

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
July 24, 2013, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Butte-Silverbow Archives
Meeting Minutes

Present: Dave Schulz, Chris Marchion, Tony Colter, Barb Cestero, Leonard Wortman, Rick Sandru, Ciche Pitcher, Paul Olson, Tom Rice, Maureen Connor, Mark Thompson, Joe Willauer

Forest Service: Tim Garcia, Dave Myers, Patty Bates, Dave Sabo (last hour)

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Meeting opened by Dave Schulz

Each person introduced him/herself. Then Dave Myers introduced Tim Garcia who will be the acting Forest Supervisor starting in August for 3 months. Dave Myers will be leaving July 26 to become the Forest Supervisor of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. He also introduced Patty Bates, Public Services Staff Officer (Recreation) for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF).

Minutes were approved (moved by Leonard Wortman, seconded by Tony Colter) unanimously.

Membership: Mark Thompson introduced himself. He has been involved in motorized recreation for a long time in this area; moved away but then moved back in 2007; does a lot of personal recreation and is a member of Montana Trail Vehicle Riders, but is not an officer. Mark works for the Golden Sunlight Mine; is a Montana Tech graduate and environmental engineer, and is vice president of Montana Mining Association.

Joe Willauer reviewed his background for the group. He is resident of the Ruby Valley, widely known amongst fishing guides; also works for the Headwaters RC&D (Natural Resources Officer), which is the B-D Working Group's fiscal agent.

Both were approved for membership unanimously.

Lodgepole Pine Committee

- Pete Nelson sent comments and edits but is unable to be here at the meeting today. Barb Cestero invited others to send her any comments on the documents.
- The Montana Forest Restoration Committee has put together a committee to talk about lodgepole pine. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) still interested in getting their feedback. Tony Colter and Barb Cestero will reach out to the committee members to see how the two different discussions could be merged. The group discussed the desire to finalize the documents within the next couple of months.

- The Lodgepole Committee participated in a teleconference with the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative (CBBC)– about 25 people participated. Barb, Tony and Pete presented the BDWG lodgepole documents; the Colorado folks were very interested in and impressed by the BDWG work. The Lodgepole Committee will continue to talk with the Colorado folks
- **Next Steps:** Paul Olson will reach out to Bruce Farling at Trout Unlimited and Chris Marchion will reach out to the Montana Wildlife Federation.
- **Next Steps:** Karen DiBari will send the lodgepole documents to Mark Thompson.

Presentation by Peter Kolb, PhD: “Wilderness, Grizzlies, Loggers and other Trouble-makers”

Peter F. Kolb is the Montana State University Extension Forestry Specialist and an Associate Professor of Forest Ecology & Management, housed at the University of Montana in the Department of Forest Management. For the past 23 years he has studied forest ecosystem function and dynamics with specific interest in the role of disturbance processes across Idaho and Montana. Specific research emphasis have included the effects of heat, water stress and grass competition on conifer seedling establishment, the role of soil characteristics, forest pests, pathogens and wildfire on forest species and succession dynamics, the impacts of forest thinning on root diseases, woody debris treatments and their effects on forest and range restoration, cultural practices to enhance woody debris decomposition, and plant community recovery following wildfires and salvage logging.

(These are limited notes from his presentation.)

- Relative humidity greatly affects tree species in the central and northern Rockies. Any time forests in our area exceed 94 degrees, they stop generating carbon dioxide
- Lodgepole pine is a pioneer species – not designed to persist in any particular area; we have a lodgepole pine habitat type in central MT and Yellowstone as a result of infrequent high severity fire – every 50 to 300 years, they burn and fires are stand-replacing; Lodgepole pine habitat types in central Montana are there by default because fire has removed other species that could live there (like subalpine fir)
- Climate was cool and wet between 1944-1979 due to Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO). Now we’ve had a period of hot/dry. Climate is the driver behind wildfires because it dries out the vegetation. Lodgepole pine is designed to survive flash fire, however higher intensity fires (100 hour and 1,000 hour fuels) burn the seed cones and lodgepole can’t survive.
- Montana likely has more forested lands now than ever before in history.
- Conservation (to keep functional) vs. restoration (to return to a certain condition)
- Dr. Kolb argues that restoration to conditions 200 years ago is to a different climatic norm than is current today. The climate interacting with human influences, etc. 200 years ago was cooler and wetter than currently. Climate has changed and been variable over history.
- We are currently in a warming trend; spring is earlier, summers are hotter and drier, mountain pine beetle not dying out in the winter; experiencing uncharacteristic fire behavior; in lodgepole

pine systems we may start seeing frequent stand replacing fires, which will reduce lodgepole on the landscape

- Clearcuts don't burn because they have higher live fuel moisture (hold snow)
- Suggests patch cutting as a tool to restore landscape forest diversity and reduce the risks of "runaway" stand-replacing wildfires
- Cited Kootenai NF as an example of a more resilient forest, partly due to patchy clearcuts that created a mosaic
- In Montana, young stands at the mid to high elevation stands are the most fire resistant (especially w/low fuel loading)

Boulder Project

Field Trip Review - Comments from the group:

- Anton Brennick and the other FS staff did a great job explaining the rationale behind the project and explaining the planning process.
- Wish the group could have seen more of the project area (rainy day didn't help)
- Interested in seeing the fire applications on the project

What's next for the Boulder Project:

- ID Team is working through the analysis currently
- Perhaps the BDWG could look back in 2-3 years to determine lessons, etc. on questions like:
 - How long did it take to get to implementation?
 - Is size of project an issue – recommendations?
 - Who participated in the collaborative at the project level and who submitted objections
- Forest Service hopes the BDWG will continue to keep tabs on this; in January the draft EIS will come out (under new objection process)
- (After the meeting, Dave Sabo provided a letter in response to the one submitted by the BDWG regarding the project; Karen DiBari will distribute to the BDWG.)

Recreation Presentation – Patty Bates

- BDNF is where 1/3 of the elk are taken in the state
- Forest plan niche spoke to recreation
- BDNF did a recreation facility analysis several years ago; based on that analysis of where public is using recreational sites, several campgrounds/facilities are now slated for decommissioning because of low use
- Every five years, the BDNF does a national visitor use monitoring effort to determine why people visit the forest; in 2010, 692,000 visitors
 - Most of visitors from Montana, from Silverbow, Beaverhead and Deerlodge counties
 - 1/3 of visits are for hunting and hiking; 10% for camping

- 40% of funds in trails budget are dedicated to trail improvements
- Do around 10 major construction projects each year; ½ motorized and ½ non-motorized
- BDNF is the last remaining forest in the region to complete the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Recreation budget is down this year; generally around \$1,000,000 per year; also receives funds from fees
- Emerging issues
 - Hazard trees – lots of work done on this recently to remove beetle-kill
 - Aging improvements – campgrounds built in the 1960s and need updating to respond to changing population of camping public; also need accessible campgrounds and other facilities
 - Changing recreational uses; aging population
 - Work force flexibility
 - Sustainable recreation
- Travel management – around 4,500 miles of road on this forest
 - 2001 tri-state off highway vehicle (OHV) decision restricted motorized use to existing trails
 - Many site-specific decisions (roads closed, converted to trails, opened)
 - 2009 – Revised Forest Plan (now have winter and summer non-motorized and recommended wilderness)
 - 2010 Forest Supervisor record of decision (ROD II) excluded motorized use in summer and winter non-motorized designated areas, excluded motorized and mechanized (mountain bikes) use in recommended wilderness; and designated motorized travel routes
 - 55% of Forest open to summer motorized
 - 5,600 miles of road open
 - National Travel Management Rule (2005) requires the forest to designate routes for motorized use by season of use and type of vehicle and displayed on a motor vehicle use map; this has been done on Madison District
 - Currently completing travel analysis for three districts
 - Whenever doing a project, the BDNF will look at travel management decisions in the project area (like Boulder); it takes about a month to do travel planning on a project, as long as you have everyone present and involved who needs to be

Steering Committee Recommendations

- Tony Colter, Barb Cestero, and Karen DiBari met
- Recommend developing a proposal modeled after the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program at a landscape level
- Would have a clear timeline
- Work by committee and full group would approve it
 - Big Hole Watershed

- BDNF as a whole
- Would have a focus on “front-loading” project development at the landscape level (NFMA stage, as referred to by the Forest Service)

Group decided to discuss this further and make a decision at the August meeting. Karen DiBari will draft a short description of the recommended approach to help lay out the framework.

Litigation Report

Litigation – court ruled in the BDNF forest plan with regard to a complaint about procedures and how alternatives developed; very important decision; won both lawsuits against the Forest on the Forest Plan

Agenda items for the next meeting:

- Landscape proposal
 - Scale
 - Framework of proposals
 - Potential opportunities
 - Interaction with the FS
 - Process for work
- Someone at the Regional Office is doing fire modeling on the BDNF re: mountain pine beetle (focus on 10 mile watershed out of Helena primarily) – Karen DiBari will find out who this is
- Gene DeGayner – Forest Niche and CFLRP – Karen DiBari will invite Gene to the next meeting

Member announcements/questions:

Patty Bates reported that Title II RAC funds have been dedicated; sequester is covered now due to reductions in Title I and III

September meeting date: September 12th, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Group members said goodbye to Dave Myers and thanked him for his open approach to the BDWG while supervisor of the BDNF. Everyone wished him well in California.

Meeting adjourned by Dave Schulz.