

May 6, 2025

The Natural Resources Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Svejcar at 6:03 p.m. In attendance were Aaron Johnston, Josh Giles, Lisa Grant, Bruce Rickman, Merle Reid, Lee Foster, Jesse Svejcar, Rob Frank, Dave Bohnert, and Chad Boyd.

Members did the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Reid, seconded by Bohnert. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Boyd, seconded by Reid. Motion passed unanimously.

For old business the group recapped the Timber topic and reemphasized the lack of infrastructure to handle the amount of board feet proposed for management. The surveys for grasshopper and mormon crickets will hopefully be done later in May. Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will play a role in the treatment of these pests.

In new business, the proposed Wolf Resolution was discussed. It is a response to increased depredation and livestock-wildlife conflicts in the county. Boyd suggested a joint resolution between affected counties and expressed concern over setting the precedent of Congress removing protections. Foster gave an update on the most current wolf study; around 206 individual wolves (15% increase from the previous year), around 25 packs and 17 breeding pairs. There has been a flattening in the population growth curve in response to internal takings. Bohnert noted that the ability to disperse has probably led to the increase.

The Integrated Water Plan was discussed. This plan was developed through Place Based Planning and is currently in the public comment period. As they move into the implementation planning, Bohnert suggested interests that pay county taxes or reside in the county be eligible for involvement in the process. Boyd commented that for the CCAA regarding Sage Grouse people had to own or manage land in the county. Reid suggested that businesses need to be represented. Boyd also suggested that radio, newspaper, and social media be used to get the word out about the comment period.

The Blue Mountain Forest Plan draft was discussed. Giles mentioned that having the AUMs listed is prescriptive and should be adaptive, however it's based on the long term sustained yield that can be produced in perpetuity and by including those numbers in the plan NEPA is grandfathered in. Grant suggested referencing the grazing handbook in the document to be clear about the options for adjusting grazing and that it would be good to have the numbers we are using now for a frame of reference. Giles suggested it should be more objective based on what is seen on the ground. When discussion of whether or not standards should be in the plan, Bohnert suggested that the appendix might be an appropriate place to insert the grazing standards. The Draft plan roadshow has been postponed to the week of the next NRAC meeting. Reid moved to postpone the June NRAC meeting so the group can attend the USFS roadshow; Rickman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Johnston started off the collaborative updates with a review of what the Wildfire Collaborative has been working on. He discussed the work they have done on PODs and PCL, which are tools used in planning wildfire suppression attempts. They've been mapping the Priority Control Lines (PCL) on Stinkingwater and working with Frenchglen, North Harney, and others to have a plan in place to complete more mapping when funds come available. Reid suggested the group spend some time discussing PODs and PCLs at a future meeting so as to better understand the implications. Johnston informed the group that \$8.8 million worth of fuel treatments have been done on Stinkingwater. He discussed the importance of Rangeland Fire Protection Agency (RFPA) liaisons, that the position is not scheduled to be funded and the BLM is not in a position to fund the position. Boyd asserted that the County needs to have a presence on the Wildfire Collaborative, and Johnston stated that the fire chiefs and Emergency Management are involved. The group agreed that there needs to be more focus on prevention than

suppression, and that needs to be addressed in the Forest Plan. Gile stated we need to receive fire in a not so intense manner. Bohnert pointed out that Risk Assessment is a newer tool that we didn't have in the past. There was also discussion about fuel breaks the collaborative had implemented on the Pueblos, and now Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) is suing Vale BLM district for a similar project that was not completed collaboratively. Boyd commented on the dynamics of using mechanical treatments in a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) with ONDAs blessing, and informed the group of a recent injunction wherein a judge is blocking 22,000 acres of grazing because the BLM reduced the scope of natural area research. Johnston also informed the group that the Forest Collaborative is meeting at the end of the month and will have interns studying the affects of aerial treatments.

EOARC gave a collaborative update and informed the group they're still waiting to see what the budget brings. They informed the group that Baker BLM will have no post-fire grazing for two years. Johnston commented that collaborative efforts prevent litigation.

Giles gave a USFS update. They will starting hazard tree abatement as soon as possible and strive to get all roads clear expediently to allow safe public access to the forest. Mitigation has already been completed around Yellowjacket Lake to allow safe use. The potential risks of mushroom season were discussed. After the Egley Fire there were over 500 commercial mushroom permits issued, which can cause tension between local and non local use, and the Falls Fire area is shaping up to be a mushroom hotspot this year. Giles also informed the group that they have begun planting about 3000 acres in pine trees. It was suggested that Agency Partner updates become a standing agenda item similar to Collaborative updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m. by general consent.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Frank