

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
June 16, 2016 Meeting Record
Butte Silverbow Archives, Butte

Attendees: Dave Schulz, Maureen Connor, Tony Colter, Rick Franke, Nick Gevock, Nathan Korb, John Kountz, Karen Laitala, Tom Rice, Mark Thompson, Darcie Warden, Bob Zimmer, Rick Sandru (on phone)

Forest Service: Scot Shuler, Betsy Herrmann, Russ Riebe

Committee members & visitors: Tim Love, Brian Ohs, Nick Jose, Matt Arno, Mo Bookwalter (on phone)

National Forest Foundation: Karen DiBari (facilitator), Charles Hayes (note-taker)

1. **Welcome and opening business** – Dave Schultz

- Dave Schultz opened the meeting and all attendees introduced themselves.
- The May meeting record was approved.

2. **Public Comments**

- There was no public comment

3. **Announcements**

- Karen DiBari announced that there have been updates to the BDWG webpage.

Forest Service Announcements

- Flint Foothills final EIS coming out very soon, hoping to sign the record of decision by the end of the fiscal year, advertising for contracts is expected right after.
- East Deerlodge has preliminary injunction on it.
- Farm Bill Strike Team is visiting BDNF in late July to discuss Red Rocks.
- Montana Strike Team positions still open, but the hiring process is progressing. The NEPA
- FS has been under litigation on sheep grazing. They must produce a report on current allotment management to determine if an EIS is necessary.

4. **Congressional Policy Updates**

- Spencer Merwin emailed an update: *There is draft discussion bill from E&R two weeks ago and the comment period just ended. The discussion draft, brought forward by Murkowski, Cantwell, Wyden, Crapo, ends the practice of fire borrowing but does not remove the 1% of fires that consume 30% of the budget from the suppression fund. There are some management fixes as well, and we're looking forward to the committee process playing out as the Senator sits on the committee of jurisdiction.*

5. **Membership**

- John Kountz introduced Brian Ohs and recommended Brian for BDWG membership.

- Brian Ohs spoke about his work with Trout Unlimited and other work around Southwest Montana. He answered questions from BDGW members and suggested he could commit to the group. Brian will observe the meeting and consider whether to put his name in for formal nomination.
- Maureen Connor also suggested a new member, Lee S., who does ranching and timber work and has been very active in Maureen's watershed group. The group decided it would be good for Lee to come to the next meeting.
- Ciche Pitcher has resigned due to meeting conflicts.

Actions:

- Brian Ohs will review group materials and respond by email.
- Maureen Connor will contact Lee about coming to the next meeting.

6. Good Neighbor Authority and Updates on Forests in Focus grants – Mo Bookwalter (on phone)

- Federal and State agencies in Montana are planning to sign a master Good Neighbor agreement that supports partnership. Specific project agreements will then be determined after the master agreement.
- There is currently work being done on a stand-alone Good Neighbor agreement in White Sulphur Springs, MT.
- Some other states are forming master agreements with each agency individually. However, Montana may sign their master agreement as one agreement involving many agencies.
- Some versions of the Good Neighbor authority had differences in adjacency requirements. Moving forward, it seems likely that adjacency requirements will not be included.
- Tony Colter asked how many projects have been requested under Good Neighbor.
 - Undetermined – the forest regions are now identifying projects that fit the Good Neighbor goals

Actions:

- Karen DiBari will send out link for the webinar that the NFF hosted in partnership with the State of Montana on Good Neighbor Authority.
- BDWG members who watch the webinar will bring questions for next meeting.

7. Montana Forest Collaboratives' Network (MFCN) – Tim Love

- Tim Love introduced the history of the Montana Forest Restoration Committee and current work of the newly-forming MFCN. The new organization hopes to link the collaborative groups around Montana, sharing knowledge, resources, and encouraging the formation of new collaboratives.
- The new organization will be organizing in the next month and plans to initiate a meeting this fall with invitations to collaborative forest collaboratives in Montana (December 5-6, 2016 in Helena, MT).

Actions:

- Tim Love will email draft Statement of Purpose to Karen DiBari, who will send it out to the group

8. Project Dashboard – Matt Arno

- Matt Arno introduced the idea of creating a web-based “dashboard” to track the development and progress of forest projects. The dashboard would allow everyone to monitor and compare projects using many metrics, e.g., speed from start to finish, efficiency, acres treated, board feet collected, etc. This is a project being considered by the MFCN.
- This dashboard would be primarily for the collaborative and their partners. It does not replace monitoring efforts or forest service internal documents.

9. Aspen Restoration Proposal

- Scot Shuler expressed that he is interested in input from the collaborative while the aspen decision is still in draft form.
- The group discussed the primary need to address conifer encroachment and reduce emphasis on grazing restrictions. Fencing is often inadequate and repairs often become the responsibility of the permit holders.
- These points were expanded and discussed by the group.
- Russ Riebe and Scot Shuler expressed agreement that livestock grazing has not been the largest issue for Aspen. Forest-specific monitoring on the BDNF has shown this to be the case (although peer-reviewed papers in other forests are divided).
- The re-write of the proposal has already incorporated some feedback from the BDWG.

Actions:

- BDGW members decided to submit a letter to the forest service outlining their positions on Aspen treatments. The group identified key points to include in the letter. Karen DiBari will draft these priorities into a draft letter to share with the BDWG members via email for consideration.

10. Process and Timeline for Development of Landscape Vision Documents

- Karen DiBari refreshed the group on what work has been done so far regarding vision statements and distributed a list of questions that will help move the process forward.
- BDWG suggested that the committees should discuss the vision documents separate from the main group.
- The group discussed the importance of developing the landscape visions with Forest Service staff as participants in the conversation so that there are no surprises and so priority projects are more aligned between the BDWG, the public and the Forest Service. It would be frustrating to have a lot of BDWG time be devoted toward developing a vision or project proposal that then is not acted upon by the agency.
- The group defined who is on the committees for the Boulder and Selway Meadows projects and discussed meeting logistics.

11. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

- July meeting is scheduled for 7/21/16. The BDWG will decide in July whether or not to have the August meeting.
- The Post and Pole discussion will be put on the July agenda.

12. Other Announcements/Closing

- Matt Arno announced a workshop/meeting for county commissioners. On October 19-20 in Missoula there will be a workshop for county commissioners on federal forest engagement, covering collaborative processes, the NEPA process, engagement with the Forest Service, etc.
- Dave Schulz closed the meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

- Brian Ohs will review group materials and respond by email with regard to his interest in becoming a BDWG member.
- Maureen Connor will contact Lee ___ about coming to the next meeting.
- Karen DiBari will send out link for the webinar that the NFF hosted in partnership with the State of Montana on Good Neighbor Authority.
- BDWG members who watch the webinar will bring questions for next meeting.
- Tim Love will email draft Statement of Purpose to Karen DiBari, who will send it out to the group
- BDGW members decided to submit a letter to the forest service outlining their positions on Aspen treatments. The group identified key points to include in the letter. Karen DiBari will draft these priorities into a draft letter to share with the BDWG members via email for consideration.