

Panhandle Forest Collaborative
Draft Meeting Record

Bonner County Administration Building, Sandpoint

November 15, 2017, 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) Members and Alternates: Bob Boeh, Idaho Forest Group; Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; John Finney, Sandpoint Winter Riders and Panhandle Riders Association; Alan Harper, Idaho Forest Group; Phil Hough, Friends of Scotchmen Peaks Wilderness; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Priest Community Forest Connection; Mike Petersen, The Lands Council; Peg Polichio, Idaho Department of Lands; Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League; Laura Wolf, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Others: Rob Brassfield, USFS Priest Lake Ranger District; Emily Cleveland, Idaho Conservation League; Lawson Fite, American Forest Resource Council (phone); Mike Gaertner, Vertical Earth Bicycle Shop; Marie Holladay, Bonner County Planning Department; Jason Jerman, USFS Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District; Erin Mader, Idaho Forest Group; Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Dan Scaife, USFS Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District; Sid Smith, Office of Senator James Risch; Erick Walker, USFS Sandpoint Ranger District

Facilitator: Ben Irely, National Forest Foundation; Jess Eller, University of Montana

1. Greetings and Opening Announcements

- Agenda Review – Brad Smith requested that the Buckskin Saddle Field Trip Report be moved up because a few people reporting on it have to leave the meeting early. Phil Hough asked about winter travel planning, suggested it be discussed under “Other”.
- Discuss Final Tower Fire Salvage Monitoring Report – is complete and sounds like a great project. No final thoughts from the group on it.

2. Policy Updates from Legislative Staff (Karen Roetter and Sid Smith)

- Karen Roetter: The amendment modifying the current Tribal Protection Act will give tribes some ability to have projects done adjacent to or in their aboriginal land boundaries. The effect of this amendment may not be as broad as everyone is reading it, but there is some discomfort with the way it currently reads amongst some interests. The group discussed the letter that Kootenai County had sponsored to remove the tribal verbiage from the amendment. Bonner County chose not to sign it and is instead working with legislators to find better language for everyone. They're envisioning something similar to the Good Neighbor Authority for the tribes where the tribes help the Forest Service (FS) manage more acreage. The group ended the discussion agreeing that this amendment will most likely see some modifications.
- Sid Smith reported to the group on the progress of the Westerman Bill. As it moves to the Senate, it will be in a group of other bills that also hope to fix the fire borrowing issue. There is a Pine Pilot Bill sponsored by Senators Cantwell and Murray and a “Westerman Light” by Senator Barrasso. Senator Risch will continue to push for a fire borrowing fix. Under some of the bills a project up to 30,000 acres that is sponsored by a collaborative process could be eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) rather than an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). “Collaborative process” does not necessarily mean an organized Collaborative but could include just a group of different stakeholders working together like on the Jasper Mountain project.

3. Updates on Good Neighbor Authority (Peg Polichio)

- Peg handed out a summary of the Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership's (IFRP) trip to Washington, D.C. IFRP is a coordination network for 10 collaboratives in Idaho. They focus on

the zone of agreement, which are the larger conceptual things that all the collaboratives can agree on. Several of those things are listed on the handout and were the main topic on their visits with legislators. Visits were 20-30 minutes. Other topics they discussed, such as capacity recommendations and threats and need for action, are also listed on the handout. The main takeaway from their visits is that the legislators and their staff thought that Idaho collaboratives' ability to work together is a breath of fresh air.

4. **Public Comment** – None given.

5. **Update on Tower/Grizzly Hearing and Draft Letter** (*Dan Scaife and Lawson Fite*)

- Dan Scaife attended the hearing, which is available to [watch online](#). The lawyer for Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR) said AWR wasn't given the same opportunity to be involved in the project that PFC was given. It came across as collusion rather than collaboration. The lengthy public scoping letter the Forest Service submitted showed they've had good public outreach and that AWR was invited on all the field trips.
- Brad Smith recommended the letter being submitted to the court be amended to say AWR was afforded the exact same opportunity as the PFC for public input. Mike Petersen added that the letter shouldn't be on an American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) letterhead, especially because the judge asked if the PFC is comprised of only industry interests. Other members of the group thought that individual names and their affiliations should be added to the letter. Lawson agreed to remove the letterhead and add individual names and affiliations before he submits it that afternoon.
- **DECISION:** all voted to approve the letter with the above stated amendments. Topic was concluded with the hope that Judge Windmill's experience with collaboratives would help influence Judge Fletcher's negative perception. Lawson is hopeful that given the composition of the judge panel they'll have a favorable outcome.

6. **Buckskin Saddle Field Trip Report & Recommendations** (*Brad Smith*)

- Brad Smith reported that as recently as Monday, he and John talked about the recreation part of this project. They discussed converting one of the pack saddle trails to non-motorized but realized that that trail was important to the motorized rec community, so they added a newly constructed additional non-motorized trail instead of converting the other trail. Phil Hough liked the idea but wondered about the capacity of the Forest Service to build a new trail or if it would become a "Friends" group's responsibility? He thought Idaho Trail Association could be involved. Brad said yes, but that this is the recommendation phase so that could be figured out later.
- Bob Boeh added that, because there were policy issues included in their recommendations letter, a copy should be sent to the Forest Supervisor. Erick Walker confirmed that Mary is the decision-maker. Bob suggested leaving the recommendation addressed the way it is and cc the Supervisor, Mary.
- **DECISION:** all present approved the Buckskin Saddle Recommendations letter and approved cc'ing the Forest Supervisor on the letter.

7. **Review PFC Protocols** (*Ben Irey*)

- This is a good opportunity, with a new facilitator, to refresh the protocols and make sure they're current. Ben would like to post the ground rules at each meeting and briefly outline before each meeting. The group seemed fine with that. He asked a few questions about how they determine who speaks first, and Liz clarified that because of the group's built trust and respect they've never really had an issue but if there are multiple people who'd like to speak the facilitator is ultimately in charge of determining order.

- Ben also asked about recruitment, and the group felt they should always be recruiting. Some thought that contacting those who not have come to meetings in past years might be a good strategy. Phil Hough remembered that they'd discussed reaching out to specific groups, like Trout Unlimited (TU), that they might want to try now. Liz Johnson-Gebhardt also recalled that they discussed this strategy with Honey Badger. Mike Petersen added that he thought they were a little light on some of the recreational interests like skiers or mountain bikers. And Liz Johnson-Gebhardt added tribal representation to that list. Ben asked which tribes they should reach out to again and the group listed Kootenai, Confederated Salish-Kootenai, Kalispell, Coeur D'Alene. After some discussion about difficulty in new membership recruitment, Ben proposed at least finding a contact for these groups that the PFC could send meeting minutes and field trip invitations to, to keep their group abreast of PFC issues and happenings.
- **ACTION:** Ben will contact the above tribes and organizations and find a contact to be on our mailing list.
- **ACTION:** Phil to outreach to TU.
- Discussion then followed on how many members of an organization can be a voting PFC member. The group thought that each organization can only have one voting PFC member.
- **DECISION:** all those in attendance voted to approve that there can only be one vote from each organization represented on the PFC
- **ACTION:** Members provide clarification on who they represent. Add this to the bottom of pages 3 and 6 of the protocols.
- **DECISION:** The group also agreed that citizens at large each get one vote.
- **DECISION:** All in attendance approved Liz Johnson-Gebhardt as PFC Chair and Mike Petersen as Vice Chair.
- **DECISION:** All approved of changing the language in the protocols that says "co-chairs" to say "Chair" and "Vice Chair".
- **ACTION:** Ben to change co-chairs to Chair and Vice Chair in protocols.
- **DECISIONS:** The group also approved the following language changes in the protocols:
 - Copy and paste language from page 9 or 10 in table "reservations about the decision will not be directed at the collaborative process itself" into communications.
 - A PFC voting member can abstain from voting.
 - More than 50% of voting members must be present and/or voting to obtain quorum.
 - Digital voting is allowed as long as quorum is achieved, follows normal voting procedure, and the situation dictates necessity of timing.
- **ACTION:** Ben makes the above changes to protocols.
- Clarification was provided on the following protocols:
 - State agency representatives are voting members; federal agency representatives are not voting members.
 - Field trips do not count toward meeting attendance, because they can be project specific so only that committee might attend.
 - After four absences a member **may** be removed from the group but that decision is up to the entire group.
 - Chair and Vice Chair's term limit is two years and should be revisited at that time.
 - Chair and Vice Chair are the only members that can speak on behalf of the Collaborative to the media.

- Current committees are: Forest Projects, Hanna Flats, and Honey Badger.
- Subgroups, like committees, make decisions provide feedback that is then passed to full PFC group; disagreements in subgroups are also passed to full PFC group.
- PFC votes by consensus, meaning everyone must be thumb up or thumb sideways (no thumbs down); in the event of a thumbs down, that person must provide an alternative which continues discussion.
- committees can have non-members in them.

8. Other Project's Timeline & Status Update

- **Honey Badger** (*Dan Scaife*) – The field trip was a good tour, and scoping ends on the 20th. There is other priority work to focus on right now, but Honey Badger's forest health is in top third of priority projects, water issues in the second third, and development stuff is in the bottom third. Dan wants to build slow momentum on the project, so they're just generating interest right now into what a trail system or watershed work could look like. Mike Petersen, from the PFC, is working with Dan on the project.
- **Hughes Creek** (*Liz Johnson-Gebhardt*) – They have a 50-foot temporary bridge built to get to the area. The crew to do the work was ready to go into the area this year, but with the fire the FS was reluctant to let them move equipment in. They've moved implementation back to next year after August 15 (mandated date because of bull trout). They're still looking for a little bit of money for the project.
- **Hanna Flats** (*Rob Brassfield*) – Rob is the Acting District Ranger at Priest Lake, but he'll be gone by early January and won't be at the next PFC meeting. Hanna Flats is a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) project. The State has hired a contractor to do the field work and some of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work. They're currently solidifying the proposed action, have completed all the fuel work, and have a travel analysis done. They had a conference call with contractor and the State and discussed each road and trail's maintenance or reconstruction needs. They can't use some of the funds for anything beyond maintenance because of GNA funding restrictions, so they'll use some Forest Service discretionary funds. Rob's pleased with the work done so far and with Dave Cobb, the Forest Service NEPA team leader. He seems to have his finger on the pulse of what is happening. There is also a good recreation piece to the project, which will include a snow mobile route and wider groomed trails for cross country skiing. Brad Smith asked a few questions about plant surveys, and Rob reported that surveys were done to the level they needed to move the project forward, but that a Forest Service botanist would be doing more surveys in the summer. Peg Polichio added that this project is a great model for collaboration from the State's view. It's also a good model for how the State can help the NEPA process. Rob finished his report with some dates: there will be a public meeting in December, most likely December 11, and the CE available for comment in January or February.
- **BIN**: PFC to review Hanna Flats CE when released.
- **Winter Travel Plan** (*Erick Walker*) – There is a small group of people working on a Kaniksu Motorized Over-the-Snow Travel Plan. They're trying to be specific and also in-line with other travel plans that have been completed. They want to host townhalls in adjacent counties and have a robust engagement with the public on the National Forest Management Act (NFMA)-side of things. They're collecting information about what the public wants that would help shape a proposed action, which would then become an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). There are town hall meeting planned for mid-January. The ultimate product will be a map that shows where it is okay to ride a snowmobile over the snow, showing areas they will groom, etc. The

other document that will be produced is the “Decision To Be Made” document. There have been decisions that have already been made such as over the snow motorized use in wilderness areas, and they’re not going back to review those. They also need to have a plan that addresses grizzlies and works with other forests that crosses state lines. The Inter Disciplinary (ID) Team leader is Annette Myrie, who used to work for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. They want to have a decision made by mid-2020.

- **BIN:** Collaborative members be kept aware of schedule for townhall meetings regarding winter travel planning.
- **Buckskin Saddle** (*Erick Walker*) – The field trip was good; thanks to all those who participated. Judy provided goodies from Clark Fork Country Store Pantry. The field trip gave a good first glimpse at project area and provided a platform for good discussions around forest restoration, inventory roadless areas, dry site old growth areas and encroachment, owl habitat, elk security, and road management. Because they’re having early discussions they now have a sense of opportunities. They also talked to the Gold Creek Lodge owner, who provides housing for mainly ATV users. Forest Service will be gathering field data for another year and will be putting out information to the public at the same time it goes to the PFC. Dan Scaife updated the group that the road that a few members had walked on with him would not work for a proposed road after consulting with a geotechnical expert. They’re going back to the original plan to use CIP funding.
- **ACTION:** Ben to make sure Buckskin Saddle Committee includes Brad, Laura, Phil, Liz, Alan, John, and Jeff.
- **Lightning Creek Road** (*Erick Walker*) – The road was damaged by a flashflood, but repairs have been approved for Emergency Repair of Federally Owned Roads (ERFOR). The Department of Transportation (DOT) will be in charge of everything (“soup to nut”) – assessment, NEPA, etc. with FS input. They are mildly receptive to FS input and will only replace what was damaged in-kind unless there is a strong reason to change original plan. The new Lightning Creek Road plan only got minor changes/updates, so hopefully the road will hold up in the next flashflood. Some of the minor changes are that Snake Creek will sit higher but not wider and Wellington Bridge will have improved abutments to make it more tolerant of flood events, but the bridge will not be replaced. They still have to finish consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) because it’s bull trout territory they need a formal consultation. Construction work will start next field season and be completed by this time next year. Erick briefed local county commissioners yesterday on this. The information poster put out five months ago is still accurate, but it will be updated and put out again. The first estimate was \$1.8-1.9 mil but now it’s closer to \$2 mil. Slight modifications have brought the price up a little bit, but it’s still a less than 10% change.

9. Meeting Closeout

- Upcoming meeting schedule (all meetings held in the Bonner County Administration Building unless Ben notifies members):
 - January 17
 - March 14 (March 21 was in conflict with Idaho Partner Forest Restoration meeting)
 - May 16
 - July and/or September field trip
- Other housekeeping items – none.
- Round Robin feedback on meeting
 - **ACTION:** Ben bring cookies next time.

- Dan Scaife: thanks to PFC with their help on Tower and Grizzly. It's been a long road but the continued support is good.

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