

**Steens Mountain Advisory Council**  
**October 10-11, 2024, Meeting Summary Minutes – FINAL**

Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC) met October 10 and 11, 2024, at the Bureau of Land Management's Burns District Office in Hines, Oregon. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public. This document summarizes attendance, discussions that occurred, and decisions made. For the record, it is noted that to avoid any conflict of interest, Council members absent themselves from the meeting with the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

SMAC Google Drive: <https://bit.ly/3A2wa94>

**SMAC members in attendance:**

- Terry Turner, SMAC Fish and Recreational Fishing Representative
- Mike Fox, SMAC Private Landowner Representative; Chairperson
- Jake Jakubik, No Financial Interest Representative
- Stacy Davies, Grazing Permittee Representative
- Tim O'Crowley, Wild Horse Management Representative
- Kali Wilson, SMAC Grazing Permittee Representative
- Butch Goette, SMAC Mechanized and Consumptive Recreation Representative
- Cliff Volpe, SMAC Dispersed Recreation Representative
- Karen Withrow, SMAC State Environmental Representative
- Teresa Wicks, SMAC Local Environmental Representative
- Lee Foster, SMAC State Liaison
- Pete Runnels, SMAC Commercial Recreation Representative

**SMAC members absent:**

- Eric Hawley, SMAC Burns Paiute Tribe Representative

**BLM staff in attendance:**

- Tara Thissell, BLM Public Affairs Specialist / SMAC Facilitator
- Don Rotell, BLM Andrews/Steens Field Office Manager
- Kyle Wanner, BLM Andrews/Steens Assistant Field Manager
- Pat O'Grady, BLM Archaeologist
- Andy Daniels, BLM Andrews/Steens Assistant Field Manager
- Calla Hagle, BLM IRA Coordinator

**Other:**

- Diane Teeman, Burns Paiute Tribe (Friday)

- Rand Campbell, Nature's Advocate LLC (Thursday)
- Linda Wallace, private citizen
- Bill Marlett, private citizen
- Tenaya Jewell, private citizen
- Theresa Barbour, private citizen
- Janelle Garzo, private citizen (Thursday)
- Lorna Torrey-Palermo, private citizen
- Steve and Marilyn, private citizens (Friday)
- Rebecca Jones Falk, private citizen (Friday)

### **Thursday, October 11**

Tara opened the meeting with the day's agenda review, introductions and facility logistics.

### **Designated Federal Official / Andrews Field Manager Update (Don Rotell)**

- Kyle Wanner is moving to BLM Eastern States, the Northeastern Field Office, starting next week! Good luck to you Kyle!
- There are multiple vacancies that we are working to fill – three Outdoor Recreation Planners, one Range Rider, and one Recreation Maintenance worker.
- The Steens Mountain Loop Road is finally fully open again after about 18 months, due to a rockslide above Big Indian Gorge in Spring 2023. The contractor did not have to install any dowels or bolts for securing the rock wall face, which was a good measure for wilderness characteristics. The scaled rock was removed by BLM Operations staff and used to widen turnout areas along the Loop Road.
- Busy fire season throughout the district. In the CMPA, there was the Solomon Fire that ended up around 2,600 acres. 20-30 smoke jumpers were primarily responsible for suppression of that fire. There is a small Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan in place for sagebrush seedling planting and invasive weeds treatment. The livestock grazing permittee in the area has agreed to rest grazing for next season.
  - Stacy stated that the wild horse use in the Solomon Fire area is heavy and the Medusahead is creeping in; would like to return horses from the South Steens gather to the Steens (close to the river) (NOT the Tombstone pasture) to avoid the Solomon area until it can better recover.
  - Rather than spending money on temporary fencing to protect a burned area, Stacy would like to see those funds spent on a bigger treatment area for Medusahead. The Tombstone pasture is damaged to the point that Medusahead is trying to take over.

- Completed the South Steens HMA gather; planned to remove around 750 horses and were able to gather 869, leaving the area (with planned returns) within Appropriate Management Level for the first time in years.
- On October 9, we held an open adoption at Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility. 27 horses were adopted into private care.
- Travel management in the Cooperative Management and protection Area continues – completed route inventory (collecting data on the ground for each road) and have nearly completed route analyses for each route with a team of resource specialists with recommendations given on management options for those routes. Next will be a public involvement and NEPA process. Logan Simpson Design will help us with those efforts.
- Bridge Creek Allotment Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement – we currently have a draft EIS at the State Office for input and review. Next, we will complete a briefing process with BLM Headquarters. Reminder that this document does not address grazing preference.
- Kiger/Riddle Population Management EA – this document is complete with a Decision issued. The project has been appealed with a stay requested; the stay was denied, and we continue to work through the litigation.
- The Kiger/Riddle gather has been postponed until July 2025 due to other priorities in the program, namely the Murderer's Creek Joint Management Area emergency gather.
- Stacy asked about vegetation treatments across the district and Don replied that targets were met with nearly 100,000 acres in 2023 and 40,000 acres in 2024. Stacy added that the chemicals currently permitted for use work for Medusahead, Cheatgrass and Ventenata (Imzapic and Plateau).

#### **Environmental Impact Statement planning process (Autumn Toelle-Jackson)**

- Autumn shared information about the EIS writing and briefing process. There is a handout with detailed information about this on the SMAC google drive.
- The original Bridge Creek Environmental Assessment was remanded back to the agency with direction to complete an analysis that provided more opportunity for public involvement. The EIS is a lengthier analysis that will allow for that.

#### **Recreation Program Update (Kyle Wanner)**

- Kyle gave a detailed presentation about recreation use, visitor stats, projects, concerns, etc. for the greater Steens area in 2024 (fiscal year – October 1 through September 30). This presentation is available on the SMAC Google Drive in its entirety.
- The contractor working with the BLM on the Steens Travel Management Plan has been excellent; very useful extensive experience in this type of work, litigation, etc.

Next steps include writing the NEPA, which will include significant public participation.

- Mike asked specifically, “what is the point of gathering and writing all the data for each route?” Kyle said the data for each route will be converted to descriptive terminology in the analysis for management regarding open, closed, or limited use.
- Stacy encouraged anyone and everyone to be involved in the entire Travel Management Planning process every step of the way. Get your input out there – what specific routes are used for, seasons of use, importance, necessary new routes, routes that should be closed, changes in types of use, etc.
- Currently have plans with the local Backcountry Horsemen to develop 2-3 of the already-dispersed sites at the proposed North Steens Equestrian Campground along Moon Hill Road. If use and popularity show a need, more sites can be developed.
- Kyle encouraged the BLM to work closely with Special Recreation Permittees, especially those that offer wild horse tours, on the July 2025 Kiger/Riddle Mountain gather timing if there is any discretion.
- Developed campgrounds got new signage with rules and other information this year.
- A new campsite was developed at Fish Lake campground – the new site replaced some other sites that are flooded annually.
- No Livestock Grazing Area fencing – we still don’t have a Range Rider hired for the Steens, but we have a contract with the Forest Service to do some of the NLGA work for now.
- Installed voluntary donations box at Frog Springs / Alvord Desert; there is no direct revenue tied to the site, but we are spending thousands of dollars there every year.
- Some selections have made for current vacant positions on the recreation staff; hoping to have more people on board for the 2025 season. We hired a term Park Ranger this week – welcome Casey Dooms!
- Jake mentioned that more information needs to be available on the mountain, like handouts and signage. Kyle agreed and stated there is a load of information posted at each developed site; he also mentioned that signs regularly get damaged, stolen and vandalized often and printed materials are often discarded carelessly. Don reminded the group that SMAC previously made a recommendation to keep the mountain LESS literature-ized on the landscape – more natural, less “National Park”. It was also mentioned that many people don’t take the time to read signs and materials available to them.
- Mike suggested to do some self-advertising at the BLM – maybe some signs out front about “get your public land/Steens/etc. information here”. Stacy suggested a sign in Frenchglen that states “there are no signs on the mountain; this is your last chance for information; scan this QR code, pick up this map, etc.”

- Cliff suggested adding information about potable water availability to the standard campground kiosk. Kyle added that campground layout maps are provided on the kiosks that show where the potable water spigots exist, but if it's not clear, we should investigate that.
- Stacy specifically thanked Kyle for all the great work he has done while with the Burns District. Pete Runnels shared a comment from a constituent. Harland Yriarte, Steens Mountain Running Camp, gave Kyle kudos for a smooth Special Recreation Permit process this year!

### **Inflation Reduction Act Projects Update (Calla Hagle)**

- Calla gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation about IRA projects in the Burns District. This presentation is available on the SMAC Google Drive.
- Kali asked about the No Livestock Grazing Area fencing reroute proposal and if there are expected concerns from the environmental community. Calla has met with several environmental parties and there does not seem to be any issue with the reroute.
- Regarding the Page Springs Weir removal – using some eDNA samples to look at some species in the waterbody to learn more about what's there. We are also working through a state-level historic assessment and have hired two Experienced Service Program members (retired agency employees) to serve on the Interdisciplinary Team for the project.
- A new project added for IRA funding is the Trout Creek Virtual Fence. This project is in cooperation with Oregon Desert Land Trust, ranchers, and The Nature Conservancy. The project encompasses a 500,000-acre public-private ranch with virtual fencing used to subdivide large pastures, management vegetation, create a case study and share lessons.
- Lee asked if there are requirements or regulations for equestrian camping. Don clarified camping is open to everyone, first come first serve, but that we are working toward having equestrian amenities available.

### **SMAC's Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use Document (Mike Fox)**

- Mike started off by saying the group that did the 2020 version of the document did an excellent job.
- Butch gave a shoutout to Mike for working so hard on the document and giving so much time to the effort of making the document “more closely reflective of the Steens Act.” Butch will step aside from the subcommittee that is working on this document to help the collaboration continue moving forward.
- Terry said that the process of putting this document together reminded him a lot of a “rules committee” or someone trying to put together a defined statute. He added the Harney County Land Use Laws would be the best way to even start looking at

access issues. We also want to make sure we don't encourage development that would change the character of Steens Mountain.

- Regardless, it really comes down to what/how was the access to an inholding at the time of the Steens Act passing.
- Terry said he isn't sure he agrees with all the changes made to the document, but he understands the intention of tying it closer to the Steens Act. Landowners should have access to their property, no question. The type and manner of access is where the disagreements exist.
- Mike said the document doesn't impose any duty on the BLM to analyze or determine access. He agreed with Terry but stated that even though local Land Use Laws will permit development, the type of development should fit into the type and character of the landscape at the time the act was passed. Does Harney County look at this sort of thing when permitting types of use?
- Lee asked Mike if the document was for the SMAC to use as a frame of reference for access conversations and recommendations, or for the BLM to use in decision making for access alternatives. Mike said he wasn't sure one way or the other. The group surmised it was likely the former and that the updated document leans toward the latter.
- Teresa said the purpose of the document should have been discussed before any updates were made to anything.

### **Public Comment**

- Lorna Torrey-Palermo – the South Steens Herd Management Area is 130,000 acres for an extremely low number of horses. Lorna would like to request to return enough horses to be at the high end of Appropriate Management Level. There is not a square inch of the landscape that isn't also grazed by livestock. The Voodoo band was gathered – all black horses that are extremely popular and elusive. Lorna requested they be returned to the landscape.
- Tenaya Jewell – asked Mr. O'Crowley if he received information from Tenaya via email. Tim responded that he did receive it.
- Theresa Barbour – appreciates the time to be able to comment; she is the Executive Director for Oregon Wild Horse Organization. Theresa wanted to set the record straight for the Kiger EA – OWO is one of the three parties in the litigation on this EA in Federal District Court and asked for a voluntary stay on the Kiger gather while the merits are being examined. Theresa believes that the litigation is the reason the Kiger gather is postponed until July, not because the Murderer's Creek emergency gather became a higher priority. She also stated the data provided in the EA is not adequate or current and the group is concerned about the unique genetics for these particular herds. She encouraged the Council members to look at the public comments OWO provided.

### **Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use documentation discussion continued...**

- Stacy asked if Nature's Advocate currently has vehicle access to both of their inholdings in the CMPA. Don stated he believes they do.
- Karen thinks the December 2020 document is much easier to read and understand, and that it better reflects preserving – with the least impact – the original characteristics of the landscape when the Steens Act was passed. Karen would like to *not* edit the 2020 document at all and wait until we can put it to the test on an actual issue.
- Teresa agreed and stated the original document was a framework established by diverse interests to help difficult conversations move forward in a smoother, easier manner. The group agreed on this intent for the 2020 document.
- Cliff said when making recommendations, it's important to differentiate between hypotheticals and real-world situations.
- Don talked about the recent High Desert Aspens (Stroemple vs. BLM regarding sheep trailing in the Wilderness) ruling from IBLA – this isn't a federal court ruling, but federal courts will often rely on IBLA rulings for their decisions. BLM denied the sheep trailing request based on the possibility of disease spread from domestic to wild sheep. The decision was appealed to IBLA and IBLA has since remanded the decision back to the BLM. The information in the appeal is available on the SMAC google drive. High Desert Aspens vs. BLM will ultimately become a federal court decision.
- The group voted whether they felt the 2020 document should be adopted as is, or if it should be modified. Kali, Teresa and Karen voted no against modifications. Lee abstained as a non-voting member. 8 voted in favor of modifying it, 3 in opposition, 1 absent. No quorum agreement.
- Terry suggested taking sections of the 2020 document and looking at them piece by piece instead of as an entire elephant.
- Everyone agrees that the 2020 document is acceptable as a foundation for the start of the framework discussion. Everyone agrees that more conversations should be had.
- Kali talked about the Nature's Advocate LLC EA and talked about a unique alternative the group came up with regarding access. She emphasized the need to work hard on consensus and even though a quorum is 9 people, we need to work hard on getting everyone in the same boat.
- Teresa felt that a subversive opinion from some people in the group feels like "the environmental groups are just oppositional". Teresa is opposed to being spoken over and essentially ignored.

- Karen would like Nature's Advocate LLC access request on the agenda for the next meeting; get SMAC up to date on this EA and get a SMAC recommendation.
- The group agreed to revisit this conversation at tomorrow's session and use the remainder of the afternoon to refresh themselves on a portion of the Steens Act.

### **Steens Act Review (Stacy Davies):**

- SEC. 131. ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COUNCIL.
  - (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish the Steens Mountain Advisory Council to advise the Secretary in managing the Cooperative Management and Protection Area and in promoting the cooperative management under Subtitle C: Cooperative Management.
- There may be some space in this section for new discussions on the SMAC. Stacy led the group through a discussion on Cooperative Management, specifically Cooperative Management Agreements.
- Stacy said as an advisory council, it is our job to *go out and look for opportunities for cooperative management*.
- There are many ways we can cooperate on to make things happen on the landscape.
- The group read through Sec. 122 – Cooperative efforts to control development and encourage conservation and highlighted the conflicting language between subsections A and D – current use vs. right to use.
- Butch asked “truly, how much influence does the SMAC actually have?” Stacy said a politician ultimately decides a lot of things – when you are a public figure and you have two different groups that disagree, you have the freedom to do what you want because you can blame the other side. But when the two sides come together, there is so much more power in the two sides than in the politician. If the SMAC truly engaged and came to consensus, many things could be achieved. There are many opportunities there!
- Look for ways to integrate the community and the public that comes to visit – are there ways to better cooperate?
- Creativity is the answer.
- Terry appreciated the reminder about looking for opportunities for cooperative management. He wants to look for projects with landowners for riparian zones and enhancing fish habitat (with incentive payment authority).
- Stacy asked “Donner und Blitzen River has been livestock free for 20+ years – has it made a difference? Who's looking at this?” What has changed? What have we learned? Lee suggested taking a hiking field tour!



For Friday, the group agreed to have Don open the meeting with some information about the Nature's Advocate LLC EA, and then the group will discuss their Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use document.

### **Friday, October 11**

Tara opened the meeting with the day's agenda review, introductions and a recap of yesterday's session.

### **Nature's Advocate, LLC, Inholder Access EA (Don Rotell)**

This project hasn't had a lot of movement this year because of other priority projects. We received a LiDar report from USGS last year which may help us with alternatives on this analysis.

Teresa asked how LiDar would change overall travel management for the Steens and elsewhere – couldn't everyone just find "old routes" through LiDar and claim them as 'historic' and that they should be open/available/etc.? Don stated that even without LiDar, there will still be claims about all kinds of routes and their uses. We don't have to make every 'historic route' open, but we do have to consider historic use for a determination.

Don emphasized that we are bound by regulations like 'no new routes in wilderness' and 'must allow access to private inholdings.' LiDar could help determine what routes existed previously...meaning they wouldn't be "new" if used again. Regardless, we have to abide by the Steens Act while considering things to things like wilderness values and ecological integrity.

Stacy agrees that using LiDar is a good move because ALL kinds of information should be gathered regarding roads and access – decisions like these will very likely be litigated and the more information available, the better. Lee emphasized the complexity of access and that seeing actual alternatives in an actual EA will help the group work through the conversation.

Stacy stated it might not be the best use of time to guess what a judge would decide on a particular access need – maybe the group should look at the bigger picture and try to avoid any conflict altogether.

### **Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use Framework (continued...)**

Terry led a conversation about the various drafts of the framework and reiterated that it isn't for the BLM and isn't a rule-making document – it's for the SMAC to help guide

conversations about access in the future and have a foundation for what other inholder requests could expect.

The Nature's Advocate LLC request for access across wilderness to their private inholding started the entire process of the establishing the Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use document. The group went through the 2020 version of the document with the following conversation, suggestions, edits, etc.

- In developing the document, there were a lot of discussions about the Steens Act vs. the Wilderness Act. Which is primary? There is considerable overlap between the two, but there are also many differences. In Sierra Club, Stroemple, 172 IBLA 27, 50-51 (2007)), the IBLA decision reads: *The specific provisions of the Steens Act (reasonable access for reasonable use) necessarily take precedence over the general rule reflected in the Wilderness Act (necessary to assure adequate access). Congress articulated a different standard in the Steens Act... The statutory grant of access rights under the Steens Act is different from and potentially broader than under the Wilderness Act [but] landowner appellants' claim to unfettered, unrestricted, unlimited access is clearly overbroad and inconsistent with the Steens Act.*
- Teresa emphasized the importance of this ruling as captured in the document as a reminder or guide for SMAC environmental representatives in the future.
- The Steens Act does not decide what reasonable use/development is on private property. That is the responsibility of the State of Oregon and Harney County. Butch asked what if a permit is granted that is inconsistent with the purposes of the Steens Act? Terry answered that there would likely be litigation, and the Steens Act brought in to play.
  - o Suggestion to make the preserving character of the Steens act / using least impact more prevalent in the framework, particular to reasonable use. Exact wordage to be discussed at a following meeting.
  - o Teresa supported the inclusion of many of Mike's 2024 document additions about reasonable use. Exact wordage to be discussed.
- Each access request absolutely must be considered individually.
- Stacy emphasized that often, decisions about access will occur outside of the SMAC – creative thinking, doing the work on the ground to collaborate, solution-oriented discussions, etc. must happen. We could even be more proactive about conflicts that could exist.
- Jake asked about public use of roads for access to private properties. Don stated it would be a case-by-case decision where roads are determined as open, closed, administrative use only, private use only, etc.
- Butch stated it seems the entire issue stems from the permitting process and the types of use allowable on private lands and wondered if there was any way to mitigate or control that. Stacy added some background about how detailed the

planning and permitting process is and how the Steens Act and relevant access issues will come into play.

Tara thanked Terry for leading the walk through the 2020 framework and setting the stage for a good conversation about it at the next meeting.

**SMAC Strategic Planning – Skills/Knowledge: Burns Paiute Tribe history on Steens Mountain (Diane Teeman, Burns Paiute Tribe Culture and Heritage Department Director)**

- Diane Shared a PowerPoint Presentation about the Burns Paiute Tribe. That presentation is available on the SMAC Google Drive. Discussion followed.
- The Paiute Tribe sees Steens Mountain as their father. It is a critically important place for them and their ancestry. The Steens has a lot of healing power – it is one of the most prominent places in the northern Paiute landscape.
- Butch asked what happened after the loss of the Malheur Reservation in 1882. Diane stated Burns Paiute Tribe was forcibly marched out of the area to Washington in 1879 – while they were away, the Reservation was returned to public domain through a series of public orders. When the 12 original families returned to the area, they re-started in the Drewsey area.
- Cliff thanked Diane for the presentation and stated he is very passionate about archaeology and has often felt the connection with Steens Mountain as a healing place. He appreciated the references made to the injustices made and suffered by Burns Paiute Tribe.
- Thursday, November 21, from 12 noon to 1 p.m. is Diane’s dissertation defense here in Harney County. This is open to the public and will cover a tremendous amount of historical information!
- Don added that he and Diane worked closely over the summer on certain things and addressed things about the history between Burns Paiute Tribe and the federal government. Not all of it is pleasant, but it is important to hear and recognize. The BLM has a unique relationship with the Burns Paiute Tribe that is unlike any other cooperative connection for the agency. Don stated this is a very important and valuable partnership to him personally and to the BLM.
- Cliff stated there is so much history and information to unpack about the Burns Paiute Tribe’s connection to Steens Mountain and would appreciate more presentation about this sort of information.
- Mike added that the Frenchglen RFPA regularly welcomes tribal members to their Rangeland Fire Protection Association training sessions.

**Member/Constituent Updates:**

Kali: Comments about horses in the wilderness – not wild horses, but domestic – there is a contingent of people that feel horses should not be on the trails at all. Kali wanted to share that perspective. She mentioned the SMAC Charter and that it was referenced in the 2020 Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use framework – we may need to look into that since the SMAC charter went from being unique to standardized around 2016.

Terry: In terms of fishing, the Steens and surrounding wilderness remains a place that only the avid, backcountry fishers like to attend. A lot of the fishing here is excellent, even with some of the areas being very difficult to get to. Terry thanked the BLM for working on the Page Springs Weir project and knows it is a complicated process to get it removed. He thinks Calla is a great project lead!

Terry talked with Lee about some eDNA studies that would be helpful to make sure there are no invasive species up the stream when the weir does come out. Terry may be able to help get some funding for that. Terry and Lee will work together on that.

Terry would be interested in exploring some of the ungrazed and grazed riparian areas and other comparisons between pre and post Steens Act – this will help us understand successes and what kinds of management have been successful. Terry and Stacy will work together on some analysis and future discussion points.

**Public Comment Period:**

Linda Wallace: Wanted to clarify with more information, fact-based data about the impacts to public land from wild horses vs. livestock. A link was provided in the Zoom chat.

Lorna Torrey-Palermo: Appreciates the SMAC and their dedication to the effort of collaboration from very different viewpoints. Lorna proposed to the SMAC that they throw their weight behind sustainable grazing practices. It can be done with cattle as well as horses. Wild horses can be used for rewilding and reestablishing healthy wild areas. There are ways to do this – it requires identifying a study area, starting the refurbishing process with reseeding, maybe developing water sources, and then managing where they are on the landscape. We need to switch our viewpoint from horses to being a nuisance to being a positive resource for the ecosystem. It may be a mistake to have livestock and wild horses grazing in the same area at the same time. There is a place for both, but they don't always have to be together. The things needed done to “do better” are very minimal.

Bill Marlett: Reminded the SMAC when the Act was written, \$25M was referenced for the express purpose of dealing with inholdings and like-issues within the CMPA. The money is there if the will to make these opportunities exists. John Helmer made a great effort to contact inholders and edgeholders to discuss addressing some of their properties and it would be good to continue these efforts to avoid potential conflicts in the future.

Theresa Barbour: Would like to express a concern – there has been a lot of discussion about diverse opinions and being a collaborative group. There have also been statements made that express a clear bias against wild horses. The Council has a position dedicated to representing wild horse management and this position needs to adequately represent all constituents. Theresa adamantly disagrees with the opinion that horses cause the most damage to the landscape. Theresa requested the SMAC ask them to BLM provide presentations to be made from unbiased, independent scientists on these issues. Theresa will email their comments from yesterday and today to the SMAC. Perhaps the recordings could be posted on BLM's YouTube channel.

Tenaya Jewell: Agrees with everything Theresa Barbour said and asked if the recordings for the meetings could be posted online.

Jake stated he had a concern about SMAC's conversations being made public in their entirety. He is worried it may stifle some of their discussions. He understands the SMAC operates in a public setting.

Stacy invited wild horse advocates to Roaring Springs Ranch with a sincere desire to have conversations about wild horse management, the positives and negatives with wild horses and livestock both, look at things on the ground, have a thorough and detailed visit, etc. Stacy is open to any and all robust conversations, creative solutions, etc. to the issue. Wild Horse Management representative Tim O'Crowley could come along as well, and we can collaborate on possibilities.

Stacy responded to Lorna's comment about 2024 wildfires on Steens taking place where horses weren't present. He said the 2024 Solomon Fire on the Steens this year and stated that it was inside the Tombstone Pasture which had over 600 horses removed from it this year.

**Member/Constituent Updates continued...**

Pete: Gave a report on the Steens Mountain Running Camp from 2024. He shared information sent in from Camp Director Harland Yriarte and upcoming director Jenner Yriarte. Pete has not connected with other commercial users on the Steens.

Lee requested more regular information from the BLM about who has a current Recreation Permit on the Steens, particularly regarding hunting guides.

Stacy: Has been in contact with a number of grazing permittees, mainly on the southern end of the Steens. They all applaud the BLM's effort to control juniper and invasive species. Stacy is an advocate for fire, but also understands it removes sagebrush and that is a challenge. Roaring Springs Ranch has the majority of the grazing permit where wild horses exist on the Steens – we appreciate the agency's effort to try and manage populations and we are committed to finding creative solutions with better, long-lasting outcomes. How many horses is enough in the private sector? On the Steens? Grazing permittees have a lot of concerns with travel management planning and where things might end up for access. They appreciate the good working relationships with current BLM staff and management's willingness to get involved in difficult situations.

Lee: eDNA sampling on the Blitzen River detected carp and small mouth bass near Riddle Ranch – only one detection each, which could be false positives. ODFW staff went out and gathered more samples and are currently looking for funds to get all of those samples tested. It is amazing what a couple of wet years do for wildlife populations – we counted more Sage grouse in Steens this year than we have in over a decade. Sometimes climate conditions are the biggest impact.

Cliff: Cliff went to the Running Camp for the first time in the 1980s and it absolutely changed his life. It is so much more than running – its about navigating life and using nature to exemplify working through difficulty. Cliff would not be involved in the SMAC or even Steens Mountain without the Running Camp.

Cliff has contact with constituents most often through face-to-face happenstance runs with recreationists. He loves to share information about the Steens with people and would like to have better contacts with people who have been to the area and what their experiences were. Cliff would like to have a dedicated email for the dispersed recreation representative

Tim: Has been in contact with a variety of folks about wild horse management on Steens Mountain – there is large spread in opinions about how things are, should be, could be better, etc. Most people that Tim connects with are in the middle of the wild

horse management debate – they love to see the horses, they would like to see the ground in better condition, they would like to see better population management and more sustainable numbers, etc. Only one individual he's worked with was very adamantly against the use of helicopters in gather operations. Tim has lived within the Kiger HMA for the last 19 years and has really noticed significant deterioration on the range in the last 6 years with overpopulation.

Butch: Has worked to connect with people on the ground to get their perspectives on Steens Mountain in relation to mechanized and consumptive uses. He is still working on connecting with this user group.

Jake: There have been issues with users on the Cold Springs Road this year and locks being cut on the gate.

Karen: Karen regularly communicates with several statewide environment-based groups. Bill Marlett is the most communicative as well as Janelle with Friends of Malheur Refuge. Thanks to both of those folks for helping pass information back and forth with people who are interested in Steens Mountain.

Mike: Regarding inholder access, Mike got considerable feedback from several people he is in touch with. Mike and other private landowners as well as the Frenchglen RFPA have concerns about losing access through the current Travel Management Planning process. We need to keep an open mind and close tabs on this. Landowners are very enthusiastic about and applaud the BLM's juniper reclamation effort on the Steens and around Frenchglen – the area is much greener, and the aspen and grasses are proliferating in areas where juniper has been removed.

Mike has received some information regarding inholdings and edgeholdings and encouraged the BLM to be as creative as possible to facilitate land exchanges or sales of these areas.

Teresa: Being the local environmental representative has been challenging, mainly trying to find local connections and contacts that don't completely overlap with statewide representation. Teresa is working through defining that role.

### **Future meeting planning**

January 30-31, 2025, in Bend, Oregon:

- Nature's Advocate, LLC, Inholder Access EA update/catch up from where we've been and where we're headed + detailed information on LiDAR and what that might mean for decision making;

- informative presentation on the basics of the agency's Wild Horse and Burro Program, conflicts, concerns, how herd sizes were established, explore creative solutions;
- hear more about Burns Paiute Tribe and their ancestry, history, and archaeology in connection with Steens Mountain (perhaps from Pat O'Grady, BLM Archaeologist);
- review SMAC's 2020 Reasonable Access for Reasonable Use document and discuss any proposed changes, updates, clarifications, etc.
- review CMPA inholdings and edgeholdings and discuss potential conflicts and proactive, creative solutions
- standing agenda items – Designated Federal Official update, Field Manager's Report, Constituent updates, Public Comment periods;

April 3-4, 2025, in Hines, Oregon

July 10-11, 2025, in Hines, Oregon

October 9-10, 2025, in Hines, Oregon

Other agenda ideas for future meetings:

- SMAC Strategic Planning – Skills/Knowledge
  - o Continue reviewing sections of the Steens Act
  - o Additional presentations on science, agency programs, complex issues, etc.
- SMAC Strategic Planning – Strategic Initiatives
  - o Discuss and creatively attempt to remedy or clarify SMAC's position on conflicting language in the Stees Act
  - o More on inholdings/edgeholdings
- Wildland Juniper Management Area – what happened there? Is anything planned for the future? What was learned from the studies there?
- Rangeland health and reducing the spread of invasive species
- Look at changes made in the Steens Act (Wilderness, Redband Trout Reserve, etc.) and see what things look like now. Do we see and differences? Positive or negative? What can we learn?
- Travel Management Planning
- Bridge Creek Allotment Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement
- Inflation Reduction Act Projects (Page Springs Weir Removal, Moon Hill Equestrian Campground, etc.)

These minutes were approved by/on:


 A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. E. J.', written over a large, stylized arrow pointing upwards and to the right.