

B-D Working Group (BDWG)
September 27, 2012
Location: Butte Public Library
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Present: Tony Colter, Chris Marchion, Maureen Connor, Jim Flynn, Chuck Mark, Paul Olson, Rick Sandru, Charlie O’Leary, Karen DiBari, Barb Cestero, Dick Owenby, Sam Samson, Shauna Brewer (note-taker)

Absent: Laurie Schmidt, Parke Scott, Dave Schulz

1. Welcome: Tony Colter welcomed everyone.
2. Meeting minutes from June meeting and July field trip approved: Jim Flynn moved, Paul Olson approved. Motion carried to approve the minutes. The following change was made, correction to Elissa Stamm’s name.
3. Public comment: No public comments.
4. Updates/Announcements
 - County Commissioners Conference – Maureen Connor reported that the BDWG was trying to get on the agenda of the September meeting of the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) and their Forest Counties Coalition. The agenda didn’t allow time for a presentation, so the new plan is to start working now to get on the February 13th agenda in Helena. The purpose of the presentation is informational and will help to lay foundation/introduce the BDWG. Maureen Connor will continue to work with Dave Schulz and Tony Colter to get it scheduled.
 - Meeting with Commissioners and others – Tony Colter has met with the Powell Commissioners; Maureen Connor has talked to Powell and Granite Commissioners; Dave Schulz has met with Beaverhead and Madison Commissioners about the BDWG. The group would still like to do personal outreach to the Jefferson, Anaconda, Butte/Silver Bow counties. Water is an interface with Butte/Silver Bow. Recreation is a good interface with Anaconda. As a reminder, the “introduction to the BDWG” letter signed by Dave Schulz and Tony Colter went to each individual Commissioner.
 - Charlie O’Leary will explore setting up meetings with department heads and commissioners in Butte. Charlie suggested waiting until after the 1st of the year.
 - Tony Colter suggested making it a BDWG practice to touch base with the counties at least once a year.
 - The topic will be put on the November or December agenda. Karen DiBari will put a list together of all the Commissioners so the group can methodically make a plan for contact.
 - Dave Myers is on an assignment to Washington DC. He is acting as Leslie Weldon’s Chief of Staff, and should be coming back in mid-November.
 - The new District Ranger for Butte and Jefferson Districts, named Dave Sabo, began work in mid-August. He was previously a District Ranger in Region 6 on

the Fremont-Winema Forest's Chemult District. He worked in timber and minerals on the Salmon Challis for many years.

- Karen DiBari reported that the introduction letter about BDWG was sent out to the Native Ecosystems Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, and Western Watersheds.

5. Discussion of Field Trip

- Maureen Connor brought up the size of the landscape and was surprised at the fairly small project size the Forest Service uses. Five acres is a small treatment area in a large landscape.
- Tony Colter- There is a lot of internal conflict within the Forest Service on scale. Also a lot of decisions are being made on projects that affect scale before the analysis is complete. There is a general feeling that things need to happen on a bigger scale than is currently being done. Perhaps the BDWG can address that issue.
- Chuck Mark - The benchmark is generally treatment of 15% of the watershed.
- Chris Marchion - A question is what the market looks like and how is it compatible with a larger treatment.
- Tony Colter - Thinks the market is there.
- Chuck Mark - The scale in lodgepole is big. The agency has been doing small scale projects in order to reduce analysis challenges. The Boulder project is huge (167,000 acre project area, 25,000 acres of treatment). There is no other Forest in the Region that has proposed anything like that in a long time. The agency is looking for a mix of projects, some small, some medium, some large.
- Sam Samson – The road system observed on the field trip was very confusing. He suggested that next time the field trip should include more walking and less driving. Raised concerns about weeds, erosion and heavy use by machines.
- Paul Olson – We ran out of time on the field trip. There are a lot of roads that are no longer useable that have been decommissioned, yet still show on the maps.
- Barb Cestero - While the vista may look all the same, when you are down walking through the woods, it isn't all the same. There is probably a lot more aspen out there than we got a sense of.
- General discussion about the agency's process to "ground truth" road maps with what is out there and usable. Chuck Mark advised that the BDNF is working on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM) done on the Dillon, Wisdom and Wise River Districts. When the MVUM comes out it will only show designated routes.
- Discussion about how to incorporate travel management issues into the group's consideration of lodgepole pine and fish key watersheds.

6. Lodgepole Pine Committee

- Tony Colter, Barb Cestero and Chuck Mark met to figure out how to tackle the question of how to address resilience/restoration in a lodgepole pine type ecosystem. They have come up with a proposal to see if they can develop a good set of guidelines, a way to address those questions with lodgepole pine. The suggested steps are as follows, using the Big Hole as a first target area to develop

a methodology with regard to that could be replicated in other landscapes on the forest. The intent is to work forest-wide.

- Draft a document of the agreed-upon understandings of the lodgepole pine ecosystem. The document can serve as a framework of what we know and understand about lodgepole on the BDNF. (Lodgepole Pine Committee)
 - Identify the human and ecological values at risk. (BDWG/ BDNF)
 - Map these values. (BDNF staff)
 - Looking at the fire history, assess how much at risk those values would be. (BDNF/ BDWG)
 - Identify tools/treatments to mitigate those risks and formulate recommendations. (BDWG)
- Discussion: We are going to have fires whether we like it or not. What are the values at risk? What are the tools? How can fire be used as a tool? And what is that going to look like in terms of timber harvest? Social/economic impacts?
 - Specific questions/comments:
 - Charlie O’Leary – What happens to a fishery when a major fire takes out a watershed, and what are the long term effects?
 - Sam Samson – Interested in reducing the risk for huge devastating fires.
 - Barb Cestero - The right question is not how you fire proof the forest but how you build resilient communities instead. What are those values that we need to make resilient to those fires and how do we make those?
 - Each person around the table weighed in on their thoughts regarding the plan to follow the steps listed above.
 - Unanimous agreement to move ahead with this approach. The committee’s next steps are to:
 - Attach a timeline to the five steps.
 - Begin work on the first two steps.
 - Paul Olson expressed interest in being on the committee. The committee will meet one or two times between now and the next full group meeting.
 - Resource documents: 1990 Forest Service publication: The Management of Lodgepole in Region One; a community of experts in the Region looked at the problem and identified key issues. One of the issues was prescribed natural fire as playing an important role. Have to accommodate both low intensity and stand replacement crown fires. Article acknowledges scale.

7. Fish Key Watershed Issues

- At the field trip Jim Brammer led the group through a “decision-making” document he drafted called “Guide to Determine Compliance with 2009 Forest Plan When Implementing Management Actions in Fish Key Watersheds”.
- He offered to come to a BDWG meeting to have a broader discussion with the group.
- Why this document and discussion is important: there is general language in the forest plan regarding fish key watersheds but no interpretation as to what it means. What activities would maintain or improve conditions in a fish key watershed?
- Discussion:

- Has a similar tool has been developed by Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Trout Unlimited or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service? Answer: no.
 - Jim Flynn thinks the other biologists would appreciate this document because it's something they could have a common discussion around.
 - How the BDWG could add to this document:
 - Are all the values that should be in the document represented?
 - Run it through each respective constituency's traplines and get their thoughts and questions.
 - Next steps:
 - Tony Colter suggests everyone read through the document, email a list of questions to Karen DiBari to forward to Jim Brammer, and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting.
 - Karen DiBari will invite Jim Brammer to attend the next meeting and will check with him to see if he's comfortable with people sharing the document beyond this group at this point.
 - Suggestions for Jim Brammer:
 - There is no number 14 in the key.
 - Could use a list of definitions to go with it.
8. Litigation and Appeals and fire funding update – Chuck Mark
- The decision on Fleecer is in the judge's hands.
 - East Deerlodge – BDNF is hoping by mid-November to hear back from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the grizzly bear consultation. It could end up coming as late as January.
 - There are several ongoing Forest Plan lawsuits on travel management, one on the motorized use and the other non-motorized.
 - The Forest Service is into fire transfer. Congress did not appropriate enough money to manage the very active 2012 fire seas. The Forest Service had to borrow from other accounts. The BDNF transferred about \$200,000. Cumulatively across the national forest system, there are a lot of things that are not going to happen.
 - With regard to fire, the Forest Service policy has not changed, but implementation of it has. The Washington Office directed forests to get Regional Forester approval to let natural ignitions burn, and most fires were required to be managed. The top priority for the agency was to maintain safety (for our firefighters and the public) despite the budget shortfall.
9. Next Steps/Agenda Items
- Upcoming meeting dates: November 15 and December 13.
 - Meeting dates in January, February, and March will be reviewed at the November meeting.
 - Major agenda items for November: Lodgepole pine discussion and fish key watersheds.

10. Member announcements

- Barb Cestero - the Gravelly Landscape Group will meet again on October 1st. Looking at a commercial component to help fund other restoration activities in the Gravelleys.
- Maureen Connor – Granite County has an abandoned mines cleanup going on now on a creek, which might be completed before winter. The forest service has been great to work with on it. The creek is in a pipe now, and once the tailings are out then the creek will be channeled into the streambed.
- Charlie O’Leary – the Highland Mine has finally gotten a road route agreed upon.
- Karen DiBari – Will send out links to two webinars with topics that the BDWG members might be interested in: temporary roads and mixed severity forests.

11. Closing

- Meeting adjourned by Tony Colter.