

Crook County Forestland Classification Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2014

Call to Order: 1:37 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Tim Deboodt – OSU Extension Service Representative
Kevin Benton – Oregon Department of Forestry Representative
John Morgan – Crook County Representative
Casey Kump – Oregon Fire Marshall Representative

Committee Members Absent:

Chuck McGrath – Crook County Representative
Ken Fahlgren – Crook County Representative

Guests:

George Ponte, Kristin Cotugno, Matt Smith, Boone Zimmerlee, Laura York, and Gordon Foster.

Review Minutes:

Tim Deboodt called the meeting to order and asked Committee members to review the January 2, 2014 meeting minutes. There being no changes, **a motion to approve the January 2, 2014 minutes was made by Kevin Benton and seconded by Casey Kump. VOTE: FOR – UNANIMOUS.**

Public Comment:

No public comment given. **Tim Deboodt closed the public comment period.**

Old Business:

For clarification and documentation, Kevin Benton reviewed for the Committee the Classification standards between Class 2 and 3, discussing the two alternatives that could have been used in the Forestland Classification process. As a refresher, Alternative 1 provides that Class 2 lands be based upon potential site productivity capability of the land while giving consideration to other vegetative communities suitability for joint use for timber production and grazing of livestock. Alternative 2 provides that Class 2 lands be

classed based strictly on site productivity. (*Detailed information on the differences between the two methodologies can be found on the Oregon Department of Forestry's website.*)

The Committee confirmed that Alternative 1 was the method used in the Crook County Forestland Classification process. **A motion to affirm that the Alternative 1 methodology was used by the Committee in the Crook County Forestland Classification was made by Kevin Benton and seconded by John Morgan. VOTE: FOR – UNANIMOUS.**

New Business:

The Committee discussed resuming their regular meeting schedule, held the first Thursday of every month, and discontinuing the supplemental meetings. In view of the fact that the Committee has completed the preliminary process of reviewing lands in Crook County, and because there would be much public meeting preparation work that would need to be completed by the Oregon Department of Forestry, it was suggested that the next regular meeting scheduled on February 6, 2014 be cancelled, resuming the regular meeting schedule effective March 6, 2014. **A motion to resume the regular meeting schedule, beginning on March 6th, and cancel the February 6th meeting was made by Kevin Benton and seconded by Casey Kump. VOTE: FOR – UNANIMOUS.**

The Oregon Department of Forestry presented the *current* and the *preliminary* Crook County Forestland Classification maps, as well as provided a printed summary review and comparison of the *current* Forestland Classification versus the *preliminary* Forestland Classification indicating statistical differences in the totals of timber/grazing acres, timber/grazing tax lots, and improved timber/grazing lots. The summary also included specific statistics for the area in which there is “dual protection” (dual fire protection is provided by the Oregon Department of Forestry (“ODF”) for grazing and timberland, and Crook County Fire/Rescue (“CCFR”) for structures). The question was raised as to whether CCFR assesses fees on vacant lots. Matt Smith from CCFR answered, yes, they do assess fees on vacant lots. Kevin Benton pointed out that per the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) ODF assessment fees apply to all tax lots but restricts the ability for the rural fire protection district to ad valorem tax for the full value of an improved tax lot over 5 acres. George Ponte said that ODF would most likely assess all lots within the ODF protection boundary, adding that within the dual protection areas, improved tax lots over 5 acres would not be impacted by the changes in the preliminary

Classification since the number of improved tax lots over 5 acres did not change, but lots of less than 5 acres would be subject to dual assessment fees.

Although the ODF Protection Boundary was last changed in 1973, at that time the areas that were included in the new boundaries were unclassified, and ODF was not authorized to assess protection fees. It was noted that in this *preliminary* Forestland Classification all the tax lots being newly classified are less than 5 acres, and the largest increases to the *preliminary* Forestland Classification were in grazing acres, grazing tax lots, and improved grazing lots. The question was asked whether there was an option to leave areas “unclassified,” to which the response was that the entire county needed to be classified. (*Detailed information on the maps and summary can be found on the Oregon Department of Forestry’s website.*)

A demonstration was given to Committee members by the Oregon Department of Forestry of the portion of the ODF website containing the Crook County Forestland Classification agendas, meeting minutes and materials, Crook County vicinity maps, and newly added interactive maps, and the new link to provide “comments.” The interactive maps were created to assist the public in finding information about *preliminary* Classification changes and the “comments” link was added to allow the public to provide feedback. The interactive maps have various layers that can be turned on and off, and they are searchable by address, but not tax lot numbers. There is still work that needs to be done by ODF to the maps and the website, and the Committee members were asked to provide their input on both. The following suggestions were made:

- Only show the ODF Forest Protection District on the map
- Change labels on map to reflect:
 - 0 = Unclassified
 - 2 = Timber
 - 3 = Grazing
- Add CCRF logo to map
- Change ODF Protection “Unit” to ODF Protection “District”
- Add “How To” and “Comments” link next to Map

The Committee next began the planning process for the Crook County Forestland Classification public meetings. It was determined that there would be two public meetings in Prineville, each on a different night and week, and one public meeting in Paulina, most likely from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00. George Ponte mentioned that there wasn’t an expectation that all Committee members attend all the public meetings, but a few

should plan to attend each. The goal of the Committee should be to get through the public meeting process by June 1, 2014. The question arose about whether there is a response period for the public following the public meetings, to which the answer was yes, the public has 14 days to respond. It will be the Committee's responsibility to review any comments and act accordingly. Once the new Crook County Forestland Classification map has been finalized and filed with the County Clerk, landowners will have 30 days to appeal. The new Forestland Classification will impact the 2015 tax cycle—not the 2014 tax cycle.

George Ponte described for the Committee members the public hearing process, stating that there should be printed maps of the County on the walls of the meeting room, and printouts of the Classification maps for the public so that they can be shown the differences between the current versus the preliminary proposed Classification. He suggested that the public meetings be held during the March through April timeframe, and that prior to the meetings, outreach brochures and a postcard (*samples of each were provided to Committee members*) and/or a letter should be sent to impacted landowners. George continued to say that, based on experience, it is better to provide more information rather than less, so postcards are less desirable than a letter, but it should also be effective and cost efficient. ODF will work on the presentation to be made at the public hearings, and the appropriate news releases will be sent out regarding the Committee's progress and what next steps are.

Tim Deboodt suggested that ODF consider setting up a booth at the Paulina Community meeting that is scheduled for April 9, 2014, where they can distribute outreach brochures and provide a demonstration of ODF's website and the map's functionality in order to prepare the landowners for the public meetings.

The Committee turned its attention to the ODF Protection District Boundary and was shown a map of the current boundary. Kevin Benton asked Committee members if, based on their review of the Crook County lands, they felt it necessary to recommend changes to ODF's Protection District Boundary. George Ponte explained what making a change would involve. Tim Deboodt pointed out an area that was classified as 2 that might be added, and suggested that there might be an area that should be taken out of the District's Boundary due to dual protection coverage. If that were to happen, the County would then be liable for protection costs. Matt Smith commented that he would like to keep the dual coverage boundaries where they are because CCRF focuses on residences whereas ODF focuses on timber and grazing lands.

George Ponte suggested that ODF find the old map, prior to the changes that were made in 1973. Tim Deboodt asked if ODF would provide information at the March meeting that would show the impact or differences in the old versus the new. George Ponte agreed that it would be worth exploring the dual coverage area and said that ODF would put forward a map at the March meeting that showed the old version versus the existing version of the District's Protection Boundary.

Finally, the Committee discussed the areas that are considered "unprotected lands." There are only 2 small areas of unprotected lands in Crook County—one in Juniper Lake Acres, and one other privately owned parcel. To make a change in the status of these unprotected lands, the Committee would need to make a recommendation to the County to create a Zone 1 Classification. The County would then designate who would provide protection to these Zone 1 lands. Casey Kump said that his experience has been that people in these areas like being on their own. Tim Deboodt said that the County would probably like to leave things as they are.

Topics for Next Meeting:

- Old Versus Existing ODF Protection District Boundary
- Proposed Dates for Public Hearings
- Presentation Materials for Public Hearings
- Letters/Postcards for Distribution to Impacted Landowners

Next Meeting:

The next scheduled meeting is March 6, 2014, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Good of the Order:

None

Action Items:

- ODF to produce a comparison between the old (pre-1973) and existing ODF Protection District Maps
- Kevin to explore potential dates for Public Hearings in Prineville and Paulina
- ODF to provide preliminary presentation materials for Public Hearings
- ODF to draft letters/postcards to send to impacted landowners

Closing:

There being no further business to discuss **a motion was made by Tim Deboodt to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Kevin Benton. Vote: FOR – UNANIMOUS.**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.