

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record

Bonner County Administration Building
Wednesday, July 18, 12:30-3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members: Kurt Dyroff, community non-profit representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, community non-profit representative; Mike Petersen, conservation representative; Peg Polichio, state agency representative; and Brad Smith, conservation representative.

Technical Advisors: Felipe Cano, Priest Lake District Ranger; Angela Harrington, Sandpoint District Ranger (acting); Erin Mader, Idaho Forest Group; Andrew Moore and Ed Wingert, Idaho Department of Lands; Judy Morbeck, Office of Congressman Raul Labrador; Karen Roetter and Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Dan Scaife, CDA River District Ranger – Fernan Office; Sid Smith, Office of Senator James Risch; and Will Young, Fish Biologist, CDA River Ranger District

Visitors: Jeff Bynum and Travis Icardo, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers; Don Holland, resident in Pine Cove/Kilroy; Barry Rosenberg, citizen-at-large, Paul Sieracki, wildlife advocate; and Bruce Yocum, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, Barry Rosenberg

Facilitators: Ben Irey, Hannah Leonard, and Adam Snitker, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- Approved May meeting record

Action Items

- Ben to send out act regarding ESA changes
- Ben to send Travis and Jeff (BHA) operating protocols
- Ben to check about getting Bart George from Kalispell Tribe on mailing list
- Ben to coordinate with Angela regarding scheduling field trip
- Questions to be answered by technical advisors:
 - Buckskin Saddle: how many acres previously logged and how long ago? What percent of 1910 fires hit this area? How many acres of roadless are to be treated and how many acres of roadless proposed to be logged?
 - Packsaddle and Shaffer: Check into how much treatment area in community protection zone vs outside of it and if includes both Packsaddle and Shaffer
- Liz to provide group with Hughes Creek timeline update post field trip

Bin Items

- Create a subcommittee for Honey Badger including Mike Gaertner
- Regarding Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan: what would happen if caribou are introduced on the Canadian side and they travel down onto the IPNF?

MEETING RECORD

1. Greetings and opening announcements

- Introduction and housekeeping.
- Approved May meeting record.
- Review and approve today's agenda.
- Report on the American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) field trip - reviewed sites and current projects. Provided information and challenges to the public. Members learned how FS approaches project.

2. Policy Updates

- Around time of last meeting, omnibus spending bill was passed.
- Idaho delegation supporting reauthorization 10-year term and increase in funds to be used for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP).
 - Doubled the funding for this (\$40M previously, bumping up to \$80M for the next 10 years).
 - Projects that are currently in existence are authorized for original 10 years and would expire and have to reapply.
- There is Senate bipartisan support for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) - which is scheduled to end this fiscal year.
- Looking at full funding going forward for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), payments have been less than full funding in the past but now full again. Counties are suing for back payment for '15, '16.
- Ongoing conversation on Secure Rural Schools (SRS), Headwaters Economics proposal is still on the table.
- There is a renewed push within the federal gov't for reorganization, including moving the USDA Forest Service to DOI.
 - Congress will have big say if this will gain traction and on the final product.
 - Legislative staff will be looking at Trump Administration's proposal regarding this.
 - Other items of interests within the proposal:
 - Army Corp of Engineers flood control would also be transferred to DOI.
 - USFWS and NOAA would merge under DOI.
 - Privatize organizations like the EPA (power marketing proposal).
 - Previous reorganization efforts faced strong opposition.
- Sid will send Ben some information on proposals to change the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

3. Updates on Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) in Idaho

- GNA is focused on increasing capacity to meet needs of National Forest through state action, 3 GNA projects in place in Idaho and working on 3 more.
- Idaho Dept. of Lands has hired three new people for GNA.
- Hired one to help with BLM projects.
- Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP).
 - Helps collaboratives meet. Talking with Idaho Forest Supervisors to discuss what we can do jointly to support collaboratives.
 - Not all groups have all the capacity that the PFC has.
- Local National Forests
 - Hired 3 new positions including forest specialist, resource specialist, and watershed restoration specialist.
 - Jasper, no activity on sale yet, probably next spring
 - Hardrock, just finished final edits and will go up for auction at the end of August
 - Hanna Flats, started boundary flagging, 80% complete also currently leave tree marking.
 - Forest management projects:
 - Black Boulder sale prep contract underway, 50% complete.
 - Camp Robin sale prep contract to be awarded on August 26th.
 - Contracting stand exams on north, central and south. Successful on central and south, north unable to award. Reflag north zone stuff shortly with expiration date of next June.
- Things in pipeline
 - BAER management units gate replacement
 - For the hazard tree project in Tower Fire area (next to road) we are getting help with write up and contract.
 - Stream crossing project - looked at stream crossings on Homestead Creek that's a fish barrier → survey and design for this fall.
 - Solo creek stream crossing - current fish ladder not in great condition, goal to increase fish passage.
 - Road decommissioning.
- Barry Rosenberg public comment
 - Q: Is the state taking over the FS' responsibilities?
 - A: State is acting as a contractor, adding capacity, helping them out with their projects. Due to hiring freeze and FS limitations, have used state to help get more capacity. State administers contracts but FS approves and makes decisions.
 - Q: Why is FS not hiring with timber sales on the rise?
 - A: FS was in hiring freeze, just now being able to hire.
- Paul Sieracki public comment
 - Q: At Hanna Flats – a goshawk nest was found, why doesn't FS hire someone to do this kind of wildlife work?

- A: Looking for someone to hire for this kind of work. There have been barriers set up and restrictions to noise and access to area to protect the goshawk. Hannah Flats is the first project with GNA, so we are looking to identify this kind of room for improvement.
 - Q: The FS has modified the sale boundaries for Hannah Flats, why hasn't there been another round of public comments after the modifications? Is the decision not open to objections? Are there any additional opportunities for input besides litigation?
 - A: FS did not modify by increasing treatment size. The units are only shrinking, so everything has already been analyzed and the opportunity to comment on the analysis has already been provided. These types of modifications are very common in regular FS projects. Start by analyzing a big piece and then shrink it down during the sale prep process and as more things are found that need to be mitigated. It is typical for final product to come out a lot smaller than the original proposed action.
 - Q: What is happening on the ground? Is FS doing the surveys? Are modifications being made by specialists?
 - A: Ecosystem Research Group's (ERG) wildlife biologist is doing wildlife surveys on the ground. Lots of other people still doing on the ground doing surveys.
- GNA Background:
 - In early 2000, a couple of states (Colorado and Utah) together with FS, piloted agreements with how states could help with restoration (specifically watershed) and add capacity to FS work in the field. States have resources and capabilities that can benefit the FS project development and implementation. The pilot was then expanded to R2 & R4.
 - Program went system-wide in the 2014 Farm Bill. FS maintains decision-making authority. States mechanisms can be more efficient at getting work done on the ground.
 - Idaho is trying to make their GNA program a self-sustaining system to reinvest timber sale receipts to put back into restoration programs. Funding by FS grants, forest products industry, Idaho legislature, and Governor. Excess revenues are held in trust by the state; FS find priority projects that are paid for by those revenues. It is a negotiated agreement between state and FS to where funds are allocated.

4. Project's Timeline & Status Update

- **Sandpoint Ranger District:** Jesse Berner, the new District Ranger, who is coming from Oregon will start on Aug. 17th. Angela will continue to be a part of things until September.
- **Buckskin Saddle:** 50+ thousand acre analysis area. Encompasses Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). FS is still working on analysis and transportation system, which is old. Field surveys are ongoing, trying to get enough information for a proposed action for vegetation treatments and shift in composition toward the historic range of variability. Work towards forest opening up for flammulated owl habitat. The area has remained untreated since 1910 fires. FS met with Forestry Subcommittee and briefed Forest Supervisor and Deputy Supervisor so everyone is all in sync going forward. It's a big area

in scope, scale, and size. Now planning an open house, targeting for late August in Clark Fork community. Public mailing in early August. 13,800 treatment acres identified, 9,050 is prescribed fire. 38 miles of new road, elk security standards to be met. Possibly recreation trail proposals involving trail relocation due to streams. Roadless units need discussion. Community protections zone in one unit, another that is not. Total Maximum Daily Load review being done due to stream vicinity.

- Q: how many acres previously logged and how long ago?
- A: Will get the answer.
- Q: Why couldn't this forest just take care of itself?
- A: That is a big ecological discussion. High points: the stand has departed far from the historic range of variability due, in part, to fire suppression. If the area did not have private property within and around it, perhaps fire could be used more aggressively to reduce the stand's departure from historic structure and composition. Even then, because of 100+ years of suppression, it would not be the same kind of fire as you would have had, at least within the lower elevation stands.
- Q: How many acres of roadless are to be treated and how many acres of roadless proposed to be logged?
- A: Will have to find out.
- Q: What percent of 1910 fires hit this area?
- A: Will have to find out.
- Concern raised for elk protections on this project and putting in so many miles of road in.
 - Forest Plan implementation discussions have already been had. Allowance has been made for roads and the Forest Plan can be amended.
- Shaffer Peak and Packsaddle 11,890 acres are roadless, 349 acres within roadless for treatment.
 - Will check into how much in community protection zone vs outside of it and if includes both Packsaddle and Shaffer Peak.
 - 248 acres in backcountry management area designation.
- **Hanna Flats:** Looking to finalize Biological Assessment (BA). Letter should come out of Forest Supervisor Office asking FWS for their review of the project. Decision memo for Categorical Exclusion (CE) is estimated for late July early August.
 - Northern goshawk found in project area, FS will write up official response and provide necessary maps for this. Awaiting approval from Regional Office in Missoula for the greater than 40 acre openings. NEPA process did work. Took input from public and made changes and the project is getting smaller. This project was unique as the majority was GNA. How can we better collaborate on a GNA project? Lots to learn from.
 - Q: Has a 40 acre opening exemption ever been denied?
 - A: Yes, there have been denials.
- **Honey Badger:** Needs a lot more community involvement. Big recreation, watershed, and vegetation restoration project. Looking at stewardship to help with recreation

restoration and watershed. Create subcommittee for this and include Mike Gaertner. Fall/winter start in on this with communication plan.

- **Hughes Creek:** Innovative restoration project. There will be a field visit tomorrow. Hughes is a meadow restoration project. Construction of encouragement channels to restore the flow and remove ditch that was built in the 40's. Timeline hoping to be done in August. Fire caused delay from starting last August. Liz to update group with schedule.
- **Lightning Creek Road:** [No update given.]
- **Bottom Canyon:** Stewardship project sold in Q4 this year. Reroute being planned and surveys being done. No location changes. Clearance from heritage folks needed for some of the work.
- **Kaniksu Community Restoration Project:** Large scale planning area. Still in early development, no proposed action yet. Planning area is a whole mountain range. Project area could be a component of said mountain range. Tied into Buckskin and work with GNA so that everything is done within FS statutes and execution on the ground done with partners at IDL.
- **Priest River Rock Slide:** Area has become popular in a very short time. Working with Idaho Department of Transportation, waiting for their intended timeline to increase parking capacity due to hazard to public safety.
- **Potter's Wheel:** Finished with scoping. Internal review of EA this week. Draft EA in September. Incorporated scoping comments. 5,000 acres of mechanical treatments, 2,000 fuels treatments. 21 miles of road decommissioning. 4 miles of road storage. Elk habitat security tweaking and comply with guideline from Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG), connectivity between corridors.
- **Jasper Hardrock:** This project is coming up soon.
- **Kaniksu winter travel plan:**
 - Met with focus group. Letters from the Lands Council and Idaho Conservation League were received stating that they didn't want to participate in focus group. There have been challenges trying to get to where the FS would like on helping put sideboards on a conversation and identifying where they want different designations. Need better sideboards for how FS goes about getting these conversations nailed down. Looking into other wildlife habitat and review and map-making. What would happen if caribou are introduced on the Canadian side and they travel down onto the IPNF? At this point not 100% clear on what to come back to the group with.
 - Meeting with Forest Supervisor and Deputy and key members to help the new leadership understand complexity of the area and get updates on where the plan stands. What would forest leadership and key members suggest on the way forward? Proposed action due out this fall, however, changes in leadership will likely change the timeline.
 - Summary of letter from IDCL during Scotchman Peaks, saw snowmobilers supporting the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness proposal that would have floated all boats. After the proposal was voted down, some PFC members met for lunch to move in a

positive direction. We need more conversation. There needs to be more support for a package deal that is a win-win for snowmobilers and wilderness users.

- **Farragut State Park:** Scattered lands and isolated parcels surrounded by private lands. 55 acres off of Schoolhouse Road, 160 acres another mile away. Lots of young lodgepole pine falling down and creating access issues. Very unhealthy forest. Looking to reduce the threat of fire due to private landowners concerns. Not sure doing separate or as one piece. Looking at land and access issues around the area.
- **Muskegg Fire:** 2 acres in size. Smokejumpers and additional resources doing initial attack. Should be contained and out by this Friday.

5. Public Comment

- The PFC should move forward with increasing their outreach to the general public. Look into what has been done in the past and what we can do moving forward.
- Possibly have a blog/social media to tell story better.
- The FS should provide opposing views in their analysis to add more credible evidence to EAs.
- There is a lot of fear of allowing fire, insects, and disease to restore the forest. Fire is natural occurrence. If people live in the forest they know the risks.
- There should be an amendment to ban snowmobiling in the Pack River area.

6. Meeting closeout

- Look at dates for Buckskin field trip.
 - Trail folks interested in being on the field trip. Make sure to include.
 - August 22nd or 23rd field trip with new Forest Supervisor and Ranger. May be open to having PFC on that trip.
 - Angela and Ben to coordinate.
 - Goals of field trip: Point out treatment areas, where roadbuilding may happen, trail stuff (motorized and non-motorized).
- Next meeting scheduled for September 19.
- Round Robin meeting critique:
 - Last meeting was good discussion. This one was good too.
 - Lots of good information. True collaborative thing.
 - Encouraging.
 - Good dialog.
 - Participation and interest appreciated.
 - Lots of good views brought up.
 - Believe in collaborative and its importance.
 - Let's get involved in more sales.
 - Great process.
 - Happy to see new faces, broadening perspectives is great.

[Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm]