

Panhandle Forest Collaborative
Forest Projects Committee Meeting
Wednesday, August 13, 2014, 12:15 – 4:00 p.m.
Idaho Forest Group Chilco Mill, Athol

Members: Jeff Connolly, Mike Petersen, Glen Bailey, Paul Sieracki, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Bob Boeh

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Meeting objectives:

- Review timeline of Bottom Canyon project and PFC communication with the District
- Discuss and agree on issues that have arisen over the summer during field trips and data gathering
- Discuss potential involvement in the Jasper Mountain project

Timeline for Bottom Canyon

- Scoping notice before the end of September
- One more field trip on September 4 to look at riparian area issues
- PFC alternative has been folded into the District's proposed action; there are some changes; an increase in acreage but most of it is in prescribed burning; some timber harvest additions; more old growth has been found and harvest units have changed a bit
- FS has a map with new acreages but no one at the meeting had a copy
- Chad has asked that the PFC submit letter with changes/updates to alternative to District by September 1; since field trip is Sept 4, Mike Petersen will ask if submitting the letter after that will work
- Unlikely that significant changes can be incorporated at this point, so we're talking about tweaks
- **PLAN FOR TODAY:** Develop recommendations to put into a letter to Chad Hudson regarding issues that have emerged this summer in addition to the PFC alternative submitted in April; Include language in letter to remind the FS of the April 13 alternative and those recommendations still stand.

Road 206

- Not specifically addressed in PFC alternative
- Chad raised the question about PFC recommendation on Rd 206 – Major source of sediment loading into the creek
- Options: close road completely; reroute it out of the flood plain, or reconstruct in the flood plain
- Major road, also mining access

- Mining company may be able to help finance pulling road out of floodplain
- County unlikely to support closing of the road
- Funds from CDA Basin Commission could help “fix” the road to at least reduce the sedimentation
- Recommendation (all voted thumbs up): The PFC recognizes that Road 206 provides access for recreation and mining operations, and it also has negative environmental impacts. The PFC recommends that the FS use the coordination process for Road 206 to convene a meeting with the PFC, local government, motorized recreation and the mining operator to discuss how to meet the objective of improving the watershed condition/sedimentation. Get everyone in a room together to talk about all of the concerns and options.
 - PFC doesn't like the rerouting because it's a new road through old growth.
 - Why isn't the other access adequate on existing roads north and south of 206 on other existing roads)?

Unit boundaries/corridors

- Objective: try to keep at same # acres/volume and tractor vs. skyline that the group agreed to already, but want to identify any high priority areas that raise special concerns. The committee talked about the following list but wanted to make more general recommendations with some “flags” for important issues.
- **NEXT STEP:** Mike will ask Jason for a map that compares our alternative with their alternative so the group can have a discussion
 - Why are units added?
 - Why were some units subtracted?
- Process: Mike will identify questions and then will ask Jason Jerman
 - 02 ITS/IB S - two parcels right inside old growth areas; GIS shows large trees; new areas proposed by FS
 - O8A and O8B -- ATV trail through it; many large trees (based on CSE data) – perhaps remove from harvest immediately (visited during field trip), lower volume
 - 17C (currently marked for skyline and broadcast burn) – 2.7 acres; Higher elevation, mesic, large tree area in headwaters
 - 17B (skyline, underburn) - 13.4 acres
 - 18A - 30.6 acres
 - West and north aspect of 22B due to fisher habitat and riparian value
 - 23B – there may be large trees in there that should be skipped around
 - PROCESS: Paul will identify other priority areas and will communicate them to Mike in the next week
- Recommendations:
 - OK with “trading units” so long as it doesn't affect type of harvest, volume, wildlife considerations and other issues already listed in the April alternative; PFC members didn't raise any concerns about mastication or prescribed burn; not able to comment specifically without further information

- PFC recommendation 2,249 total treatment (in alternative); FS recommendation now 2,615 acres; 165 of additions are new harvest units and the rest is mastication and prescribed burn

Corridors

- There's been some discussion on field trips about connectors between old growth areas
- Concerns about fragmentation of old growth patches and desire to maximize conditions for wildlife
- Identify isolated old growth patches
 - Recommend adding 17C and 17B into retention areas for old growth connection
 - Drop last unit visited in the field trip (O8A and O8B)

Size of skips and gaps

- Concern about a giant clearcut with a few scraggly trees; that's not the intent of the PFC
- **NEXT STEP:** Mike will talk with Jason to have a statement about how their prescriptions look like the FS prescriptions; trigger point for communication; also encourage Jason to pick up the phone and keep communications open

Fisher

- Joel Sauder said that female range of fisher is 15,000 acres;
- Invite wildlife biologist on the field trip; Ana Cerro-Timpone
- FS take steps to prevent the fisher from being put on Endangered Species Act; forest plan
- Concerned that the FS doesn't have any thresholds for impacting fisher habitat
- CDA Mountains – appears that there's a lot of habitat but there's not many fisher
- Recommendation: The PFC remains concerned about habitat impacts on fisher, elk and other species but it is not possible to understand individual project impacts without an integrated management plan across the whole forest. The PFC would like to have an intelligent debate about these issues but don't have the facts and data to support that level of discussion.

Snags

- Current language is fine; there will be a lot of snags because of the forest structure

NEXT STEPS:

- Karen will draft letter based on agreements at meeting today.
- Committee– please weigh in during the week of August 18 with any changes/ suggestions/concerns (and use “reply all”).
- After committee has had an opportunity for input and letter is close to final, it will be circulated to the full PFC for sign on.

Summary of points for the Bottom Canyon letter

- Include language in letter to remind the FS of the April 13 alternative and those recommendations still stand.
- Recommendation (all voted thumbs up): The PFC recognizes that Road 206 provides access for recreation and mining operations, and it also has negative environmental impacts. The PFC recommends that the FS use the coordination process for Road 206 to convene a meeting with the PFC, local government, motorized recreation and the mining operator to discuss how to meet the objective of improving the watershed condition/sedimentation. Get everyone in a room together to talk about all of the concerns and options.
 - PFC doesn't like the rerouting because it's a new road through old growth.
 - Why isn't the other access adequate on existing roads north and south of 206 on other existing roads)?
- New units/acreage
 - OK with "trading units" so long as it doesn't affect type of harvest, volume, wildlife considerations and other issues already listed in the April alternative; PFC members didn't raise any concerns about mastication or prescribed burn; not able to comment specifically without further information
- Identify isolated old growth patches
 - Recommend adding 17C and 17B into retention areas for old growth connection
 - Drop last unit visited in the field trip (O8A and O8B)
- Recommendation: The PFC remains concerned about habitat impacts on fisher, elk and other species but it is not possible to understand individual project impacts without an integrated management plan across the whole forest. The PFC would like to have an intelligent debate about these issues but don't have the facts and data to support that level of discussion.
- After the scoping notice comes out, the PFC would like to discuss touchpoints for the NEPA process (NEPA Roadmap).

PFC Forest Projects Committee decision: Each point was reviewed and supported by a thumbs up vote by all, except for Paul Sieracki who voted with a sideways thumb due to his concern about road densities.

Johnson Twin

- Karen will contact Erick to ask if an Oct 1 field trip is still a possibility

Jasper Mountain HFRA project – south of Lower Priest project (adjacent)

- Located in Bonner County/ Priest Lake District
- Meeting 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Priest River Event Center on August 25 – some PFC members have received invitations
- Liz, Jeff and Paul plan to attend
- Erick Walker acting ranger right now for Priest Lake as well as Sandpoint; Liz will call to ask:

- Why was this project selected for a CE?
- Why didn't they talk with the PFC?
- What will the FS collaborative process look like?
- How could the PFC engage?

Hughes Creek

- Priest Lake DO; Bonner County
- Bulldozed channel – bull trout and grizzly in area; need to fix the channel
- Liz talked with USFWS and there's a lot of interest in doing restoration work up there; also want to do brook trout control
- Brad did a lot of footwork and talked with Shawn Stash, Erick, Jill Cobb, and Dan Scafe; lots of FS interest in putting it on the aquatics project list for next 3 years
- There are some funds available from USFWS (Recovery Initiative Program); NEPA will be challenge to fund
- Asked if the PFC is interested; lots of interest amongst committee