

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
May 19, 2016 Meeting Record
Butte Silverbow Archives, Butte

Members: Tony Colter, Mark Thompson, John Kountz, Rick Franke, Karen Laitala, Rick Sandru, Tom Rice, Nathan Korb, Leonard Wortman, Nick Gevock

Forest Service: Alex Dunn, Amie Shovlain

Committee members & visitors: Nick Jose

Facilitator: Karen DiBari, Charles Hayes

1. Welcome and opening business

- Tony Colter welcomed everyone to the meeting and all attendees introduced themselves.
- The members offered two corrections to the April meeting record:
 - Rick Sandru did not attend the April meeting; correct that in the minutes.
 - Item 8 on the record should read “May” instead of “April Meeting.”
- Rick Sandru expounded on his comment from last meeting concerning post and pole activity. He expressed that there is a large demand for post and pole material and local companies have little opportunities to harvest locally.

Actions:

- NFF will correct the April meeting record.
- Alex Dunn will contact appropriate Forest Service staff to discuss post and pole issues at the June meeting.

2. Public Comments

- There was no public comment.

3. Announcements/Updates

- Karen DiBari summarized the NFF Collaborative Restoration Workshop and told the group about the involvement of BDWG members.
- Rick Franke told the group about the Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) transitioning to become the Montana Forest Collaborative Network (MFCN). Tim Love called Rick to ask how their group might partner with the BDWG.
- Alex Dunn made a few announcements on behalf of the Forest Service:
 - Forest Service leadership are currently at a joint fire meeting with cooperating partners today.
 - The Supplemental EIS for motorized travel is being released today.
 - The Flint Foothills NEPA decision is scheduled to come out in July. The timber sale component is scheduled to be advertised in the 4th quarter.
 - The Boulder Lowlands timber sale will also be advertised in the 4th quarter.
 - The Farm Bill Strike Team is currently working on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. They will soon be considering Red Rocks, Maxville, and Greenhorn.
 - BDNF hiring announcements:
 - A GS-11 ID Team Leader position open; notably, few people have applied.
 - Wildlife Program Manager position is open, search just started.
 - Hydrology Technician recently hired
 - Realm Staff Officer has vacated – hiring in process

- Fish Biologist has been hired (FS now has two)
 - Hiring process started for a NEPA Strike Team, to be stationed in Dillon
- Members raised the question of why the Boulder Lowland project timeline is so drawn out. In conversation with Alex Dunn, the group asked if it would be possible to create a dashboard for documenting project progress.

Actions:

- Matt Arno with the State Dept of Natural Resources has talked about creating a dashboard; Karen DiBari will ask him if he can talk about this at the June meeting.

4. Congressional Updates

- There were no congressional updates.

5. Membership

- It was reported that Donna McDonald considered, but declined to join the BDWG at this time.
- Brian [?] was identified as a potential representative for fish and streams to join the BDWG.
- The group discussed attendance issues, deciding that they are due to scheduling conflicts, not a lack of interest.

Actions:

- John Kountz will approach Brian about participating in the BDWG.

6. Letter of Support from Lolo Restoration Committee (LRC)

- The BDWG decided not to sign LRC's letter of support at this time.
- Reasons for not signing included concerns about how "local" is defined, that Stewardship contracting is not always in the interests of mills and county governments, and that there is not always local capacity for stewardship contracting.

Actions:

- Karen DiBari will relay the group's concerns to Chelsea Pennick McIver at the LRC.

7. Forests in Focus

- Forest-Wide Aspen Restoration Project
 - Alex Dunn and Amie Shovlain explained the Aspen Restoration Project
 - The project is modeled off a decision already approved in the Custer Gallatin NF.
 - The project would allow for aspen stands to be identified and treated with pre-approved treatments (primarily slash and burn of conifers), without having to go through an approval process for each individual aspen stand.
 - This is a categorical exclusion and the decision memo is due to be signed soon.
 - The group expressed support for aspen regeneration, noting that wildlife grazing and conifer encroachment were the leading causes of aspen decline. A policy that allows for broader and more efficient conifer removal will best address the decline.
 - The group then discussed concerns that potential treatment strategies include regulating cattle grazing and fencing. Alex Dunn and Amie Shovlain stressed that the project is primarily about conifer removal, and should include very little, if any, cattle grazing regulation.
 - Mark Thompson expressed approval of the Forest Service looking towards innovative and more efficient ways of doing NEPA. This opinion was supported by other members.
- Collaborative Integrated Forest Assessment (CIFA)

- The BDWG decided to table conversation about CIFA until the next meeting.
- Group members agreed that in future the BDWG should only agree to support projects and funding applications that have received adequate review and discussion.

Actions:

- Alex Dunn and Amie Shovlain will try to send the BDWG the draft decision memo for Aspen project and they will look more closely at sections that discuss cattle grazing.
- Alex Dunn will forward the Forests in Focus proposals to Karen DiBari so she can share them with the BDWG.
- Karen DiBari will add CIFA to the June agenda.

7. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)

- Mo Bookwalter was not able to attend the meeting. This discussion was tabled until June.

Actions:

- Karen DiBari will add GNA to the June agenda.

8. Identification of Action Plan Projects

- CONSENSUS DECISION: After discussion, the BDWG decided to develop landscape visions for three areas: (1) Selway Meadows, (2) the Boulder River, and (3) the Gravelly Landscape.
- Two areas were listed for future consideration: (1) Wise River Watershed and (2) Whitetail-Pipestone-Fish Creek Landscape

9. Items for the June meeting agenda

- Mo Bookwalter -- Good Neighbor Authority
- Matt Arno – dashboard concept
- Farm Bill Timelines – who are authorities to talk with about Farm Bill projects, what is their decision process and who is making these decisions?
- Vision document planning – how to facilitate and create capacity for this process
- Post and pole issues:
 - Alex Dunn will try to bring appropriate Forest Service staff to the June meeting
 - It was suggested that this conversation would benefit from having a post and pole representative at the June meeting.

10. Meeting adjourned