

B-D Working Group (BDWG) Meeting Minutes  
February 21, 2013  
Location: Butte Archives  
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Members present: Tony Colter, Chris Marchion, Charlie O’Leary, Barb Cestero, Parke Scott, Dave Schulz, Paul Olson.

Forest Service Personnel: Dave Myers, Peri Suenram, Anton Brennick, Anne Roberts, Shauna Brewer

Guests: Joe Willauer (Headwaters RC&D)

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Absent: Maureen Connor, Sam Samson, Rick Sandru

1. Welcome: Tony Colter welcomed everyone.
2. Meeting minutes from December meeting: Paul Olson moved to approve the minutes, Charlie O’Leary seconded the motion. Minutes were approved with no changes.
3. Public comment:
  - N/A
4. Updates/Announcements
  - Scot Shuler has been hired as the new District Ranger at Dillon.
5. Membership Committee
  - There is another opening, Dick Owenby has resigned.
  - Peter Nelson will be attending the March meeting, he was unable to attend this meeting.
  - Charlie O’Leary and Karen DiBari met and developed recommendations for the membership nominations process: *Ad hoc committee will bring names back to the full group for discussion, a list will be developed based on the interests needed at the table; a BDWG will contact each person to determine interest, explain the process and extend an invitation to attend a meeting; a letter will be sent to provide background information about the BDWG. If a potential new member is interested, the person will be invited to please send a letter and come to a meeting to introduce themselves, talk about their thoughts about the group and what they might bring to the group. Then the group decides via email whether to extend the invitation to become a member.*
  - The group voted thumbs up for the process.
  - Considerations:
    - ✓ Should invite more people than needed, because not everyone will say yes.
    - ✓ Recommendation to have a second motorized recreation person.
  - Who to invite? Group members discussed:
    - ✓ Jefferson County Commissioner Leonard Wortman: Dave Schulz will contact to determine interest and invite

- ✓ Beaverhead County Commissioner Tom Rice: Dave Schulz will contact to determine interest and invite
- ✓ Peter Nelson, Defenders of Wildlife (conservation): based on the decision in January, Barb Cestero already invited Peter to attend a meeting. He wasn't available in February. Barb will confirm his availability for March 21 and communicate the membership nominations process.
- ✓ Ciche Pitcher, Discovery Ski Area (permittee): Chris Marchion will contact to determine interest and invite
- ✓ Benny Finecum, Benny's Power Toys in Butte (motorized rec): Tony Colter will contact to determine interest and invite
- ✓ \*\*\*Group members are asked to forward (reply all) names of fishing outfitters/guides, particularly in the southern part of the forest and we'll go through the list at the next meeting.

*Next step: In addition to the outreach listed above by individual members, Karen will send a draft letter around via email for group comment.*

#### 6. Lodgepole Pine committee report and discussion

- Lodgepole Pine Ecology document is no longer a draft, it was approved at last meeting.
- Part 1 and Part 2 were approved on the Lodgepole Pine Restoration document at the last meeting – COMMENTS:
  - ✓ Page 1, item 2, second bullet...might want to insert something regarding maintaining mosaic, irregular pattern/shapes
  - ✓ Page 2, at top of the page, first bullet – could remove NEPA reference
  - ✓ Need to be clear about intending to use prescribed burning as a treatment strategy; some conservationists have hesitation about treating large landscapes (action: define “treatment”)
  - ✓ When the FS does large landscape scale NEPA is when we get in trouble with appeals and litigation; as we are trying to move further along we should experiment with some different ways of doing NEPA to see what works
  - ✓ Should talk about increasing species heterogeneity in restoration.
- ACTIONS: Members are asked to share the draft documents with their constituencies (Montana Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited were specifically mentioned)
- Third document is the desired condition and resilience definition.
  - ✓ ACTION: Vet this document amongst constituencies as well. The Wilderness Society and Montana Wilderness Association were specifically mentioned.
  - ✓ Mention sage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet
  - ✓ Add alpine larch to the last bullet

#### Next steps:

- *If know of somebody who might have interest in any of the documents, ask them to weigh in.*
- *Barb will make the changes based on today's comments and will email out a new version.*
- *Will get final approval next meeting after receiving all the comments. Then will go to MFRC after this group approves to add it as an appendix.*

#### 7. Boulder Project presentation and discussion

- This project started with a site-specific collaborative process. This is the project, if the group so chooses, that is early enough in development for the group to get involved with.
- Anton Brennick reviewed the purpose and need.
- Project area is 143,000 acres. Stands run anywhere from 40-70% mortality. Most of the stands are 3-8" in diameter. Mortality is over 30% in 3 and 4" diameter material.
- Propose to reduce densities and stocking by about 1/2 in treatment area.
- Looking at introducing prescribed fire (multiple methods) on about 4500 acres. May look at some treatment with masticator.
- Seral means it is generally the first species to colonize a site following disturbance.
- An indirect benefit of the project may be whitebark pine coming in. Currently there is a minimal amount of whitebark (1-2%).
- All proposed commercial activities are in the suitable timber base. There is no suitable timber base located in inventoried roadless or fish key watersheds. These areas have a lot of the resource conflicts eliminated right off the bat.
- Conditions are looking better for aspen than it has in a while, dispersed ungulate grazing and less shading due to lodgepole mortality.
- Potential for aspen is based on historic presence of aspen on the landscape.
- Water table levels are way up due to dead trees (loss of pump system).
- Treatments will have beneficial and indirect effects on wildlife. Most aspen work is driven by wildlife.
- Looking at a NEPA decision, ideally in 2014. Looking at potentially a 5 year contract for commercial activities. Potentially 15 years for the prescribed fire activities, depends on burn windows and availability of resources. If ideal prescribed fire conditions exist, looking at 4-7 years to complete.
- The prescribed fire units are designed to act as a buffer to a wildfire burning into Boulder.
- Speculate the non-commercial activities will take up to 15 years.
- Proposed group process: review the Boulder project in the context of the lodgepole documents and the Montana Forest Restoration Principles to evaluate the project, identify further questions, and determine group support. Discussion points:
  - ✓ Group expressed interest in post and pole use in biomass.
  - ✓ Purpose and Need doesn't describe wildlife benefits and only emphasizes timber. Response from Forest Service – the broader the purpose and need statement, the larger the array of alternatives and the more difficult the analysis
  - ✓ Concern is that a collaborative group like this is predicated on everyone seeing their interest being met
  - ✓ Dave Myers – would like to see the purpose and need for restoration be equally apparent to the public to the purpose and need for lodgepole treatment. It's not popping out to the public.
  - ✓ Discussion about the challenge of NEPA interpretation and how it interferes with defining the current condition of a landscape, identifying problems X, Y, Z, showing in the purpose and need why improvement is needed
  - ✓ Group discussed the need to take some risks in discussing these issues.
  - ✓ Timing very good for the group to make recommendations; hoping to have the draft EIS out this fall.
- *Next Steps*

- *Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest will provide project maps to the group.*
  - *Set up a field trip to the site. After the middle part of June would be a good time, snow should be gone.*
  - *Chris, Paul, Tony, Barb, Sam are interested in forming the subcommittee. Have a conversation in how the lodgepole documents and the MFRC principles apply. Start the process of evaluating it against them. They will meet at 10 a.m. at the Butte District Office on March 21 (the morning of the next BDWG meeting).*
8. Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest niche – Dave Myers described the niche and asked for input
- Each forest in the system is tasked with developing a niche related to accelerated restoration. The concept is to target priority areas for resource (budget) use.
  - Dave Myers invited feedback from the collaborative regarding the niche for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge.
  - The group reviewed the niche statement from the B-D forest plan
  - Important role of the BDNF is headwaters (294 watersheds on the B-D)
    - ✓ What other major components should be considered for the forest’s niche? Group comments:
    - ✓ The B-D is the piece that keeps the Northern Rockies intact by connecting the greater Yellowstone to the Continental Divide and Idaho. That makes this forest unique.
    - ✓ Connectivity for fish and wildlife
    - ✓ Fish and wildlife supports a huge economy
    - ✓ The large amount of dead and dying lodgepole forest makes this forest unique, understanding it happens roughly every 100 years. With the huge amount of dead and dying trees and the major values at risk, is this something we want to happen again? Or are we just accepting it’s going to happen every 100 years or so?
    - ✓ There’s also a lot of rangeland and open spaces in high elevation areas.
    - ✓ In the short term we are looking at a lot of fire and a lot of loss. In the long term, looking at a strategy to get age diversity back in.
    - ✓ The B-D is such a diverse and useable forest: species, recreational opportunities. The forest is very usable for the average person.
    - ✓ Recreation is key to this forest. People move here for recreation. There is no industry here, it’s the variety of recreation opportunities that brings people.
    - ✓ Also need to recognize that the most dynamic force that influences all of those things is fire. Fire can change the landscape completely out of our control.
  - *Next Steps*
    - *Send any additional thoughts/comments to Dave Myers.*
    - *Dave Myers will provide a timeline for groups input on where the B-D is going for the next 5 years, pipeline work, etc.*
9. Litigation and Appeals Update
- Have 4 active litigations. Trapper Creek fuels project is the latest. We are responding to the complaint now, due next week.
  - Waiting in court for decisions on 2 of them.

- Completed supplemental EIS on winter motorized use, filed in November. Just finished briefing on the motion to enforce a remand filed by Wildlands CPR.

#### 10. Next Steps/Agenda Items

- Lodgepole pine document approval
- Meeting dates: March 21, no meeting in April, May 23, June 13 will be the field trip to the Boulder project, July 24, August 15.
- The next meeting agenda items:
  - ✓ Boulder committee report
  - ✓ Revisit the lodgepole pine documents, talk about any new feedback
  - ✓ Membership introductions of new folks, moving forward if opportunity
  - ✓ Presentation from Dave Myers for schedule of integrated restoration projects for the coming 5 years.

#### 11. Member announcements

- None

#### 12. Closing

- Meeting adjourned by Dave Schulz