

B-D Working Group
Draft Minutes
Thursday, October 16, 2014
Butte Silverbow Archives
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting objectives:

- Agree on “landscape vision and project approach document”
- Identify next steps for Boulder and Selway
- Identify key messages for state of Montana meeting

Present: Pete Nelson, Paul Olsen, Leonard Wortman, Ciche Pitcher, Sam Samson, Tom Rice, Dave Schulz, Mark Thompson

Guests: Bryan Lorengo, Rick Franke

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

1. Welcome and approve minutes

Dave Schulz opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The group approved the May 16 and September 25 meeting minutes unanimously.

2. Public comment

No public comment.

3. Updates/ Announcements

- Dave Schulz has been elected president of the Montana Association of Counties, so has a very busy year ahead of him!
- Karen DiBari reminded everyone of the upcoming “National Forest Management & Collaboration in the Interior Mountain West” workshop being hosted by the NFF in Missoula, October 28-30.

4. Landscape vision and project approach document and how to communicate BDWG expectations for the process to FS

- Recommendation to split out the CE projects from the vision/opportunity map process (Karen DiBari will do)
- General support for the approach
- Ciche Pitcher shared the example of a ski area’s “Master Development Plan” that outlines the big picture and that would be accomplished over multiple years in various projects
- Desire to develop a “menu” of projects and them matching them up with FS program of work
- **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Revise document
 - Steering committee meet with Melany and staff to talk through the document, make adjustments and lay out expectations on all sides, and get commitment to work on

5. Boulder Lowlands with update from Boulder field trip

- Pete Nelson, Tony Colter, and Rick Franke all attended the field trip the previous week with many Forest Service staff
- The purpose of the field trip was to explore the question of whether the Forest Service's fire regime group matched on the ground conditions and ERG data
- In order to qualify as a categorical exclusion (CE) under the 2014 Farm Bill, several conditions must be met including that the project is in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) or represent certain fire regime groups, be developed collaboratively, etc.
- Learned on field trip:
 - The WUI was originally determined to be in two parcels (east and west sides), based on the 1 ½ mile buffer around communities.
 - According to the Boulder Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), the entire planning area is WUI (4 mile buffer).
 - The Regional Office is leaning toward using the CWPP definition but that will have to be resolved and must be well justified.
 - The planning area is divided between regime group (dry lodgepole and Douglas fir) (?) – so some of it qualifies as Fire Regime Group 1, which is the requirement for the Farm Bill CE if not considered WUI
 - Forest Service is thinking it will take 2 years to move CE, with a December 2016 decision
- Discussion:
 - There is good potential for treatment in the lodgepole stands to bring Douglas fir back
 - Concern about litigation potential
 - BDWG members feel strongly there needs to be clear and defensible justification for regime groups and WUI
 - Concern and questions about why a CE would take 2 years when Boulder was scheduled for a decision last September and there has already been a lot of data collected (an EA apparently takes 2 ½ years)
 - BDWG members want the project to move forward quickly but also want to be able to defend it to various constituencies
- NEXT STEPS: Leonard Wortman will set up a meeting of the committee with Dave Sabo to talk about:
 - What are the information gaps that require additional field work?
 - Why the 2 year timeline for the CE? If it is going to take so long, is a CE the most appropriate approach?
 - How will the WUI definition be resolved?
 - Can the Regional Office provide some staffing or other resources to help accelerate the timeline?
 - What are the points for collaboration between the BDWG and the Boulder District during the project? BDWG is interested in:
 - Discuss where light vs heavy treatment prescriptions are appropriate
 - Identify weaknesses in the project to help improve it
 - Consider how other restoration work can be included

6. Selway Meadows

- Question about whether the BDWG can add value by engaging in the project. The group decided that yes, they want to stay engaged. Even though it is a smaller scale project, it can respond to an integrated vision.
- Paul Olsen said Trout Unlimited is very interested in the Selway Meadows project and may be able to contribute funds for implementation.

- NEXT STEP: Tom Rice will set up a meeting with Melany Glossa and the project staff and the committee to talk about how the BDWG can engage on the project and the timeline that they are thinking of.
7. Messaging for Oct 20 meeting w/Bob Harrington and Governor Bullock
 - Dave Schulz will be representing the BDWG, and Barb Cestero will be representing the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative
 8. Montana Logging Association (MLA) Logging Accreditation program (*Brian Lorengo*)
 - MLA has 400 dues-paying members, multiple chapters, began in 1976
 - Most of the organization's funding comes from workers comp and safety services provided to their members.
 - Montana is one of just a few states with no forest practices act, which he attributes to MLA's strong system of member accountability and best practices supported through their forest stewardship program.
 - The industry regulates itself as evidenced by 97-98% compliance with the Best Management Practices and Streamside Management Zone Act requirements.
 - Montana State University extension forestry, the Forest Service and Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation offers a forest stewardship program with MLA to teach best practices. Loggers are required to have 32 credits per year. Considered nationally to be a premier training program.
 - Brian Lorengo raised concerns about the state of the industry and mill infrastructure
 - MLA used to have 500 members (now 300)
 - Buyers have to go to great distances (200-400 miles) to access materials
 - 250 million board feet of timber is tied up in Region 1 due to litigation
 9. Membership issues/meetings
 - The group discussed communicating with Melany about needing her participation every other meeting to reduce her obligations and also enable the BDWG to get work done to most effectively use the time with the Forest Service staff.

Karen turned the meeting back over to Dave to close out.

10. Member Announcements

- Joe Willauer has been unable to participate in meetings and so the group decided to identify another fishing guide representative. Members were asked to think of people who might be good candidates.

11. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 20th.