

August 19, 2025

The Natural Resources Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Svejcar at 6:05 p.m. Members in attendance were Jesse Svejcar, Lisa Grant, Jason Kesling, Chad Boyd, and Aaron Johnston.

Members did the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

In old business the group briefly discussed Wildlife Services. Foster has been working on some proposals concerning this area and anticipates work sessions in the fall. The Big Beautiful Bill Public Lands dispersment was briefly discussed. Kesling remarked that there was little land in Harney County that qualified, but that legislative move has failed, rendering it moot. During the recap of the Lumber/Timber Infrastructure brainstorming Svejcar noted that the market for dimensional lumber is saturated and quality lumber is scarce; laminated lumber would be a great outlet, but it doesn't currently meet building code. Johnston noted that value added products such as wood chips and bio char are gaining interest. Recapping the Grasshopper and Mormon cricket update, Kesling informed the group that it was pretty slow this year; Drewsey never had a hatch. We'll roll the leftover funds to next year.

In new business, discussion of the Blue Mountain Forest Plan revision meeting was initiated with Grant and Johnston offering to submit comments and share them with the court. Johnston was particularly interested in seeing more active management of riparian areas, and Kesling added that the plan's definition of riparian does not fit Eastern Oregon. Boyd noted that if you manage an intermittent stream as "riparian" it is ineffective; there needs to be a strategy for prioritizing riparian areas that need attention. Grant stated that there needs to be a standard for annual use, and sometimes areas need more monitoring. Boyd commented that biologists need to be given more latitude to use discretion to improve efficiency and efficacy.

An update was given on the Wolf Resolution to delist the wolf in general.

Discussion was had on the Wild Horse gathers planned for the summer that had been cancelled. Grant asked what was being litigated, process or science. Boyd suggested local government could help by lobbying to change the governing act. Grant suggested urging BLM to let Oregon manage Oregon horses. Svejcar noted that with the current horse market, there could be an outlet for surplus horses. Boyd questioned what administrative conditions we could influence change in to give us more latitude for management of our resources. Grant noted that gathers should be categorical exclusions and having to write an Environmental Assessment for every gather is redundant and counterproductive. After much discussion it was suggested that the Wild Horse and Burro Act itself is not as problematic as NEPA.

Frank gave an overview of the meeting with OWEB and discussion was had about land and water acquisition. Svejcar noted that the RAC 512 regulatory measures of cleaning up unused water rights is important, but overall, curtailment needs to be priority date driven. In regards to the concept of OWEB potentially buying water rights and retiring them instead of just being shut off by OWRD, Kesling thought they had bought some in Umatilla County. It was suggested that the Watershed Council might be a good intermediary for the County to work through with OWEB, similar to how landowners worked with SWCD on sage grouse CCAAs rather than directly with USFWS.

During the discussion of Payment in Lieu of Taxes(PILT), Grant asked about the formula, and although specificity wasn't given it was clear that it was a combination of acres of public land and population. Boyd noted the ridiculousness of incorporating population as a multiplier, because counties with larger populations can generate more revenue. It was suggest to as Josh Giles about his presentation on the

pros and cons of taking PILT over timber receipts. Johnston thought he remembered the figure of \$45K if the county took timber receipts rather than over a million in PILT.

There was discussion on the newly formed federal Wildfire agency. Johnston noted that they would take wildfire suppression from BLM and USFS to make the new agency, and they slashed those agencies to fund the new one. Svejcar questioned how they would interact with other agencies already established, and cited the lack of local knowledge on big fires with outside resources is already problematic. Boyd noted the centralizing of power is never a good idea. Boyd also cited that we catch 98% of fire starts; what happens before a fire starts is far more important. Kesling noted the potential negative impact the new agency could have on Harney County jobs dependent on the previous fire responsibilities of federal agencies.

During collaborative updates, Johnston discussed the Wildfire Collaborative. In regards to the ONDA situation they will try to make them involved earlier in the process, to which Boyd noted perhaps their behavior will change if they aren't always treated like a group that sues. Frank cautioned that involving litigious special interest groups in processes has the potential to be counterproductive and was a constant point of concern during the RAC and CBWP process. The Christmas Tree bill allotted more money to landscape resiliency, and the Zyn tax will go towards that as well. The collaborative was currently brainstorming project locations for PODs and PCL fuel reduction locations. Partners were outlining economic efficiencies of the RFPA liaison position. The wildfire interns are done for the summer, and CBS came out and filmed a piece on their work. The Forest Restoration collaborative will prepare comments for the Blue Mountain Forest Plan revision.

No agency partners were present for updates.

Svejcar adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Frank