

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record

Wednesday, September 16, 2015, 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
County Administration Building, 1500 Hwy 2, Sandpoint

Members: John Finney, Phil Hough, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Mike Petersen, Brad Smith, Bob Boeh, Jeff Connolly, Glen Bailey

Partners/Guests: Bob Mirasole, Judy Morbeck, Karen Roetter, Matt Scott, Julie Halliday, Marc Eberlein, Todd Sudick, Dan Dinning, Cary Kelly, Greg Becker, Kirk Sehlmeier, Emily Olsen

Forest Service: Erick Walker, Chad Hudson

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

1. Greetings and Opening

- All introduced themselves

2. Reviewed the agenda and last meeting minutes

- Unanimous approval of the July 8th meeting minutes
- Meeting minutes, when approved, and future meeting agendas will be posted online

3. Public Comment

- There was no public comment, but members welcomed the large group of visitors and also noted the following changes:
 - Chad Hudson has accepted a Deputy Supervisor position on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah
 - Karen DiBari is transitioning facilitation duties to Emily Olsen, but as Emily's supervisor, Karen will continue to be involved with the PFC

4. Forest Service Staff Transitions

- Karen suggested that Chad might use a transition memo to ensure the new district ranger is up-to-speed about the PFC
- Tim Knight (from Region 5) will be the new Priest Lake District Ranger
- Zone staff are excited to continue working with the PFC, and all core staff (with the exception of Jeanne White) are still on board

5. Policy Updates

- Karen Roetter reported that timing looks good for the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act of 2015, which would fund large fires out of FEMA disaster funds instead of the Forest Service budget
- Judy Morbeck reported that Congressman Labrador's staff are researching a post-fire salvage bill; they're hoping for a NEPA categorical exclusion (CE) that would allow immediate entry into a forest post-fire for salvage purposes

6. Presentation from Kootenai County Commissioner Mark Eberlein

- Sharing his background in wildland firefighting, and discussing his son's thesis project about mining contamination at the Old Sacred Heart Mission at Cataldo

(now known as the Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission), Commissioner Eberlein discussed how forest health and water quality are connected. He also shared his views about the challenging nature of removing timber from the forest post-fire in time for it to be merchantable, in part because the NEPA process prevents post-fire salvage in a timely manner.

7. Fire Salvage

- Bob Boeh discussed the 15-page Environmental Assessment developed after Hurricane Katrina for salvage logging and restoration. However, members discussed differing conditions, e.g., the damage was from wind (not fire).
- The IPNF is just beginning a rapid forest assessment to determine post-fire salvage and reforestation needs. Fires are still burning the landscape and fire suppression activities were hard on the land in some places, so the Forest Service needs to look at habitat rehabilitation and burned area emergency response (BAER) assessment work to make sure the next rains don't have major effects.
- Brad Smith brought two handouts – fire perimeters for the 2015 fires and fire history over the last century showing acres burned each decade; fire parameters were identified, along with the date of the parameters because the fires are still burning and subject to grow.
- *Discussion points:*
 - Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest has three 250-acre CEs already in discussion for post-fire salvage
 - Typically a forest has 11-18 months to salvage timber post-fire
 - National-level assessment team could be useful to rapidly assess the post-fire area and remove some of the burden from local staff
 - Available tools could focus on acreage based on the suitable timber base (i.e., the current CE allows 250 acres) or high-priority areas (campgrounds, along roads, etc.)
 - CE for salvage along roads in the North Zone was completed in 2012, and the IPNF may have other tools in the toolbox to use.
 - How will post-fire salvage (and changed conditions) affect the existing program of work/5-Year Action Plan?
 - Does the PFC support a 250-acre CE to manage post-fire salvage, or does the group want a larger project that would need to have an EA?
- **ACTION: Forest Projects Committee** will work on developing recommendations for post-fire response for Mary Farnsworth. The Committee may consider focusing efforts on the Grizzly Complex and Kaniksu Fire areas as potential areas for post-fire management, pending assessment information from the FS (Chad will provide a timeline as soon as he knows).

8. Projects & Forest Plan Updates

- 5 Year Action Plan
 - No updates

- Bottom Canyon
 - On the south side of the project area, the INPF Hopes to do a pre-bid walk through this fall; the sale will be a stewardship contract (named Lone Cabin)
 - Retained receipts from the south side will fund the stewardship projects in the north; the Forest Service is prepping for the contracting work
 - Chad will look into the numbers for each side and update the PFC
 - Once implementation begins, the PFC will would like to schedule a field trip

- Jasper Mountain
 - Layout as of September is 90% complete; next step is to do GPS boundary marking and then timber cruising
 - May be two sales; numbers won't be final until the cruising is complete
 - Work will likely happen during the 3rd quarter of FY2016

- Buckskin Saddle
 - Brad & Bob met with Eric and resource staff to discuss the proposed 45,000-acre project
 - IPNF staff will follow up with insect and disease maps, and a better volume estimate, but staff have been consumed by fire-related work
 - Stand exams have been in progress; contracted stand exam work will be completed over two years
 - There are several emerging issues –
 - Whitetail fire was in the project area
 - Other issues: BPA transmission corridor, TMDL issues, WUI areas
 - IPNF staff can look at the Whitetail fire area and see if it might be a potential Farm Bill CE because of the fire and insect/disease issues
 - The FLT needs to discuss the project, how it fits in with the fires that occurred this summer, and if it's still on schedule

- Hughes Creek
 - River Design Group will complete the design and prepare for contracting
 - LiDAR may be too complicated for Hughes Meadow
 - Kalispell Tribe is willing to put in piezometers –hope to install 20 this fall
 - Decision is slated for 2016, and work is scheduled for 2017
 - Excavator will be used instead of blasting due to grizzly bear habitat

- Granite Reeder
 - Crowd funding to fund the conceptual design might help attract grants
 - The PFC needs someone from the IPNF to write a narrative or talking points before kicking off a fundraising campaign

- Potter's Wheel
 - Data collection started prior to the fires; LiDAR work is available
 - Status of Shoshone County is still in question – the IPNF and PFC would like to involve Shoshone County in the project

- Leslee Stanley invited Mike to Shoshone County's meeting, and Mike suggested that Kent Hill and others should also attend
 - Chad suggested that the first meeting should happen in the next month, at least to look at maps
 - Members should start thinking about how regular Potters Wheel meetings should happen – where to meet, information needs, etc.
- Lightning Creek
 - Northwest Youth Corps crew is working on the Beetop Roundtop trail
 - Wilderness Restoration Volunteers worked on trails in August
 - Scotchman Peak trail reroute was completed; unfortunately the trail is currently closed because of mountain goat issues
 - Large woody debris installation is complete in Lightning Creek
 - NFF contracted with the Weed Guy for weed treatments at trailheads/trails
 - Friends of Scotchman Peaks will put together a volunteer crew to do weed monitoring next summer
 - Warming Hut
 - Site has been cleaned and prepped; students and instructor camped at the site to take photos, soil samples, and collect other information
 - 50% design completed in December; 90% design by early spring
- Recreation
 - IPNF submitted two work plans – (1) winter travel plan – light (funded at a minimum level) and (2) winter travel plan –fully funded; the fully funded version was tentatively approved for FY2016 but won't be confirmed until the Forest Service has a budget from Congress
 - Committee is ready to put a set of winter travel plan recommendations together so that when the IPNF begins analysis, the PFC is ready.
 - **ACTIONS:**
 - Committee (John, Brad, Phil, Liz) will meet; they'd probably reach out to stakeholders in Boundary County, and would also like to coordinate with KVRI
 - Committee will set up a meeting with Dan (IPNF)

9. Miscellaneous Business

- Marc Brinkmeyer, Chairman of the Board, Idaho Forest Group sent a letter to the Idaho Congressional delegation to support designating the Scotchman Peaks as wilderness.
- Liz updated the PFC about Grouse Creek large woody debris stream work.
- The PFC meeting schedule will likely change after November. Emily will poll the PFC to determine the best time for full PFC meetings.

10. Meeting adjourned.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

- **Forest Projects Committee: Tuesday, September 29th, 2:00 PM at Priest River**
- **Potter's Wheel meeting: Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 8th, 9:00 AM at the Fernan District**
- **Full PFC: Thursday, November 12th, 1:00-4:30 PM**

ACTION ITEMS:

- Forest Projects Committee will work on post-fire response and salvage recommendations
- Forest Projects Committee will try to meet about Potter's Wheel in the next month, and some members will also meet with Shoshone County Commissioners
- Recreation group (John, Brad, Phil, Liz) will meet to start working on winter travel plan recommendations
- Emily will poll the PFC to determine the best time for full PFC meetings in 2016