

B-D Working Group (BDWG) Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2014

Location: Butte Silverbow Archives, Butte

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Dave Schulz, Barb Cestero, Tony Colter, Paul Olson, Chris Marchion, Mark Thompson, Rick Sandru, Sam Samson, Leonard Wortman, Maureen Connor, Tom Rice, Peter Nelson

Guests: Duane Johnson, Cindy Kromm

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Forest Service: Melany Glossa, Shauna Brewer

Welcome and approve minutes

- The November minutes had a spelling error needing correction. Leonard Wortman moved to approve the November and December minutes, Paul Olson seconded. All approved.

Public comment

- None.

Updates/Announcements

- Duane Johnson spoke to the group regarding the mineral business (DJ Inc.) he and Cindy Kromm operate in Little Basin Creek. They have a certified 70 acre tree farm and logged it several years ago to remove the dead lodgepole and Engelmann Spruce. There is a need to address the dead and dying trees on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. Believes education is a way to help solve some of the problems. They have put together a booklet of educational materials to help address the need for mineral/mining education in the schools. Their emphasis today is on getting the lodgepole logged off the forest. Ryan Connor is looking into manufacture of extruded fuel logs out of material not suitable for timber and lumber. Volunteer activity could be very important as well. See attached list of articles prepared by Duane and Cindy.

Lodgepole Pine Committee update

- The Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) had a meeting in November. Barb Cestero is waiting to hear back the details from their November meeting.

- The MFRC draft was pretty consistent with what we have done; it didn't get as far down into the specifics.
- That group only meets twice a year and are still struggling to come to any conclusion on lodgepole.
- We have to go forward on our own with the direction we need to go.

Landscape Proposal

- The Steering Committee (Tony Colter, Barb Cestero, Maureen Connor and Pete Nelson) met with Regional Forester, Faye Krueger. (Dave Schulz was not able to make it due to weather.) They talked about the frustrations with integrated approach to large landscape projects (like Boulder). There is some unanimity on the part of the Regional Forester and Forest Supervisor. Both are supportive of the group.
- The Steering Committee also continued its work to identify a landscape on which to focus a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration proposal (CFLRP) proposal around. Being awarded CFLRP funding is not the measure of success; putting together an integrated landscape restoration plan and having it ready in case opportunities arise – and creating opportunities with it – is the intent.
- met with Mike Hillis (ERG Consulting) to talk about an initial analysis they did pro bono, and to explore different approaches to prioritizing which landscape should be the group's focus.
- The top four landscapes (in terms of opportunities) are the Upper Clark Fork, Clark Fork/Flints, Upper Rock Creek and the Big Hole. They are landscapes which are defined in the Forest Plan.
- Priorities/opportunities were looked at in terms of departures on the forest in vegetation. Where are these acres that are out of whack in terms of size class, age class, types and distribution? There are many acres that are candidates for restorative action based on departure information. Really looking for more information regarding number of acres within those landscapes, etc. That will help determine priorities on which are chosen for restoration opportunity. What other restoration opportunities are there in these other landscapes?
- The Steering Committee identified the following data needs to see what the Forest Service can provide and then see what would be needed to get from ERG. The six key informational needs identified:
 - Vegetation types and distribution, within our candidate landscapes, compared to natural/historic range of variation. (The Forest Plan FEIS provides information on forest wide vegetation composition and relationship to historic estimates forest wide, but does not present this information spatially by landscape.)
 - Age class distribution, within our candidate landscapes, compared to N/HRV. (The Forest Plan FEIS provides information on age class distribution for

lodgepole and Douglas fir forest wide, but does not present this information spatially by landscape, nor does it allow for an analysis of departure from historic conditions at the landscape scale.)

- Size class distribution by forest type within our candidate landscapes. (The Forest Plan FEIS provides information on size class distribution compared to N/HRV, but not by forest type, and does not present the information spatially by landscape.)
- Other available information related to current condition of “resiliency” including patch size and distribution, stand density, and understory conditions.
- Fire regime group (FRG) distribution and condition class (FRCC) within our candidate landscapes. (The Forest Plan FEIS provides forest wide acreage information on FRG and FRCC but does not present the information spatially by landscape.)
- Other significant restoration needs on these landscapes (also depicted spatially as practical) – road densities in excess of the Forest Plan desired density, insects & disease, impaired water quality, degraded watershed function.
- What started all of this was the lodgepole pine committee looking at the BDNF as a 3 million acre forest with even aged dead and dying lodgepole. Trying to determine if that is within the natural range of historic or is that out of whack. How do we treat that landscape so it doesn’t happen again? Long term, how do we want these landscapes to look so we don’t have the same bug problem in the future?
- The first step is to hear back from the FS about what they can provide and in what timeframe. Based on that information, the BDWG can then evaluate what ERG may provide to fill those gaps and what the cost would be. There are pieces that can be obtained quickly; there are pieces that will take a fair amount of time and/or money.
- Forest Service data:
 - Forest Plan; pulling layers out will give gross numbers. Will take work to get those layers represented spatially on a map.
 - Some of the information from the Montana database on insect and disease may be good.
 - The FS has landscape assessments that have been done for all of these areas, but some are old.
 - Also have rapid assessments.
 - To get down to the unit level detail it will take a fair amount of money.
- Social values may be another consideration in looking at these landscapes as well.
- Melany Glossa - many of the projects that have been successful in getting CLFRP money were projects that were already being done and they grouped them together and sent them in for implementation. The monies toward projects that have already been through the EA can help show progress in landscapes and watershed condition class faster. Can show a change and effect on the landscape. Melany wants this group to be successful in implementing projects. She is hopeful that there is an opportunity when a landscape that is chosen to move the watershed from one condition class to another.

- Suggestion from the BDNF for the group to consider the Selway Meadows, on the edge of the Big Hole landscape. It is relatively low cost in terms of NEPA analysis. It's on the edge of the Big Hole landscape, called Selway Meadows.
- Boulder River Project has been suspended in its current form. The BDWG could engage on this and “repackage” it.

NEXT STEPS for Potential Project Research:

- Presentation about Selway Meadows “plus” at next meeting.
 - What other opportunities exist? Could the current project be expanded out so that it is more inclusive of other values in the landscape?
 - Committee will work with BDNF between now and next meeting to develop presentation (time frame, capacity, next steps)
 - Tom Rice, Chris Marchion, Paul Olson, Mark Thompson on committee – Jim Brammer, Scot Shuler (DR) – Tom Rice will take charge.
- Boulder - use the available data and start with it as a “blank canvas” to build a proposal around.
 - Committee work with Anton Brennick and Dave Sabo to bring information back to next meeting (time frame, capacity, next steps)
 - Leonard Wortman, Sam Samson, Tony Colter, Mark Thompson on committee – Leonard will take charge.
- Four landscapes narrowing
 - Barb and Melany will talk about information availability
 - Map with upcoming projects
 - Steering Committee to identify next steps

Litigation, Appeals and Fire Update

- No litigation update.
- Roadside VI salvage project was not appealed.

Member Announcements

- Thanks to Melany for her engagement with the group.
- Ken Harris (Madison District Ranger) is retiring the first week of March.

Closing

- Meeting adjourned by Dave Schulz.