

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record
Wednesday, January 13th, 2016 – 12:00-3:30 PM
County Administration Building, 1500 Hwy 2, Sandpoint

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

Partners/Guests: Karen Roetter, Greg Becker, Sid Smith, Molly McCahon, Steve Klatt, Nate Sparks, Marni Salmon, Randy Stoltz, Mike and Ben from Jeep Jamboree USA

Facilitator: Emily Olsen

Meeting objectives

- Discuss opportunities to partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Discuss and determine next steps for winter travel planning
- Review 2015 end-of-year survey results

Greetings and Opening Announcements

- The NFF received a second grant from the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation to support meeting facilitation and technical assistance. The PFC currently has \$17,760 to contract out for GIS analysis and/or supplemental data collection to advance collaborative discussions and accelerate projects.
- Dan Scaife is the new Coeur d'Alene River District Ranger. Members noted that they had positive interactions with Dan in the past when he served as IPNF Aquatics Specialist.

Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes

- Emily Olsen reviewed the meeting objectives.
- PFC members unanimously approved the November 12th meeting minutes.

Public Comment

- No public comment, though several guests joined the PFC for the meeting.

Policy Updates and Discussion

- Karen Roetter and Sid Smith reported that significant progress was made on the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act in 2015, and there was a lot of support in the West. Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) seem serious about pushing a bill this year.
- In December, the Forest Service received a \$600 million increase in the fire suppression budget through the omnibus budget bill, for this fiscal year only.

Winter Travel Planning (*Brad Smith & John Finney*)

- IPNF is preparing to start developing a winter travel plan for the entire North Zone. Several years ago, winter travel planning was set to be completed for the Selkirk Mountain Range by 2007, but the process was delayed for a number of reasons. Now the scope is larger. The IPNF currently has \$35,000 in the budget to start moving forward this FY.

- PFC Recreation Committee would like to work through a collaborative process to develop recommendations for the winter travel plan (essentially discuss where snowmobile use is appropriate in the North Zone). The Committee feels that collaborative recommendations would help a new travel plan stand up in court.
- Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) is the best forum to discuss winter travel planning in the Bonners Ferry District. The PFC would like to facilitate discussions in the Sandpoint and Priest Lake Districts. The vision is to host geographic meetings, with the PFC and KVRI coordinating to develop recommendations for the entire North Zone.
- There's not a set timeline for the process yet.
- Mike Petersen noted that the Kootenai Valley Stakeholders Coalition developed consensus recommendations on snowmobiling and wilderness (among other issues) on the adjacent Kootenai National Forest. Mike shared the example recommendations with the Recreation Committee.
- **Consensus Decision: The Panhandle Forest Collaborative supports the approach described by the Recreation Committee, and feels that participation in the winter travel planning process is worthy of the group's energy and time. The PFC would like engage in the process.**
- **Action Items:**
 - Recreation Committee will set up a meeting with KVRI representatives to figure out roles and how to best move forward (process meeting).

Post-Fire Planning & Work (Update from the IPNF about the Tower and Grizzly Fires)

- Coeur d'Alene ID team is working on an EA for Grizzly Fire salvage, and Priest Lake ID team is working on an EA for Tower Fire salvage. The two districts are coordinating.
- Public scoping will likely begin in late January with a legal notice for each project.
- The plan is to issue a decision by June 2016.
- ID teams have the PFC's letter, and are considering the Forest Project Committee's points.
- Members shared some concerns that the salvage projects are distracting the IPNF from green work; however, the group is encouraged to hear that both salvage projects are moving forward.
- Laura Wolf noted that she flew over the Grizzly Fire area recently, and the burned areas looked great in terms of wildlife habitat.
- Brad Smith received the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) report for the Tower Fire. He'll share it with the group.
- Members noted that a larger snowmobile area in the Tower Fire site is currently closed, and shared an example from the Coleville National Forest where snowmobilers were able to comprise with the Forest Service to open some previously-closed snowmobile areas this winter.
- **Action Items:**
 - Forest Projects Committee will meet soon after the IPNF releases scoping letters for fire salvage in the Tower and Grizzly Fires. The Committee would like to review the project proposals and determine whether to develop and submit comments.
 - Brad Smith will share the BAER report for the Tower Fire with the group. *Done*

Tower Sale Discussion

- IPNF staff asked industry representatives to look at the Tower salvage site and provide advice on saleability. The group agreed that the sale needed to be out by June in order to capture any value from the burned areas.
- Jeff Connolly and others encouraged the IPNF to take the "low hanging fruit," work along roads first, and keep the sale as simple as possible in order to gain the most value. More information on the sale area will be available once the scoping documents are released.

- In response to questions, Jeff said that there probably aren't safety concerns for people living near the burned area.

Opportunities to Partner with the NRCS (Greg Becker and Molly McCahon)

- Greg shared several NRCS grant programs that could help extend forest management onto private lands adjacent to public lands. The PFC discussed why Jasper Mountain makes sense based on the adjacent private lands. *Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation for details.*
- Four options for grant programs:
 - **Conventional NRCS cost-share (on-going)** – pre-commercial thinning, planting, road repair
 - **Idaho Department of Lands grant (due Jan 2016)** – must be on private lands adjacent to public lands; applications are stronger with multiple partners.
 - **Regional Conservation Partners Program (due summer 2016)** – watershed approach and multiple partners desired; partners must provide a “significant contribution.” *See the attached RCPP program handout for more information.*
 - **Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership (due Nov 2016)** (NRCS and USFS program) – joint funding from NRCS and the USFS to enhance work beyond Forest Service boundaries to restore lands, reduce wildfire threats, protect water quality and supply, and improve habitat for at-risk species; involvement from a collaborative group is helpful.
- PFC members thought that Jasper Mountain might be too far along for Chief's Joint Landscape program funding; ideally, the group could start at the beginning with project identification.
- PFC role moving forward: partner (makes proposals stronger), helps prioritize the area to build a project around, provides matching contribution if required
- **Action Items:**
 - Greg will send more information on what “significant contribution” means in the RCPP. *Done*
 - Liz will find out the schedule for Jasper Mountain to determine if the project would still be applicable for a grant. *Done (sale will be advertised in the fall of 2016)*
 - Forest Projects Committee will look at the 5 Year Plan and make recommendations for projects to discuss during the March meeting.
 - Forest Projects Committee members will try to meet with Shoshone County in advance of the March meeting to discuss the potential to partner (this could be a great opportunity).
 - PFC members will pick a project that has the best fit during the March meeting. Options may include Jasper Mountain, Bear Paw, Upper West Branch, and others.

2015 End-of-Year Survey - Potential Improvements and Next Steps

- Emily Olsen shared the results from the 2015 End-of-Year PFC survey (“Factors of Collaborative Success). Ten people completed the survey. *Please see the attached presentation for full details.*
- Majority of the results were very positive.
- Survey responses pointed out that more organizations could be at the table. The group discussed this issue, and noted that the PFC would benefit from participation from the Kalispell Tribe, grazing representatives, Clark Fork citizens, Shoshone County, and other. The PFC agreed to make an effort on a project-by-project basis to bring more people to the table. Committees should keep an eye out for new member opportunities. If people participate at the committee level, they may consider participating in the full PFC.
- **Action Items:**
 - Emily will send the survey results to the full list that initially received the survey link.
 - Emily will send the survey results to the Idaho Forest Restoration Partners as a resource.

Project Timeline Updates

- **5 year action plan** – Postponed
- **Bottom Canyon** – No updates
- **Jasper Mountain** – Sale will not be advertised until fall of 2016, mostly due to the fire salvage projects, but sale prep is nearly done. The sale will come out as a stewardship project.
- **Buckskin Saddle** – Postponed
- **Hughes Creek**
 - Field surveys were completed in November. The Kalispell Tribe is putting the design together to shift the stream to the native channel. NEPA work should be completed in the summer of 2016, with implementation scheduled for 2017. It sounds like LiDAR will be used as a tool for the project.
 - Liz Johnson-Gebhardt noted that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering poisoning brook trout (non-native species) in order to help bull trout. A scoping letter should go out soon. **Action Item:** Laura will find out more about the brook trout situation and share any relevant information with the PFC.
 - RAC dollars are available, and could be used to fund Hughes Creek implementation.
- **Granite Reeder** – No updates
- **Potter's Wheel** – Postponed
- **Lightning Creek**
 - Large Woody Debris: Many LWD structures were lost after flooding in November. The channel shifted drastically in some places, both in the project area and downstream. Road closures are in effect in the area, and repairs could take multiple years.
 - Trail work: Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness will do weed mitigation work this summer. Phil Hough reported that they should be able to access almost all trails.
 - Winter Warming Hut: University of Idaho students released the 50% design of the warming hut, and are working on the 100% design. John Finney can share the design with anyone who is interested. The students are on track to start construction after July 4th. **Action Item:** Emily will keep a PFC field trip on agenda as a possibility for summer 2016.
- **Scotchman Peak Trail Reroute** – Phil reported that there's only one mile to go. In terms of the goat issues, tagging, monitoring, hazing, and education/outreach options are being considered. **Action Item:** Phil will keep the PFC updated about Scotchman Peak Trail.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

- The March meeting is rescheduled for 12:00-3:30 PM on Wednesday, March 16th because the originally scheduled date conflicted with an IPNF leadership training.

Upcoming Meetings

March 16th

May 11th

July 13th

Meeting Action Items

- **Winter Travel Planning**
 - Recreation Committee will set up a meeting with KVRI representatives to figure out roles and how to best move forward (process meeting).
- **Fire Salvage EAs**
 - Forest Projects Committee will meet soon after the IPNF releases scoping letters for fire salvage in the Tower and Grizzly Fires. The Committee would like to review the project proposals and determine whether to develop and submit comments.
 - Brad Smith will share the BAER report for the Tower Fire with the group. *Done*
- **Opportunities to Partner with NRCS**
 - Greg will send more information on what “significant contribution” means in the RCPP. *Done*
 - Liz will find out the schedule for Jasper Mountain to determine if the project would still be applicable for a grant. *Done (sale will be advertised in the fall of 2016)*
 - Forest Projects Committee will look at the 5-year plan and make recommendations for projects to discuss during the March meeting. Mike volunteered to get the 5-year plan update.
 - Forest Projects Committee members will try to meet with Shoshone County in advance of the March meeting to discuss the potential to partner (this could be a great opportunity).
 - PFC members will pick a project that has the best fit during the March meeting. Options may include Jasper Mountain, Bear Paw, Upper West Branch, and others.
- **2015 End-of-Year Survey**
 - Emily will send the survey results to the full list that initially received the survey link.
 - Emily will send the survey results to the Idaho Forest Restoration Partners as a resource.
- **Projects**
 - Laura will find out more about the brook trout situation at Hughes Creek and share any relevant information with the PFC.
 - Emily will keep a PFC field trip to visit the Lightning Creek winter warming hut construction site on agenda as a possibility for summer 2016.
 - Phil will keep the PFC updated about Scotchman Peak Trail.

Adjourn.

Immediately after the full PFC Meeting: Recreation Subcommittee Meeting