

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resources Committee

July 12, 2023

Committee Members Present: Steve McGuire, Lynne Breese, Bill McCormack, Melinda Kestler, Frank Porfily, Mike Lunn, Cliff Kiser, Tim Deboodt, Andy Gallagher

Members Absent: Kim Vogel, Casey Kaiser

Guests Present: Sarah Beeler, Crook County Librarian, Stephanie McKinney (BLM), Chris Gerdes (OSP), Mary Schmely (OSP), Jerry Brummer (Crook County Commissioner), Greg Jackle (ODFW), Steve Waring (CCPRD), Becky Cooper (BOR), Todd Honeywell (OSP).

Public Present: John Breese

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire @ COCC Crook County Open Campus

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of June 14, 2023 minutes: Lynne moved to approve as presented. Cliff Seconded. Motion Passed.

Agency Reports:

Forest Service provided information that Shane Jeffries has been assigned to a fire detail in Colorado and Kirk Flannigan from the Sawtooth National Forest will serve as interim Forest Supervisor starting in late July.

Stephanie McKinney provided the BLM update: Stephanie reported for Lisa Clark, Deschutes Resource Area Manager that BLM is working to complete an update to the Grizzly Mtn Communication Plan, dealing with the communication towers on top of Grizzly Mtn. BLM released the FONSI and record of decision for the Powell Butte communication tower expansion. Flat Rock road association had asked for a new right of way for their road. The new road would have required a NEPA review including an EA and BLM does not have the resources to complete that effort. Tim asked if the Grizzly Mtn planning effort would include wildfire risk assessment and planning along with a grazing review. Stephanie did not know the details of that workload and said she would ask.

Chris Gerdes, Oregon State Parks provided an update on park activity at Prineville Reservoir. Chris reported that all their marine equipment was in the water and that they were almost completely staffed. Currently they are working on a weed management plan. Mike Lunn asked about the operational status of the dock at the main park. Chris responded saying the maintenance had been completed and everything was working. The dock moves as the lake level drops during the season. Mike asked about algae levels in the lake and were they harmful? Chris reported that there is no risk at

current levels. He did advise showering after contact with the lake water. Chris reported that fishing has been successful so far this season. Cliff asked about any surge in camp reservations? Chris reported that campgrounds are full on the weekends but noted that Jasper Knolls usually has spots open. Steve thanked State Parks for helping make the Wildland Fighters Association fund raiser at the lake a success.

Business items:

Prineville Resort: Sarah Beeler, Crook County Librarian was present to talk about the future of the Resort and how Crook County Library might play a role in its future (management and programming). Sarah provided a bit about her background (30 yrs. as a public librarian). She pointed out that it is common for Libraries to be involved in outdoor services. Her original interest in this part of County was searching for sites that might work as a branch library site. She spoke of finding out that BOR was searching for a concessionaire for the resort and mentioned how Tillamook County Library provides management oversight to a campground in Tillamook County and how the revenue from the campground support the operations of the County Library systems.

Sarah was excited about the opportunity to create something at Prineville Resort. Look for opportunities to create a full camping experience along with chances to make the facilities available for functions during the low water years of the reservoir. Mike Lunn expressed his appreciation for the innovative thought that went into Sarah's presentation. Recreation and tourism is important to the County's economy. Frank asked if fuel sales might continue to be a function of the resort. Sarah said yes. Cliff asked if the vision included only the current foot print of the resort or was expansion possible. Sarah indicated that those discussions would have to include State Parks and BOR to see what the possibilities were. Chris Gerdes emphasized that currently, no fees are charged for using the reservoir for recreation. State Parks only charges a mooring fee of \$10.

Todd Honeywell (OSP) is currently leading the effort for planning for the Prineville Resort. State Parks is at the initial stage of hiring a facilitator, followed by public meetings to gather information about what the community wants to see. Following steps will include an evaluation of the existing infrastructure and see what does or does not meet current codes. Prineville Reservoir has a longer season of use than Lake Billy Chinook and is used by more of the local community. Lynne asked if local service groups (ex. Rotary and Kiwanis) would be groups of interest. John Breese asked about grant writing and funding of any future work/upgrades. OSP currently has a grant with BOR for construction. OSP is looking for other grants to stretch those dollars. Becky Cooper (BOR) said that BOR currently has set aside \$7 million dollars with a 50% cost share agreement with State Parks. Becky also mentioned that she is looking at recently passed congressional appropriations for additional funds. Becky said BOR would be happy to add Crook County as a partner. Steve Waring, Crook County Parks and Rec District supported the idea of a Community Assessment and said it would be a critical first step. Todd Honeywell indicated that complete build out of a "new Prineville Resort" could have an estimated cost of \$50 million.

Melinda reminded the group that the primary purposes for construction of Bowman Dam and the creation of Prineville Reservoir was #1 Irrigation, #2 Flood Control, #3 Wildlife and #4 Recreation. Melinda asked if State Parks could include that information in its educational programming.

Good of the order:

Cliff asked Greg Jackle about wolf depredations in Deschutes County. Greg confirmed that there had been 2 confirmed livestock kills by wolves in the lower Bridge area of Jefferson and Deschutes Counties. Greg reported that Jefferson County was reactivating their wolf committee and that Deschutes County was creating theirs. Questions about ODA's funds for compensating for lost livestock and discussion was had on how the funds are spent. Greg mentioned that central Oregon has a new ODFW wolf biologist and that they had trapped and collared a female wolf near Wickiup. Greg also mentioned that a wolf, collared in Baker County was now hanging out near the GI Ranch. Another collared wolf was in the Murderers Creek area. Greg has been working with the landowners in that area, sharing general wolf locations with them regularly. This area may be named a "AKWA" Area of Known Wolf Activity this fall. Greg talked about the wolf's current federal status as endangered and that now takings is allowed.

Melinda asked Greg about the fawn population this spring and summer. She reported that she has not seen any. Greg responded that he hadn't heard any reports and that the official fawn count occurs in December.

Public Comment:

None

Mike moved to adjourn. Bill Seconded. Motion Passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.