

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resources Committee

July 8, 2026

Committee Members Present: Bill McCormack, Frank Porfily, Lynne Breese, Calista Songstad, Tim Deboodt, Melinda Kestler, Cliff Kiser, Mike Lunn, Laura York, Andy Gallagher, Steve McGuire, Kim Vogel

Members Absent: none

Guests Present: Robbie Piehl (FS), Jeff Marzal (FS), Slater Turner (USFS), Susie Hermreck (County Commissioner), Greg Jackle (ODFW) Jodie Stiffman (Oregon Living with Fire), Dr. Jenn Fenton (Oregon Living with Fire), Lisa Clark (BLM), Stacey Long (FS),

Public Present: Gayle Hunt

Meeting was called to order @ 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes: Calista moved to approve the minutes as presented. Bill Seconded. Bill, Frank, Lynne, Calista, Melinda, Cliff, Mike, Laura, Andy, Kim and Steve all voted yes, no nays, motion passed unanimously.

Agency Updates: Jeff Marzal, Ochoco National Forest Supervisor provided the Forest Service update. He introduced Stacey Long, Acting Public Affairs Officer for the Ochoco National Forest. Jeff shared updates with the timber sales, he announced that the FS will be updating its grazing regulations soon (similar to the process BLM is using) and that the FS has begun the search for a permanent replacement for District Ranger on the Paulina District.

Jeff reviewed early fire activity in the Forest and reviewed market challenges currently facing timber sales and logging activities.

Robbie Piehl reviewed fire rehab work. The Forest is working on agreements with Crook County SWCD, South Fork SWCD, Heart of Oregon, Crooked River Watershed Council and others to assist with project supervision and contracting for rehab work being scheduled as a result of the Crazy Creek and Rail Ridge Fires (2024). Close to 4.5 million dollars has been secured to complete a variety of projects. Hazard tree removal will occur on approximately 600 acres.

Kim Vogel asked about the grazing regulation update. Jeff shared that the Ochoco NF currently has only 1 allotment that is vacant and meets the criteria for reestablishment of a grazing permit. Proposed rules (not yet released) are being designed to improve relations between the Forest and permittees, improve administration of permits and include the addition of a Fire Liaison for the purpose of coordinating wildfire fighting activities with permittees and local Rangeland Fire Protection Associations. Proposed changes are not yet public.

Melinda asked about campfires and their continued authorization within some campgrounds. She asked why the agencies haven't just banned all campfires for the remaining part of the year. She noted that volunteers have been scouting the Ochocos and putting out campfires left by people who didn't take the time to put it out properly.

Lisa mentioned that on lands administered by BLM, the campfire restrictions are done in stages and not all campgrounds are open for campfires. Only those campgrounds that have on site camp hosts can still have a campfire. Stacey Long with the Forest Service mentioned that there is no data showing that wildfires start from designated campground fire use. Mike Lunn added that fire restrictions are also based on national activity (not just local conditions) meaning that if it is a busy fire season nationally and fire resources become restricted, then banning campfires in designated campgrounds will be more likely.

Lisa Clark, Deschutes Resource Area Manager provided the update for BLM. Lisa provided two handouts (attached), one for updated activity and the other an announcement for hiring. BLM is currently hiring in Oregon, with positions prioritized based on Administrative priorities. In western Oregon, foresters, surveyors, and equipment operators are being recruited. For the Prineville District, a forester position is being recruited for.

Other topics discussed (see handout for details) include the Integrated Invasive Plant Management plan update, lower Crooked River Guide permits, Barnes Butte trail system and the Juniper Canyon Motorized Use area updates. BLM is working with members of PLA2 on this project. Tim asked Lisa if the permittee for the area was involved in the discussion. This Committee participated in a process in the early 2020's regarding OHV use and the conflicts and trespass issues in this area due to unauthorized and unregulated OHV use. Lisa responded that she wasn't sure of the permittee's involvement in the current conversation but would reach out to them.

Greg Jackle, District Wildlife Biologist for ODF&W thanked Susie Hermreck, County Commissioner, Andy Gallagher and Tim for their help and participation in the ODF&W Commission tour on June 25. Commission members were holding a quarterly meeting in Redmond and during that meeting, were touring the Brothers/Hampton area, looking at landscape level work being done by multiple partners to enhance wildlife habitat. Greg shared an update on the finding of the invasive quagga mussel species found recently in Prineville Reservoir. ODFW will continue to monitor the reservoir for additional evidence of their presence.

Mike asked Greg about the impacts of IP-28 if passed in November on the Department and its programs. Greg said that the Department receives much of its operating funds from the sale of fishing and hunting licenses and the impact is not fully known.

Good of the Order:

Susie addressed the Committee and reminded them of the County's efforts to update Goal 5 planning documents and the need for public involvement in the process. The Planning Department is currently seeking applications for 3 committees that will work on this project. Each committee will have 3 – 7 people on it. Applications are due July 27, with the first committee meetings scheduled sometime early

fall. Tim shared that he had made copies of the applications and were available to the public to pick up from the table.

Kim asked Slater if Committee members could attend an upcoming field tour of the upper Trout Creek and North Slope project areas. Slater and Jeff shared that they didn't see why not and provided time and place as to where to meet to start the tour.

Andy provided an update from SWCD. For the last few years, the District has been doing about \$400,000 worth of projects annually. This year, to date they have over 1.2 million dollars in projects being done which covers 36 grant agreements, and 14,000 acres of juniper treatments. Additionally, there is another \$2 million in grants that are being reviewed.

Steve thanked Lynne for her service as acting Chair in Steve's absence the last 2 months.

Jodie Schiffman provided an update for the work being done under the leadership of Oregon Living with Fire. Website updates now include the postings of local fire (burn) restrictions. The public can sign up for alerts (to their cell phones) for current, wildfire information.

Public Comment: None

Kim moved to adjourn the meeting. Mike seconded the motion. Bill, Frank, Lynne, Laura, Cliff, Kim, Calista, Melinda, Steve, Mike, Andy all voted yes. No nays. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.