

**Idaho Panhandle Forest Collaborative  
Meeting Record**

Wednesday, May 16, 2018 12:30-4:30 PM  
Sandpoint Ranger District, 1602 Ontario Street, Sandpoint, ID

**ATTENDANCE**

**Members:** Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, community non-profit representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Alan Harper, timber representative; Phil Hough, community non-profit representative; Mike Petersen, conservation representative; Brad Smith, conservation representative; and Laura Wolf, Idaho Fish and Game representative

**Technical Advisors:** Felipe Cano, USFS; Angela Harrington USFS; Judy Morbeck, Office of Congressman Raul Labrador; Sid Smith, Office of Senator James Risch; Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Mitch Silver, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Erick Walker, USFS; Ed Wingert, IDL

**Visitors:** Paul Sieracki, observer

**Facilitators:** Ben Irely and Zoe Bommarito, National Forest Foundation

**MEETING OUTCOMES**

**Decisions**

- March meeting record: approved

**Action Items**

- American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) fieldtrip on 6/27 – Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) to join. The destinations for this field trip will be the Red Beauty and Blue Alder projects because they are partially completed or have been completed.
- Laura Wolf and Alan Harper to coordinate on photo point/UAV for the Bottom Canyon project
- Ben Irely: Have a Potter's Wheel project update on the agenda for next meeting
- Ben Irely: update date on protocols
- Next meeting is July 18<sup>th</sup>

**Bin Items**

- Phil, Liz, Alan: PFC needs to step up public outreach and education.
  - Outreach and education: evening meetings, inviting media and decision makers to field trips and meetings, article writing and other communications.
  - Perhaps an open house or add-on meeting for the public to schedule in the evening in September.
- Annual meeting of collaboratives to be coordinated.
- Winter travel planning group to consider contacting WEG, CBD, tribes for input.
- Bottom Canyon field trip post-harvest (tentatively: fall 2019).

## MEETING RECORD

### 1. Greetings and Opening Announcements (Ben/Liz)

- March notes approved
- Agenda for today approved

### 2. Policy Updates from Legislative Staff, including forestry provisions in the Omnibus Bill (Sid Smith, Karen Roetter, Judy Morbeck, Mitch Silver)

- Good neighbor authority road fix, veg management transmission line reforms; stewardship contracting reforms for 20 year contracts and addresses; 10 year fire-funding fix to manage budgets more efficiently; 2 year retroactive secure rural schools at 95% of the levels, reauthorization of federal land management transaction act.
- Fire borrowing issue: the authority will kick in 2020 and authorizes for the next two years – allocate 3.2 billion until the wildfire fix kicks in. From 2020 on – 1.11 billion available and a cap of 2.2 billion when firefighting costs exceed the 10 year average.
- Categorical exclusions for hazardous fuel reduction for high risk areas identified.
- Agencies will have 5 years to revise their land-management plans when new species are listed on the ESA.
- USFS: \$614 million for hazardous fuel projects available, with the fire funding fix – with the additional money – the agency now has a new accountability process.
- Cottonwood decision: critical habitat designation – for plans 15 years or more recent, we don't need to reinitiate for new critical habitat.

### 3. Updates on the Good Neighbor Authority in ID (Ed Wingert)

- Department of Lands hiring a couple of foresters and a program specialist for GNA Projects; Hanna flats wildlife BA is completed and has been forwarded to fish and wildlife for review.
- Wildlife specialist review is being reviewed by contractor; Memos to be signed July 1.
- Hired retired foresters to assist on the panhandle, Hanna Flats; Looking for water in the project area and things missed in the analysis and flagging buffers.
- Timberland services incorporated; prework coming up soon.
- Jasper GNA West: fall or winter next year, Jasper 2 roadside spray contract – awarded yesterday to Deangelo Brothers signed contract – scheduling prework this summer.
- Hardrock GNA being reviewed and need to advertise for one month – hope to sell in late summer (July or August).

#### 4. Other Updates

- Idaho Forest Restoration Partners/Montana Forest Collaborative Network Workshop
- FS Personnel transitions: Jeanne Higgins, Mary Farnsworth, and Erick Walker
  - Jeanne Higgins – Forest Supervisor
  - Deputy Forest Supervisor – Kim Pierson
  - Angela Harrington – Acting District Ranger
- Status of hiring on Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF)
  - Things have shifted, still reducing the federal workforce but hiring is reinitiated. Not as restrictive as it was 2 month ago.
- Tower/Grizzly opinion publishing request denied.
- Trout Unlimited grant (Liz)
  - Yesterday the grant was due – Bill Love submitted it – if granted, \$5,000 available for the Hughes project next year – will find out at the end of September.
- Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM) change effort update (Ben)
  - NFF have been hosting round-tables to discuss EADM feedback, the regional reports are now available on NFF website – the national report is being presented to USFS leadership and released soon.

#### 5. Project's Timeline and Status Update (FS and Committee Chairs)

- Buckskin Saddle
  - Timeframe: gave specialists until mid-July to look at possible activities to meet need to desired condition. Project proposal projected to be released this fall for comment.
  - There will be additions to what we have identified: forest health and wildlife habitat improvement work. Identified some fuel treatments, but need coordination with wildlife for roadless areas and residents. The area has gone many years without management activities due to limited access. About 2/3rds of the area have not seen any fire disturbance, and is a drier area. There are dry site old growth restoration opportunities, potential wildlife burns, and opportunities to improve wildlife including elk habitat. There is a large contiguous fuel issue with cedar-hemlock mosaic. Forest plan identified many areas needing restoration due to failing composition structure. Opportunity for

regeneration harvest for stand restoration. More road maintenance, fuel, and aquatics restoration opportunities will be identified throughout this summer.

- Public comment: will there be roads that are decommissioned? Yes, there may be roads decommissioned. There are also 38 miles of new roads proposed.
- Recreation stakeholders should join PFC for fieldtrips due to concern and interest expressed.
- Estimated 13,000 acres of mechanical treatment and a few thousand additional for burn-only treatment (56,000 acres total), there may be additional fuels treatment areas identified.
- Hanna Flats
  - Decision date for July 1 – biological assessment is with USFWS.
- Honey Badger
  - Nothing to note.
- Hughes Creek
  - Still hoping for implementation, budget is done, piezometers data for soils and water levels will be available (probably) after July 15<sup>th</sup>. After that, we will assess feasibility and have until the end of September to implement.
  - There will be a coordination conference call on May 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Lightening Creek Road
  - Western Federal Lands (arm of the Federal Highway Administration) will be here on Friday.
  - Contract is awarded to company out of Montana, prework meeting is on May 29 and construction will start soon afterwards – there is only one construction season to complete the project. Bridges to be repaired. Project is being completed concurrently with Boulder Creek project due to destructive storm. There are tighter deadlines associated with the Boulder Creek project, so that will be their first and foremost priority.
  - The roads will be closed – and there may be more need to enforce the road closure.
- Bottom Canyon
  - The 2016 road will be reconstructed right above the flood plain – misses almost all of the old growth.

- Bottom Canyon was sold and will be logged soon.
- Laura Wolf is hoping for feedback on appropriate photo points for analysis. The Missoula office has photo points for the Grizzly Fire, and Laura will take over after Missoula office ends their analysis. Any number of photo points is good.
  - Alan: We could fly a UAV over Bottom Canyon and coordinate on locations of the photo points.
- Lower Priest Lake
  - Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Project: development stage, broader approach, the decision maker (forest supervisor) will have three options to look at. Panhandle 5 year action plan identified 5 projects in the Lower Priest sub-region. Development stage – pre-NEPA with identifying the size and scale.
  - The Tower Fire and fire behavior has a large impact on this area, and included wildlife analysis in the development stage (why here and why now) the area has many private/urban interface areas – planning will be inclusion of private landowners.
  - Almost 30% of identified lands are dedicated old growth. Veg mapping identified opportunities for restoration of dry sites and stream mapping identified aquatic opportunities.
  - Forest subcommittee should get together and discuss partnership going forward.
  - Mike Petersen: Landscape evaluation may be considered, historical ranges and treatments, projects fire to set priority and funding.
- Ed Wingert: State has been helping with the stand exam contracts.
- Mike Petersen: Potter’s Wheel project may be dictating the pace of other work.
- Winter Travel meeting tomorrow is the 1-3 PM.

## 6. Public Comment (Ben Irely)

- Paul Sieracki: My understanding was that the PFC was only going to focus on previously logged areas, but it seems like PFC is logging roadless and virgin areas (Buckskin Saddle).
  - Discussion: Buckskin Saddle already has roads and powerlines. The 38 miles of road is certainly a concern to this group and will be discussed further. The PFC’s focus is on the thousands of acres that have been logged – but it doesn’t mean that we can’t work on other areas. Protocols have been updated recently to accommodate this.

## 7. Meeting Closeout (Ben Irej)

- Upcoming field trip schedule
  - Alan Harper: AFRC fieldtrips: June 27<sup>th</sup>. Is it worthwhile to go to projects that are completely/partially done or just beginning? Perhaps Blue Alder or Red Beauty. Blue Alder is completed and Red Beauty is in process. Block a whole day off for the fieldtrips (may be a pre-meeting).
  - Next meeting is Wednesday, July 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Other housekeeping items
  - Fire season is projected to be similar to fire season 2017.
  - Phil Hough: PFC should focus on public outreach and education. Ideas: have evening meetings, tell stories of successes and better communication to the public, invite media or decision-makers in the community to the field trips for exposure and understanding.
- Round Robin feedback on meeting
  - Like specifics and information about projects – need better communication about ongoing projects between meetings.
  - Erick: thanks for inclusion, collaboration, proud to be participant. Thank you on behalf of the agency and public.
  - Public outreach and communication is key to success.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.**