

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Collaborative/Coalition/Citizen's Group
Meeting Notes
December 7, 2011
Butte-Silver Bow Archives

Present: Dick Owenby, Paul Olson, Tony Colter, Rick Sandru, Jim Flynn, Chris Marchion, Maureen Conner, Charlie O'Leary, Dave Shultz, Chuck Mark (USFS), Dave Myers (USFS), Richard Stem (visitor), Karen DiBari (facilitation), Emily Biesecker (note-taking).

Not Present: Parke Scott, Laurie Schmidt, Barb Cestero, Sam Sampson

*Corrections to October 5th Meeting Notes: Parke Scott should be marked as present at October Meeting. Barb Cestero should be marked as not present at October Meeting.

Introduction: Karen DiBari reviewed the agenda for the meeting and the code of conduct for the group.

Forest Service Presentation – overview of the forest: Dave Myers stressed the importance of collaboration to Forest Service leadership at the national, regional, and forest level. Presentation provided a snapshot of the forest budget, program of work, and planning. Summary of FY11 accomplishments handed out to the group. The B-D has a relatively new Forest Plan (2009), so Dave Myers will be making a lot of decisions about where on the forest the next major vegetation management should take place. A lot of value could come from this group's input on the trade-offs and benefits of choosing one landscape over another for work.

The 2009 Forest Plan documents 284,000 acres as suitable for timber, and unencumbered by other resource issues (such as roadless areas). An additional 1.6 million acres is available for harvest and other resource use, but 912,000 of these acres are inventoried roadless area. Example of mixed resource objectives discussed, such as a Fish Key Watershed. Group requested context of ongoing appeals and litigation faced by the forest regarding travel management and site-specific projects.

Previous Forest Plan listed close to 700,000 acres as suitable timber lands. There is ongoing disagreement with the revised acreage in the new Forest Plan. Members expressed concern that, without access to conversations like this meeting, it will appear to members of the public that nearly 400,000 acres have disappeared off the table. Recognition that harvest can take place in acres outside of the Suitable areas, but that there will be constraints and the forest will need to demonstrate that the actions are preserving or enhancing other resource priorities. Valuable role of this group would be to help craft viable forest management projects in areas that have additional constraints.

Chuck Mark presented the major items on the forest's program of work, especially centered around vegetation management, range management, and travel management. Within vegetation management projects, wildlife issues are often what are contested. The Boulder project is one of the first landscape level projects for the forest, while many other projects have focused on quite narrow scopes in the hopes of making them more defensible. Presents a number of factors influencing the program of work: increases in pre-decisional review on documents, vacancies in key positions, dependence on Enterprise Teams (internal USFS "contractors"), travel restrictions, flooding and wash-outs, bark beetle.

Discussion on Group Organization and Process: Karen DiBari re-introduced the purpose statement discussed at the October 5 meeting. She presented the list of potential tasks and functions drafted by the group to choose from, and reiterated that this group will be operating at a forest-level. One role of the group will be to provide input to the forest regarding next steps and the placement of upcoming projects. There is continued concern about the name “collaborative” for the group, which will be discussed at the January meeting.

Group expressed the need to continue professional neutral facilitation, but concerned about source of funding for facilitation after the current USFS-NFF contract has completed. The desire to maintain the arm’s length relationship with the forest raised question about accepting financial support from the forest in order to fund facilitation. Some members would like the group to be entirely independent of forest funds, while others agree that outside funding sources should be pursued in addition to forest or regional-level funding assistance.

More discussion is needed to resolve questions about open/public meetings, policy for visitors, invitations to non-members who represent interests not present in the group, web presence, and communications with the public and the media. Group acknowledges the need to craft its message and introduction to the public. Organizational Committee will draft an operations manual to address these questions. The Committee will also revise the group purpose statement to serve as a public statement and introduction of the group.

Next Steps – Project: The group agrees that engaging in a Forest Service project will be an appropriate next step, and the group discussed the merits of two upcoming landscape scales projects: Big Hole vegetation management and Pioneers travel management. The timing is advantageous for both projects, as they are just beginning. The group discussed if they would like to hear from and perhaps work on both projects in tandem. The group determined that it would like to hear from the District Ranger about the Big Hole landscape project at the January meeting. If desired, the group could hear from the forest about the Pioneers project at a later meeting.

Actions, Assignments, and Committee Tasks:

Funding Committee: Members are Dick Owenby, Chris Marchion, and Charlie O’Leary. Karen DiBari will calculate the remaining balance on her facilitation contract. With Bruce Farling, Chris Marchion and Charlie O’Leary will attempt to meet with Leslie Weldon before her transition. Richard Stem will share examples of collaborative groups in Colorado that addressed issues of funding and independence. Dick Owenby will explore funding avenues used by other collaborative groups, and will investigate external sources of funding (such as Cinnabar Foundation).

Organizational Committee: Members are Tony Colter, Jim Flynn, and Dave Shultz. The committee will draft an operating manual to be discussed at the January meeting. The committee will also draft a public statement for the group, and will consider the question of the group’s name.

Next Meeting: After speaking with members not present at today’s meeting, the date will be set for January 5, 2012 or the alternate date of January 12. Tentative February meeting date set as February 1. January Meeting will include a presentation on the Big Hole landscape from the Forest Service. The group will discuss the name of the group, as well as the draft of the Operations Manual and the public statement/introduction crafted by the Organizational Committee.