

B-D Working Group Meeting Notes

February 23, 2012

Butte Archives

Present: Russ Riebe, Parke Scott, Tony Colter, Jim Flynn, Chris Marchion, Paul Olson, Chuck Mark, Sam Samson, Cornelia Hudson (Corny), Dave Schulz, Dick Owenby, Dave Myers, Charlie O'Leary, Laurie Schmidt, Barb Cestero, Maureen Connor, Karen DiBari

Introductions:

- People raised several issues they were interested in hearing more about: Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration and the accelerated restoration plans of the agency, plus a recent column in the Montana Standard; Laurie Schmidt (issue?)

Operating Guidelines

Agreement that notice on the website is how the group will publicize meetings.

- **ACTION:** Karen will integrate language of "important questions" into the Operations Manual.

Leadership

Nominated and approved:

- Chair: Dave Schulz
- Vice-Chair: Tony Colter

Dave Schulz took over running meeting at this point

Website Options:

- Maureen -- reported on quote she received for web site
 - \$99/month for first year, \$55 for hosting
 - 2-page website (home and contact us)
 - 1 hour of time/month for content changes
 - Professional design
 - 10 email accounts (could be used instead of individual member emails)
 - CatClick Campaign – think it's a poll function
- Karen – Google Sites
 - Free
 - Easy to use and edit, has designs that are packaged
 - Can be made public
 - Question about url and how easy it would be for people to find
- Russ Riebe -Lemhi Restoration Working Group out of Salmon uses GoogleSites effectively

ACTION: Karen and Maureen will send around examples of websites

Questions from the group:

- Who will build/create the website?

- Who will maintain it?
- What should be posted on it?
- Free vs. paid option – how will it be paid for?
- Contact information of B-D Working Group members on the site? Suggestion to have a general info@_____ email address.

ACTION: The website issue will be on next month's agenda for further discussion.

Funding Committee Report

Forest Service Contract with NFF

Chris Marchion went to Missoula and met with Tom Schmidt (Deputy Regional Forester) last month, and the Regional Office pledged \$5,000 toward this effort. The funds are to go toward the NFF purchase order and Dave Myers will follow up. This money is considered seed money and will likely not be renewed. The NFF's role includes the launch of the group, facilitation, and coordination.

Other potential funds for the B-D Working Group

Cinnabar Foundation: deadline is March 31st; if awarded, would receive funds in July or later

- Could put together a grant application
- Potential budget items:
 - Website
 - Note-taking
 - Other?
- **ACTION:** Karen will work on preparing the grant and Barb volunteered to help; Chris Marchion will also review the proposal. Parameters: request for \$15,000 to support facilitation, coordination, note-taking, field trip, and web site. If possible, have a grant period longer than 1 year.
- The B-D Working Group is the applicant
- General support of having Headwaters RC&D serve as the fiscal agent
- Headwaters' admin fee is 10-15%; some questions about whether that could be negotiated
- Disclosure: Maureen is vice-chair of Headwaters RC&D
- Headwaters RC&D would provide a monthly statement of financial activity
- **ACTION:** Maureen will communicate with Headwaters RC&D about serving as the B-D Working Group's fiscal agent and bring more information back to present at the next meeting.

Richard Stem

Suggestion to have Richard Stem be on the agenda for 30-45 minutes at the next meeting to talk about the successes and experiences of other collaborative groups. Group supported that proposal. Mr. Stem may also be able to offer funding suggestions.

Barb Cestero suggested that perhaps it would be beneficial to hear from the folks who have successfully competed for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program funds; group interested as a potential for a later meeting.

Discussion that the group should remember that there's no one recipe for collaboration and things are different in each place.

Big Hole Landscape subcommittee

Charlie O’Leary reported that the committee (Tony, Chris, Charlie, and Paul) met in Wise River with the Forest Service staff to talk further about the Big Hole Landscape. Discussion included restoration, beetle killed forest, sedimentation of streams. The committee reported that the FS did a very good presentation; can see a local collaborative having an opportunity for input. They felt a bit constrained in giving feedback on the project because this group hasn’t come to agreement on any criteria or common principles, and members are just getting to know each other.

Dave Myers asked if this area makes sense to go to for action or were there red flags raised. The Big Hole project isn’t funded this year, but there’s work being done on it in preparation. Could do a field trip w/a FS van and suburbans (no need to incur costs w/a bus). Group comments:

- Area has timber values impacts of mountain pine beetle, huge restoration needs and opportunity
- Great recovery has happened in the last 30 years. Area is great for moose and elk. Really need to engage hunters because of road access issues. Won’t be obvious to the silviculturist or the hydrologist on the forest which roads are important to the local public. Very popular place and perhaps there’s a way to engage people and blend the restoration and recreation needs. Perhaps when it gets to the appropriate time, this group could host a meeting and invite who should be involved, w/the Forest offering a presentation?
- Suggestion to get the users to identify what’s important to them BEFORE building alternatives.
- Stands are regenerating very well. Concern expressed about the increase in red trees and interested in seeing those trees removed. Other concerns: lack of maintenance of the road system, remove culverts that are fisheries barriers. There are west slope cutthroat populations out there, need some stream rehab. Mount Haggin is a very popular snowmobile area, especially the high peaks. Dry Creek Rd by Grassy is an ATV access point. Perhaps some of the old motorized rec trails could be looked at again to make them more usable.
- FS staff expressed appreciation for perspectives of the committee because of their familiarity with the landscape from living and working in that area.
- Area is interesting because of the mix of protected Wilderness, roadless areas, and area of suitable timber base. That suitable timber base can be used over and over again.
- Big Hole area doesn’t seem to have a “fatal flaw” or “wedge” issue (such as grizzly bears, bull trout, etc.).
- Suggestion to the FS to plan the work so that it is done efficiently and all at once, then will be left alone for 30-40 years.
- Perhaps in answer to the question “Is this a good place for a project now”, put together some criteria as a group at the next meeting to guide whether/how to engage on a project and avoid (fatal flaws) a landscape. **ACTION: topic to be placed on next meeting agenda**
- Dave Myers – yes that would be helpful with regard to where to go next after Boulder and the Big Hole. What’s important to the multiple interests here about where to go work?
- Chuck commented that the rapid assessment team focused on bark beetle. Would be good for this group to look at the 12 landscapes on the forest with other values in mind to layer on top of the beetle issue.

Committee recommendation: there is agreement amongst committee on the following in terms of providing feedback to the Forest Service about the Big Hole landscape project:

- Take a large landscape approach

- Accomplish as much as possible in an integrated fashion, particularly addressing the restoration needs on the north end of the area where there's beetle kill and high road density
- Next step: suggest that the FS further define the project boundary and cutting units
- Will likely want to do a field trip this field season
- Group will consider hosting a meeting to bring in local interests and hear about the project w/the Forest Service at a later time

ACTION: If anyone has any suggestions or concerns about the project, please email comments to Tony and committee; the committee will draft up a letter/white paper and forward it around to the group.

ACTION: Karen will share the format UFRWG uses (or an adapted version) for project team reports w/the full group.

Travel Management Presentation

Cornelia Hudson and Russ Riebe presented:

- Forest Plan done in 2009; incorporated tri-state
- Implemented several land management allocations including recommended Wilderness, wilderness study areas, summer motorized and non-motorized, winter motorized and non-motorized
- When moving into travel management, those will become sideboards
- Purpose of travel management process is to designate summer motorized access for the public
- The Travel Mgmt rule has two subparts. They are completing Subpart A, called TAPS, which is a description of the existing condition. They've looked at 4100 miles of motorized roads and trails to describe the existing condition, and are ranking their condition (high, moderate, low) by condition and need, then are developing recommendations on how to manage that route (decommission, change to seasonal use, improve, etc.).
- SubPart B is the travel management planning and NEPA process of designating motorized access routes to create a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), which requires looking at the site specific level. Are planning public workshops, working with other agencies at federal, state and local levels to ensure that the plans are consistent across jurisdictions. Really want to get interested public engaged pre-scoping, before the formal NEPA process begins. Objectives are to arrest degradation, validate appropriate size and scale of designated routes. The MVUM result is a free, black & white map that the public uses in conjunction with the forest travel map. If a route is not designated as open on the MVUM, it is closed.
- Purpose of this travel management process is to achieve consistency in how motorized vehicle routes are managed across forests. Motorized travel is only allowed on designated routes. Close to half of the national forests have completed their MVUMs.
- Selling plasticized maps that are Visitor Use Maps (north, central and south) – right now the MVUM is not incorporated into it.
- Dave M: public is very confused about travel management. FS does a lot of motorized construction work right now and there's not good public understanding of that
- 3 alternatives will be presented: no action, adopted system roads (minimum road system to manage the forest); then proposed action. The B-D NF wants to build a proposed action that will be accepted and supported by public.

- Russ and Corny – very close to completing the travel analysis process (TAPS) which includes reports and maps; waiting for a final budget to determine what can be done this year

Group discussion

- The maps are hard to follow because there are no topographical features or names of local landmarks.
- Question: how big will the maps be? Answer: Large format.
- Question: As part of this process, is there an opportunity to look at trail improvements or construction to build a better system? Answer: rule requires the FS to designate motorized routes and that is what the purpose and need states. Don't want to throw new construction or decommissioning b/c it will likely be a roadblock in getting the MVUM developed due to the need for a further analysis. Will form a list of opportunities going into the process, put that on the list and develop a site-specific NEPA process to handle new construction or decommissioning. The FS is basing the proposed action w/in a very tight budget; travel management takes money away from other resource needs like wildlife. When you get to site specific travel planning, the rule is intended to have the FS look at the whole. If a lot of new construction is required, that is more complex. Just identifying loops wouldn't be as complicated and could be done w/in the MVUM process. If dirt needs to be moved to create a new route or connect a route, then a site-specific NEPA process would need to happen.
- Concern that once a route is dropped from the system, it will never be reinstated. Bad experience on the Dillon District – spent 6 months with motorized and non-motorized users; the forest doesn't have credibility that the agency will ever go back to do those projects; motorized community only sees this process as losing routes. Conservation community concerned about the resource damage from motorized use.
- Suggestion to do travel management planning with different budget scenarios in mind b/c the current budget limits what is possible
- Group interested in offering input to the agency and be a sounding board so they can “test” reactions to their presentations/proposals
- **ACTION**: think about how to engage local people and will bring back some recommendations

Next meeting: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., March 22, Butte Archives

Items for next meeting agenda:

- Approve minutes
- Public comment
- Revised operations manual
- Hear about the accelerated restoration priorities of the Forest Service from Dave/Chuck
- Web site
- Review draft proposal to Cinnabar Foundation
- Richard Stem – 45 minutes
- Develop criteria to help guide group decisions about whether to engage in a particular area