

B-D Working Group Field Trip
Pintler Face Area of Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
July 26, 2012
Approved 9/28/12

Present: Jim Flynn, Paul Olson, Sam Samson, Maureen Connor, Tony Colter, Dave Schulz, Barb Cestero, Rob Gump (BDNF Silviculturist), Russ Riebe (Wisdom District Ranger), Chuck Mark (Deputy Forest Supervisor), Jim Brammer (Forest Fisheries Biologist), Elissa Stamm (silviculturist), Karen DiBari

The group met at the Mule Ranch pull off, then carpooled in Forest Service vehicles to a stop to eat lunch. After discussion, we drove to another location with a view of the valley that showed a mosaic pattern, and had further discussion. The following is a brief summary of discussion points.

B-D Working Group Business

- Maureen Connor suggested that the B-D Working Group (BDWG) request the opportunity to make a brief presentation in coordination with the Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) to the County Commissioner's conference in Great Falls in September. The Forest Counties Committee will also be meeting in conjunction with the conference.
 - The group decided this was a good idea; Tony Colter will contact Gordy Sanders of the MFRC to see if they'd be interested in this. Maureen will request a slot on the agenda.
- The group will renew efforts to talk with other county commissioners in counties adjacent to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF).
 - Dave Schulz reported that he met with the Jefferson and Beaverhead County commissioners and had positive discussions. Suggested inviting them to the September meeting.
- The group decided not to meet in August due to how busy everything is in the summer.

General Description of the Project Area and Restoration/Fish Key Watersheds

- Much of the lands in the Seymour-Deep Creek area were in private ownership (Louisiana Timber) until the 1970s/80s. This area was logged in the 1800s and early 1900s. Lakes were dammed up to enable transport of wood. The intent was to remove all timber and leave the land open for grazing.
- Leave strips were negotiated before best management practices were in place.
- A set of criteria were used to identify restoration watersheds across the BDNF based on need for restoration, then each district picked 3-4 to work on. As restoration watersheds are restored, they'll go off the list and new ones will be added based on condition. Criteria included: road density, mining activity, any monitoring information available regarding function or non-function of the stream, total maximum daily load (TMDL), etc.
- How is a watershed deemed restored? Answering that question has been a dilemma for the forest. Perhaps that's something the BDWG could help answer.

- Fish Key watersheds will not change - no more will be added
- Money for watershed restoration has shrunk – what was \$50 million is now \$12 million in the existing regional budget
- Current activities include Roadside salvage safety on Upper and Lower Dry Creek Rd, treating hazard trees around campgrounds and trailheads; upcoming projects include Mystic Lake and Main Byway

Draft Dichotomous Key for Actions in Fish Key Watersheds

- Jim Brammer handed out his draft dichotomous key/screen and walked the group through it. Questions and discussion:
 - How long is temporary? Jim Brammer used 2 years but this is a point of discussion amongst fish bios.
 - 80% of sediment issues happen when road is within 50 feet of a stream.
 - Jim Brammer offered to come to a BDWG meeting and talk through the key when more people are present.

Vegetation Issues

- Conifer encroachment into aspen
- Has money increased with Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR)? No – amount of money has not increased, but the agency has more flexibility and hopefully can realize some efficiencies. There is the danger that this increased flexibility could lead to larger programs sucking up smaller programs. For example, this year it was difficult to reserve money for weed treatments. Accountability under IRR is that the forest is still held to targets.
- Discussion about the importance of the weed issue to adjacent private landowners.
- Discussion about what a mosaic of lodgepole pine forest types would look like as we all looked over the valley.