

Tri-Corner Community Collaborative Meeting #8

Lake County Court House Memorial Hall

513 Center Street

Lakeview, Oregon 97630

June 3, 2024

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Attendees:

Coordinating Committee: Anya Tyson (Facilitator), Alex Dohman (Convener/LIT Coordinator – note: Alex will be transitioning away from LIT role over the next few months as he transitions into role with Harney SWCD), Shannon Ludwig (USFWS), Todd Forbes (BLM), Barry Shullanberger (Lake Co Commissioner), Mary Schadler (Rancher/Beatys Butte Grazing Association), Jon Muir (ODFW), Autumn Muir (ODLT), John O’Keeffe (Adel Rancher)

Collaborative Participants: Myron Steward (Adel rancher), Chuck Messner (Adel rancher), Levi Miller (Catlow Rancher), Jami Ludwig (BLM), Grace Haskins (BLM), Les Boothe (BLM), Lindsey Smith (BLM), Nate Silvis (BLM), Jason Jaeger (rancher/CWMA), Mark Salvo (ONDA), Brandi St. Clair (LCSWCD), Jason Kesling (HCSWCD), Chad Boyd (ARS), Micheal O’Casey (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership), Tristan Henry (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership), Richard Bradbury (Adel Rancher), Mary Jo Hedrick (Oregon Hunters Association), Brandon Palmer (Oregon Desert Land Trust), Randy Wiest (DSL), Brian Wilk (USFWS), Emmy Tyrrell (USFWS), Sally Fitzgerald (rancher, Friends of Hart Mountain)

Notes

Welcome & Introductions

Anya Tyson, Facilitator

Objectives today are primarily:

- Information sharing during second half of meeting
 - Will hear pertinent updates from local leadership for USFWS & BLM
- Continue moving towards on-the-ground action on common-ground interests
 - Note: one funding proposal submitted earlier this spring (OR/WA BLM) and another in-progress currently (USFWS BIL)
 - Spatial action map – how do we keep building this out in a way that produces value and not just an exercise
 - Should help us in getting funding to high-priority projects
 - May also help with landscape-level vision (for example for wildfire preparedness and response)
 - Must continue rounding out with local, on-the-ground knowledge
- Looking ahead:
 - We will likely not meet in July / August
 - Instead looking into a summer/fall field tour

- Likely our next Lakeview/indoors meeting would be in October

Introductions: Name one hope or expectation you have for this landscape or collaborative over the coming summer.

- Many folks excited about getting out on the ground as a collaborative
- Several folks hoping to sustain group momentum, see projects hit the ground.
- Hoping to figure out how Partners for Fish and Wildlife program can be useful to this group by passing along funding opportunities.
- Hopes to continue seeing mixed group participation from a variety of individuals and groups.
- Hopes to see progress towards long-term positive outcomes.
- Hopes that there aren't wildfires in this area this summer. Concerned about big increase in traffic on dirt road, and sees a big need for education of visitors about fire safety and not spreading weeds.
 - o Another participant mentioned later in the meeting that [Keep Oregon Green](#) could be a potential partner in educating visitors about fire prevention on the desert. They have funded billboards, pamphlets and other materials in the past.
- Also hopes to *not* see lots of action this summer in terms of wildfire and increasing invasive annual grasses.
- Hopes to keep up the good progress.
- Looking forward to continuing consensus about a productive landscape being good for everybody.
- Would like to hear more about BLM ongoing and upcoming projects as opposed to just new projects that the group comes up with.
- Looking forward to seeing funding proposals be successful, projects get implemented and future projects build off of that starting point.
- Looking forward to continuing to get on same page and hopefully finding solutions.
- Hopeful to bring USFWS BIL implementation dollars to important projects that benefit the collaborative.
- Hopeful to see no fires, successful funding and would like to see organization (ONDA) involved in collaborative restoration projects.

Next Steps for Collaborative Spatial Action Plan

Overview of where we are to date with Spatial Action Plan / Threat-based Strategic Conservation Map

- General reminder that there are no "right answers" or "perfect maps," instead there is generally more value when we have more agreement as a group, a shared understanding that will allow us to leverage resources and move quickly on time-sensitive opportunities
- Recap of process so far:
 - o March 7 Workshop
 - o April 22 full collaborative review of workshop outputs + draft sub-units
 - o Additional refinement of sub-units/spatial action plan based on:
 - Collaborative participant feedback
 - Consideration of draft potential control lines from Lakeview BLM

Draft changes to sub-units

- Sub-unit 3 got larger due to previous boundaries being non-existent roads
- Original unit 6 removed (combined with 3 above) and new unit six is where sub-unit 16 was split
- Shape 5, 4, 8 slight adjustment to boundaries

- The east boundary of 16 and 13 moved east slightly; corresponding boundary of 14 moved east

Future changes to map:

- Currently just for Oregon portion of collaborative interest area
- Plan to extend down to Nevada over the summer, first with a workshop in Nevada similar to March 7 in Lakeview, and then the outputs of workshop would be brought back to Tri-Corner Community Collaborative for review/discussion.

Previewed bare-bones draft of what a sub-unit brief would look like including:

- Include a short narrative of key elements
 - o Known issues, key threats
 - o Specific values/objectives
 - o Resistance and resilience (e.g., elevation, aspect, temperature, significant soil type limitations)
 - o Special features and considerations
- Include breakdown/pie-chart of general vegetation condition
 - o Note this mostly characterized presence/absence of shrubs and whether perennial or annuals are dominant in understory; take with a grain of salt.
 - o Importantly, can map these general categories to approximate cost per acre for generally relevant management actions, and paint a picture of stewardship funding needs for a specific unit.
 - o Some consideration of trend; vegetation condition break-down over time

Questions/Comment:

- Would be good to keep the ecostates/vegetation classes considered shrublands all together then followed by the types considered grasslands for ease of interpretation.
- Also, note that shrub steppe habitat, means that there were likely areas with less shrubs part of natural state than we see today. Would be interested in seeing this trend, and the collaborative paying some attention to the discussion of when there is more shrub cover than would be characteristic or than allows for healthy understory conditions.
- Question about whether draft BLM potential control lines for Lakeview District intersect with Tri-State Fuel Breaks effort. Answer: No that effort was the tri-state of Nevada, Idaho and Oregon, and does not extend this far west.
 - o Note that CCAA/CCA plans proposed that where they think fuel break activities would be beneficial along major roads specifically..
- Note that we are using roads as sub-unit boundaries in most cases, and we will be thinking about Potential Control Lines (next on agenda), but that these boundaries do not all equal fuel break projects.

PCLs and PODS: Tool for fire management

PCLs = Potential Control Cines for fire response

- Wildfire response uses linear feature to stop fires. This can either be existing or put in new reactively (dozer line). PCLs are used for:
 - o Access, deploying resources
 - o Tools to support direct and indirect attack
 - o Tactical decision making (e.g., where/how to direct resources based on fuel types, values at risk, etc.)

- Identifying lines before vs. during incidents
 - Strategically planned v. emergency

PCLS:

- Where can fires realistically be stopped, given existing roads and landscape
- Help compartmentalize landscape
- Reliable routes for fire response
- Identified collaboratively in advance of incidents to provide a common operating picture for all emergency responders.

Considerations for establishing PCLs:

- Location : Accessible, safe, defensible, strategic
- Assessment
- Coordination
- Treatment
- Monitoring
- Maintenance

Process to establish - engage

- Fire Professionals: where can fire feasibly be controlled
- Locals: who may know the routes/ground the best
- Lots of communication/collaboration between these two, also other perspectives and interests

PODS: a tool for integrated planning

PODS = Potential Operational Delineations.

- The sub-units defined by PCLs
- Can inform both fire planning and management
- Used to inform priorities, investments, and where to treat

Comments from Chad Boyd, ARS:

- Likens PCLs/PODs to “putting the playbook together *before* the football game, instead of during or after”
- The idea is that everybody has the same map in their trucks and thus can communicate much more effectively and efficiently during a fire, but it also helps before (prioritizing fuels/habitat treatments) and after (considering where/how to pursue post-fire restoration most effectively)
- Really beneficial to have in place especially if you get out-of-the-area teams responding to fires, without local knowledge.
- Harney County Wildfire Collaborative has mapped the status of PCLs based on on-the-ground assessment of fuels, etc., so that they have lines coded as red (difficult to stop fire here), yellow (medium difficult to stop fire), green (most suitable to stop fires).
- Thinks about PCLs as “fire fences”, fire is an animal that eats fuel. The PODs are the pastures that the fire can eat up, the PCLs are the fences that *can be* boundaries before the fire crosses over to new fuel.
- Very important to develop PCLs to go to the people rather than to expect them to come to us. Local buy-in pays big dividends.

Discussion:

- This could be a really good tool to communicate with community about how fires progressed, where and how they were suppressed, e.g., on the flipside, after the Bootleg fire there was a lot of confusion about how fire-fighting decisions were made.
- We will remember that this is not going to just become a wildfire collaborative, we will still focus on other common-ground actions/interests/issues, e.g., wildlife habitat, open space, etc.

- We should also be considering where there are staging areas, another important wildfire response consideration

Round-robin: Share 1-3 word reaction to the concept of sub-units/potential control lines (PCLs)

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Want to learn more | - Minimize confusion, aids in communication |
| - Optimistic | - Needed piece of the puzzle |
| - Strategic | - Aligns well with national level conversation at national wildfire commission |
| - Same page | - Do it now before too late |
| - Good idea | - Foundational |
| - Cautiously optimistic | - Don't get stuck; come up with something rather than spending 3 years on it |
| - Long-time advocate | - Let's get prepared |
| - More formalization | - Progressive, proactive |
| - Like the concept | - Playbook before the game |
| - Discussion should be bigger than fuel breaks | |
| - Strategically collaborative | |
| - Support and resources should be considered | |

Field Trip Planning Discussion

- Coordinating committee intent is to:
 - o Visit areas viewed as high-priority, some potential general areas of interest based on a voting exercise from our last meeting include Beatys Butte, High Lakes/Jack Creek/Guano Valley, and western portions of Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge.
 - o Discuss high-priority topics in first-hand conversations
 - o Consider feasibility/accessibility

Potential Field Day Topics, votes and comments:

- **Wildfire/Fuels management:** 18 votes
 - o Note interest in grazing + AUM increase as potential fuels reduction strategy
- **Spring restoration/protection/water developments:** 14 votes + 1 vote specifically for water developments
- **Grazing Management:** 14 votes
 - o Temporary non-renewable/grazing to reduce fire risk
 - o Using grazing as a tool to achieve other objectives
- **Invasive annual grass treatments:** 12 votes – **Note: 1 “no/caution” vote**
 - o Identification: 2 additional votes specifically for this associated topic
- **Migration Corridors/Habitat Connectivity:** 11 votes
- **Recreation/Traffic Considerations:** 10 votes
 - o Both Dark Skies initiative and Backcountry Discovery Trail mentioned as new developments with implications in this arena
- **Tour of core, growth and impacted:** 8 votes
- **Specific Habitat Requirements:** 7 votes
 - o Examples provided such as pygmy rabbit habitat needs or bighorn habitat considerations
- **Wildlife-friendly fence retrofits/reconstruction:** 6 votes
- **Development Consideration:** 2 votes

- Discuss impacts of potential mineral and renewable energy development and potential exclusions
- **Pollinators:** 2 votes
- **Juniper Encroachment:** 1 vote

Potential Dates with most interest:

- Friday, August 2
- **Monday, Sept. 9**
- **Thurs, Sept 12**
- **Friday, Sept 13**

Important Agency Report-outs

- **USFWS Refuges Landscape Conservation Design Process: Presentation and Q&A**
Shannon Ludwig, USFWS Refuge Manager
 - Landscape Conservation Plan: informal process that precedes formal planning; not subject to NEPA
 - Purpose: Understand how USFWS refuge management sits within larger context of land management, stakeholders and partners. Answering the question “how will we manage the refuges within the larger landscape context?”
 - Objectives:
 - Describe current conditions and Refuge’s role and contribution to conversation across boarder landscape
 - Work with others to identify local and regional conservation priorities and threats
 - Prepare for Comprehensive Conservation Plan revision for both refuges that will take place in the future
 - Process:
 - Will consider outputs from/involvement in threats-based workshop in Lakeview (March 7) and future workshop in Nevada
 - Will also consider individual engagement by stakeholders
 - Will defined landscape level boundary for process and consider spatial tools
 - Looking ahead:
 - There will be future announcements on how to participate if you would like to be involved in providing stakeholder input or otherwise participate. Stay tuned, and be in touch with Shannon with questions.

BLM Draft Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment and EIS: Presentation and Q&A

Todd Forbes, BLM Lakeview District Manager

Background/purpose

Originally written in 2003 and had legal issues, now amendment addresses a narrow scope necessary to comply with 2010 Settlement Agreement

- Determining how Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) units will be managed
- Addressing a full range of alternatives in respect to OHV use
- Considering the reduction of grazing:
 - A grazing permit is voluntary relinquished
 - Standards for Rangeland Health are not achieved due to current livestock grazing

Timeline of relevant events/work to date

- 2010 issued notice of intent
- 2011 Public Scoping and tribal consultation
- 2012 scoping report
- 2013 on hold for sage grouse planning
- 2015 wilderness inventory review
- 2016-18 wilderness re-inventory
- 2019 Hold until SE Oregon RMP complete
- 2020 completed landscape inventory

Wilderness characteristics in 106 units, 1.65 million acres, 67% of the planning area

Clarification: This process does not designate Wilderness with a capitol W nor Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)

- Wilderness designations come from Congress and they need to decide whether to act

Alternatives

- “No Action” Alternative Continue under 2003 as amended by 2015 Greater Sage Grouse RMP
 - Continue to manage 106 units as required by 2010 Settlement Agreement under which the BLM cannot authorize actions that would:
 - 1) diminish the size of an inventory unit or
 - 2) cause the unit to no longer meet the criteria for wilderness characteristics.
 - Continue existing OHV allocations and livestock grazing management direction.
 - Projects can’t reduce the size of a LWC unit or cause it to no longer have wilderness character
- Alternative A: Continue management as 2003 and 2015 greater sage grouse
 - No additional protections for 106 WC units
 - No changes in OHV or grazing management

Alternative B-E all involve reference to different categories of WC management

- Category A: Prioritize other multiple uses; no protections
- Category B: Balance LWC with other multiple uses
 - Right of way avoidance
 - VRM Class III
 - Best Management practices
- Prioritize Protection of LWC
 - No new major right of way
 - Land Tenure Zone 1 retention

- VRM class II
 - 202 WSAs: Managed according to the WSA Manual
 - Right of way exclusion
 - Land Tenure Zone 1
 - VRM Class 1
 - Closed to Leasable/Salable Minerals
- Alternative B: most restrictive
 - Wilderness Characteristics
 - 202 WSAs: 34 units and a portion of 2
 - Protect (Category C): remaining 77 and portions of 2
 - OHV
 - All WSA and Category C would be closed
 - Grazing
 - Not changed
 - Removed when rangeland standards are not met due to livestock grazing
 - Voluntary permit relinquishment an option in WSA, ACEC, RNA, Critical ESA habitats
- Alternative C (designated as preferred, but final alternative can reflect a range of components from all alternatives)
 - Wilderness Characteristics:
 - Protect – Category C: 26 and portions of 4
 - Balance – Category B: 71 and portion of 2
 - Don't protect – Category A: the remaining 5 and portions of 3
 - OHV
 - Limited to existing across planning including all LWC
 - Grazing
 - Not changed
 - If not meeting RH standard grazing remove until met
 - Voluntarily relinquished within WSAs, reduced or eliminated for the life of the plan (reduced in cases where there are other permittees in common, who have NOT voluntarily relinquished their permits)
- Alternative D
 - Wilderness Characteristics:
 - Protect – Category C: 2 units

- Balance – Category B: 41 whole units, portions of 18
 - Don't protect – Category A: remaining 45 units, portions of 18
- OHV
 - Most planning limited to existing or designated routes
 - OHV open on 70573 acres-Christmas Valley sand dunes
- Grazing
 - Same as no action
 - If a RH assessment determines one or more standards are not being met due to factors other than grazing, the authorized officer shall consider taking action, including changes in grazing, to make progress toward RH standards and land use plan objectives.
- Alternative E: Informed by data process from Southeastern Oregon RAC
Similar to alternative C in acreage, but different spatially re: where WC units land on the landscape.
 - Wilderness Characteristics:
 - Protect – Category C: 26
 - Balance – Category B: 689
 - Don't protect – Category A: 12
 - OHV
 - 26 Category C units be limited to existing routes
 - No changes in rest of planning area
 - Grazing
 - No changes

Questions/Discussion

- Setbacks are buffers along wilderness characteristic unit boundary to give space if road maintenance or minor re-route is needed. These setback vary by management category, but typically 300 ft. next to highway and 100 ft. next to dirt/gravel road.
- Wilderness and WSA are generally most restrictive, Category C would be slightly less restrictive for management activities, but still may complicate/slow down implementation of some active management options. For example, site-specific NEPA is required for drill seeding and mechanical juniper control under category C, so possible, but more process/time involved for these options to be on the table. WSA typically makes these management options even more difficult, though not impossible.

Next steps:

- Available [on ePlanning on June 5](#): Add link
- 90-day public review
- Public meetings from Late June to early July

- 3 meetings so far are planned. 1 in Lakeview and 2 virtual
 - Might be additional in person if needed
- Proposed RMP/final EIS
 - Reminder that final could take parts and pieces to develop an Alternative
- Governor Review/30-day protest period
- Record of Decision