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”
     o 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)
     o Sun Mountain would pay for significant portion of it
     o Jefferson County might make a contribution/ Madison as well
     o Positive recommendations from the other city commissioners in CO and WY
   - BDWG member ideas for raising the profile of the BDWG and the BDNF:
     o 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.
     o Put together basic stats about current money and staffing and how that compares to other forests
     o Perhaps hold a “state of Montana Forest Summit”
     o 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
     o 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
     o Governors of any state can ask the FS to designate an area within 60 days
     o After 60 days FS can designate
   - A few terms that must be met before it can be designated as a landscape-scale treatment area:
     o The area must be in declining forest health
     o There must be a risk of substantially increased tree morality
     o There must be an imminent public health/safety risk
   - Other comments regarding the Farm Bill:
     o Streamlines authorities
     o Authorizes $200 million annually for 10 years for the landscape-scale treatment areas
     o 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
     o Permanently reauthorizes stewardship contracting authorities
     o 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
    o The watershed is 22,000 NFS acres
    o 35 miles west of Dillon in the Selway-Saginaw management area
    o About 10,000 acres suitable timber base
    o 6,620 areas of that base is saw log size
    o 75% of stand live green trees
    o Have tested enclosures to protect riparian areas from cows/elk to allow willow regrowth and ground water replenishment
    o Selway meadows are on a rotational grazing schedule
    o The area has been grazed since the late 1800’s
    o FS has water rights
    o Current grazing at 60% of historic levels in line with forest plan interim grazing standards.

    Controversies
    o Irrigation
    o Ditches in need of repair/maintenance of head gates
    o Erosion

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

    Noxious Weeds
    o Knapweed
    o Muscle Thistle
    o Canada Thistle
    o 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)
    o 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
      o Bugs
      o Seasonal Closures
      o Access to streams
     Potential to work to expand across a variety of resource issues:
      o Timber: Lots of younger stands, green trees with value
      o Willow restoration
      o West Slope Cutthroat: Trout restoration
         Great opportunity for a showcase
         FS doesn’t have a defined project now
          o Working through watershed assessment of full 6th code HUC
          o 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
  o Met morning of Feb 20\textsuperscript{th} with the District staff and will meet again on March 20\textsuperscript{th}
  o Discussion of whether a categorical exclusion could move forward now? The district is looking into it
  o District doesn’t have money for implementation
  o Committee asked for a map of hot spots for sedimentation from roads, fire condition class, land fire model
  o Anton Brennick is temporarily employed in current position; capacity an ongoing problem

• Discussion of Scale
  o Boulder River project is back at drawing board
  o The whole area is 143,000 acres
  o Considering breaking into 3-4 areas
  o Question: Could projects be broken into phases? Example of ski business where a “Master Development Plan” id developed, then implemented based on NEPA, need, capital, etc.; Same kind of approach as CFLR

• Issues
  o Fire danger
  o Beetle kill
  o 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)
  o 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
  o 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
  o Have to revisit temporary roads by court order
  o Will be out for review in March, 90 day public comment period.
• Working to reduce unit costs
• Melany Glossa thinks BDNF can handle:
  o 3 EISs and 3 EAs at a time
  o Concerned about ecosystem services component of Forest Plan
• Added CE for:
  o Roadside salvage
  o Fuel reduction
• Once the above projects are done, BDNF could then go to:
  o Boulder
  o Gravelly
  o Selway Meadows
• BDNF Problems
  o Capacity
  o Budget
  o 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.
  o 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?
  o Brings the gift of different perspectives
  o Potentially reduces threat of litigation
  o 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
  o David Callery is detailed for 4 months
  o The job has been announced and review will being 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
  o Get closure
  o Do pre-work to prepare as well
  o Action item: Barb, Karen and Pete will do
• Thursday, March 20th at the Butte Silver Bow Archives Auditorium