

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group Meeting Record

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., January 2, 2019
Butte Archives

Members: Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, grazing representative; Chris Marchion, citizen-at-large representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Rick Sandru, grazing representative; and Mark Thompson, mining representative.

USDA Forest Service (FS): No attendance due to partial government shutdown.

National Forest Foundation: Ben Irely

Visitors: Cindy Perdue-Dolan, U.S. Senator Steve Daines' Office and Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County.

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- The BDWG confirmed their support for Richard Stem's review of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest's processes, organization, and public engagement.
- The BDWG decided to move forward with having Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) update the priority landscapes analysis.
- The BDWG decided to establish a Projects Subcommittee. The duties of this subcommittee are to go to the Districts once a month to check on all of the projects. Nick Jose and Chris Marchion volunteered for this subcommittee.

Action items

- Richard Stem to forward Ben Irely drafts of Master Stewardship Agreements for distribution to the Group.
- Ben Irely to distribute RAC applicant's request.
- Commissioner Wortman to give overview of a proposed project from the Jefferson County Subcommittee at the next meeting.
- Ben Irely distribute Ecosystem Research Group's PowerPoint presentations.
- Chris Marchion, Tony Colter, and Leonard Wortman have a strategy meeting with the new Forest Supervisor, Cheri Ford.
- Ben and Maureen have call to talk about getting Headwaters Economics involved in CWPP planning for the counties of the BDWG.
- New Projects Subcommittee (Nick Jose and Chris Marchion) talk to Districts re: projects.
- Projects Subcommittee report out on agenda for next meeting.

Bin items

- Richard Stem can help the BDWG navigate the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) application process.

MEETING RECORD

1. Welcome, introductions, and approve agenda for today's meeting

[Attendees are welcomed by the Co-Chair and introduce themselves in a round robin fashion. The meeting agenda was altered to receive a presentation from Richard Stem immediately after the welcome in lieu of the regular announcements agenda item.]

2. Presentation from Richard Stem

- Introduction of this agenda item: Beaverhead County is the fiscal sponsor for Richard Stem's work on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF). All of the counties of the BDNF have signed on to support Richard Stem's work. Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) Co-Chair Tony Colter has spoken with the new Forest Supervisor, Cheri Ford, and the Forest is on board with Richard's work. Matt Arno, with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is funding a significant portion of this work.
- Richard's background: lives outside of Alder, MT. Retired from the FS eight years ago. Now consults with other agencies such as Dept. of Homeland Security, state governments, post fire ICS, and mostly with land management organizations regarding multiple use. Basically, Richard helps the agencies to clear the rocks out of their way by utilizing different process tools and organizational approaches. Richard has worked in 3 Regions in timber, as a line officer at 3 levels, staff officer, regional director, and in fire. Richard had a long term acting stint as the National Director of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Since his retirement from the agency, Richard has consulted on 18 forests and in three regions as well as managing parts of certain national contracts. Within this Region, Richard has consulted with the Custer-Gallatin, Kootenai, and Bitterroot National Forest and with the Region 1 office.
- Richard is an active member of the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR). NAFSR has become very active with the agency to get more work accomplished. NAFSR has the ability to do some things that the agency simply cannot do. NAFSR recently met with agency leaders in Washington D.C. to hammer out what is needed to get more work done on the ground (NEPA regulations, Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM), ESA, capacity issues, etc.).
- The President issued an [executive order](#) before Christmas, which orders the FS to treat 3.5 million acres. This will be difficult for the agency to accomplish. The FS has lost 45% of its budget in the last 20 years, much of that has gone into fire. The agency has lost seven thousand employees in the last 15-20 years. Unless the agency engages in high level triage or if their budget increases, treating 3.5 million acres will be a difficult lift.

- In the meantime, Richard (working with/through the Board at NAFSR) is validating and attempting to daylight the agency's capacity problem, Forest by Forest and nationally. Richard's consultation with Forests has three components:
 - Process – NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), Farm Bill authorities, Endangered Species Act (ESA), biological assessments (BA), Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), Master Stewardship Agreements, etc.
 - Organization - line officer engagement, teams, leadership, zoning, IDT management, tracking, etc.
 - Public engagement —Who is involved, how are they involved, how is it working, is it efficient and effective, leadership, and who are the key parties. Covering all entities from regulatory, elected officials, NGO's, collaboratives, etc.
 - During the course of Richard's work with the BDNF he will look at interagency collaboration, specifically, he will visit with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Dillon, MT.
 - Richard's work is focused on forest resiliency. Some people feel that recreation and wildlife get left out, but even those resources are effected by forest resiliency.
 - Richard asks forests, "What is your forest strategy?" The response is often, "The five-year plan", but that is not a strategy. Richard wants to know the where, who, and how of regaining forest resiliency. A Forest needs to show that they have a strategy so that they can get the right budget to implement that strategy. With changing budgets, FS processes tend to drift without a strategy. Richard's work is about developing and implementing a strategy.
- The collaborative would like to see the BDNF meeting their recreation needs as well.
- The concept of a POD is part of the Regional Forester's "Let us not accept the status quo" approach.

3. Shared Stewardship and Forests in Focus 2.0 Update from Matt Arno, Forestry Assistance Bureau Chief

- In a month or so, the Governor will put together the Montana Forest Action Council. The council will be charged with the duty of driving the development of the 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan. This group will oversee the progress of priorities outlined in the plan, report progress annually to the Governor, and identify recommendations to overcome any obstacles inhibiting defined targets.
- Matt Arno expects the plan to identify the greatest needs in the wildland urban interface (WUI), put all WUIs on a map and come to agreement on where the highest priorities are. They will then assemble a 10-year plan of work. The plan needs to be both ambitious and achievable, with yearly review. The Governor wants to get more work done in fuels reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, and watershed health.
- When the action plan is released, the DNRC will be looking for feedback from groups like the BDWG.
- Will the new Farm Bill provisions regarding counties' and tribes' ability to use Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) make a difference for the state's effort?

- Most counties probably do not have the capacity to do GNA work, but DNRC can work with the counties to get GNA projects done.
- Forests in Focus 2.0 is a good first step, the question is, “What is the next step regarding funding and implementation?”
 - The Governor’s budget includes eight full-time employees plus funding to help ramp up the GNA program. DNRC might need four years of funding to get Forest in Focus 2.0 off the ground but they’ve got a good start. Once the program has gotten started, DNRC expects timber sale receipts to fund the continuation of the program. Boulder Lowlands is expected to bring in \$396,000 in estimated program income.. DNRC looks at each sale to make sure it at least breaks even or generates revenue to support further work.
 - DNRC expects to deliver 30 million board feet per year within a few years.
- Counties need the FS to move past salvage projects and get back into green sales.
 - DNRC is figuring out ways to mix in some green into their sales to make sure they pay their way.
- Since shared stewardship came out, DNRC has been collaborating more with the FS. The Shared Stewardship Report, like the increasing pace and scale report, is encouraging.

4. Congressional Policy Updates

- None of the litigation reform provisions made it into this Farm Bill, but Senator Daines will keep working on litigation reform.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) will soon be getting a new vote to fund it.
- Senator Daines is still committed to reintroducing legislation regarding Montana’s Wilderness Study Areas (WSA).

5. Continuing the discussion of BDWG 2019 goals and objectives

- Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) did Geographic Information Systems (GIS) work to identify a landscape for a potential CFLRP application by the BDWG, then the 2014 Farm Bill came out and the BDWG realized they were well positioned with ERG’s work to respond to the Governor’s request regarding Forests in Focus 1.0. Then the FS asked the BDWG to help with a lodgepole pine Categorical Exclusion (CE). BDWG got Forest in Focus funding to complete the analysis.
- The BDWG would like to pursue the newly reauthorized Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), but will need to have the BDNF on-board, as it is they that will need to submit the application.
- BDWG needs to work on all scales, from small projects to landscape scale.
- Somebody needs to be pushing to get the counties of the BDNF funding to update their Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).

6. Round robin: meeting critiques

[In round robin fashion, each member and visitor was given a moment to reflect on how this meeting has gone and to suggest changes for future meetings.]

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