

Panhandle Forest Collaborative

7/17/13 meeting minutes

Fernan Office, Coeur d'Alene

11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Present

Members: Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Bob Boeh, Laura Wolf, Mike Petersen, Phil Hough, Brad Smith, Glen Bailey, Bonner County Commissioner

Partners: Karen Roetter and Jake Derringer (Senator Crapo's office), Sid Smith and Luke Hilcup (Senator Risch's office), Aaron Calkins and Nick Johnson (Congressman Raul Labrador's office)

Guests: Cliff Anderson, Kootenai County Resource Committee;

Forest Service (field trip): Chad Hudson, Jason Jerman (silviculturist), Michael Jow (forester), Jeannie White (planning/operations)

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Introductions and Meeting Minutes

All those present introduced themselves. Liz Johnson-Gebhardt provided a quick overview of the Panhandle Forest Collaborative's purpose and structure. The group approved the 5/21/13 minutes with no changes.

Business Items

All of the changes agreed to in May have been incorporated into the protocols. The decision matrix that expands upon what consensus means is now in the current version of the protocols that was circulated prior to the meeting, and will be on the agenda for approval in September.

The September 25 meeting will be held in Sandpoint. Karen DiBari will coordinate with Erick Walker in the hope that the meeting can be held at the Sandpoint District Office.

Declaration of Cooperation Statements

The group expressed support for members and partners preparing declaration of cooperation statements, modeled after the Harney County Restoration Collaborative example. The statements should address:

1. A commitment to adhere to the protocols
2. Expression of commitment to participate in good faith in the collaborative process
3. What the organization/individual brings to the collaborative table

The deadline for developing cooperation statements is September 15th. Please submit them to Karen DiBari (kdibari@nationalforests.org) and she will compile and distribute them prior to the September 25 meeting. The Harney County Restoration Collaborative packet offers good guidance on how the different members and partners in that group approached this.

Recreation Committee

The travel plan for the North Zone of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest is still on hold due to lack of funds. There is currently no timeline for action.

Treasured Landscapes

Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness has completed volunteer trainings and people have been out surveying weeds and conducting whitebark pine surveys in the Lightning Creek drainage. A volunteer workday to improve the Morris Creek trail is planned for September 28th, which is also National Public Lands Day.

A Lightning Creek Local Coordinating Council meeting will be scheduled the morning of September 25, before the afternoon PFC meeting.

Forest Projects Committee

The Forest Projects Committee has been working with the Coeur d'Alene River District to learn about the Bottom Canyon project, in anticipation of the PFC developing an alternative. Mike and Liz passed out copies of notes regarding preliminary recommendations regarding the project. One major suggestion is to increase the scope of analysis to cover a larger area for efficiency's sake and to potentially treat more acres.

Chad Hudson joined the meeting at this point and explained that the intent for the field trip is to look at two stands that they had decided against including in the areas slated for treatment, and to discuss the reasons why. The stands are located on the southern section of the project area.

The meeting adjourned for the field trip.

Field Trip

Participants included: Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Bob Boeh, Laura Wolf, Mike Petersen, Phil Hough, Brad Smith, Glen Bailey, Karen DiBari, Chad Hudson, Jason Jerman (silviculturist), Michael Jow (forester), Jeannie White (planning/operations)

The first stop on the field trip was a location above the road which was clear cut in 1968 and then regenerated naturally. The trees are 40-60 years old. The area is not very productive due to root

rot; is probably at 50% of the productivity it had in the past when white pine dominated. The Forest Service did not include the site in its target for treatment because 1) it doesn't meet the culmination of mean annual increment (95% of maximum annual rate of volume increase; this commonly occurs at 90 – 100 years of vegetation age on the IPNF), and it would require a very heavy hand in treatment (mechanical removal and fire). Other types of treatments are possible but the trajectory of the site is really out of whack. Thinning of the area would likely exacerbate the situation. Species conversion is what is likely required.

The Forest Service Manual requires that even-aged stands shall meet the culmination of mean annual increment prior to regeneration harvest unless it is in the urban interface or is not trending toward desired conditions (which on the IPNF are a restoration of the white pine forest).

The second stop was a location below the road which also has a lot of root rot. Much of the discussion was centered around whether treatment could be deferred. Jason (silviculturist) said that the more time spent on the ground, the more he has questioned whether waiting for treatment is a good idea.

Discussion of how fewer entries benefit wildlife; project includes pulling some roads. Chad Hudson said in order to determine whether other areas should be treated, stand exams are needed and the district is short on funds for more. They are currently working to do stand exams on the areas targeted already for treatment, plus botany and archaeological surveys are being done right now in those target units. The botany survey season is about to end because plants will start to fade out in August. Wildlife and hydrological assessments are also being done across the whole area, not just specific to units targeted for treatment.

Chad said that doing more analysis in Bottom Canyon now could help access NRDA funds (\$100 million in mitigation funds for mining impacts in the Coeur d'Alene Basin) for treatments.

If the PFC Forest Projects Committee continues to work collaboratively and find consensus on recommendations, and perhaps bring resources to the table to help get the work done, then perhaps the timelines could be extended for alternative development and survey work in the field.

Next steps:

- 1) Bob Boeh/Idaho Forest Group is contracting with Northwest Management to review the larger Bottom Canyon project area to identify preliminary prescriptions and the transportation system needed to support them. The report produced will help the PFC in developing an alternative, and will help in determining a) what areas that aren't currently

under FS analysis merit a stand exam/closer look; and b) in what areas can treatment be deferred, and in what areas should treatment be done sooner. This report is expected to be done August 16th or so.

- 2) The PFC Forest Projects Cmte is planning to meet August 21 or 22 to review the Northwest Management report and discuss preliminary recommendations.
- 3) Working to schedule a meeting between Chad and his staff and the Forest Projects Committee for some time in the week of August 26th in the Fernan office.
- 4) Bob Boeh has talked with Regional Forester Faye Kruegger about potentially pooling funds from interested bidders to help the Forest Service get work done that they currently lack capacity for (stand exams, field work, potentially NEPA analysis). Faye is meeting with Washington Office FS staff later this month and discussions will continue about what this might look like. Chad Hudson reported that he has requested end of year funds for work on this project, but that funding is up in the air currently and could change with fire season needs.