

## Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG)

### Meeting Record

Butte Archives, 17 W Quartz St., Butte, MT  
Wednesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 1:00-5:00pm

#### ATTENDANCE

**Members:** Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, agriculture/ranching representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation/weeds representative; Chris Marchion, citizen-at-large representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Rick Sandru, grazing representative; Mark Thompson, mining representative; Darcie Warden, conservation/non-governmental organization representative.

**Technical Advisors:** Sean Steinebach, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (Anaconda)

**Visitors:** Bryan Lorengo, Montana Logging Association; Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County

**Facilitators:** Ben Irely and Anna Wearn, National Forest Foundation

#### MEETING OUTCOMES

##### Decisions

- November meeting record approved.
- Karen Laitala will get updates from the staff of each member of the congressional delegation prior to each BDWG meeting.
- BDWG will draft a letter to the Regional Forester regarding BDWG's criteria for selecting a new Forest Supervisor.

##### Action Items

- Anna will research what options forest collaboratives have for supporting a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) action being challenged in court.
- Nick Jose and Willy Peck will distribute materials from the November Montana Forest Collaborative workshop.  
Ben Irely will request that Carol McKenzie give a presentation on pods and timber targets.
- Ben Irely circulate a letter describing the BDWG and requesting for financial support. The letter will then be sent to potential funders.
- Tony Colter will circulate BDNF's five-year timber management plan.
- Ben Irely will include the BDWG's statement of accomplishments in our external communications packet.
- Ben Irely will find Karen Laitala contact information for Congressman Gianforte's field representative.

## **Bin Items**

- Discuss whether and to what extent we want to engage in County Wildfire Protection Programs.
- Learn more about CFLRP (Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program) and potentially apply as a grantee.
- Ask Ecosystem Research Group to update the mapping assessment they conducted and present to the group.
- Have a presentation on how the Custer-Gallatin, Helena-Lewis and Clark, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge pod will work.

## **MEETING RECORD**

### **Announcements (Ben Irej)**

- Nick Jose and Willy Peck attended the Montana Forest Collaborative Network workshop in mid-November. The workshop provided instructive examples of collaboration, both positive and negative experiences.
- Beetle kill around the Flint Creek Reservoir (near Phillipsburg) has been affecting the community's sewer system and water supplies. Maureen requested that BDWG consider how we can help the District Ranger, who expressed a need for assistance with geology and silviculture reports.

### **Congressional updates (Karen Laitala)**

- Karen reached out to Erik Nylund from Senator Tester's office for an update. The only item he had to report was that the farm bill will likely look like the version the Senate passed. The legislation will be voted on this week or next.
- Karen will reach out to Senator Tester, Senator Daines, and Congressman Gianforte's offices before each meeting to see if they can attend and if not, to get an update to share with the group.

### **BDWG year in review (Ben Irej)**

- Review of recent accomplishments document (see attached)
- Review of 2018 goals (see attached)
- Discussion
  - Partnerships and engagement
    - Going forward, it will be important to define what we mean when we state that we seek "meaningful engagement" from USFS.
    - Initial thoughts:
      - Meaningful engagement is when USFS not only listens to our concerns, but incorporates them into decision-making.
      - Meaningful engagement is when USFS involves the BDWG at the beginning of projects, when they can provide the most meaningful input.
        - In 2019, work to ensure district rangers can attend more meetings, along with someone in the timber division.

- Presentations
  - In the future, when the group invites a speaker to present, it is important to carve out time in the meeting to discuss how the new information informs the BDWG's work.
    - One potential presentation for an upcoming meeting could be from the agencies working on the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Advancing USFS projects
  - How can we support the BDNF in completing the Fleecer project?
  - Could we submit an amicus brief?
    - BDWG can sign on with other organizations that can directly support the FS in Litigation.
    - Anna will explore the options for collaboratives seeking to support a USFS action that has been challenged in court.
      - American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) will only get involved in the litigation if one of their members is involved (Sun Mountain Lumber is a member), if the legal issue will set a precedent, and if the project is sufficiently large. Occasionally AFRC attorneys will work with a collaborative to submit an amicus brief.
  - In the future, for projects that we want to see completed, it will be important to submit a public comment so that we have standing to submit an amicus brief later on if the USFS action is challenged.

#### **BDWG strategic goals for 2019 (Ben Irej)**

- The BDWG needs to be out front on getting projects moving forward.
  - Go back to the priority landscapes this group has already developed.
- Utilize the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) to alleviate some of the capacity constraints.
- Create a projects subcommittee.
  - Go to each district, review their programs, ask how the subcommittee can help.
- Determine where we can add value
  - The project closest to completion is Boulder Lowlands. The working group helped expedite this process because we had already ranked the priority landscapes.
- Establish a strong working relationship early on with the Forest Supervisor
  - We will request a meeting with the hiring team. In the meantime, we will also submit a letter outlining our the qualities we are looking for in a new Forest Supervisor, and requesting that one of the interview questions concern the candidate's perspective on and experience with collaboratives.
  - Commissioner Wortman has already communicated to the Regional Forester the importance of hiring a Forest Supervisor who can make hard decisions and work with the community.
  - We will also request a meeting with the new Forest Supervisor, once she or he is hired, to communicate our vision to them.
- Success stories from the Mineral County Resource Coalition (MCRC)

- MCRC has been able to move a number of large projects through by engaging in every phase of the project: preparing the scoping statement, providing silviculture prescriptions, identifying the timber market values, etc.
- MCRC works at the project and district level.
- MCRC initiates most of the meetings with USFS and often does site visits. The group also checks in with the districts on a weekly basis.
- The group has successfully increased the size of projects while also increasing the pace of implementation (accomplishing a project as much as six years earlier than it would have taken otherwise).
- This is a big time investment and not every collaborative has the bandwidth to be so involved.
- Pursue applying for a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program funding.
  - Congress is doubling the funding for the program. Money is awarded by USFS to grantees, who then decide where the money goes for implementing a project.
  - Best to identify a specific project in the funding proposal.
- Request that consultant Richard Stem conduct an internal analysis of the capacity issues within BDNF.
  - The results of the assessment remain confidential so we will not be able to see them.
- Leverage the BDWG's power
  - Proactively address the new pod
    - Meet with the delegation to request a strike team for the pod in addition to an interdisciplinary (ID) team on the BDNF. These measures should address the main bottleneck: completing the NEPA process. The BDNF's strike team has been sent elsewhere and the ID Team is composed of staff who all have other roles and responsibilities so the NEPA review doesn't get their full attention.
    - What does the new pods concept mean for the BDWG moving forward? Will spreading the strike team around will hurt us?
    - It would be helpful to have a presentation on that.
  - Highlight the uniquely high percent of dead and dying timber as a huge fire hazard. Leverage the situation and the state of the forest and stand conditions to make our argument.
    - Assist counties with Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
  - Work with the BDNF to define and agree on the "right" level of resources for managing this landscape.
    - What is the scale of restoration activity needed to support ecological resilience and wildfire protection in the WUI, and what is the staff/budget needed to get there?
  - Keep forest planning on the radar.
- Fund facilitation for BWDG monthly meetings
  - Cost is \$11,000 per year.
  - We have received contributions from Sun Mountain Timber and Jefferson County.
  - Consider reaching out to other funders.
    - Consider whether the group wants a larger budget work with to leveraging work
- Identify needs on the ground – have a presentation on resiliency and integrity across the forest so that the BDWG can identify priorities.

- Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) ecosystem integrity report could serve as one such model of mapping out priority projects. GYC identified areas where the ecosystem integrity is the lowest as their target areas for restoration work.
- Ecosystem Research Group has evaluated forest conditions on a landscape-scale (risk of fire, disease, etc.) for the BDWG. Perhaps the BDWG could update and build off of that.
- Work on a few categorical exclusions (small-scale projects)
  - To be considered for categorical exclusion under the Farm Bill, projects must be no greater than 3,000 acres. There is no size limit for GNA projects.
  - Work with the Forest on a programmatic EA for conifer encroachment – Melany’s last suggestion.

#### **Round robin: meeting feedback**

- The group appreciated hearing about the way MCRC operates. We can learn from them, just as they have learned from us (adopting some of our protocols, having NFF facilitate, etc.)
- Group members expressed optimism about working with the incoming Forest Supervisor when the position is filled. On a related note, it is important that we not alienate USFS staff when we get frustrated with the pace of the projects. We won’t be able to accomplish anything without that relationship remaining strong.
- It is important to not let public comments derail the conversation and remember that the public has not agreed to the protocols of the group.
- It was helpful to have a meeting with just BDWG members to get a more candid sense of how everyone is feeling.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.**

**BDWG 2018 Goals and Objectives**  
**(from the December 6, 2017 meeting)**

- Continue to strengthen and improve the relationship between the BDWG and the BDNF
  - Continue to schedule six month reviews of 5 year plan and discussion of project prioritization
  - Advocate for meaningful FS interaction and partnership with local government on projects (Red Rocks example where Jefferson County is helping map roads, host public meetings, etc.)
  - Communicate regularly with the Regional Office and be an advocate for the BDNF; invite \_\_\_\_\_ every other month
  - Actively engage other district level FS staff in BDWG meetings
  - Communicate regularly with the Forest Supervisor
  - Welcome the new Deputy Supervisor to build on the positive relationship with previous deputies
  - Nurture individual relationships with FS staff
  - Document lessons and share them with the FS (open discussions and letters)
- Broaden BDWG involvement in FS decisions
  - Assist the BDNF in incorporating local knowledge into operations and decision-making
- Help the FS identify their blind spots in working with the community
- Raise funds to support the work of the BDWG
  - Develop an overview document to use in approaching potential funders
  - Acquire part time staff
- Develop an external communications plan
  - BDWG talking points that all members can use
- Regularly monitor project progress (more detailed short term rainbow chart and longer term 5 year plan)
- Continue to advocate for increased capacity, funding and resources on the BDNF
  - Work with the BDNF to define and agree on the “right” level of resources for managing this landscape
  - What is the scale of restoration activity needed to support ecological resilience and wildfire protection in the WUI, and what is the staff/budget need to get there?
    - Does the BDNF have a way to get to the answer?
- Assist counties with Community Wildfire Protection Plans
- Keep forest planning on the radar (plan approved in 2009)

# Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group

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## Overview

The **purpose** of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG), a collaborative that started in 2011, is to bring together diverse interests to develop agreement around priorities and approaches for project work and increase the pace and scale of restoration on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF).

For more information on the BDWG, visit <https://sites.google.com/site/bdworkinggroup1/home>.

## Objectives

- Develop a common understanding of BDNF issues among diverse stakeholders;
- Serve as a bridge to broader constituencies;
- Reach agreements that will lead to more efficient and effective restoration project work being achieved at the watershed level;
- Increase stakeholder's understanding of Forest Service processes and approaches;
- Offer and support innovations in project planning and implementation;
- Advocate for funding and staffing resource to increase capacity to achieve more work on the BDNF;
- Identify management efficiencies and priority projects; and
- Foster broader public support and ownership of proposed Forest Service actions.

## Membership Categories

- Timber
- County Commissioners – North
- County Commissioners – South
- Agriculture/Ranching
- Quiet recreation
- Motorized recreation (summer and winter)
- Conservation organizations or NGOs
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Commercial outfitters (permittee)
- Mining
- At-large

**Steering Committee:** Tony Colter, timber representative and Co-chair, 846-1600; Maureen Connor, at-large representative, 544-8434; Darcie Warden, conservation organization representative and Co-chair, 595-0126.

## Examples of what the BDWG does:

- Meet with the Forest Service about current issues;
- Work with the Forest Service to identify and prioritize landscape-scale projects, and provide input on those projects;
- Make recommendations to the BDNF on people and interests to engage at the project level;
- Increase public and constituency awareness about projects and how to engage;
- Act as a sounding board for the Forest Service;
- Look for and champion restoration opportunities;
- Help the Forest Service think outside the box when addressing various conflicting resource issues;
- Act as ambassadors for projects and decisions the group supports.

**Current Projects:** Selway Meadows, Boulder Lowlands and Red Rocks, Greenhorn, and Pintler Face

## Get Involved

BDWG **meetings** are typically scheduled for the first Wednesday of the month at the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives at 17 W. Quartz St. All BDWG meetings are open to the public.

The BDWG is coordinated and facilitated by the National Forest Foundation (NFF). Contact Ben Irely at NFF to join the BDWG **mailing list**, 830-3369 or [birely@nationalforests.org](mailto:birely@nationalforests.org).

# Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group

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## STATEMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As of November, 2018

*The purpose of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG), a collaborative that started in 2011, is to bring together diverse interests to develop agreement around priorities and approaches for project work and to increase the pace and scale of restoration on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF).*

*The BDWG recognizes that their ability to develop agreement around priorities and approaches to project work is dependent upon the strength of the relationships between members, between members and other stakeholders, and between the Group and the BDNF. The ongoing strength of those relationships deserves to stand alone as an accomplishment.*

*The BDWG also recognizes that their ability to increase the pace and scale of restoration is effected by the capacity of the BDNF, therefore, the BDWG, as a diverse set of stakeholders, continually advocates to increase the capacity of the BDNF to get restoration work accomplished.*

The BDWG has actively engaged with the Forest Service on the following projects:

- Boulder Lowlands Categorical Exclusion (CE)
- Red Rocks Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Pintler Face EA
- Selway Meadows
- Aspen Restoration CE
- Fleecer Mountains EA
- Rancho Deluxe Prison Project
- Little Hogback-Meyers Fire Salvage EA

The BDWG supported the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative's work on the Greenhorn Restoration Project.

Landscape level work:

- The BDWG developed an assessment of priority landscapes that became the 2014 treatment areas for the BDNF under the Governor's priority landscape initiative.
- The BDWG approved a landscape strategy statement for the Big Hole Divide landscape.
- The BDWG approved a landscape strategy statement for the Boulder River landscape.

Other accomplishments:

- The BDWG conducted outreach to motorized recreation users to gain support for targeted decommissioning of roads in the Red Rocks area. This allowed the BDNF to more strategically reduce road density, which made for a stronger project.
- The BDWG documented areas of agreement within the Group regarding lodgepole pine restoration, in support of the Forest Service's "Accelerated Restoration Strategy".
- The BDWG acted as test subjects for the BDNF's *Guide to Determine Compliance with 2009 Forest Plan When Implementing Management Actions in Fish Key Watersheds*.

Ongoing efforts:

- The BDWG continues to provide input to the BDNF on both planning and projects.
- The BDWG continues to support projects going through the NEPA process, which reduces the likelihood of litigation.
- The BDWG continues to support public participation in BDNF decisions.
- The BDWG provides a forum to communicate with Congressional staffers on land management issues.
- The BDWG works with the BDNF to ensure that management actions are acceptable to the range of stakeholders in the Group, then actively supports the BDNF's decisions.
- The BDWG maintains open channels of communications between the BDNF and the Group, as well as between the group and other stakeholders.
- The BDWG works with the BDNF on out year planning.

# Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group

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## Request for Support

### Overview

The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) works closely with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) to improve the design and increase the scale of projects that correct the ecological trajectory of the landscape, generate economic benefits, and engage adjacent forest communities. By involving people with a variety of interests across the forest, the BDWG strives to achieve:

- A clear, transparent and collaborative approach to prioritizing restoration and resiliency projects across the BDNF in a five year plan;
- A shift toward landscape-scale, ecological management;
- Substantially increased funding and capacity on BDNF to increase the pace and scale of restoration;
- Development of at least one landscape-scale project over the next 12 months in order to put the BDNF in a competitive position for funding and staff support at the national level; and
- Design and implementation of collaboratively-supported projects.

The BDWG showcases the power of collaboration in a controversial forest management context and shares its experiences with other forest collaboratives in the region.

### History and Membership

Following the conflict around the Beaverhead-Deerlodge forest plan and the introduction of Senator Tester's Forest Jobs & Recreation Act, members of the conservation and timber communities and the Forest Service asked the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to help launch a forest-wide collaborative group in 2011. The BDWG membership includes people from multiple communities across the forest that represent a variety of perspectives, including timber, conservation, county commissioners, quiet and motorized recreation, ranching, and wildlife interests. BDWG meetings have regular attendance of congressional staff. The purpose of the BDWG is to develop agreement around priority areas and approaches for project work on the BDNF and to help facilitate completion of those projects at the local level. The group also seeks to develop common understanding among diverse stakeholders and serve as a bridge to broader constituencies.

The BDNF is an important forest ecologically. It is part of the High Divide, which connects and overlaps with the Greater Yellowstone and Crown of the Continent ecosystems. As the largest national forest in Montana at 3.5 million acres, it serves as a connector to other habitats for carnivores, elk and a variety of other species. It is home to large swaths of lodgepole pine and Douglas fir forests, as well as pockets of whitebark pine, aspen, and grasslands. The BDNF contains critical recreation resources and produces economic and social value for surrounding communities. Straddling the Continental Divide, the BDNF is the headwaters for rivers flowing through both the western and central United States.

In recent history, funding of all programs on the BDNF has been reduced to a point where they lack the personnel and other resources to meet critical restoration objectives. In response to the BDWG's consistent and persistent message of the Forest's lack of capacity, the Regional office has made a concerted effort to direct supplemental staff and funds to assist the Forest on several projects. A long term funding solution for the BDNF is needed and the BDWG is well positioned to advocate for that solution.

NFF has provided the BDWG with facilitation and coordination services since BWDG's inception, with funding from the U.S. Forest Service, the State of Montana's Forests in Focus Initiative, Madison County, and private funders including Sun Mountain Lumber, the Cinnabar Foundation, and the Kendeda Fund. NFF has also made in-kind contributions. NFF hosts graduate students from the University of Montana's Natural Resources Conflict Resolution Program that assist with note-taking, committee facilitation, document development, and preparation of technical material for the BDWG.

### **The National Forest Foundation**

A national organization, the NFF is fortunate to be based in Montana, the heart of forest management debates. With 18% of the state's land mass dedicated to National Forests, Montana is centered in the Forest Service region with the highest litigation rates in the country. Nationally, the NFF has convened, facilitated, and helped course-correct dozens of collaborative groups working to move the Forest Service toward better stewardship and restoration of our National Forests. Collaboration is not the answer in every situation, but it can be an extremely effective tool in identifying a "zone of agreement" to advance the restoration of National Forest System lands. NFF has supported the BDWG from its beginning, and serves as the coordinator and facilitator of the group.

### **Request for Support**

BDWG's members donate their time and travel costs, but facilitation and coordination are a significant piece of maintaining an active working group. On average, these costs per year are \$11,000. The BDWG is seeking support toward these operational costs and respectfully requests your support. Thank you for your consideration.

For further information or to make a pledge, please contact one of the Steering Committee members listed below:

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