

B-D Working Group (BDWG)
October 17, 2013, 2013
Location: Butte Silverbow Archives, Butte
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Members present: Pete Nelson (on the phone), Ciche Pitcher, Leonard Wortman, Barb Cestero, Tom Rice, Dave Schulz, Paul Olson, Sam Samson, Mark Thompson, Maureen Connor, Tony Colter

Forest Service Personnel: none present

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Absent: Chris Marchion, Parke Scott, Charlie O'Leary, Rick Sandru

Meeting objectives:

- To further narrow the focal area for a landscape level restoration proposal
- Identify information needs for the proposal

1. Welcome and minutes

Dave Schulz opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The September meeting minutes were approved without any changes.

2. Public Comment - There was no public comment.

3. Updates/ Announcements

- The Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation is holding meetings around the state about the Montana State Water Plan. If people are interested in learning more they can talk with Maureen Connor. The plan is to develop recommendations through gathering of input at the public meetings, then draft the plan over the coming winter. The plan will go to the Montana State Legislature in January 2015.
- Dave Schulz reported that the Eureka fire prompted a need for grading of roads to aid in suppression efforts. The Forest Service contracted with the county to get this work done.
- General discussion about the reduced capacity of the Forest Service due to sequestration and budget drains.

4. Lodgepole Pine Committee update

- Pete Nelson, Barb Cestero, and Paul Olson participated in a telephone call with the Montana Forest Restoration Committee's (MFRC) lodgepole pine committee. From their end, Barry Bollenbacher, Len Broberg, Jim Innes, Gordy Sanders and Melissa Hayes participated.
- Barb Cestero reported that it was a good conversation. They all compared notes about progress, and discussed the lodgepole pine principles/guidance that the BDWG had developed. There were no major concerns raised. Differences between westside and eastside forests were discussed (westside has a more contiguous canopy and more severe fire regime,

diversity of habitat types; eastside has more aspen...). Also, there was discussion about north and south differences. Perhaps this is more of a gradient versus a hard line.

- The MFRC is a bit apprehensive about signing off on the BDWG principles.
- The BDWG discussed moving ahead with using its principles and not waiting for the MFRC to work through its process.
- **NEXT STEPS:** Barb Cestero will ask Barry Bollenbacker and Mike Hillis to review the BDWG principles and offer feedback.

5. Steering Committee report on landscape scale proposal

- Debrief from September meeting – general discussion points
 - Interesting to see the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest’s (BDNF) project selection process and that it is restraint driven
 - Seeing overlays was helpful
 - Need to orient maps with cities, towns, major roads
 - Should the BDWG focus on opportunities at the broad level within the new context of landscape scale restoration, or go for “low hanging fruit” within the restraint context to make sure the first project the BDWG engages in is successful
 - Frustration that the BDWG has been asked where to prioritize work, and yet there’s a lack of information to help make that determination
- Sharing of landscape comparison
 - The Steering Committee (Pete Nelson, Tony Colter, Barb Cestero) met after the September meeting. ***Maureen Connor is joining the Steering Committee (SC).
 - At the September meeting in Whitehall, the group identified several potential projects. The SC decided in order to get at the landscape questions, it was important to review what other information is available about the 12 landscapes defined by the Forest Plan.
 - The SC removed Madison, Elkhorn (just a tiny portion of this landscape is on the BDNF), Boulder and Gravelly landscapes from consideration due to other projects/collaboratives already at work on them.
 - Pete Nelson then attempted to summarize what is known about the other landscapes across the BDNF. This process generated many more questions.
 - See attached ppt prepared by Pete Nelson.
 - Questions:
 - 40% across forest of lodgepole pine 120+ years old seems too high
 - What is historical age class distribution?
 - Need more detail on the “middle aged” stands of lodgepole and douglas fir
 - ✓ What is preferred age class distribution?
 - ✓ How is “historic” defined?
 - ✓ How did the aspen population sustain itself pre-settlement (probably helped to have more predators to reduce browsing impacts)?
 - Fire regime group and condition class
 - ✓ Where are the acres located in the different groups?
 - ✓ How would mountain pine beetle change the picture (the forest plan didn’t include beetle impacts)

- ✓ Would group distribution be the same under historic or more natural conditions?
 - ✓ Where are condition class 2 and 3 areas located?
 - ✓ Fire regime group III likely to be lodgepole; group I likely to be doug fir, dry
 - ✓ How were the groups defined?
 - Do the landscape assessments still accurately reflect conditions on the ground?
 - Question for Mike Hillis – explain assessment approach.
 - Big Hole (BH) and Clark Fork- Flints (CFF)
 - Lots of fish key watersheds in CFF
 - Big Hole – lodgepole salvage easier to emphasize
 - Why attention to these two areas?
 - Why do the CFF and BH have a greater diversity of treatments than the other landscapes?
 - *Historic Range of Variability*: departure in conditions from a particular time period (such as pre-settlement); *Natural Range of Variability*: allows for other factors to be considered in terms of projecting future conditions (insects, disease, climate change for example)
 - Municipal watersheds and fuels reduction seem to be great opportunities – they are too small to be the entire focus of a landscape proposal, but would be a part of the larger proposal
- Relevant research – Tony Colter shared information about several resources
 - Probabilistic assessment of wildfire hazard and municipal watersheds. *Natural Hazards* (2012) 64:707-728
- The BDWG formally agreed by consensus to remove the Gravelly, Madison, Boulder and Elkhorn landscapes from consideration for the focus of the landscape restoration proposal, based on the recommendation of the Steering Committee.
- **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Invite Mike Hillis to present at the next BDWG meeting (November) – Tony Colter will arrange
 - Karen DiBari will send around the ppt developed by Pete Nelson

6. Preparation for November public meeting

- The BDWG reviewed the draft flyer for the public meeting of the BDWG, scheduled for November 21 and had a number of concerns due to its reference to the forest plan and also the timing, since this will be the new forest supervisor's first week. The group decided:
 - Have a regular BDWG meeting in November with Mike Hillis presenting.
 - Change the public meeting to December 12th and design it to be more of an informational meeting with a presentation from the Montana DNRC about the forest action plan and an overview of the BDWG. The meeting will be scheduled from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
- The BDWG discussed a plan to introduce the group and its purpose to the new forest supervisor, Melany Glossa. Her start date is November 18th (*note: this was prior to the government shutdown – new start date is December 2nd*)
 - **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Karen DiBari will:

- ✓ Contact Joe Willauer about the new date and changes to the flyer.
- ✓ Contact Sean Steinbacher at DNRC to arrange a presentation.
- ✓ Draft an agenda for the Dec 12 meeting, then set up a Steering Committee call to discuss/finalize.
- ✓ Work with Joe Willauer to arrange technology needs (phone, computer) for the Dec 12 meeting.
- ✓ Contact Tim Garcia to try to set up a meeting for a small contingent of the BDWG to introduce the group to Melany Glossa.
- ✓ Draft a letter from Dave Schulz and Tony Colter, introducing the group to the new supervisor.

7. Mining Reclamation

Leonard Wortman provided an overview of small mine reclamation efforts in which legacy tailings are shipped to Golden Sunlight. The project has enabled lots of clean up to get done. To learn more about how the counties have been working with a broad coalition of conservation and other interests on the Mountain States Transmission Intertie, go to: <http://www.mstireviewproject.org/>

8. Litigation, Appeals and Fire Update – no update as no Forest Service staff in attendance

9. Member Announcements

- Maureen Connor suggested it would be useful to invite watershed councils from around the BDNF area to attend a BDWG meeting sometime this winter and give them an opportunity to share what they do
- Barb Cestero and Maureen Connor reported on the workshop they attended in Salmon, Idaho. Good networking opportunity, interesting projects discussed.
- Karen DiBari highlighted a new tool the National Forest Foundation developed called “A Roadmap for Collaboration Before, During and After the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Process”. Link is here: <http://www.nationalforests.org/conservel/learning/collaboration-and-nepa>

10. Closing

Upcoming meeting dates:

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| • Thursday, November 21, 2013 | • Thursday, June 19, 2014 |
| • December 12, 2013 (public meeting on Montana Forest Action Plan) | • Thursday, July 17, 2014 |
| • Thursday, January 23, 2014 | • Thursday, August 19, 2014 |
| • Thursday, February 20, 2014 | • Thursday, September 25, 2014 |
| • Thursday, March 20, 2014 | • Thursday, October 16, 2014 |
| • Thursday, April 17, 2014 | • Thursday, November 20, 2014 |
| • Thursday, May 15, 2014 | • Thursday, December 11, 2014 |