

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (SEORAC/RAC) Meeting  
Minutes October 18, 2002  
Comfort Inn Conference Room, Hines, OR

<b>RAC Members Present:</b>	<b>Group Number:</b>	<b>Federal Officials Present:</b>
Mark Ferns	1	Dave Henderson, DFO, Vale BLM
Tom Harris	1	Tom Dyer, Burns BLM
Ken Bentz	1	Steve Ellis, Lakeview BLM/ Fremont/Winema NF
Dick Leever	1	
Lee Belknap	2	
John Bishop	2	
Mike Golden	2	
Bob Kindschy	2	
Jill Workman	2	
Chad Boyd	3	
Marilyn Miller	3	
Jane O'Keeffe	3	
Walt Van Dyke	3	

**Federal Officials Absent:**

Roger William, Malheur NF

**RAC Members Absent**

Jim Campbell  
Cecil Dick

**Guests:**

Wedge Watkins, BLM	Tom Christensen, BLM	Mike Hartwell, BLM
Tom Miles, BLM	Joan Suther, Burns BLM	Jim Keniston, Malheur National Forest
Ron Wiley, BLM	Rick Hall, BLM	
Nora Taylor, Burns BLM	Gretchen Burris, Lakeview BLM	

**Jill Workman, RAC Chair**

- Opened the meeting at 8:00 am with self- introductions.
- Mike Ferns introduced himself and is a new RAC member representing Minerals.

**Jill Workman – Minutes**

Jill reviewed the previous meeting minutes. John Bishop moved and Marilyn Miller seconded that the minutes be approved, minutes were approved as written.

**MEETING DATES FOR NEXT YEAR**

**Jill Workman**

- February 24, 25 - Ontario
- May 27 and 28 - Christmas Valley/Lakeview
- September 8 and 9 - Lakeview
- December 8 and 9 - Burns

**WOOD RIVER WETLANDS**

**Steve Ellis/Wedge Watkins**

**Steve Ellis**

- Wedge Watkins is the manager of the Wood River Wetland Restoration Project.

**Wedge Watkins**

- Handout 1 is the management summary of the project from 1995-2002.

- BLM started the restoration project in 1994 after purchasing the 3,200 acre Wood River Ranch property with the help of The American Lands Conservancy.
- BLM studying wetlands around the lake and monitoring water quality of the lake.
- Several wetlands areas around the lake have been drained from reclaimed wetlands and used for agriculture.
  - Project goal is to restore the 3200 acres back to wetlands by returning the river channel back to its original location and in the process, restore the wetlands.
  - Long term improvement in water quality will improve riparian habitats for federally listed fish and other wildlife species.
- Wood River water temperature is 48 degrees when it comes out of the ground 15 miles north of project site.
  - Water temperature is in the 50-58 degree at the project site.
- A good portion (50%) of the Wood River is currently diverted to irrigation.
- Concern has to do with nutrient levels and the ph can be in excess of 10.
  - Algae blooms in Agency Lake and Upper Klamath Lake are the key to controlling water quality.
  - The nutrient load delivered to the lower Wood River and Agency Lake, has greatly reduced and improved water quality
- Increased water is available to Agency Lake by reducing irrigation water during the critical demand period of June 15 to September 15.
- Duck production has increased every year under BLM management, but dropped in 2001 because of lack of water. Production for 2002 has increased to 2000 levels.
  - Main Ducks in area are Gadwall and Cinnamon Teal plus numerous other species of ducks and geese.
- Primary use around the Wood River is wildlife/bird watching.
  - Numerous tour buses of bird watchers.
- A very small amount of noxious weeds including White top and Canada Thistle.

### **Steve Ellis**

- Partners have contributed \$3.5 million dollars including both federal and private to this project.
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is looking for more water.
  - BOR has two proposals to store more water that include BLM lands: Wood River Wetlands plus another proposal to raise the height of Gerber Dam which could flood some BLM land including tow fee campsites.
- BLM has advised BOR that they need to get the public involved.
  - BLM should be a partner in the BOR EIS for the Gerber project.
- Need some mitigation on the fee campsites, fishery, and bird populations.
- BOR would like to store more water in the Wood River wetlands.
  - BOR land next to the BLM wetlands has a mudflat type of vegetation, not wetland type vegetation
- BOR owns the dam, BLM manages the land.
- BLM objectives are tied into a resource management plan (RMP) and this plan would need to be revised if there is a change management.
- Concern is that this is popular with the public and BLM partners have contributed a lot of dollars and signed written agreements.
  - The partners will not be happy if there is a shift in use.
- Congressional interest in both areas.

- Wedge Watkin's handout highlights the water quality data.
- Use is geared to the irrigation season.
  - BOR seeks water storage areas to meet their irrigation demand.
- Flow data is available before and after the Wood River Restoration.
- BLM tries to maximize water levels for waterfowl nesting.
- Ducks Unlimited (DU) poured over a million dollars into the Wood River Wetlands Project and have a written agreement with us.
  - They probably will not be happy if the use of the area is changed.
- BOR acquired 7000 acres next to the BLM.
  - To date BOR does not have a management plan on this additional property.
- Ducks Unlimited (DU) has an agreement for 30 years with BLM.
  - Change in relationship with DU could have state wide implications.
- Once BOR comes up with alternatives this may be a good time for the RAC to provide advise.
  - May need a RAC subcommittee to work on asking the Klamath PAC to join us in encouraging the BOR to share their intent on these issues and encourage public input.

***Decision: Tom Harris moved and Mike Golden seconded that we send a letter to the Klamath PAC encouraging the BOR to share their intent on these issues and encourage them to seek public input. Motion passed.***

- Jill Workman will draft this letter to show that the RAC has some interest in this area.
  - Steve will provide an update on both the Wood River Wetlands and Gerber Dam issues at the February meeting.

## **SAGE GROUSE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

**Chad Boyd/Walt VanDyke**

### **Walt VanDyke**

- Walt will be moving his office to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at the farm services building in Ontario, OR. He will start writing the Sage Grouse Plan after the first of the year.
- Food is limited for Sage Grouse in Malheur County at the end of farm season because of limited habitat.
- There is a need for someone to be tied to both habitat and noxious weed control.

### **Chad Boyd**

- Conservation team has not met since the last RAC meeting.
- Letter was sent out announcing the next meeting on December 12 is in Bend.
  - And email will be sent out prior to the meeting.

## **STEENS MOUNTAIN UPDATE/ANDREWS RMP**

**Tom Dyer/Rick Hall**

### **Tom Dyer**

- Ron Wiley is currently Acting Manager Steens Mountain/Andrew Resource Area.
- Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC) members have been confirmed as of yesterday.
  - Next meeting is next Monday and Tuesday in Bend.
- 12 voting SMAC Members and 1 non-voting member:

- Alice Elshoff-Local Environmental
- Hoyt Wilson-Grazing Permittee
- Michael Golden, Dispersed Recreation
- Ron Harding, Wild Horse and Burro
- Richard Benner-No Financial Interest, General
- Wanda Johnson-Burns Paiute Tribe
- Jason Miner, Fish and Recreational Fishing
- Jerry Sutherland-Vice Chair Environmental Rep-State
- Cynthia Witzel-Recreation Permit Holder
- Tom Harris Chair-Mechanized or Consumptive Recreation
- Stacy Davies-Grazing Permittee
- Harland Yriarte-Private Landowner
- Steve Purchase-State Liaison (non-voting member).
- Fencing contract is let and material moved in this fall with the project going next spring.
  - Roaring Springs is willing to not graze cows next year if this project is completed.
- By the end of next year there should be a cow free area circled.
- Visitor use is currently being studied on how best to get the data.
- There was an increase of use when the legislation got the publics eye.
  - This summer use same as in the past.
- Because of the series of fires there is concern that cheatgrass will take over.
- How do we convert these cheatgrass areas back to native in wilderness study areas.
  - Not a lot of shrubs coming back into areas.
  - Looking at doing this on a larger scale.
  - Spent a lot of years getting rid of sagebrush now we are going to put back in.

### **Rick Hall**

- Assistant Manager for the Steens/Andrews RA.
  - Handouts five.
  - Alternatives, goals and objectives goals desired statement s objectives-descriptions of outcome or progress that can be tracked.
  - Would like advise from the RAC on each objective, go over the handouts and let them know of any suggestions or concerns.
  - Handout of the table of content. Full analysis of the management situation, physical and biological and a discussion of the environment that they will be using to create the plan.
- Working on a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that should be out in February.
- Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) should be completed by May 2004.
- Environmental interests have already sent out comments.
- Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) will be reevaluated in the Resource Management Plan (RMP).
  - BLM has received numerous suggestions and some of these will be incorporated into the plan.
  - Exchanges and acquisitions will also be looked at.
- Environmental Analysis (EA) schedule is behind and also special use permits.
- EA's cover activities until the RMP is completed.
- The running camp EA will be the first one completed.
- Recently caught an illegal outfitter from Bend charging folks \$400 each to see the Steen
  - There were 14 folks on the tour.

- Other outfitters are out there trying to use this area: Recreation users, hunters, and fisherman.
- If you are leading a birding outing and charging folks for your expertise you need a permit to do this.
- Education stuff may get a break on the permit, but each case needs to be looked at.
- BLM tours are different involving universities.
  - Non-profit versus profit.

### **Tom Dyer**

- Status on vacancies-Wilderness Coordinator-vacant.
- Selection soon for the Steens/Andrew Manager.
  - Should be easy on selection since it does not have to go to the Washington Office for approval.
- John Collins- from Arizona, Recreation Lead taking Mark Sherborne place.
  - John's background is range and he moved into Recreation early in career.

### **NATIONAL RAC MEETING**

**Dave Henderson/Jill Workman**

#### **Dave Henderson**

- November satellite broadcast to include all RAC members.
- Director wants to have a national meeting with all of the RAC chairs in Phoenix, AZ.
  - The first day the folks will get together and put together a program for the second day with the director.
  - We need to figure out what is working and what is not working.
  - Timeliness of Appointments is a big issue that Jill will take to the meeting.
  - This is the second year in a row that there has been a problem getting the appointments completed.
  - Delay of meetings both last year and this year.
  - How to expand the RAC's role to help BLM/FS.
- Issues for Jill to take to the National Meeting
  - **What works for the RAC:**
    - Great staff-support from the BLM/FS districts.
    - Educational tours.
    - Stick to BLM/FS jurisdiction.
    - Speak your mind/capable of independent thought.
    - Sub-committee process.
    - Decision making process-true to consensus process.
    - Ensure diversity of membership-broad based.
    - Operation guidelines/interpersonal relationships-courtesy of members (operation guidelines on back of nameplate).
    - We are specialist not lobbyists.
    - Social aspect (e.g. 2-day meeting w/tour) (social/non-meeting time).
    - Empowered membership.
    - Web site.
    - Proactively.
    - Good working relationship with federal agencies.
  - **What needs improved**

- Appointment process.
- Federal Register authorization delays.
  - All Federal Registers not just the RAC's.
  - Politics/control.
- Interface between RAC's w/national Horse and Burro program.
- Lack of response to our correspondence from administration in DC.
- Need to advise other agencies-not just the BLM and FS.
  - To address issues crossing agency borders.
- FS should be included in Delegated Federal Official (DFO) duties.
- New Administration view on RAC needs update.
- Standardized ongoing training with periodic updates.
- Flexible funding for special projects.
  - Not take away from management monies for other programs.
- Inter-RAC communication.
- National communication links (web site?)
- Better orientation materials for new members.
  - New member binder with key positions that the RAC has taken, rosters.
- Better public awareness of RAC activities.
  - Open to options.
- Secretary of Interior input and communication on topical issues.
- What is the priority for developing additional guidelines?
  - Original intent was to deal with standard of rangeland health w/guidelines-what is priority for developing new guidelines for recreation and mining?
- Create favorable environment for public participation.

### **Public Comment Period**

*No one signed up to speak*

### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Dick Leever asked to be removed from the Malheur County Wildland Fire Board Subcommittee and Mark Ferns will take his slot. Mike Golden asked to be added to the Birch Creek Management Plan Subcommittee. Lee Belknap is joining the North Lake Recreation Subcommittee.

North Lake Recreation Plan Subcommittee	Jane O'Keeffe, Marilyn Miller, Dick Leever, Lee Belknap, and Tom Harris
Birch Creek Management Plan Subcommittee	Marilyn Miller, Jill Workman, John Bishop, Mike Golden, and Jim Campbell
Malheur County Wildland Fire Board Subcommittee	Walt VanDyke, Bob Kindschy, John Bishop, and Mark Ferns
Range Health Assessment BLM All Subcommittee	Walt VanDyke, Jill Workman, Chad Boyd, and Ken Bentz?

### **NORTH LAKE RECREATION PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE**

#### **Dick Leever, Chair**

- Committee went on a tour in Christmas Valley yesterday and met last night and they came up with several issues

- Need to know where the boundary is.
- Define key locations that will offer recreation opportunities or conflicts.
- This will allow group to deal with key issues of the areas.
- Christmas Valley, Fort Rock, Summer Lake area is the users in the area
- Gather maps from Lakeview.
- Plan another on the ground meeting in November to define the areas that they have concerns.

## **BIRCH CREEK MANAGEMENT PLAN SUB COMMITTEE**

### **Jill Workman, Chair**

- Need to get out to the area as a group.
- Subcommittee meeting in Jordan Valley in February 26 following the RAC meeting.
  - Jordan Craters maybe included in tour.
  - Consider packaging as an ecological area
- Later on RAC could facilitate a local public meeting.
- April 16-20 the whole RAC is invited by the subcommittee group to go on a float trip down the Owyhee River.
  - Launch at Rome.
  - Take out either at Birch Creek or Leslie Gulch depending on waterflow.
  - At the February meeting will need to know who is going.

## **MALHEUR COUNTY WILDLAND FIRE BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **Bob Kindschy, Chair**

- Issues:
  - Appearance of equipment being available without enough personnel to run the committee.
  - Best option is to form a committee to assist.
  - Ranchers are angry and the folks need to be involved that are in the rural areas.
  - Get firefighters trained and up to speed so the regulations can be met.
  - Utilize key folks that are respected by their peers.
  - Educate folks so they understand the issues.
  - Need to address the problems.
  - Look at green stripping.
  - Look at breaking up the contiguous stands and supporting agricultural research on native seeds.
  - Farm raised seed could be developed.
    - Native plant society is very active in this.

## **RANGE HEALTH ASSESSMENT BLM SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **Chad Boyd, Chair**

- Charged with the Bully Creek LAMP and decided to invite other folks to the meeting from other areas in relation to the standard and guidelines.
- Problems with public relations on both sides.
- Summer pasture because of riparian concerns.
  - Time line issues.
  - Action by next season.

- Funding of process to meet standards and guidelines.
- Tools to fix problems such as use of herbicides for non-native invaders.
- Technical issues-research
  - Cheatgrass and yellow star thistle
- To send a letter to the Secretary you must have a unanimous decision by the RAC on the content of the letter.

### **Steve Ellis**

- Final Lakeview RMP is waiting *Federal Register* approval in Washington.
- Document at printers and will print as soon as the Washington Office approves.
- BLM still has some fire rehabilitation to complete.
  - Planting both native and non native seed.
  - Plus some shrubs and brush.
- BLM Law Enforcement decision to stovepipe part of the organization-the special agent side of program.
  - Rangers will continue working for the District Managers
- Steve was in Australia to represent BLM and give a paper on Lakeview's hazardous fuels reduction program.
  - Will try to get an exchange program going with 3 folks coming here from Australia and in April and 3 BLM folks going over in January/February.
- BLM/FS are on a continuing resolution because Congress did not pass our budget.
- BLM budget is supposed to be flat in 2003 with some increases in mineral and energy.
- Congress is tying both agency's dollars to performance and accountability.

BLM is good at tracking performance and accountability

## **AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR ROUNDTABLE**

### **Dave Henderson**

- Process issues; Burns is going allotment by allotment and Vale is by a broader landscape scale.
  - Main concern that when there are permittee's in both Burns and Vale, the process needs to be consistent.

### **Steve Ellis acting for Chuck Graham**

- Forest Service is getting ready to do the NEPA analysis on some fire salvage timber sales.
  - Six timber sales are proposed.

### **Dave Henderson-Vale District BLM**

- Continuing resolutions come with more contingencies and there are more and more things that we cannot do because of not having an approved budget.
- Downfall, if districts over spend by the time the budget comes in seasonal folks may have to be laid off sooner.

### **Malheur National Forest – Jim Keniston acting for Roger Williams, acting Forest Supervisor**

- Title II projects were completed before the fires hit.
  - Cannot spend any further Title II dollars until a budget is authorized.
- A lot of infrastructure has been lost along with the ability to do projects.
- Thinning projects are gearing up.

- 2003 budget has a grim outlook.
- Forest Service has centralized communications leaving shortfalls in forests budgets.
- Recreation program is below a viable program level because of the 55% decline in budget.
- Not sure how the Forest will operate next summer.
- Multiple problems dealing with fire planning and budget.
- See handout.

### **Three Rivers Resource Area**

**Joan Suther, Area Manager**

- Hazmat site cleanup completed this week.
- Continuing interest in minerals and mining operations.
  - Requires bonding at 100% cleanup levels.
  - Reno meeting next week on dealing with bonding issues.
- Large allotment plan-West Warm Springs is complex.
  - 300 acre allotment with an interdisciplinary team.
- Juniper cutting done this year with a committee to plan the use these products: such as firewood, Bio mass utilization, or art lumber.
- Newall area will include timber sale thinning.
- BLM and FS sharing personnel making a difference with the one stop shopping for the public.
- State Director visited the Three Rivers Resource Area last week.
- Recent presentation by Larry Swan who is involved with bio mass utilization and Louisiana Pacific.

### **Tom Dyer**

- Wild Horse program \$700,000 budget this year-usually at a million three.
- 150 animals gathered this year instead of 500.
- (9) HMA's over in numbers in Oregon (19 total HMA's)
- More and more of a concern with other levels of the districts.
- Utah and Colorado are pulling more animals out than planned for and has to have holding facilities that are eating up the budget.
- Nevada program is not good either.
- **Jill Workman**
  - Thinks that the RAC should send a letter to the BLM Director and ask assistance (Tom Dyer) in using the appropriate language in the letter.
  - Letter was sent in 2001 about the wild horse issue.
    - Letter never received an answer.
  - Jill will take this issue to the RAC satellite meeting.
- Suggestion that the RAC needs to send a letter each year supporting the Wild Horse and Burro Program.
  - Proper way is to send the letter to the secretary with a cc to the senators and congressmen.
- John Bishop will draft first letter.
- Bob Kindschy will email the original letter to Jill Workman and John Bishop.
  - BLM can provide information if requested.

### **Dave Henderson**

- Oregon's new State Director was on the district a week ago.

- She is very approachable and easy to talk to.
- She came from the National Landscape Conservation System.
- Committed to see the entire state in three months
- There are still a lot of questions to be answered on fire rehab.
- No lawsuits or appeals yet on why permittee's need to keep cows off for two seasons and why horses were removed from the burned out areas.
  - Communication is very important on this
- Native plant issues continue to come up because most of the native plants do not compete well.
- Looking at areas to clear of cheatgrass by planting non natives to get established and then come back and put the natives back in.
- Bonding regulations are a function of the last administration and BLM is getting hammered on this with FOIA's and congressional inquiries.
  - This is expected to continue for sometime.
- SEOR-RMP will be printed when the federal register notice has been approved and released.
  - Implementation plans are being used to get things started.
  - Will bring these plans back to the RAC to study.

### **Follow-up items for the next RAC meeting**

- Chad Boyd-write PAC letter.
- John Bishop to write the Wild Horse and Burro letter.
- Update on the Wood River Project.
- Election of officers.
- Subcommittee's meetings.
- Jill Workman-report on Phoenix satellite meeting.
- Meeting in Vale/Baker City may include a trip to the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center on a field trip.
  - Sagegrouse update.
  - Steens/Andrews update.
  - Followup on wild horse study.
  - Birch Creek Owyhee River trip planning.
  - Dave Henderson and Peggy Diegan put together a RAC training manual for new comers.
    - List of organization with phone numbers for RAC members.
  - SMAC update.
  - Present Howard Brooks plaque for his service with the RAC.

Meeting adjourned