

B-D Working Group
Minutes
Thursday, February 20, 2014
Butte Silverbow Archives
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Objectives:

- To discuss three potential landscape proposal approaches and identify pros/cons and objectives
- Identify strategies to raise the profile of the BDWG and the BDNF

Attendees: Dave Schulz, Tony Colter, Ciche Pitcher, Barb Cestero, Paul Olson, Tom Rice, Leonard Wortman, Mark Thompson, Peter Nelson

Guests: Abbey Dennis

Forest Service: Kim Fletcher, Katie Borogofsky, Kyle Schmidt, Scott Shuler, Melany Glossa

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Motions

- January 23, 2014 meeting minutes approved
- The group decided to submit a letter to the governor (cc Faye Kruegger, Bob Harrington, and Melany Glossa) using the information being developed by ERG to nominate landscape-scale treatment area designations on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest under the new Farm Bill
- The group unanimously supported inviting Gary Severson to the March 20 meeting to advise on raising the BDWG's profile and influence

Action Items

- Tony Colter will lead this effort and the Steering Committee will develop and approve nominations. They will share with the full group via email before finalizing.
- Tony Colter will reach out to Gary Severson to arrange his visit
- Karen DiBari, Barb Cestero and Peter Nelson will look at metrics that the BDWG wants to make progress towards and do pre-work to prepare

Minutes

1. Welcome and approve minutes

Motion: Minutes approved

2. Public Comment

Dave attended a meeting on Feb 19 in Bozeman with other city commissioners and the Forest Service.

- Montana Association of Counties (MACo) has a Forest Counties Coalition
- Dave shared information about the BDWG at the meeting
- Other counties are interested in what the BDWG is doing

3. Lodgepole Pine Committee Update

- Barb Cestero reported that there are no updates in regards to the MFRC
- Karen DiBari reported that the Southwestern Crown plans to organize a workshop on mixed-severity; Barb Cestero is interested in following up for the group

4. Raising the profile of the BDWG

- Want to raise the BDNF capacity/staffing in order to enable more work to get done on the ground - “It’s all about the money”
 - Tony Colter suggested inviting Gary Severson make a presentation on raising the profile of the BDWG, political influence, funding (Don’t need internal review of collaborative)
 - Sun Mountain would pay for significant portion of it
 - Jefferson County might make a contribution/ Madison as well
 - Positive recommendations from the other city commissioners in CO and WY
- BDWG member ideas for raising the profile of the BDWG and the BDNF:
 - Several members have talked about the need for the group to meet with the Montana congressional delegation about state of affairs on BDNF, the largest national forest in MT.
 - Put together basic stats about current money and staffing and how that compares to other forests
 - Perhaps hold a “state of Montana Forest Summit”
 - Invite congressional staff- state natural resources staffers, DNRC, BLM, ?
- Question about whether the BDWG can affect how resources are distributed? Not sure who’s got the influence
- ACTION: unanimous support amongst those present to invite Gary Severson to the next meeting
 - Gary will be calling group members in advance of the 3/20 meeting

5. Farm Bill Opportunities

- Barb Cestero distributed the TWS summary of forest related issues and Dave Schulz shared the Montana Association of Counties Farm Bill summary (see attachments)
- The Farm Bill allows for establishment of landscape-scale treatment areas in two ways
 - Governors of any state can ask the FS to designate an area within 60 days
 - After 60 days FS can designate
- A few terms that must be met before it can be designated as a landscape-scale treatment area:
 - The area must be in declining forest health
 - There must be a risk of substantially increased tree mortality
 - There must be an imminent public health/safety risk
- Other comments regarding the Farm Bill:
 - Streamlines authorities
 - Authorizes \$200 million annually for 10 years for the landscape-scale treatment areas
 - Allows for categorical exclusions of collaborative restoration projects
 - Project must be developed by a collaborative comprised of diverse stakeholders
 - Treatment area cannot be larger than 3,000 acres
 - Permanently reauthorizes stewardship contracting authorities
 - Makes the “good neighbor authority” permanent
- Melany Glossa reported that she was asked by the Regional Office for areas. She shared six areas – none were selected for this year. This may be in several years of rule making. Can’t see a downside to designation
- ACTION: The group decided to submit a letter to the Governor (cc Faye Krueger, Bob Harrington, and Melany Glossa) using the information being developed by ERG. **Unanimous Support** Tony Colter will lead this effort and the Steering Committee will develop and approve letter. They will share with the full group via email before finalizing.

6. Landscape Proposal

- Steering Committee will look at data again, refine needs, and bring back a recommendation to the full BDWG when ready.

7. Selway Meadows Project – presentation by Forest Service staff

Background

- The watershed is 22,000 NFS acres
- 35 miles west of Dillon in the Selway-Saginaw management area
- About 10,000 acres suitable timber base
- 6,620 areas of that base is saw log size
- 75% of stand live green trees
- Have tested enclosures to protect riparian areas from cows/elk to allow willow regrowth and ground water replenishment
- Selway meadows are on a rotational grazing schedule
- The area has been grazed since the late 1800's
- FS has water rights
- Current grazing at 60% of historic levels in line with forest plan interim grazing standards.

Controversies

- Irrigation
- Ditches in need of repair/maintenance of head gates
- Erosion

Willow Restoration

- Have done 200 yards of lower end and in an enclosure
- Have had a good survival rate of sprigs and recovery from new grazing standards

Noxious Weeds

- Knapweed
- Muscle Thistle
- Canada Thistle
- The area is fairly “clean” of noxious weeds compared to other areas on the district.

Sensitive Species

- Western Pearlshell muscles (rely on west slope cutthroat trout for dispersal)
- Lemhi Penstemon

Discussion

- Area is recovering. Provides an opportunity to reintroduce west slope cutthroat trout; perhaps acquire ranch in-holding
- Could be one of largest contiguous areas for WS Cutthroat
- BDWG would need to take a bigger look at restoration opportunities
 - Bugs
 - Seasonal Closures
 - Access to streams
- Potential to work to expand across a variety of resource issues:
 - Timber: Lots of younger stands, green trees with value
 - Willow restoration
 - West Slope Cutthroat: Trout restoration
 - Great opportunity for a showcase
 - FS doesn't have a defined project now
 - Working through watershed assessment of full 6th code HUC
 - Have \$20,000 allocated for assessment

- What is a sufficient size for assessment to get a larger resource picture?
- What impact are old harvest units, closed roads having?
- A number of BDWG members showed general interest in the Selway project and the scale. Seems like a great opportunity for the BDWG to get involved early.

8. Boulder River Project

- Committee
 - Met morning of Feb 20th with the District staff and will meet again on March 20th
 - Discussion of whether a categorical exclusion could move forward now? The district is looking into it
 - District doesn't have money for implementation
 - Committee asked for a map of hot spots for sedimentation from roads, fire condition class, land fire model
 - Anton Brennick is temporarily employed in current position; capacity an ongoing problem
- Discussion of Scale
 - Boulder River project is back at drawing board
 - The whole area is 143,000 acres
 - Considering breaking into 3-4 areas
 - Question: Could projects be broken into phases? Example of ski business where a "Master Development Plan" is developed, then implemented based on NEPA, need, capital, etc.; Same kind of approach as CFLR
- Issues
 - Fire danger
 - Beetle kill
 - Transportation system – Melany Glossa said roads could be dealt with at the project scale in Boulder (BDNF plans to do formal travel planning by district)
 - Elk security

9. BDWG Workplan for FY14 Melany Glossa

Background

- Challenge on forests – said "yes" a lot
- Forests has one full interdisciplinary team for NEPA and about half of another team
- Forest employees have shrunk from 400 permanent employees to 150

Operations and Maintenance

- New projects have prioritized legacy projects
 - 4 current EISs
 - Big Hole Range
 - E. Deerlodge (8 years, September)
 - Butte Land Exchange
 - Flint Foot Hills
- Forest Plan SEIS: plan to sign in July
 - Have to revisit temporary roads by court order
 - Will be out for review in March, 90 day public comment period.
- Working to reduce unit costs

- Melany Glossa thinks BDNF can handle:
 - 3 EISs and 3 EAs at a time
 - Concerned about ecosystem services component of Forest Plan
- Added CE for:
 - Roadside salvage
 - Fuel reduction
- Once the above projects are done, BDNF could then go to:
 - Boulder
 - Gravelly
 - Selway Meadows
- BDNF Problems
 - Capacity
 - Budget
 - Litigation
- Melany: the BDNF has a lot of assessments, and have a plan for where assessments will be done next
- BDWG has talked about being involved in an assessment to help tier their projects from it; it would be great to hear from FS about where the plan is to go next.
 - Melany: the forest hasn't been about to think about new projects for a long time.
- Question: What is the value of the BDWG to Melany?
 - Brings the gift of different perspectives
 - Potentially reduces threat of litigation
 - Opens door for opportunity to access funds through congressional initiatives

10. Member Announcements

- Gravelly Group would like to present to BDWG in next couple months
- Ken Harris is retiring
 - David Callery is detailed for 4 months
 - The job has been announced and review will begin 3/10/14
- Dave Schulz has been to Washington DC several times regarding noxious weeds
- The Butte Archives is not available on August 21 – BDWG may not meet that month but will decide later

11. Next Meeting

- We will look at metrics that the BDWG wants to make progress towards
 - Get closure
 - Do pre-work to prepare as well
 - Action item: Barb, Karen and Pete will do
- Thursday, March 20th at the Butte Silver Bow Archives Auditorium