Panhandle Forest Collaborative Forest Projects Committee
Meeting Minutes
Fernan District Office
3/26/14

Present: Paul Sieracki, Kajsa Stromberg, Jeff Connolly, Laura Wolf, Mike Petersen, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Bob Boeh, Tom Crimmins

Forest Service: Ryan Foote, Melissa Hendrickson, and others

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Guests: Fanny Chomel, Wayne Fitzpatrick

Melissa Hendrickson – GRAIP in Bottom Canyon presentation (see ppt)

- Analyzed a larger area than Bottom Canyon so that it includes the drainage into the project area
- DEM – digital elevation model
- Surveyed open roads
    - Green on map – open on MVUM to public
    - Black lines – administratively closed roads or in "storage" for administrative use only
    - Weren't able to survey all of motorized trails – there weren't that many
- Many at top of ridges were not surveyed
- Over 99% of roads produce sediment (doesn't all reach streams)
- Look at roads producing sediment and of those, roads delivering sediment
    - Roads closest to the streams are producing the sediment
    - Open roads get the most traffic and so produce more sediment
- Road segments delivering 80% sediment – 4 miles of road are most problem areas
    - 206 – Burnt Cabin Creek
    - 411 – Lone Cabin Creek
    - 158 – Canyon Fork (north central)
    - 209 (eastern side)
- Discussion about road maintenance
- Non trafficable and decommissioned roads
    - 44 miles non trafficable
    - 29 decommissioned
    - 31 open roads
- Most motorized trails were not surveyed – limited on time and cost because the focus of this project is on access for timber harvest
- GRAIP is a tool to provide information but it is not the only source of data; if surveys are done within 600 feet of a live stream, you get most of the sediment information

- Drain points by type – over 1000 surveyed; drain points are where water is taken off of the road; 77 drain points are delivering 100% of sediment; 22 of those are delivering 80% of sediment (411, 206, Little North Fork of CDA, Canyon Fork); 3.4 miles of road are delivering 80% of sediment
- Fish passage – GRAIP is not the best model but it does provide some information
    - Would be helpful to get further information to inform PFC in making fish passage recommendations
    - FishCrossing Model is the best to get further information; some further info may be collected this summer; fish biologist needs to run GRAIP data through FishCrossing model to see what it shows. PFC could prioritize additional data collection and/or questions.
    - Kajsa Stromberg – Little North Fork is more important than she initially realized. She has added some further information to the report she'd prepared on the Bottom Canyon area. She recommends that the group think about effects of project impacts on Little North Fork. Discussion: likely to be a positive effect due to improvements in watershed conditions so it would be good to take credit for those improvements.
    - Project area is different than the analysis area; analysis areas vary based on the resource being considered
- How will timber harvest impact water quality? That will be analyzed once the treatment units are determined. That analysis will include effects on Little N. Fork.

Tom Crimmins – Motorized trail presentation

- Wide variety of ATV users; includes responsible users and "Bubba and his truck"
- Users look for lots of different experiences; an important one is challenge, usually found in a mud hole or a hill
- Ways to add in challenge for ATVers
    - Log on trail, rocks or other obstacles
    - Narrower is better
- Advantages of narrower trails: speed is reduced, safety is increased, lengthens time in the seat, more enjoyable which leads to increased compliance
- Sustainable motorized trails
    - Provide resource protection
    - Can be operated and maintained efficiently and cost-effectively
    - Will enhance the recreation experience
    - Does NOT mean that it is cheapest
    - Does NOT mean that the trail will be maintenance free
- Recreation value: maintaining motorized routes as motorized routes, and not re-opening them up as roads
- A main transportation road does not provide a desired recreation experience
- How to convert roads to trails
    - Use some parts of road as is
    - Add obstacles

    - Make it a serpentine route; move up cutbank, for example (with appropriate drainage systems)
    - Designate short segments off a road to provide access to desirable feature (viewpoint, for example)
- Liability
    - Liability is not an issue for Forest Service when putting in obstacles; myth
    - Liability is an issue if there are problems that are not dealt with; can resolve it through user education
    - In some places, the FS is ranking trails easy, moderate, difficult (as a way to alert people to challenging trail conditions like cliff exposure)

Bottom Canyon Alternative

The group looked at the map of the alternative, and Paul Sieracki showed the different GIS on the screen. Discussion:

- In northern section – new road will run through newly designated old growth –Canyon Fork Area
    - Is there another alternative to access that northern area?
    - 2377 – current status is administratively closed. Could it be used to access?
    - Old growth area is 19 acres; road is 600 feet; removes 4 stands and 116 acres in access to treatment area
    - Bob will look into this and have an answer 3/27 and acreage impact
- Orange areas on map are reserve pool for treatment units
- One option – add acres off of rd 1587; Bob will have NW Mgmt look at it and calculate acreage add in for 3/27 meeting
- If that road stopped at old growth, would remove .83 miles
- Bottom Creek near 1511 – why go through the creek; is that an old road prism? Bob will check into it

Post-Harvest motorized trail considerations

- 544 – have planned construction for project; use existing roads to tie to 411 after the sale to get motorized rec users off the main road
- Otherwise, Tom doesn't see anything that would negatively impact motorized rec (there is one area of reconstruction – add logs and other barriers to 2341UP post sale

Wildlife

- Bottom Canyon a lower-priority area for elk security due to its high recreation area
- Concern about the high open road density
- Would be helpful to have a discussion between Melissa and Paul about road densities due to differences in how they each interpreted the information
- Discussion about "grizzly bear method" of determining road density per square mile
- Need to be careful about increasing road density; consider a no net increase in road density

- If a road and ATV trail are in the same corridor, then concern about "double counting"

Agreements

- No net increase in open road density (open year round to public use) (ALL AGREE; PAUL sideways thumb)
- 7.3 miles new construction of roads; plan would be to close them after the project is complete
  - When is project complete?
  - What does closure mean? Combination of gating and front end obliteration
- Perhaps decommission in old growth – what is opportunity to close old jammer roads? Remove culverts, etc.
- Do no harm

Road prescriptions:
Prioritize list of roads that are appropriate for decommissioning; PFC will seek funding to support changes to the road system positively

1) Focus on roads for this alternative
2) In addition, look to the GRAIP analysis and FS specialists to make sure the roads that need to be fixed are fixed
3) Group needs more information in order to provide input about closing roads; FS is looking at areas outside of the green to respond to GRAIP

<u>Currently in project area</u>
11 miles designated ATV trail
7 miles designated motorcycle trail