

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record

Wednesday, March 29, 2017

Bonner County Administration Building, Sandpoint

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

Forest Service/Partners/Guests present: Alan Harper, Karen Roetter, Judy Morbeck, Cait Reeves, Kurt Dyroff, Peg Polichio, Sarah Jerome, Dan Scaife, Mary Farnsworth, Cameron Rasor, Melissa Hendrickson, Kyla Berendsen, Kary Maddox, Craig Phillips, Erick Walker

Facilitator: Karen DiBari

Meeting Objectives

- Outline next steps for each committee and determine project timelines
- Discuss forest-wide issues with Mary Farnsworth, Forest Supervisor
- Learn about LiDAR and its use/value on priority projects
- Schedule field trips

Approval of Minutes

- The January meeting record was approved with no changes.

Public Comment - None

Policy Updates from Legislative Staff

- Judith Morbeck reported that Congressman Labrador, vice chair of the Natural Resource Committee, is working with Congressman Simpson to introduce a bill to address the routing of the Gateway West Transmission Line through the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area.

Report from the Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership Workshop (IFRP)

- Jeff Connolly and Peg Polichio both attended the IFRP, and reported that the workshop was good. The IFRP is working on a refresh of their operating principles. Peg is on the IFRP board, and will share the revised principles with the PFC. There was lots of good discussion at the workshop about the many successes of collaboration in Idaho, and also strategies to avoid collaborative fatigue.

Updates from the State of Idaho

- The Nez Perce-Clearwater NF recently contracted a timber sale on the Wapiti Good Neighbor Authority project, which will be implemented this summer.
- The state is working with the Forest Service to develop protocols regarding how the state can administer sales.
- The state is hiring several foresters.
- The Boise NF is doing a 200,000 acre salvage sale (Pioneer).

- The state is working to add capacity to get projects done through National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) contractors, and have a request for proposals out right now.

Updates from Mary Farnsworth, Supervisor

- The 2017 program is on schedule for delivery.
- The Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) is one of the few forests in the northern region that had a first quarter sale.
- Their target this year is 54 million board feet (compared to 28 mbf in FY11). The target for FY19 is 58 mbf.
- The Jasper Mountain stewardship sale will happen this spring.
- The IPNF has shelf stock now, which enables the forest to increase on the ground work if further resources become available.
- Hannah Flats project is going well.
- Floods blew out the access road to the Tower Fire Salvage area last week. The IPNF is working with the ERFO Program (Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads) to get funds to replace washed out bridges and roads.
- Lightning Creek – the IPNF has requested \$2.7 million to replace Lightning Creek Rd.
- Hiawatha Trail – 20th Anniversary in 2018 – planning a celebration. Mary invited involvement from PFC members. The Shoshone County Collaborative is involved. 2018 is also the 50th anniversary of the Trails Act and Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.
- Winter Travel Planning – Erick Walker is the lead for the IPNF.
- The IPNF has 40 vacancies currently, including the forest wildlife biologist.

Farm Bill Landscape Treatment Units

- Farm Bill landscape treatment units –the IPNF is not going into Management Area 5 due to the input they've received. If some kind of disturbance happens (like a windstorm) they might work in MA5 but don't have current plans to.
- In the second part of the letter – Mary went through a list of projects that have been completed in the areas listed in the PFC's letter. She said those projects weren't in the 5 year action plan because they were already in motion.
- The Northern ID Strike Team is focused on Farm Bill categorical exclusions only because the team is being shared between the IPNF and the Nez Perce – Clearwater. They are working on two projects (Camp Dawson and Robin Hood) and should be focusing on them in August.
- Group discussion:
 - Q: Is there a need to go back into an area when just 15-20% of the area has been treated?
A: Maybe – would require a closer look.
 - Q: What are the possibilities for large landscape analysis (Paul Hessburg style), such as 200,000 acres? A: The IPNF doesn't currently have funding for large scale analysis.
 - The PFC and the IPNF are interested in having a discussion about these two points but need to structure it in a strategic way.
 - The Farm Bill is a useful tool for vegetative treatments but seems limited for aquatic restoration, road decommissioning, etc.
- ACTION:
 - The Forest Projects Committee will meet and will talk with Bob Boeh about how to frame up the landscape approach discussion (such as a programmatic EIS).

Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act (see ppt)

Phil Hough gave a presentation about the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act.

- Senator Risch introduced the bill on December 8, 2016.
- In 1978, members of the public submitted over 6,000 comments to the forest planning process during RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation). 75% of those commenters expressed support of wilderness.
- Feedback on the bill?
 - General love and hate both
 - Some comments on game carts
 - Anti-federal government sentiment
 - Fire suppression concerns (based on unfounded concerns).

LIDAR – Light Detection and Ranging

Melissa Hendrickson gave a presentation on LIDAR, and how it has been used.

- LIDAR is a powerful tool. They have used it to get a data elevation model, with lots of data layers. LIDAR enables correction of errors in existing data, for example roads that aren't in the Forest Service database can be seen using the LIDAR data, or road locations can be corrected. Other things LIDAR shows:
 - Mining/geology – landscape, fill, abandoned mine closures, adits with roads (dangerous to the public)
 - Helps identify public safety priorities
 - Landform stability – can see landslides (Potter's Wheel for example – showed 3 roads across a slide)
 - Old ground-based units – can see prior activity of what happened on the landscape
 - Terracing
 - Canopy density
 - Canopy height (cuts really pop out)
 - Recreation visuals
 - Helps set up logging units
 - Can extrapolate stand info (like old growth)
 - Shows slope (steepness) which informs unit layout and road design, helps with cost estimates
- LIDAR doesn't go through water, so that is a limitation
- Potter's Wheel – LIDAR flight done after the field work was completed, so it is being used to add to the field data collected. The project area has 370 miles of road and the LIDAR shows where there's water.
- Honey Badger – looking at LIDAR first, then doing field work
- LIDAR can help with the design of a project, and prioritizing where seasonal employees should be sent to most efficiently collect data, such as watershed surveys, stand exams, or old growth exams.
- There is no replacement for getting out on the ground. Can't tell insect & disease conditions, forest health.
- Cost of technology should be going down.
- The IPNF has coverage for:
 - Potter's Wheel
 - Honey Badger
 - Copper

- Hughes Meadow
- Buckskin Saddle

Project Updates

Honey Badger (Dan Scaife IPNF lead, Mike Petersen PFC lead)

- In the NFMA phase
- Implementation planned for FY21
- Large acreage
- 3 major sections of the project
 - South of Hayden Lk (focus on recreation; lots of unsustainable old logging roads, trails)
 - Northern section (focus on forest health) –
 - South of 437
- The Central Zone Trails Group has identified desired conditions – very interested in the project, particularly the south of Hayden Lk section.
- Other potentially interested groups – CDA Natural Resources Group (CDA 2030 – Chamber of Commerce) and the Four County Natural Resources Group
- ACTION: Discuss field trip opportunities. Dan Scaife will think about timing and report back.

Potter's Wheel (Dan Scaife - IPNF, Mike Petersen/Laura Wolf - PFC)

- IPNF is formulating the proposed action
- “business as usual vegetative treatment”
- Maybe a field trip opportunity, but there is less to see.

Hughes Creek (Cameron Rasure, Acting DR; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt and Brad Smith PFC leads)

- Looking at LIDAR
- PCFC has raised about \$55,000; still have a few grants pending
- Project will be ready to implement phase one this summer!

Hanna Flats – Good Neighbor Authority Project (Cameron Rasure FS and Brad Smith PFC lead)

- Objectives:
 - increase resiliency to insects and disease
 - increase quantity and vigor of ponderosa pine
 - reduce hazardous fuels
- 7,000 acre project area; 200 acres private
- Have identified 2,300 acres of treatment opportunity
- Project NEPA will be a categorical exclusion
- PFC toured the area last fall
- Cameron Rasure met with the tribe on 3/28/17
- April 13 public meeting planned at the Priest Lake District Office
- Working with the state through an IDIQ and relying on state specialists for heritage and wildlife
- The State of ID put \$250,000 into a startup fund; \$850,000 is available statewide from the state for projects
- IPNF plans:
 - Early June field trip
 - Public meeting in the fall
 - Decision Winter FY18

Lightning Creek

- Lost Rattle Creek and Wellington Bridges, plus 4 culverts due to the 2015 rain on snow event
- Requested the ERFO funds
- The Federal Highway Administration has done a 50% design phase this spring, plan on 70% design approval in June
- Replacing “in kind” in accordance with what is allowed with this federal money (no betterments or improvements); will be able to use bigger, better culverts
- Have a problem with legal access to the Upper Pack River Rd, so that portion of the project will be dropping off
- Construction planned for 2018 field season
- The IPNF has to do a categorical exclusion because of bull trout critical habitat and location adjacent to grizzly bear area

Buckskin Saddle (Erick Walker FS, _____ PFC)

- Plan a FY20 decision, FY21 sale
- Boundary has been changed so the project is all on the Sandpoint District
- Plan to do stand exams this summer
- LIDAR may cover part of project area
- Gathering NFMA data FY17/18 field seasons
- Anticipate 2-3 sales total, maybe one will be stewardship; 50,000 acres
- Will be an integrated restoration project
- Johnson Twin is a roadside salvage project which will hopefully be able to fix some roads
- ACTION: Plan a late summer field trip. Erick Walker will think about timing and report back.

Winter Travel Planning (Erick Walker FS, John Finney and Brad Smith, PFC)

- Travel planning will cover entire north zone
- Required to do oversnow winter travel planning (subpart C)
- IPNF decided it is most efficient to do entire Kaniksu portion
- Shoshanna Cooper (Public Affairs Officer) is drafting a public involvement plan
- Erick will share the plan with Brad and John
- Planning effort will start in the late fall
- IPNF do extensive community outreach
- Analysis will be completed by a combination of an enterprise team and IPNF staff
- Anticipate a two year planning process (EIS)
- Looking to Regional Office for continued funding
- ACTIONS:
 - PFC consider a letter of support for winter travel planning to the RO
 - Phil Hough suggested connecting with the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition

Bear Management Units

- The IPNF has two bear management units that are out of compliance with road density standards
- Scoped the project in September 2016 and received public input
- Once the bear management units are in compliance, the IPNF will have more flexibility with other projects
- Decision anticipated late fall 2017, with implementation of contract work in the FY18 field season
- DISCUSSION:
 - Some PFC members were surprised by this project and would have liked to have had an opportunity to discuss it within the PFC.

- The IPNF asked for guidance on what projects the group is interested in because there are a lot of projects and it's not clear in which projects the PFC wants to engage.
- The group discussed the need to be very clear about the type of engagement the PFC is interested in. For example, some projects could be a "communication" level and at the other end of the spectrum would be full engagement like Bottom Canyon (multiple meetings to develop an alternative or substantive comments).
- **ACTIONS:**
 - Develop criteria or some kind of system to articulate the level of engagement the PFC is interested in, and a communications system with the IPNF.
 - Add a review of the Schedule of Proposed Actions to every meeting so the PFC is informing itself about projects going through the NEPA process.

REMINDER OF PFC MEETING DATES!!!!!!

- Wednesday, May 17
- Wednesday, July 19
- Wednesday, September 20
- Wednesday, November 15

RECAP: Meeting Action Items

- The Forest Projects Committee will meet and will talk with Bob Boeh about how to frame up the landscape approach discussion (such as a programmatic EIS).
- Discuss field trip opportunities for Honey Badger. Dan Scaife will think about timing and report back.
- Plan a late summer field trip to Buckskin Saddle. Erick Walker will think about timing and report back.
- PFC consider a letter of support for winter travel planning to the RO
- Phil Hough suggested connecting with the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition