

B-D Working Group
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 21, 2015
Butte-Silverbow Archives

Members: Ciche Pitcher, Tony Colter, Tom Rice, Paul Olson, Pete Nelson, Rick Sandru, Nathan Korb, Leonard Wortman, Maureen Connor

Partners/Guests: Erik Nylund, Rick Franke, Spenser Merwin, Cory Kirsch

Meeting objectives:

- Review and approve BDWG roles document
 - Discuss BDNF vegetation plan
 - Boulder and Selway Meadows committee update
1. Welcome, introductions and approve minutes – Tony Colter began the meeting. All introduced themselves around the table. April meeting minutes approved unanimously.
 2. No public comment.
 3. Updates – Dr. Courtney Schultz of Colorado State University would like to meet with the BDWG to discuss IRR (integrated resource restoration). The meeting date would be June 3, from 10 a.m. – 12 noon in Butte. Those present are interested in the meeting; Karen will coordinate with Melany Glossa and Courtney Schultz to finalize arrangements.
 4. Policy Updates – The Congressional timber task force met in early May. The Regional Office is working to establish a Farm Bill-specific NEPA team by the end of June. Concern continues about fire and fire borrowing. The letter from the BDWG to the Congressional delegation was sent.
 5. BDNF Outyear plan and timber # breakdown. Follow up questions:
 - What does timber “sold” mean (as opposed to offered)? Does that mean the timber is cut in the same year?
 - How is the volume calculated in fuelwood permits?
 - Are Christmas trees calculated in the timber volume?
 - Does fuelwood include biomass?
 - Concern about use of mbf measurement for fuelwood.
 - In outyear projections – what is the actual sawlog measurement? (E Deerlodge as an example)
 - Discussion that the BDNF has less volume per acre, but higher value timber.
 6. Boulder Lowlands update and identification of next steps
 - Review of committee meeting with Melany Glossa, Cheri Ford, Bruce Higgins, and Dave Sabo in the morning.
 - The proposed action was mailed out last week. It is now changing due to mistletoe.
 - Original prescription was for salvage; now regeneration harvest.
 - Discussion about plan for developing comments:

- Karen DiBari will give Dave Sabo the list of names/emails of everyone interested in being on the list to receive communications about Boulder Lowlands
 - The BDWG plans to prepare scoping comments. Individual members may also submit comments.
 - At the June meeting, the BDWG will dedicate time to finalizing comments on Boulder Lowlands. Will likely focus on process recommendations.
 - The FS plans to develop an update letter after receipt of the scoping comments. The committee asked for a meeting to discuss the scoping comments but the agency was not comfortable with that. Instead, the BDWG will receive the update letter and can provide input as per the normal public process.
 - If the update letter is done in time, the FS would like to announce that the July 16 BDWG meeting will be an opportunity for the public to ask questions and gain more information about Boulder Lowlands. The BDWG agreed to this approach.
7. Selway Meadows update and identification of next steps – the committee met in May. A field trip is planned for mid-July. Right now the project is very narrowly focused on the irrigation issues. The committee asked Peri Suenram for a timeline for a broader, multiple-objective, landscape approach. (see attached committee notes from Paul Olson)
8. Gravelly Landscape Restoration update – Nathan Korb reported that he and Bob Zimmer (Greater Yellowstone Coalition) met with John Meyer and Glenn Hawkett of Cottonwood Environmental. It was a productive meeting and it seems to have alleviated Cottonwood’s concerns.
9. BDWG Roles - The group reviewed the draft roles document, and made editing suggestions. Karen DiBari will update and recirculate. The purpose of this document is to clarify how the BDWG will engage with the Forest Service on projects and on BDNF-level issues/planning, since Melany Glossa and other BDNF staff had asked for clarity.
10. Identify action items and plans for next meeting - June 18 meeting date was changed to June 9th due to other conflicts. Karen DiBari will check with those members not present to make sure it works for the majority of people.
- Karen DiBari will circulate the 5 Year Report on the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program.
11. Closing – meeting adjourned so that BDWG members could participate in the Boulder Lowlands public meeting, which started at 4 p.m. at the Butte District Office.

Notes from the Selway Meeting May 5th 2015

Folks present; Peri Suenram - FS, Mark Thompson-BDWG, Kevin Weiner - FS, Craig Fager , Wildlife Biologist - FWP, Matt Yeager - Fisheries Biologist - FWP, Nathan Korb - The Nature Conservancy, Olie Berkram - NRCS, Paul Olson - BDWG, Tom Rice - BDWG, Kyle Schmitt - FS Range Con, Chris Carparelli – FS, and Rob Gump.

Handouts were given to the group showing the Selway Meadows area with irrigation ditches and water diversions.

The Forest Service plans to have Karen Boyd on the ground this summer to look at the irrigation system, stream function and physical habitat.

DEQ will do some data collection on area during summer. Two weeks figured for work.
Joel Christiansen (?) – will look at willow rehab.

A field trip for the public is planned early to mid July.

Kevin's overview report of the Selway Area:

13 water rights plus the Holland Ditch near mouth of Selway

Discussion followed on problems with irrigation system;

1. Hidden Creek Ditches – All headgates have failed. Three ditches. Yearlong diversion with all water going down ditches and there is no longer a stream channel/connection to main Selway Creek. Distance from diversion to Selway is ½ mile. 3.8 miles of ditches with two diversion points.
2. Orr Creek Ditch – Ditch has failed with a 5 foot high headcut. Estimated \$40 to \$50 thousand to repair failure point. Estimated 30 acres of irrigated ground. Proposal is to put a pipe in ditch to move water past headcut/failure point moving water to a trough for stock water with rest of water being put back into Selway Creek. Two water rights - stock water and instream flow.
3. Spring Creek Ditch –Irrigated ground 10 to 15 acres. Water Temperature in Spring Creek is 5 degrees cooler than Selway Creek and recommendation is to turn water back into Selway Creek. The cooler water would benefit Selway Creek during summer months. Ditch takes all water and there is no connection to Selway Creek. Constant flow of 3 CFS. Water right shows 172 irrigated acres but actual potential irrigated acres is 30.
4. Upper Selway Creek – 1.8 miles of ditch. This is the FS's first priority to invest in getting a headgate and measuring device. Actual irrigated acres is 96 with water right showing 165 acres. Current diversion is a tarp. Estimate \$15,000 to construct headgate. Needs: NEPA and headgate design. Design would be post and plank with a fish ladder. Olie Berkram NRCS with look at this sight and has committed to design a structure for this site. He indicated he could only do one design this spring/summer.
5. Short Creek Ditch - .57 miles. Irrigates 89 acres with water right showing 188 acres. Has ditch failures causing erosion. FS recommendation is to retain this system.
6. Upper CL Creek Ditch – Has a post and plank structure that has failed and needs to be replaced. FS lists this as their second priority for repairing. There are erosive soils at end of the ditch.

7. Lower CL Creek Ditch – Diversion takes most or all of the water with there being no connection to Selway Creek. Irrigates 27 acres with the water right showing 188 acres. FS recommendation is to get rid of diversion and pipe water to a trough for stock water.
8. Lower Selway – There is no diversion structure with a tarp diversion in Selway Creek. FS recommendation is to retain this diversion but it would be a challenge to design and maintain due to high spring flows in creek. May need to be a concrete structure.
9. Mooney Creek Ditch – irrigates 9 acres with no diversion structure and no water right. FS recommendation is to remove ditch and restore stream channel to connect with Selway Creek.
10. Lower Selway (Holland) Ditch – FS recommendation is to convert to instream use. Ditch is not being used and there is no reasonable way to get water into ditch. Ditch is higher than stream.

Kevin reported on one of the handouts showing decisions to be made for the Hidden Creek Ditch System. For restoration work on this ditch there needed to be seven decisions made. Assume there would be similar decisions made for all other ditches that the FS is recommending to keep and restore.

There are a lot of decisions to be made for restoration work and money needs for all restoration work to be completed.

Matt Yeager FWP biologist wants to do Brook Trout (BT) removal in 2017. There may be lots of problems getting restoration work done before treatment can be done. Fish barrier needs to be installed (2017?) near the mouth of Selway Creek before BT removal can be done. Removal of BT will take at least two years depending on surveys showing effectiveness of treatment.

Craig Fager FWP Wildlife Biologist – Elk number are impeding mule deer numbers. Having more disturbance by timber harvest or fire creating forage for mule deer will help numbers. Also need more willows for moose. MT Tech is planning field studies on ground water and return flows using dyes this summer.

Studies would look at:

1. Water temperature regimes for shading versus non shading of the stream.
2. Nutrient recycling through system with irrigation
3. Looking for macro-invertebrates
4. Looking for DNA markers for pearl shell mussels.
5. DNA markers for westslope cutthroat?

Some discussion followed concerning plans for future projects in watershed and setting up time lines when NEPA and other projects may occur. This would include future timber harvests, dealing with old roads and erosion, etc.

Concern expressed by members of the BDWG is that once the fisheries work was done other project needs may not happen and BD Working Group wants some assurance that the FS is committed to doing more work in the watershed and future restoration needs/planned projects are put on the FS planning schedule.