

B-D Working Group
Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2012
Butte-Silverbow Archives

Members Present: Dave Schulz, Parke Scott, Tony Colter, Jim Flynn, Chris Marchion, Paul Olson, Laurie Schmidt, Charles O’Leary, Barb Cestero, Maureen Connor, Sam Samson, Rick Sandru

Forest Service: Chuck Mark, Dave Myers

Guest: Richard Stem

Facilitator: Karen DiBari and note-taker

Introductions/Opening

Dave Schulz opened meeting, minutes approved with removal of reference to an issue Laurie Schmidt wanted to raise at the last meeting (but didn’t due to lack of time). Rick Sandru will be late today and expressed preference (via Dave Schulz) for 1 p.m. meeting time.

Dave Myers proposed inviting other district rangers to come in as guests/observers so they become familiar with the group. Group agreed that is a good idea.

Updates: Accelerated Restoration Priorities

- Chuck Mark and Dave Schulz distributed the “Increasing the Pace of Restoration & Job Creation on Our National Forests” document from USDA
- Chuck Mark discussed how there are many competing priorities and needs; unclear how the current budget and staffing levels can support increased restoration pace
- Forest is very focused on E. Deerlodge for restoration; that ramp up fits restoration priorities well b/c they have a good program of work
- Direction in FY13 is to prepare the forest for downsizing
- Challenge is how to get other projects like Boulder staffed up
- Key fish and wildlife biologists on the forest have retired and no way to replace them; creates great challenges
- Group discussion:
 - Document addresses all national forests and so is a large generalization
 - Some feeling that increasing timber production by 20% won’t be too hard to do, but also questions about how the forest balances increased timber cut and restoration priorities
 - Interest in the economic benefits of stewardship contracts
 - Document is politically motivated; no acknowledgement of appeals & litigation impact
 - Questions about role of prescribed fire as a strategy and how does that contribute to the economy – discussion about prescribed fire’s role in improving wildlife habitat, reducing likelihood of severe wildfire and negative impacts of that (fire suppression costs, loss of property and livelihood impacts)
 - Suggestion that BDWG have a presentation about how to quantify the benefits of recreational value of forests; how do recreation priorities fit in with the restoration and job creation goals of the FS?

- Questions about Southwestern Crown Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration project – collaborative effort. One of their projects is Colt-Summit – the timber part of the project has been litigated and a variety of conservation and other partners involved putting together the project have intervened to defend the project

Public Comment – no public present

Updates

- Laurie Schmidt – Madison County did a questionnaire of public for the growth policy update. Local residents responded to “ what outdoor activities do you participate in”; lots of response. Heavy emphasis on fishing, hiking, hunting, camping as well as many others
- Feedback to Dave Myers and Chuck Mark for responding so productively regarding the conflict w/the XC ski volunteer group
- Suggestion that at the end of each meeting there’s opportunity for member reports/updates
- Ken Harris – new District Ranger on the Ennis District, coming from the Klamath NF in northern CA (Happy Camp District); has a teaching background; Dave Myers and Chuck Mark are very excited about him; he’ll be starting in May

Organizational Issues

Decision-making

- Question about whether to use Robert’s rules or not. Decision was that formality of Robert’s Rules not always needed for every discussion; some members expressed concern about losing focus on consensus decision-making model and making sure that Robert’s rules and consensus work together, since Robert’s is based on a voting system.
- Strong desire for clarity in the recorded notes about decisions.
- Public comment needs to be structured so it has validity
- Desire to make sure this group is structured enough so that the group is of value to the FS in terms of input
- **DECISION:** The group decided to use of a “Montana” version of Robert’s Rules where first the group seeks to find agreement on the motion and then moves forward w/vote (maintaining commitment to each other to seek consensus throughout)

Revised Operations Manual

- Karen DiBari will send out the revised version and group will discuss at the next meeting

Cinnabar Proposal

- Headwaters approved submitting this grant as the fiscal agent of the BDWG and they are writing a letter to submit to Cinnabar
- Discussion about the appropriate amount of funds to request from Cinnabar -- Will request up to \$5,000
- **ACTION:** Karen DiBari, Chris Marchion, and Barb Cestero will continue to finalize the proposal language and the ConserveMontana.org webpage language; Maureen Connor will introduce Karen DiBari to the appropriate person at Headwaters RC&D for final grant arrangements

Website

- Concern about having the B-D Working Group on someone else's website; strong preference in the group for autonomy
- Nothing wrong w/putting something on ConserveMontana.org and group ok with that – could have a link to B-D Working Group site

Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) & Principles/Criteria Development

- Tony Colter gave an overview of how the MFRC formed, who participates, and the principles they developed
- The MFRC asked if the B-D Working Group is interested in using the principles; suggested that Gordy Sanders (Pyramid Lumber) and Dale Harris (Great Burn Study Group) make a presentation to this group
- Need to think about community and FS staff capacity to manage multiple collaborative efforts.
- Discussion about need for this group to clarify the zone of agreement; suggestion to use both the MFRC as well as the “Accelerated Restoration” document as starting points
- MFRC principles hasn't yet addressed lodgepole pine/upper elevation, beetle infestation
- Discussion about the benefits of BDWG having a forestwide perspective; less scientific consensus about lodgepole vs. ponderosa pine eco types
- **ACTION:** Karen DiBari will send out the link to the MFRC site

Elkhorn Working Group (EWG)

- Sam Samson is a member of the EWG; an original member and has served on it for the past 8 years – gave a brief presentation
- Formed to help address issue of conflicts between elk and cattle
- Area is supposed to be managed primarily for wildlife
- Members include ranchers, conservationists
- Very active group, have gotten large grants for range studies; gathered a lot of information; have an elk count trend
- FS, BLM, and FW&P are non-voting reps and give short presentations at the end of each meeting
- Chair of the group is Dave Brown
- Sam Samson can act as a liaison between the EWG and the BDWG

Richard Stem

- Retired from the FS; is working as a consultant currently; was the Deputy Regional Forester in R2; also worked in the Washington Office
- Described various collaborative groups he knows of and their successes
- Colorado Bark Beetle Collaborative – Forest Service stepped back and asked for help; collaborative group set priorities for response to the bark beetle; were able to leverage funds lot of big money
- Common elements:
 - Set pace for what the group will work on

- Paid leader (coordinator); helps to have someone w/experience – saves time; train others to take the role
- Get bigger seed money; if you build it, the money will come from counties, recreation industry, utility industry
- Challenges and needs
 - Funding and leadership consistency
 - Place-based collaboratives - \$10-30,000/year; raise money from donations
 - Fuel for place-based collaboratives is passion for a certain area
- Timing is perfect for this group, have a new forest plan, willing and open forest leadership

Discussion

- BDWG has met five times – this is the 6 month mark
- What are we going to sink our teeth into? People interested in moving forward.
- Might be a good focus to build on the MFRC work and develop some guidance for local groups to address project-specific
- Would like to be in the position of the BDWG being the ally of the FS; identify the group to the public as a collaborative group designed to help think through what the forest wants to do; do the outreach
- Agreement regarding working on the Big Hole; at the same time we need to look at bigger picture issues – MFRC principles, recreation, key fish watersheds; solicit questions from the FS on a specific project
- Desire to set a launch date to announce the group publicly and do it soon; will likely be a flurry of interest from the public and should be prepared for that; need to talk to the counties as a group, not just the county commissioners; need something of substance to introduce the group to the counties; suggest a date of end of May.
- Dave Myers – helpful to get input at the forest level; look at landscape level; fish key watersheds, travel management, recreation management – a challenge to not go to the project level, but to stay focused at the forest planning level
- Request for a copy of the forest plan from the FS
- Identify where to go next – landscape analysis

Future meeting topics:

- BDNF's recreation program (budget allocation, strategies, etc.) – 1 hour
- Fire management – 1 hour
- Sensitive, fish-key watersheds
- Operations manual
- Invite Gordy Sanders and Dale Harris to present about the MFRC; history of group; process of principle development
- Consideration of inviting other people experienced in collaboration to present