

Business / Agriculture

NRAC goes over USFS issues

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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The Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) met for its first, regular meeting of the year, on Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

Attendance included NRAC Chair Doni Bruland, Baker County Commissioner Bill Harvey, NRAC Coordinator Eric Wuntz, Ken Anderson, Chuck Chase, Cynthia "Cookie" Long, Alice Knapp, Jan Alexander, Laurene Chapman, Lyle Defrees, and Arvid Andersen. Public attendance included Wanda Ballard.

Bruland mentioned that, though a draft of the NRAC by-laws was an item on the agenda up for discussion, they weren't in effect yet, and she asked for an agreement as to whether a quorum was met, in order to conduct business, and it was agreed that there was a quorum.

The minutes from the July meeting were approved, with a motion from Long, and a second from Defrees; and the minutes from the August and the October meetings were approved separately, with motions from Long, and seconds from Alexander.

Harvey and Wuntz provided an update about the agency-to-agency coordination process, between the County, and the United States Forest Service (USFS), speaking primarily about a meeting with Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya, and the new Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision (BMFPR) Team Leader, Victoria Anne, on Monday. Harvey said that the informational meeting went well, and that the focus was determining consistencies and differences between the BMFPR, and the County's Natural Resource Plan (NRP). He said that the USFS has agreed that coordination is the law,

though the USFS's and the County's definitions of that term differ, but Montoya, post-meeting, seemed to realize that the USFS has more in common with the County than originally thought.

Wuntz echoed Harvey's comments regarding the USFS and County effort, to determine consistencies and differences with the BMFPR and the NRP. Wuntz said that, in the area of watersheds, the past thinking was to do basically nothing with them in terms of management, but now, the USFS has agreed, that can't continue to be the plan. Chase said that he thought the City hasn't had a strong enough stance with its watershed management, as opposed to the USFS, and Harvey said that he agreed with that opinion. Harvey said that he'll be emphasizing focus on the watersheds in future meetings, including adding Sumpter's to the conversation. He said that, to Montoya's credit, Montoya agreed that action needs to be taken now, in order to address watershed issues.

Wuntz discussed the Sparta Project Environmental Analysis (EA), and he provided those present with a copy of a letter to Whitman District Ranger Jeff Tomac, dated January 12, 2017, which includes Baker County's comments regarding the project. Wuntz said that the comment period ends mid-February, and, according to the letter and to Wuntz, Alternative #2 is the one preferred by the County, which he views as a better one than Alternative #3.

According to the letter, "Selection of Alternative 2 will best meet the Purpose and Need for the Sparta project while protecting wildlife habitat and enhancing forage; does not adversely affect listed animals and plants; protects cultural resources, air and water quality; meets Forest Plan Standards; and provides economic opportunity and access for local



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

The Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee.

residents."

In discussing the NRAC draft by-laws further, Bruland said she had sent the document to members, via email, for review and edits. Highlights include limiting the number of NRAC members to thirteen (it needs to be an odd number), and Harvey explained that what prompted this is that, for various reasons, many members have been unable to attend the meetings on a regular basis. Another included detail is that meetings should be at least quarterly (most likely, more often).

Bruland spoke about an NRAC draft advisory letter, which she said she would like to present to County Commissioners during the regular Commission session on Wednesday, February 1, regarding mining concerns, on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Proposed Withdrawal from Mineral Entry in Sagebrush Focal Areas. She urged members to review documents she sent via email, including an executive summary on the withdrawal (the actual withdrawal document is over 400 pages), and she said that comments need to be formed by mid-March. Bruland said that there is no withdrawal planned for Baker County currently, but support should be shown for other counties.

Bruland said that her main message, per the advisory letter, is that federal agencies need to adhere to their own rules. She asked members, especially miners, to review the letter, for accuracy and thoroughness.

For the second Public Participation segment, Ballard (who briefly commented also during the initial Public Participation segment) said that she considers a gate placed on any previous County road that's closed, by the USFS, to be giving the USFS too much, rather than just pushing for no gates period (she referenced the Sparta comment letter, which states that the County would rather have gates on closed roads, than tank traps, to allow for easier future management, and for faster fire and emergency response times). Harvey said that, where the County pushes back, is the timing of when a gate is closed. He said that the County's effort is to keep all the roads open, but he doesn't want tank traps, or boulders in the way, and if the County can keep the roads partially open for now, the gates can be opened later.

The next NRAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

SWCD holds awards banquet

Submitted by Tara Phillips of SWCD

Local landowners, producers, and agency personnel gathered on the evening of January 20th for a very important reason: conservation in Baker County.

Each year, the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (consisting of Baker Valley, Eagle Valley, Keating, and Burnt River SWCDs) host their Annual Dinner and Awards Banquet; recognizing the dedication, willingness, and hard work that it takes to implement conservation practices at the local level.

The Districts aid private landowners in restoring, enhancing and improving their land through many different activities; including livestock watering systems, spring developments, cross fencing, irrigation efficiency, streamside plantings, diversion structures, and much more.

Dinner guests enjoyed a video presentation, highlighting all of the ongoing

and recently completed conservation projects in the county.

Along with enjoying a delicious prime rib dinner, attendees welcomed newly elected SWCD directors as they recited the oath of office, presented by County Commissioner Bruce Nichols; as well as said goodbye to three retiring directors: Mike Williams of Baker Valley SWCD, Dave Clemens of Eagle Valley SWCD, and Tim Heater of Eagle Valley SWCD.

Between these three directors, they have dedicated over 55 years of service to their respective soil and water district; and their knowledge, input and support has been invaluable.

As in years past, the Baker County SWCD directors and staff nominated two individuals for outstanding conservation efforts. Steve Brink of Idaho Power was recognized as the 2016 Partner of the Year, and Dave Clemens, who lives in Richland, was recognized as the 2016 Conservationist of the Year.



Submitted Photo.

From left: Mike Williams, retiring Baker Valley Director; Whitney Collins, District Manager; and Myron Miles, Baker Valley SWCD Chairman.

Both of these men have dedicated their lives to being good stewards of the land, and have been instrumental in getting restoration projects on the ground in Baker County.

Farmers and ranchers truly are the most

dedicated conservationists in the world, and the staff and directors of the Baker County SWCDs are beyond proud to represent this hard-working community; and we've all been busy!

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, January 27, 2016 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady in a limited test compared to week ago prices. Most demand lays with the retail/stable hay. According to some producers, horse owners prefer lower sugar, higher protein hay. The recent snows slowed movement as trucks cant get to the farms to get loaded.

Tons	Price Range	Wtd Avg
Alfalfa — Large Square Good	380 130.00-130.00	130.00
Alfalfa / Orchard Mix — Large Square Good	300 100.00-100.00	100.00
Timothy Grass — Large Square Premium	120 180.00-180.00	180.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, January 25, 2017
Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 690

Steer Calves

300-400#	Bulk	137.00-169.00	Top	170.00
400-500#	Bulk	153.00-176.00	Top	177.00
500-600#	Bulk	134.00-160.00	Top	163.00

Heifer Calves

300-400#	Bulk	126.00-141.00	Top	143.00
400-500#	Bulk	124.00-142.00	Top	143.00
500-600#	Bulk	126.00-140.00	Top	141.00

Yearling Steers

600-700#	Bulk	127.00-137.00	Top	138.00
700-800#	Bulk	126.00-136.00	Top	137.00
800-900#	Bulk	114.00-121.00	Top	122.00
900-1,000#	Bulk	N/A	Top	N/A

Yearling Heifers

600-700#	Bulk	113.00-126.50	Top	127.00
700-800#	Bulk	105.00-124.50	Top	127.00
800-900#	Bulk	101.00-111.00	Top	111.00
900-1,000#	Bulk	N/A	Top	N/A

Thin Shelly Cows	35.00- 49.00
Butcher Cows	51.00-57.00
Butcher Bulls	45.00- 59.00
Pairs Young	N/A
Hfretts.	65.00
Stock Cows Young	- N/A

ProducersLivestock.com
541-473-3136

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Prices are based on the majority of saw mills in Northeastern Oregon and Central Idaho. The prices listed below are a composite prices of various sawmills willing to visit with me about this topic.

Ponderosa Pine—small diameter class 8-11 inches diameter class \$250 per mbf. Only one sawmill was willing to buy small diameter pine at this time.

Ponderosa Pine—medium diameter class 12-17 inches diameter class \$300 to \$350 per mbf

Ponderosa Pine-large diameter class 18 plus inches diameter class \$380 to \$410 per mbf

The Pine prices are still approximately \$40 per mbf below average lumber/log market due to 2017 fire salvage

Doug Fir & Western Larch—\$380 to \$420 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$425 to \$475 per mbf.

White Fir-\$300 per mbf. Normal prices typically ranged between \$340 to \$360 per mbf.

Engelmann Spruce—\$350 at one Idaho sawmill, other sawmills including with White fir prices.

In general, the log prices still impacted from 2015 fire season and fire salvage that resulted. Sawmills are starting to get log yard inventory in line with sawmill production needs. With a new Administration as of 1/20/2017, a more normal economic environment should result and hopefully a more healthy housing situation will result in a better climate for Northeast Oregon Sawmill and private forest landowners.

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1,209.00

Silver: \$17.48

Platinum: \$998.55

Palladium: \$761.81

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— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn: \$367.00/bu/USD

Wheat: \$431.40/bu/USD

Soybeans: \$1,036.00/bu/USD

Oats: \$252.50 bu/USD

Rough Rice: \$9.54/cwt/USD

Canola: \$511.60 CAD/mwt

Live Cattle: \$113.90/lb./USD

Feeder Cattle: \$122.35/lb./USD

Lean Hogs: \$69.03/lb./USD

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