

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group Meeting Record

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM, Wednesday, June 5, 2019

Butte Archives

ATTENDANCE

Members: Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large; Nick Gevock, hunting representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, agriculture representative; Chris Marchion, hunting representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Rick Sandru, agriculture representative; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; County Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Technical advisors: Anton Brennick, Jeannie Dawson, Dale Olson, Jeff Tomac, Russ Walker, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF); Steve Kimball, Montana Department of Natural Resources Conservation (DNRC); Cindy Perdue-Dolan, Office of Senator Steve Daines; Richard Stem, private consultant

Guests and observers: Erin Plue and Morgan Root, Idaho Forest Group

Facilitators: Ben Irely and Maisie Powell, National Forest Foundation (NFF)

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- The May meeting record was approved and the next meeting date will be July 10th.
- Tony Colter will contact the National Collaboration Cadre to discuss possible consultation

Action items

- Ben Irely will circulate the Montana Forest Collaboration Network report
- Maisie Powell will follow up with Dale Olson about the September field trip with the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative
- BDNF will give an update on progress from the Integrated Resource Strategy (IRS) at each meeting
- BDNF will have someone from wildlife present the wildlife data used in the IRS process

Bin items

- BDWG consider taking on a public information campaign to raise awareness for the importance of fire in these landscapes.

MEETING RECORD

1. Welcome, introductions, and approve agenda, meeting record, and ground rules

Group members review agenda and Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) members review and approve May's meeting record. Group members generate and agree to abide by a set of ground rules for today's meeting.

2. BDWG member updates

- Status of funding for facilitation of the Working Group
 - NFF did not get the Catalyst grant.
 - BDWG received \$7,500 from a grant program through DNRC.
 - The Anaconda Sportsman's Club will contribute \$200.
- Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) annual report.
 - Ben Irely will circulate last year's report to MFCN along with an updated version.
- Jefferson County Subcommittee report out.
 - The BDNF is looking at ways to accomplish things for the permittees. The BDNF will not write people up for noncompliance if the BDNF cannot get to certain tasks such as removing fences.
 - The Group considered different ways of managing livestock if the downfall-on-fencing issue cannot be addressed due to safety or funding issues.
- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Subcommittee report out.
 - The Subcommittee did not come to any decisions about submitting a CFLRP application and will meet again before the next Group meeting.
 - There is potential for a CFLRP project in the forest, but there are still unknowns. There need to be discussions over maps and specifics of what this project could look like.
- BDWG July field trip
 - There might not be relevant projects on the Forest that would be helpful for the Group to look at by next month. The FS is working on aspen treatments, active sales, and roadside harvests.
- There is an opportunity to go out for a field trip in September with the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative.
- There will be a flush of money coming in June and July to the FS. There is a priority of increasing fuels management. The BDWG could help the forest get these projects going.
- Steve Kimball introduced himself and his position with the MT DNRC to support counties with federal lands engagement. His office offers grants and trainings with one on June 14th in Missoula for County Commissioners on the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA). He has experience with the CFLRP on the Payette National Forest.

3. Congressional updates

- On Saturday, the President announced that it will not close the Anaconda Job Corps Center. Senator Daines is co-sponsoring legislation with Senator Tester to keep the Job Corps open. Members reiterated the importance of the Anaconda Job Corps and showed appreciation for bipartisan support.

- The House will pass the \$700 million dollar disaster funding to pay back the FS for last year's fire borrowing. Trump is expected to sign it.
- Robert Wallace was nominated to be Interior Department assistant secretary for fish, wildlife, and parks.
- Darcie Warden and Tony Colter are on the statewide committee for the Montana Forest Action Plan.

4. BDNF updates

- 5-Year Timber Plan
 - **2019:** Roadside 481 was sold in April. Monument decks will hopefully sell in July. 944 was sold in April. There are two fire salvages, but the FS is waiting for confirmation on bull trout and lynx. Red rocks is wrapping up, but they are waiting on a lynx consult.
 - **2020:** Red Lodge Salvage 2, Fleecer, Moose Salvage, and Rancho Deluxe are planned for FY2020.
 - **2021:** Pintler Face and Greenhorn.
 - **2022:** Selway Sagana and the remainder of Pintler Face.
 - **2023:** Selway Sagana and hopefully there will be more smaller sales and GNA projects as well.
- Discussion
 - There may be an opportunity for a project between East Fork and Storm Lake that would benefit the recreation infrastructure of the area. The road systems is highly used and 50 years old and needs maintenance.
 - The BDNF is still trying to figure out where they should be in terms of sale acres per year.

5. BDNF Vegetation Management Process (VMAP) Modeling – Anton Brennick

- The VMAP is a 5 year plan looking at when, how, and to what extent to treat vegetation. It is tied to targets from the Regional Office and refreshed annually. For the BDNF, it includes two sister forests, the Custer Gallatin and the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forests (CGNF & HLCNF).
- The intent is to increase the scale of projects, prioritize resources to meet needs, use consistent methods, and increase shared partnerships. The objectives are to improve ability of the Region by including the CGNF, HLCNF, and BDNF within a regional budget planning group. A goal is to identify high priority areas to get the most “bang for our buck.”
- Defining the purpose and need at the outset of a project is a paradigm shift for the agency. This helps define the end point and helps the FS better communicate the rationale to stakeholders.
- The analysis process includes developing information criteria, identifying areas of abundance/existing opportunity, and using the summarization tool. Criteria includes things like silviculture, timber, wildlife, and fuels.
- BDNF's Integrated Resource Strategy (IRS) has a goal of increasing data richness, collaboration, and transparency in project development for the 5-year plan. Feedback from collaborative groups will inform the ranking process for projects. Ranking includes ecological, economic, and social factors.

- The BDNF is working on a hazardous fuels assessment which includes WUI acres. They are trying to stay ahead of bug outbreaks and wildfire to reach optimal levels and reset forest stands so they are more resilient.
- This is still in its infancy, but the FS hopes to integrate the BDWG in a symbiotic relationship to go forward with the right vision and strategies.
- What are we missing, what are the other inputs to include?
 - WUI, allotments, noxious weeds, suitable habitat for specific wildlife (this is happening for threatened and endangered species), water quality.
- The FS hopes to be done by October 1 in terms of narrowing priorities and mapping. The hope is to have projects to feed back into the 5-year management plan by the beginning of next calendar year with the help of BDWG, county commissioners, and district rangers.
- Discussion
 - More emphasis needs to be put on getting ahead of the bug outbreaks and wildfire.
 - Resource benefit fires are included in the forest plan. A lot of folks want to let fire take a more natural role. Wildfire management is all about resource risk relative to public and firefighter safety.
 - Every time the FS lets a fire go, the press takes it out on them. This is still a huge political issue. The BDWG might have a role for improving public perception of wildfire.
 - We need more education, getting people on the landscape to learn about post fire landscape, and more publicity about the fires done in the right place, at the right time, in the right way.
 - It is important to highlight the opportunities for working between forests for Shared Stewardship projects within the Forest Pod.
 - There are opportunities for cross pollination with the Bitterroot NF and Salmon-Challis NF in the VMAPing process
 - The group requested a similar VMAP presentation from a wildlife expert and a VMAP update at each meeting.
 - The integration of wildlife into the Pintler Face project was a success for the BDNF.

6. Madison District update – District Ranger Dale Olson

- Greenhorn project: This was co-developed with the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative. They used Forest in Focus money to collect data and are in the planning stage. The project includes timber harvest, slashing and prescribed burns. The project is 15,000 acres off of Timber Creek Road and includes not suitable but allowable harvest. The EA is drafted and a couple of standing reports will wrap up this month. The decision will be this fall.
- Strawberry Cascade Sheep Allotments: This project is in the NEPA process. There is info for alternatives and the BDNF is looking to have a draft by late July. After review, the draft will be out for public comment in early fall. More dual grazing would improve the rangeland and increase animal unit months (AUMs).
- General updates: The Ruby Moose project partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. It is a prescribed fire project. The BDNF is trying to get another 50-60 acres done this spring. There is a 750 acre restoration project to promote aspen restoration. There was a suggestion to partner with private landowners for these prescribed burn restoration project.

- The Forest has 53 active allotments and 50 permittees. It is the biggest rangeland program in the region.

7. Increasing effectiveness of BDWG – Rich Stem

Rich Stem provided recommendations to improve relationships between the BDWG and the FS.

8. Public comment

There was mention of appreciation for the BDNF and the work they do.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58.

DRAFT