

Agenda Item No.:	E
Title and # of Issue:	Rangeland Protective Association Formation
Date of Presentation:	11/02/2007
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to obtain Board approval to proceed with formation of a Juntura Rangeland Fire Protection Association, in portions of Northwestern Malheur County.

CONTEXT

Rangeland fire protection associations are non-profit, locally governed groups of landowners which have been organized to provide fire protection to rangeland in portions of eastern Oregon. These organizations are formed under the authority of the Board and with assistance from the Department.

In a letter dated December 14, 2006, landowners in Northwestern Malheur County requested the formation of a rangeland fire protection association. The Board, on March 7, 2006, authorized a public hearing on the formation request, pursuant to ORS 477.320. This hearing was held in Juntura on May 10, 2007.

At the hearing, strong support for the formation of an association was evident and no opposition to a formation was expressed. Testimony presented during the hearing indicated a need for organized fire protection and revealed that landowners in the area have already taken initial organizational steps, including: a board of directors has been established and a person has been elected chair, a set of by-laws has been established, corporate legal status has been applied for, a bank account has been established, some funds have been raised, and commitments of time and equipment have been received.

Testimony presented at the hearing also revealed that landowners and residents of the area are increasingly worried about the incidence of rangeland fire. The past several years have produced numerous, very large, rangeland fires. Many attendees are life long residents that have fought fire for years, but because of federal restrictions are no longer able to assist in fire suppression on federal land. The belief is held, that with the formation of a Rangeland Fire Protection Association, additional equipment and formal training, the federal government will recognize them as firefighters. Then they will be able to support not only, private lands fire suppression, but assist on federal lands as many fires start on federal lands and spread onto private ground.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department recommends the Board approve the inclusion of rangeland in portions of Northwestern Malheur County into a rangeland fire protection association and direct the Department to assist with the formation of the Juntura Rangeland Fire Protection Association, pursuant to ORS 477.320.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will work with local landowners in the area to form the Juntura Rangeland Protection Association. This will include; developing mutual aid agreements, provide training as requested, offer FEPP equipment as available and any other assistance as requested and feasible.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Map of area of consideration
- (2) 05/10/2007 Hearings Report