

Minutes

Subcommittee, BLM Grazing Rule

Crook County Natural Resources Committee

June 3, 2026

Members Present: Mike Lunn, Melinda Kestler, Cliff Kiser, Tim Deboodt

Members absent: Laura York

Public present: Commissioner Hermreck

Meeting was called to order by Mike @ 1:00 p.m.

Tim made available the draft minutes from the meeting on May 28, 2026. Mike provided an updated version of the draft he is working on that will be presented to the full Committee at next week's regular meeting (June 10, 2026).

Mike asked everyone to summarize their thoughts from last week's meeting and anything they have thought about in regard to this topic since then.

Melinda shared her continued concern regarding what appears to be an effort to limit public involvement in any NEPA process associated with permit renewals. The proposed rules would significantly reduce public participation, including limiting the County's role through Coordination.

Cliff said that he wants our response to clearly state what the County absolutely agrees with in regard to these rule changes and what we absolutely disagree with.

Mike shared that he is working to expand the draft letter he is working on that includes all these discussions. The version we have today to review expands the introduction portion of the letter and states the importance of public land grazing to the County and the ranches in the County.

Melinda, in reviewing the FAQ handout provided by the BLM, likes the direction of creating opportunities for flexibility in permit administration and application. Again, Melinda stressed that the new rules should not alienate the public and shut them out of the process.

Both Mike and Melinda expressed concerns about the changes in language regarding water quality, state's jurisdiction and the disconnect being proposed. How will the State be involved and stay informed when water quality issues arise? In order to deal with water quality issues, the State and BLM must identify the cause of the problem in order to be able to deal with it. In terms of improving water quality through management changes, years may pass and the State with BLM must remain engaged. Disconnecting the State is not a good thing.

Mike was going to add language about the 4 elements of water quality. Landform, vegetation, etc.

There was much discussion on the language in the new rules over the “Interested Party”. The committee does not support narrowing the public’s involvement in the NEPA process. The committee does support a narrowed involvement to those “actively involved” in the development of the Allotment Management Plan that evolves out of the NEPA process. The Committee supports an active role by the permittee in the development of the Allotment Management Plan. Active role means participation as a member of the Interdisciplinary Team from its inception to the completion of the permit renewal process.

The committee discussed strong support for assuring County’s and other local governments continue to have a defined role through Coordination. “Big C”. The rules appear to want to limit the role of consultation, cooperation and coordination. The committee is not clear as to the intent of this change (4110.2-4). This issue is tied in places to “allotment combination or division”, there is language in other portions of the rule changes that add confusion. The committee is in strong support of Coordination (big C) as it is call out in NEPA and FLPMA. Section 4120.2 “Cooperation with State, County, Tribal and Federal Agencies and Governments, speaks to the requirement that BLM will cooperate with state and County governments but cooperate is different than Coordination.

Susie spoke about the positive change in the rules, calling out the need to IDENTIFY the cause of problems to ensure any changes in land management, are tied to the problem and not change things that are not a part of the problem.

The committee discussed the option of extending the grazing period 21 days before and after the terms ID in the AMP. The committee supports an even broader definition for expanding the grazing period and then develops a grazing strategy to address vegetative/resource objectives within the AMP. Dates on a calendar to not allow for the flexibility that may be necessary to incorporate in the AMP to address these objectives.

Melinda and Cliff suggested a review of the County’s Natural Resources Policy and include policy statements (ex from Grazing and Wildlife sections) that support the Committee review of this Grazing Rule.

Mike will work on the next draft and have it ready for next week’s Committee meeting. There may be a need to have the subcommittee meet in the next coming weeks to finish the letter and submit it to the County for their review and adoption.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.