

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record
Wednesday, March 16, 2016 – 12:00-3:30 PM
Sandpoint Ranger District, 1602 Ontario Street, Sandpoint

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

Partners/Guests: Karen Roetter, Greg Becker, Aubrey Hoxie, Sid Smith, Steve Klatt, Kevin Wade, Alan Harper, Jim McReynolds, Judy Morbeck

Forest Service: Shoshana Cooper, Ryan Foote, Tim Knight, Erick Walker, Dan Scaife

Facilitator: Emily Olsen

Meeting objectives

- Discuss the Grizzly and Tower Fire Salvage Projects and Timeline
- Discuss the 5-Year Plan & Process to Update the Plan
- Identify a Project to Move Forward for a Potential NRCS Partnership

Welcome & Opening Announcements

- Idaho Forest Restoration Partners (IFRP) Workshop: Mike Petersen and Bob Boeh represented the PFC at the [2016 workshop](#) in Boise. Mike reported that the workshop was a great learning experience, and featured panels on fire preparedness, post-fire restoration, tending to collaborative groups, and public lands issues.
- Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): Erick Walker reported that the State of Idaho and the Forest Service are in the process of developing a master GNA agreement. Once finalized, the agreement may allow the State to carry out on-the-ground work on Forest Service lands, thereby expanding implementation capacity. Emily will contact Peg Polichio (new Good Neighbor Authority facilitator for Idaho) and ask her to speak to the PFC in May.

Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes

- The January 13th Meeting Record was approved and will be posted on the PFC's website.

Public Comment

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

Idaho Panhandle National Forest RAC

- Shoshana Cooper, Acting Public Affairs Officer on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, discussed the Idaho Panhandle Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC is comprised of fifteen members from five membership categories. Of the 15 membership terms, 11 will soon expire.
- Funding has gone to a variety of projects (fire, noxious weeds, recreation, education, etc.). In FY 2016, the RAC approved \$1.5 million of funding for projects; however, if membership vacancies aren't filled, the RAC won't be able to distribute funding in FY 17.
- Membership requires a four-year commitment, and the RAC typically meets once/year. RAC members must be Idaho residents. Two people must apply for each vacancy (in other words, each applicant must have an opponent).
- Brad Smith and Jeff Connolly are applying; Alan Harper is currently a RAC member.
- **Action Items:**

- Shoshana Cooper will send Emily the RAC interest form and information on current vacancies to to distribute to the PFC.
- PFC members are encouraged to apply for open vacancies, or spread the word to others. Members should contact Shoshana directly if they have questions.

Policy Updates

- Karen Roetter, Sid Smith, and Judy Morbeck reported that the energy bill has recently sidelined the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.

Update on Winter Travel Planning

- Recreation committee members Brad Smith and John Finney, and Erick Walker, met with Patty Perry and Dan Denning from KVRI to discuss the PFC's desire for a collaborative process for winter travel planning. Through the discussion, PFC members learned that KVRI is interested in coordinating with the PFC to host community discussions.
- IPNF must prepare a winter travel plan, and the intent is to cover the entire North Zone, and consider impacts to caribous, as well as grizzly bears, lynx, and other species.
- The cost is estimated at \$250,000 per year for two years.
- The IPNF is not likely to launch a planning process until adequate funding is available. The IPNF does not want to diminish the existing, limited recreation funds.
- Mike Petersen noted that the Coleville National Forest just released a revised forest plan with [special interest areas](#) (see page 107 of the linked plan) to enhance recreation. Counties and others have shown interest in seeking funds to support recreation in these areas. There could be similar opportunities on the IPNF.
- Phil Hough noted that funding might be available if the INPF considers the wildlife management aspects of the process.
- **Action Items:**
 - The Recreation Committee will draft a letter on behalf of the PFC to Mary Farnsworth, Region 1 leadership, and the Washington Office explaining the importance of and need for winter travel planning on the INPF. The Recreation Committee will circulate the letter to the PFC via email or during the May 11th meeting for approval.
 - Phil Hough and Emily will look at grant opportunities through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other sources that may support the process.

Fire Salvage Projects Update & Discussion

- [Tower Fire Salvage & Reforestation Project](#): Tim Knight reported that the IPNF appreciated the PFC's comments on the Tower Fire Salvage project, and thanked the group for putting in time to develop the comments. The planning team developed a new alternative for analysis based on the PFC's comments. The project is still under analysis, but on time for a decision in June.
- [Grizzly Fire Salvage & Restoration Project](#): Project is still on target for a May or June decision. The Washington Office is currently reviewing the "emergency situation" determination.

Five Year Plan Update & Discussion

- Ryan Foot reported that Matt Staudacher is the new Forest Vegetation Staff Officer for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, and is leading an effort to update the Five Year Action Plan (5YAP).
- Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Mike Petersen, Judy Morbeck, and Karen Roetter recently attended the first 5YAP update meeting.

- The INPF is working with collaborative groups, RACs, county officials, and others to work on the update. First, the IPNF will determine if the existing landscape criteria are still appropriate, or if new criteria are needed (existing criteria include, for example, restoration potential, location in or near the Wildland Urban Interface, distance to a mill, etc.). Second, the IPNF will determine how to rank or prioritize projects.
- PFC members suggested that other variables could include a community's economic need, or local value to a community.
- **Action Items:**
 - Following the next 5YAP meeting, the full PFC or forest projects committee will discuss the 5YAP if Liz and Mike determine that there's a need for more input.
 - Ryan Foote will send Emily the 5YAP map and Timber Plan to share with the PFC.

NRCS Partnership Opportunities – Identification of Potential Project

- Following up on the PFC's decision in January to move forward in support of an NRCS partnership opportunity, Greg Becker and Aubrey Hoxie discussed several options for a Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership project with the group.
- Through this program, NRCS and the USFS would receive funding 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.
- After discussion several potential projects, the group encouraged NRCS staff to look into:
 1. Jasper Mountain (Priest Lake District, scheduled for 2017 implementation) *Members noted that Jasper Mountain has potential for an NRCS partnership, even if the Joint Chief's Program doesn't end up being the best fit.*
 2. Bunco Rouch (Coeur d'Alene River District, scheduled for 2020 implementation)
- **Action Items:**
 - NRCS staff (Greg Becker and Aubrey Hoxie) will start reaching out to landowners to assess the potential for a Joint Chief's project.
 - NRCS staff will coordinate with Tim Knight (Priest Lake RD) and Dan Scaife (Coeur d'Alene River RD), as well as Liz Johnson-Gebhardt and Jeff Connolly for help with landowners around the Jasper Mountain project area.

Project Timeline Updates

- **5 year action plan** – Beginning the process to update the 5YAP (see details above)
- **Bottom Canyon** – IPNF is considering a different road location for FR 206 that would be out of the floodplain and old growth area. Dan Scaife would like to plan a field trip for the PFC to see and discuss the proposed location.
 - **Action Items:** Mike Petersen will work with Dan Scaife to set a field trip date. Prior to the field trip, Dan will ask GIS staff from the IPNF to put together a diagram showing the previous and proposed road locations. Mike will reach out to the Kootenai Environmental Alliance to explain the situation.
- **Jasper Mountain** – Sale will be advertised in the fall of 2016. The sale will come out as a stewardship project.
- **Buckskin Saddle** – Postponed; planning may begin in FY2017
- **Hughes Creek** – Making progress; the Kalispell Tribe and USFWS are working on a design. NEPA work should be completed in the summer of 2016, with implementation scheduled for 2017. The Forest Service and partners are seeking funds for LiDAR.
- **Granite Reeder** – No updates; **Action Item:** Tim Knight will check on the status of Granite Reeder (engineering drawings) prior to the May 11th PFC meeting.

- **Potter's Wheel** – No updates
- **Lightning Creek**
 - The IPNF received approval for [Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads](#), and will receive federal dollars for the closed access points. NEPA is expected next winter (2016), and repair work and reopening during the 2017 field season. The funding will also be used to repair the Rattle Creek bridge.
 - Winter warming hut: John Finney reported that the hut will be a 20x40-foot structure, and the students will start building in July. **Interested PFC members can check out the hut site in this [Winter Riders YouTube video](#).** The RAC recently approved the project for supplemental funding, due in part to the many partners involved. Emily is working with IPNF staff to set up a July field trip to the site.

Miscellaneous Business

- Erick will be leaving for a four-month detail on the Coconino National Forest beginning March 21st. The acting Sandpoint District Ranger is coming from the El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico.
- Membership: Alan Harper, Kevin Wade, and Greg Becker attended recent meetings and are voting member candidates. The PFC will review membership status and guidelines for membership during the May meeting.
- The PFC has \$17,760 in grant funding to contract out for GIS analysis and/or supplemental data collection to help advance the collaborative discussion and accelerate the project schedule that must be spent by the end of 2016. The group discussed the potential to use the funding for LiDAR work to accelerate the timeline for 1-2 upcoming projects.
- **Action Item:** Dan Scaife will speak with his staff about the potential opportunities and cost of LiDAR as a use for the PFC's grant funds.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 11th from 12:00-3:30 PM at the Bonner County Administration Building (First Floor Conference Room).

Adjourn.

RECAP: Meeting Action Items

- Shoshana Cooper will send Emily the RAC interest form and information on current vacancies to distribute to the PFC. **Completed**
- PFC members are encouraged to apply for open vacancies, or spread the word to others. Members should contact Shoshana directly if they have questions.
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