes of the river
- Fish habitat and competition (including invasive species like carp)
- Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River values
- Historic value of the weir and gauging station

Potential Cooperating Agencies & Interested Parties

Group	Potential Interests
Native American Tribes	Protection of cultural resources and healthy landscapes.
Rural Communities	Local economic and recreational opportunities.
Elected Officials	Strong rural economies, healthy landscapes, and recreation.
State and Federal Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Fish and wildlife habitat protection (red band trout, other native fish species and mussels) and common carp control. Cooperating agencies on this project include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (FWS)
Environmental Groups	Wilderness, WSA, wild and scenic river, visual resources, support of native aquatic species and recreation.
State of Oregon	Healthy landscapes and support for rural economies.

Schedule - After publishing the notice of intent (NOI), in the Federal Register, the final record of decision (ROD) will occur within 2 years.

- Publish NOI: March 2025
- Public Scoping: March 2025
- BLM Finalize Alternatives for Preliminary Draft EIS: Aug 2025
- Publish Draft EIS and Public Comment: June 2026
- Final EIS for Public and Agencies: February 2027
- Notice of Availability for ROD: March 2027

Mud Lake Sage-grouse / Mule Deer Categorical Exclusion (CX) by Todd Forbes

- Project is south of Hart Mountain located generally South of Mud Lake and down to Horsehead Lake.
- 3,800 up to 4,500 acres of Phase 1 and 2 juniper reduction.
- All treatments are within 2 miles of sage-grouse leks.
- Smaller trees would be lopped and scattered with no post treatments. Trees that are too large to lop and scatter would be cut, bucked, piled, and covered, then piles would be burned when conditions allow for the piles to consume without burning between the piles.
- No Pre-settlement trees (>1850) would be cut. Specific trees around disbursed camp sites and other wildlife trees would also be left intact.
- No cutting would occur at this time in the High Lakes ACEC, WSA, or areas where Wilderness Character was found.

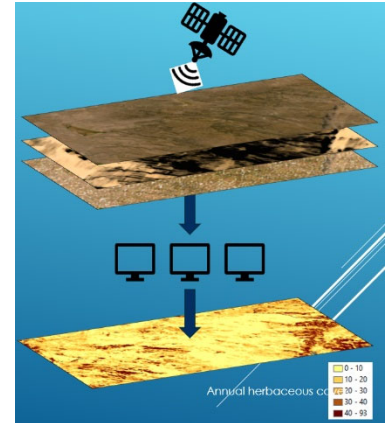
RAC Comments on the Mud Lake Project

- Did we look at the ODFW Mule Deer Model to see if we need to leave additional habitat untreated for Mule Deer winter habitats? (Mary Jo Hedrick). Answer: I don't know for certain, but this project is also for mule deer, and I will check to make sure that there was adequate consideration for Mule Deer.
- There is quite a bit of research that indicates the position that these types of treatments have positive impacts on sage-grouse. This looks like a good project to protect sage-grouse. (Mark Salvo). Mr. Salvo also noted the circles on the map that illustrate a 1-mile buffer from sage-grouse leks.
- There were no other questions or concerns from the RAC about the project. Everyone seemed to agree that this was a good project.

Technology and Range Presentation by John Owens

Rangeland Vegetation Maps

- Remotely sensed models of upland rangeland vegetation
- Recent improvements in modeling techniques and capabilities
 - e.g., multiple time series products



Field Data Collection

- Individual plot locations
- Limited spatial coverage, locations are usually not fully representative
- Collect information on anything that is measurable in the field
- Direct field measurement of vegetation, error is likely lower
- Time-consuming to collect
- Each field visit is a point in time
- Long history of use and acceptance in decision-making
- Can incorporate expert judgment

Map Products

- Continuous across landscape
- Maps are likely to be more representative of broader landscape
- Limited information based on what can be modeled remotely
- Estimate vegetation based on remotely sensed reflectance, higher error
- Time to understand and use varies
- Some maps record change over time
- Newer technology with few examples of District-level use
- Can use the power of computers

List of map products in Oregon

- Rangeland Analysis Platform
- RCMAP
- LandCART
- Near-Real-Time Annual Cover
- Southeast Oregon Veg Comp
- Oregon Sage-Grouse TBFM
- Western Juniper Canopy Cover
- Tree Canopy Cover in Rangelands

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Blueprint for Recreation Presentation by Kevin Oliver and Dave Ballenger

The Bureau of Land Management's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation

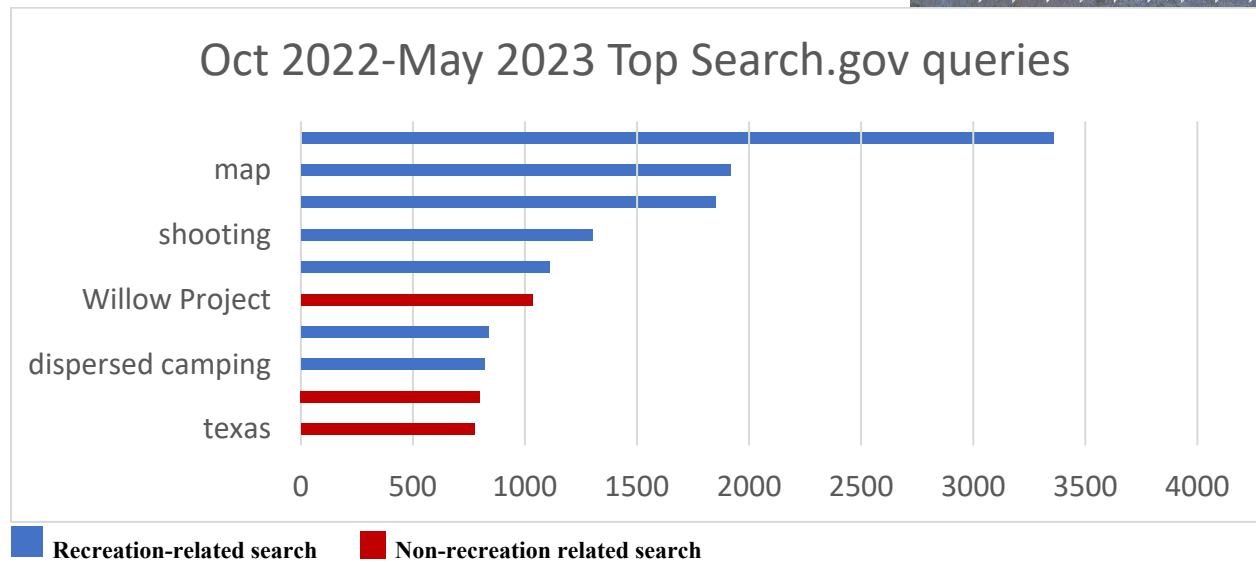
Blueprint vision - To provide exceptional and one-of-a-kind recreational experiences that invite all to share in the enjoyment and stewardship of their public lands.

Blueprint – the Case for a New Approach

- Visitation has increased 40% over the past 10 years.
- Funding per visit is trending in the wrong direction.



Public Interest in BLM = Recreation



13,798 Total Searches

11,193 Recreation-Related Searches

81% of Total Searches were Recreation-Related

Blueprint Highpoints –

- Grow and Diversify resources supporting recreation
- Advances equity in outdoor recreation
- Addresses challenges of increased visitation

Why seek more recreation resources? –

Key Needs:

- Prioritizing the recreation program within BLM
- Expand Partnerships & Community engagement
- Access to public lands – approved travel routes, landlocked public lands, transportation grants to underserved communities
- Meeting demand while protecting resources

Blueprint Structure –

Strategic Pillars

- Desired Outcomes
- Core Strategies
- Partnership Success Stories

Blueprint Vision and Key Concepts – “Our Blueprint vision is to provide exceptional and one-of-a-kind recreational experiences that invite all to share in the enjoyment and stewardship of their public lands.”

Four Strategic Pillars:

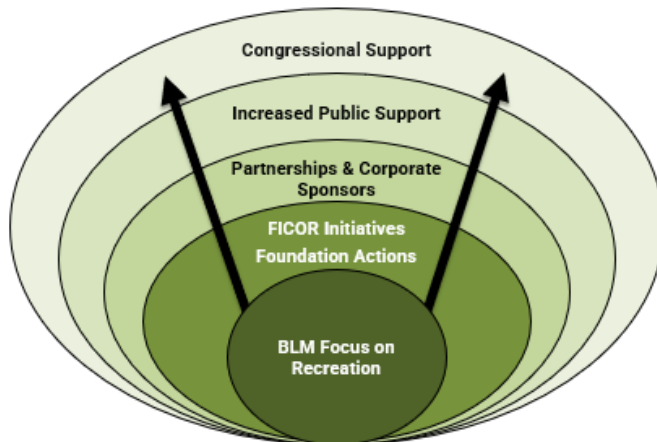


Public Feedback –

- Enthusiastic partner support of the four pillars
- Recognition that recreation demand is growing, and funds and capacity have been declining
- Shifting to the Blueprint will require long-term and sustained effort
- Blueprint is high level, needs to go deeper

Blueprint Impact:

Meet the Needs of Today and the Future



ORR Recreation Funding Report (JUN 2024) –

- ORR commissions comprehensive study of federal spending on outdoor recreation, associated trends, and issues that impact future funding needs
- Stand-out stat: Outdoor recreation contributes 2.2% to U.S. GDP, yet only receives 0.16% of federal funding, a nearly 14x difference in scale.
- [New Report Quantifies Outdoor Recreation-Related Spending, Outlines Threats to Funding and Potential Solutions - Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#)









<https://recreationroundtable.org/news/new-report-quantifies-outdoor-recreation-related-spending-outlines-threats-to-funding-and-potential-solutions/>

BLM Resilient Recreation –

- IRA Capacity Building - Recreation Field Staff, \$9 million = 42 new positions
- BIL Resilient Recreation Projects 59 projects totaling \$7.6 million
- IRA Restoration Landscapes 18 projects in 6 states totaling \$6.2 million (more on the way)

Public Lands Rule Presentation by Pat Johnston and Gordon Toevs

The Public Lands Rule delivers on the Bureau’s promise to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for present and future generations.

The Three Main Components of the Public Lands Rule		
Protect the most important, and healthiest landscapes	Restore landscapes back to health	Ensure decision-making is based on science and data
<p>Protect Intact Landscapes</p> <p>Manage landscapes for wildlife habitat and clean water.</p> 	<p>Restoration</p> <p>Identify priority landscapes, develop restoration plans, and put people to work restoring America’s public lands.</p> 	<p>Make management decisions informed by the health of lands and waters using science, including Indigenous Knowledge, and data.</p> 
<p>Designate Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)</p> <p>Use this existing tool to protect and manage important landscapes for natural, cultural, scientific, and other values.</p> 	<p>Mitigation</p> <p>Use a landscape-scale approach to develop and implement mitigation strategies. Avoid and minimize adverse impacts to public lands from development, and offset unavoidable impacts.</p> 	<p>Expand land health assessments beyond the grazing program to all BLM-managed public lands.</p> 
<p>Allow Restoration and Mitigation Leases</p> <p>Formalize restoration and mitigation leases as tools to ensure healthy landscapes, where they are compatible with existing permitted uses. Partners like conservation districts, state game and fish agencies and sporting groups can lease public lands to make investments in restoration. Leases can also be used to balance the impacts of development elsewhere.</p> 		<p>Ensure science drives decision-making, by incorporating assessment, inventory, and monitoring information.</p> 

Public Lands Rule Timeline:

May 9, 2024: The Public Lands Rule published in Federal Register - 43 CFR 6102.4

June 10, 2024: The Rule in effect

August 9, 2024: Published preliminary implementation guidance

- Information Bulletin 2024-035 | [Implementation Guidance](#)
- Information Bulletin 2024-048 | [Land Use Planning Requirements](#)
- Instruction Memo 2024-035 | [Restoration Prioritization & Planning](#)
- Instruction Memo 2024-036 | [Watershed Condition Assessment](#)

- Instruction Memo 2024-037 | [Land Health Standards](#)
- Instruction Memo 2024-038 | [Restoration & Mitigation Leasing](#)
- Manual Section-1735 | [Inventory & Monitoring of Ecological Resources](#)
- Manual Section-1613 | [Areas of Critical Environmental Concern](#)

What's in the Rule?

Revises Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Promulgates new regulations

- Principles for Ecosystem Resilience
- Protection of Landscape Intactness
- Management to Protect Intact Landscapes
- Restoration
 - Restoration Prioritization and Planning
- Restoration and Mitigation Leasing
 - Termination and Suspension of Restoration and Mitigation Leases
 - Bonding for Restoration and Mitigation Leases
- Management Actions for Ecosystem Resilience
 - Mitigation
- Land Health Standards
 - Management for Land Health
 - Land Health Evaluations and Determinations
- Inventory, Assessment, and Monitoring

The Public Lands Rule – Objectives

Protect Important Landscapes - ACECs

The Public Lands Rule clarifies and expands the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) regulations to meet FLPMA's direction to give priority to the designation and protection of these important areas.

- Expands the importance criteria to include ecosystem resilience, landscape intactness, and habitat connectivity.
- Requires ACECs to be managed in a manner that conserves, protects, and enhances the relevant and important values.
- Codifies RNAs as a type of ACEC designated for the primary purpose of research and education.
- Establishes procedures for addressing ACECs nominated outside the planning process and for implementing temporary management.



Protect important landscapes

Protect Important Landscapes – Intact Landscapes

The Public Lands Rule promotes the identification and management of intact landscapes.

- Provides direction to identify intact lands during resource management planning and to identify which areas will be managed to protect their intactness.
 - Management direction for an intact landscape can vary across the landscape itself.

- Requires working with diverse local, state, Tribal, and federal partners to identify and manage intact landscapes that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Requires the BLM to maintain a publicly available database of landscape intactness data.

Restoration

Restoration, directs authorized officers to adhere to restoration principles when designing restoration actions

- Address the root causes of degradation
- Ensure actions occur at appropriate spatial and temporal scales
- Coordinate actions across programs and consider existing uses
- Include BMP's, high quality information, and adaptive management
- Consider using nature-based solutions and native seeds
- Consult with Tribes to identify opportunities for co-stewardship and collaboration



Restore lands back to health

Restoration Prioritization and Planning

Consistent with the restoration principles, authorized officers must:

- Identify measurable restoration outcomes in Resource Management Plans.
- Identify priority restoration landscapes at least every 5 years to leverage our ongoing investments in restoration.
- Prepare or amend restoration plans for priority landscapes every 5 years.

Restoration Prioritization and Planning

Authorized Officers must:

- Track restoration implementation.
- Assess progress towards meeting restoration goals.
- Assess if additional resources and management changes are needed to achieve restoration goals.

Restoration and Mitigation Leasing

Consistent with Section 302 of FLPMA, the Public Lands Rule establishes a new tool in the form of restoration and mitigation leases.

- Provides guidance for who can hold leases, how to apply for them, and how to process them
- Provides guidance for when and how to terminate or suspend restoration and mitigation leases
- Provides guidance on bonding for restoration and mitigation leases
- Provides additional guidance for mitigation leases

Informed Decision-Making—What the Rule Does

Establishes a process to:



Provide for informed decision-making

Promotes Tribal Engagement

- Respects and equitably promotes the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge as part of incorporating science and data to support decision making.
- Requires meaningful consultation with Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations during decision making processes and identifies opportunities for Tribal co-stewardship.
- Provides opportunity to be co-leads or serve as cooperating agencies in the development of environmental impact statements or environmental assessments.

Develop national land health standards, including indicators that will be used in Watershed Condition Assessments within three years. States may also adopt regionally specific standards.

Consider land health in decision-making across all programs.

Evaluate land health on all BLM-managed land every 10 years using the results of Watershed Condition Assessments.

Watershed Condition Assessment (WCA)

- Assess: condition of soil, water, habitats, and ecological processes; disturbances; and landscape intactness.
- Completed by the National Operations Center every 10 years with local data added by state and field offices.
- WCA will be used to:
 - Inform protection of intact landscapes;
 - Inform context for land use and restoration planning; and
 - Manage for ecosystem resilience.

Next Steps

- Fall 2024:
 - Establish Interdisciplinary National Teams
 - Restoration, Watershed Condition Assessment, and Land Health Standards

- Stand up State Teams
- Stand up PLR National Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Committee
- Establish WCA Pilot using existing priority landscapes
 - Start with one pilot, then do the next three, then the next six.
 - Ideally these landscapes will have a diversity of habitat and contain predominately BLM-administered lands
- FY2025:
 - Full suite of implementation guidance
 - Webinars to roll out guidance

Lakeview RMPA Update by Todd Forbes

- The Lakeview Field Office is in south central Oregon. There are 3.2 million acres of public land located in the planning area. The area is characterized by a basin and range topography with remote canyons as well as high desert and mountain systems.
- The RMP Amendment has a Narrow scope to comply with the 2010 Settlement Agreement by:
 1. Determining how Lands with Wilderness Characteristics units will be managed;
 2. Addressing a full range of alternatives with respect to OHV use; and,
 3. Considering the reduction of grazing when:
 - A grazing permit is voluntary relinquished.
 - Standards for Rangeland Health are not achieved due to current livestock grazing.
- What Happens Next?
 1. 30-day Protest Period Nov. 9 – Dec. 9
 2. Record of Decision

2024 Fire Recap and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Review by District Mangers

2024 Burns District Fire Recap

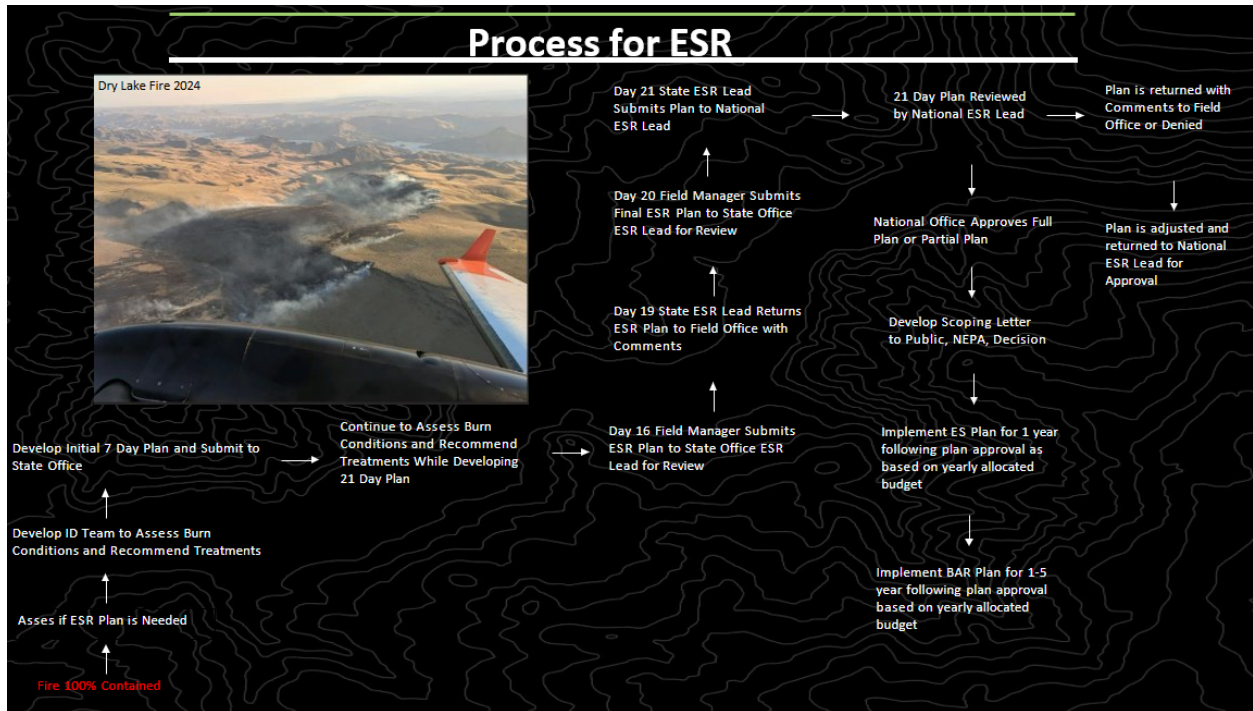
- 24 Fires (10 Year Average = 22 Fires)
- 36,428 Acres Burned (10 Year Average = 18,567 Acres)
- 198,860 Acres Burned in Other Jurisdictions. 176,537 acres USFS
- 19 Total Grazing Allotments Affected
- 20 Separate Grazing Permittess Affected
- 14,253 Acres of Priority Sage Grouse Habitat Affected

2024 Lakeview District Fire Recap

- 27 Fires this year (40 Fires - 10-year average)
- 3,974 BLM acres this year (3,396 Acres - 10 Year Average)
- 94,028 Acres other jurisdiction acres burned
- 2 allotments affected
- 2 permittees affected
- 0 acres BLM Priority Sage Grouse Habitat

2024 Vale District Fire Recap

- 57 BLM fires (43 fires 10-year average)
- 366,045 BLM acres (134,025 acres 10-year average)
- 395,366 acres burned other jurisdictions inc. Private (327,615)
- 143 allotments affected
- 395 permittees affected
- 88,417 acres Priority Sage Grouse Habitat



Resource Values and other considerations when developing a plan

- Slope
- Pre-burn ecological and vegetative condition
- Exposure
- Soils
- Access
- Wildlife habitat
- Geographic setting
- Invasive species and noxious weeds and potential
- Likelihood of success for treatments
- Land Use Plan guidance
- Special Management area considerations
- Contract development timelines/availability of vendors/local capabilities

Typical ESR Treatments

- Herbicide Treatments
- Wildlife Guzzler Repair
- Shrub Planting
- Foot Bridge Replacement
- Seeding Treatments
- Aerial Seeding
- Fence Repair
- Monitoring

Typical 5 Year Treatment Calendar

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Planning	Planning	Plan Admin	Plan Admin	Plan Admin
Grazing Agreements	Grazing Compliance Checks	Grazing Compliance Checks	Noxious Weeds Application	Noxious Weeds Application
Cultural Protection	Aerial Seeding	Noxious Weeds Application	Temp Fence Removal	Monitoring
Cadastral Survey	Drill Seeding	Monitoring	Monitoring	
Permanent Fence Repair	Seedling Planting			
Temporary Fence Installation	Noxious Weeds Application			
Aerial Herbicide Application	Monitoring			
Noxious Weeds Application				
Soil Stabilization				
Seed Purchase				
Seedling Grow Out				
Facilities				
Monitoring				

Round Table:

- Topic Ideas: Climate changes effect on public lands; Population growth and impacts to public lands; Formal rockhounding regulations, including petrified wood; Managing healthy sagebrush steeps; Seeds of Success Program; Update on PLR; field trip to lek; Update on Sage Grouse Planning; Update on solar planning (PEIS); and Update on individual solar projects.

Meeting dates for 2025:

- March 18 and 19 in Lakeview
- June 17 and 18 in Ontario
- October 14 and 15 in Burns

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Wednesday, November 20, Tour of the Oregon Wild Horse Corral:

RAC members Ken Poole, Alison Cole, Mary Jo Hedrick, Joe Tague, Kristen Shelman, and Don Hodge

Agency representatives: Designated Federal Official/Lakeview District Manager Todd Forbes; Vale District Manager Shane DeForest; Tara Thissell, Burns PAO; and Lisa McNee, Lakeview PAO/RAC coordinator.

Tour ended at noon.