

Panhandle Forest Collaborative
Meeting Minutes
Sandpoint DO
October 1, 2014

Present: Brad Smith, Mike Petersen, Paul Sieracki, Laura Wolf, Phil Hough, Glen Bailey, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Jeff Connolly, John Finney

Forest Service: Erick Walker

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Announcements and Minutes:

- The group unanimously approved the minutes from April 9, 2014. The Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) has not met as a full group since then, but the Forest Projects Committee had an active summer of field trips and committee meetings.
- Karen reminded the group of the upcoming “National Forest Management & Collaboration in the Interior Mountain West” workshop, scheduled for October 28-30, 2014 in Missoula.
- John reported on the upcoming Idaho State Snowmobile Association meeting, scheduled for October 31-November 1 at the Bonner County Fairgrounds. They are anticipating 300 participants form around the state.

Review of Protocols:

- Karen reminded the group of the PFC protocols and the expectation that each member will treat other members with respect and civility both in PFC meetings and outside of them.

Statements of Cooperation:

- The group reviewed the statements of cooperation and several members pointed out that their statements are missing. Karen will track them down and include them. Erick asked if Karen would send an example letter to him.
- The group is interested in asking for support statements from other partner groups, including the Idaho delegation and Kootenai, Coeur d’Alene and Kalispel Tribes.

Bottom Canyon Alternative:

- District staff have been excellent to work with (particularly Jason Jerman, silviculturist).

- The Forest Projects Committee has taken multiple field trips with the FS.
- On the last field trip, the group looked at Road 206, which is located at the bottom of very steep slopes with old growth. There is no clear solution to the sediment loading problem of the road because there's not an obvious place to run it out of the floodplain. The PFC would like to handle the road in a holistic manner. The PFC will try to address this road issue in scoping.
- The public scoping meeting is scheduled for October 22 at 5 p.m.

Jasper Mountain

- Erick Walker is Acting District Ranger for Priest Lake (as well as continuing in his role as DR for Sandpoint). He explained the 2014 Farm Bill nominations for landscape scale treatment areas impacted by insects and disease, and that Jasper Mountain is proposed for a categorical exclusion under the Farm Bill.
- Erick is the "Line Officer in Charge" of the project. There's been broad participation of members of the public so far, including a meeting, field tour, and 1 ½ day workshop (in which several PFC members participated). It's not clear if Erick will continue as the LOIC when Matt Davis returns from his detail.
- The FS doesn't want to limit the purpose and need only to insects and disease. Other issues being considered:
 - Transportation network (maintenance, understanding of who's responsible for which roads, standards)
 - Wildlife and aquatic opportunities
 - Local economic development
- Dave Cobb is the silviculturist and Matt Butler is the Fire Management Officer working on the project.
- The FS originally planned to have a proposed action by the end of September, but that has been delayed 3-4 weeks. Scoping with a proposed action can be expected to come out late October/early November. They are working off of the new forest plan (which will likely be finalized in January).
- The project includes 2700-2800 acres of treatments.
- The FS wants to keep the process streamlined in a manner consistent with Farm Bill intentions.
- The FS is committed to Jasper Mountain being a stewardship contract and keeping funds in the area for restoration work.
- Tera Little out of the Regional Office (Missoula) is the interdisciplinary team leader.

Group questions/discussion:

- How will cumulative impacts be handled in light of other projects? Answer – they will have to be addressed in analysis.
- Is the FS willing to share specialist reports as a courtesy to the public? Erick will check into that.
- Is there enough time left in the season to do field work?
- What about wildlife and goshawk surveys? Answer: surveys are required to be done – can record the proposed action and then include protections/safeguards in implementation. Surveys must be done prior to implementation, not decision.
- What was the tenor of the public meetings and field trips? Answers: Lots of questions about the ability of the FS to implement; accountability and monitoring. The FS plans to go back to the public with information about how the project is progressing. There is some suspicion of the FS about the project. Lots of recreation discussion, including horse trails, visuals, resistance to old growth logging. Erick noted a lot of angst amongst the public about developing a purpose and need statement.
- Questions about the definition of large tree, collaboration.
- Discussion about how/whether the PFC should engage as a collaborative on the project.
 - How much influence would the PFC have on Jasper Mountain due to the short timeline?
 - It's likely the PFC can't engage as deeply as on Bottom Canyon.
 - PFC member engagement does help inform other members of the public who are less familiar with working with the FS and the NEPA process
- Jasper Mountain committee: Jeff, Paul, Brad, Liz, Glenn, Phil (Brad was asked if he'd be chair and he is thinking about it)
 - **ACTION**: At November 13 meeting: discuss whether to identify areas of agreement and submit PFC comments, or decide against submitting comments as the PFC

Buckskin Saddle (previously named Johnson Twin/Horsehoe)

- Forest Service wants to work with the PFC from the inception of this project (National Forest Management Act (NFMA) stage)
- Decision by September 30, 2018
- FY15 will focus on NFMA level work
 - What is existing condition?
 - Information gathering by specialists, stand exams
- June 2015 – PFC field trip
- Fall 2014 – develop Purpose & Need
- (See April 2014 meeting minutes for further information about the project)

Hughes Creek

- Field trip planned for October 14 at 9:30 a.m.
- A channel was dug in the 1940s to drain Hugest Creek and create an airstrip.
- The project purpose is to return Hughes Creek to its original channel.
- Project is located on the Priest Lake District.
- Other interested parties include US Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps, Kalispel Tribe (and maybe Kootenai Tribe of Idaho?)
- Hughes Creek supports Bull Trout coming from Priest Lake
- Project needs to be fit into the FS program of work.
- Potential opportunity for mitigation funding since the problems result from military activities

Treasured Landscapes Update and EA

- Implementation update:
 - Large woody debris installations and bank plantings have been delayed until next summer due to the need to rebid (first bids were prohibitively high), but the contracts are in place now.
 - NFF contracted with The Idaho Weed Guy to treat weed populations identified and mapped in last year's assessment, and all reports are that they were effective.
 - FSPW coordinated several volunteer days to work on the Morris Creek and Mud Creek trails, as well as one more effort to conclude the white bark pine surveys
- Environmental Assessment
 - Coming out soon with the 30-day scoping notice; so comments due in November
 - Re-route of lower portion of Scotchman Peaks Trail (Beetop Roundtop)
 - Installation of boardwalks and native plantings in high mountain lake trails
 - Winter warming hut at junction of Trestle Creek and Lightning Creek road
 - Porcupine Bridge across Lightning Creek

Upcoming events/timeline:

October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bottom Canyon Scoping meeting 10/22• Jasper Mountain Scoping meeting (late October/early November)• Invite Shoshone commissioners and others to be involved in Buckskin Saddle (Don Childress (TU); Larry Yergler; Chad Hudson's contacts; Kajsa van Reit; Sandy Podsaid?)• October field trip for Hughes Creek
November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bottom Canyon scoping comments due (Nov 9)• Jasper Mountain scoping comments due (late Nov/early Dec)• Treasured Landscapes EA comments (recreation focused)
December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jasper Mountain meeting (early)
January/February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jasper Mountain decision (pre-decisional meeting)• PFC would like to have a focused discussion about Bottom Canyon engagement moving forward, using the NEPA Roadmap worksheet
Spring/Summer 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• June – PFC/FS field trip to Buckskin Saddle• FS gather data
Fall 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PFC engage in developing purpose & need for Buckskin Saddle