

**Beaverhead-Deer Lodge Working Group
Meeting Record**

Butte Archives, Butte, MT

7/11/2018 - 1:15pm

ATTENDANCE

Members: Tony Colter, timber representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, agricultural representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation/weeds representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Technical Advisors: Alex Dunn, USDA Forest Service

Visitors: Commissioner Daniel Allhands, Madison County; Tom Harrington, Jefferson County Local Development Corporation; Chris Marchion, Anaconda Sportsman; Willy Peck - Idaho Forest Group

Facilitators: Ben Irely, National Forest Foundation; Hannah Leonard, National Forest Foundation; Adam Snitker, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- June meeting record approved
- Darcie approved as Co-Chair
- Attending members voted in favor of approving membership additions of Willy Peck, Commissioner Allhands, and Chris Marchion

Action Items

- Ben to add Ted from newspaper to mailing list
- Ben to make sure FWP biologist attends field trip next month
- Ben to get list from Alex on timber projects
- Ben to invite District Rangers to present their project priorities (October meeting?)
- Alex to share E Deer Lodge project report/findings
- Darcie to share GYC comments submitted to Pintler Face project
- Ben to talk to Pete Nelson about objecting to get into objection/comment period
- Ben to contact Brian Sweatland in Missoula regarding: being an objector vs. an interested party and what it gives you in the NEPA process
- Group to send out any objection items
- Tom Rice to send invitation to public hearing for WSA's at the end of the month
- Alex to send history on WSA in the Beaverhead specifically, history, acres, what happens after release? What is status in forest plan for release? What forest plan currently says for each area and what they think happens post wilderness release? IF POSSIBLE, SEND AHEAD OF SEPTEMBER MEETING

Bin Items

- Future meeting topics - Pintler Wilderness chainsaw letter, need FS to explain why it was denied; SEPTEMBER: WSA discussion (Wrote letter to Daines, now what does the BDWG want to do re: WSAs?); OCTOBER: bringing District Rangers into the group to discuss their projects and priorities - each Ranger gives a presentation and report of their District's projects and what they think the priorities are; Chelsea Pennick McIver or Jerry Drury, both presenters at MACo Forest Summit to talk about the 25% payments; presentation on trust funds, authorities, county payments, and opportunities for creative strategies arising from there; Mark Finney on fire history; presentation by USFS on implementation of the Selway Project; Community Wildfire Protection Plans on BDNF; state of timber industry economics by Sun Mnt. Lumber; an update on the livestock industry and the BDNF; KV funds, salvage, GNA, and Stewardship - the right mix moving forward on the BDNF; What is the long-term plan for building BDNF capacity?
- Ben Irely to circulate Headwaters Economics' report on their community wildfire planning meeting in Helena, once published.
- Members should be on the lookout for opportunities to comment on and support projects when they're open for objections (upcoming: Pintler Face, Greenhorn, Red Rocks)
- Alex Dunn will present on progress of BDNF on Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM) change effort

MEETING RECORD

1. Review agenda and last meeting's action items (Ben Irely)

2. Announcements and Upcoming Events (Tony Colter)

- Leonard announced a donation from Jefferson County of \$5,000 to Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
- Ben announced the request for a letter regarding recent challenges and successes for BDWG to be written for Montana Forest Collaborative Network annual report
 - **Challenges:** Acreage wise, Boulder Lowlands is a drop in the bucket, hard to keep these projects going for the future → momentum is a challenge. Getting more accomplished with limited funds in the BDNF. Hard to get meeting turnout, strong participation in this collaborative and interest, limited by capacity of BDNF.
 - **Success:** Boulder Lowlands project. Participated in comment process on Red Rock project (participated in public meetings). Motorized Recreation involvement got them together and hopefully came up with solutions for them. Helping other groups get started. East Deer Lodge USFS lawsuit/timber sale, worked in a collaborative way on better projects, both group and USFS learned → will win more than will lose. Getting the resources needed for the Greenhorn project to get through NEPA. Have had participation from congressional delegation, senators. Healthy discussions and debates. Aspen CE (EA) this group had lots of input.
- Ben asked about thoughts on recent news article on the group.

- Group was satisfied with article and discussed continuing a relationship with the newspaper and journalist (Ted Mcdermott) for future articles to keep public awareness of the group and their work.
- Ben Discussed a field trip on August 1st (Boulder Lowlands)
 - See if FWP biologist to attend meeting
 - Will hold a meeting on the day of the field trip in the ranger station conference room not to exceed 30 minutes
- Tony proposes to schedule more field trips ahead of project planning and before comment periods.
 - Alex says FS has 5-7 year sale plan that are currently plotted for advertisement based on NEPA outcomes.
- Ben asked group about using past work as a jumping off point and moving forward with FS in project planning.
 - Alex - Timber programs 5 year sale plan is more about scheduling sales, not necessarily appealing to the BDWG group. Regional targets are focused on timber and fuels. Thus, the driver is the timber and fuels piece. We then need to hitch our wagons to those projects to see progress regarding recreation, grazing, etc.
 - Important to note that 25% fund to counties occurs if the project is on your county or another. Not payed just to the county where the work is done.
 - BDNF's "Where we go next?" is not finalized, key message is we have built into it a plan for outreach and collaboration.
 - Alex - each district will be coming up with its own priorities to be submitted to the Forest, as in "here's what we're thinking for a 5 year plan".
 - Where does someone with a project idea start?
 - Alex - That's an open question, you can call a District Ranger anytime and will have staff to go look and keep in mind when developing projects
 - BDWG needs to decide if they want to make their own opportunities for projects or wait for FS to engage with them.
 - If we wait for the FS to engage with us to help prioritize projects we could be waiting years. There is a NEPA bottleneck.
 - FS doesn't have capacity to deal with a lot curveballs (lawsuits) right now.
- Process that's currently being done is outreach at the District level → District works with the Forest to think who should be involved
 - We should invite rangers to come to meetings and present their priority projects.
 - BDWG should be a group that helps the BDNF prioritize projects, since there is not a Gravelly Landscape Collaborative on every District.
- Intention of the Ranger-based prioritization process is to create transparency on why certain projects get chosen and others not
 - The BDWG should work with each District Ranger to get sense of priority areas and then work with Forest to push for projects. Use the Gravelly Landscape Collaborative process as an example.
 - Alex - not a collaborative group on every district, how does FS go about handling collaboration then?

- To summarize - bring in Rangers to BDWG to see where their priorities are and then work with them to dial in on projects that are important to them too.

3. Congressional policy updates

- None

4. BDNF updates (Alex Dunn)

- Budget/Staffing Capacity:
 - Authorized by USDA to go through first round of hiring after freeze was lifted. First hired in January under Phase 1 hiring. All positions vacated by retirement or job change within agency.
 - Phase 1: we are not allowed to hire outside the agency, then given authority to hire gov't-wide. Resulted in robbing units of a position and pay a transfer of station (TOS) cost (est \$10,000 - 100,000+). Wanted to hire 30 employees resulting in a budgeted 3M in TOS costs. Hired 10 from Phase 1, Phase 2 to open at the beginning of May... still has not opened. Have set aside TOS, not sure if able to spend.
 - Where will you be at, budget-wise, if you hire all these vacant positions?
 - 90% of total budget → not much left for contracts. We must find the sweet spot.
 - Income from Congress and projected sales
 - Planned to sell Fleecer this year, but that is not happening (injunction not lifted)
- E Deer Lodge Forest: Sheep grazing in the Gravellys - litigation process ongoing. Doover on supplemental EIS, wild vs. domestic and disease transmission.
- Status of NEPA projects:
 - Notice of intent for EIS domestic sheep allotment NEPA
 - **Fleecer** oral arguments schedule for July, attempting to reschedule for August
 - Roadside Nine hazardous tree removal
 - **Red Rock** Strike Team is keeping team lead until project is finished
 - Strike Teams now aligned with 3 regional pods
 - Compiling EA now
 - **Little Hogback Meyers Salvage** → compiling EA Now
 - **Pintler Face** → compiling EA, going to objection in August
 - **Greenhorn** → taking a pause due to position vacancies
 - **South Gravelly ANP** → collecting more info/delayed
 - **Prison Ranch** → initial phases (same team as Greenhorn)
 - **Seelway Sagana** → beginning stages of how to work with public, interdisciplinary team
 - **Sheep Grazing ANP** → litigation process ongoing
 - **Take home** → four to come out for objection, to have seat at the table you have to object (not sure about being an objector vs. and interested party gives you)
 - Ben to follow up with outside council, Brian Sweatland in Missoula, for better clarification

5. Nominees for new membership

- Willy Peck
 - Likes: how group functions, diversity, organization, structure (bylaws)
 - Brings: hopes to add what already know and do, some things Mineral County Resource Council and Sanders County Collaborative have done and do differently, timber and recreational subcommittees, has experience writing congressional leaders, has a direct line to Sonny Purdue (Secretary USDA). Works in the timber industry but also in collaboratives.
- Daniel Allhands
 - Likes: The collaboration of diverse groups
 - Brings: has dealt with FS and Fish and Game his whole life, has been in litigation with them. Being a commissioner, can deal with agencies in public sector and private sector.
- Chris Marchion
 - Likes: original founding member of this group. Liked where the group has evolved to working more on projects and not on administrative things.
 - Brings: interests of sportsman, involved in many FS projects, board of wildlife federation, familiar with Anaconda, Rock Creek area, as well as Big Hole. Hunter/Angler/Backpacker values. Knows a lot about how the group got here.

6. Public comment Tony Colter

[No public comment given.]

7. Members only discussion of new membership nominees

[No notes taken]

8. Discussion of open Co-Chair position and nominations

- Darcie previously agreed to think about Co-chair position and has decided to take the co-chair!
- Darcie was voted in to assume the position effective immediately

9. Round robin: meeting critiques

- Next meeting topics:
 - AUGUST: Field Trip
 - If we have a brief meeting beforehand, perhaps we could get an answer to why the chainsaw exemption for trail clearing in a portion of the AP burned by the Meyers Fire was denied.
 - Let's have a brief meeting before the field trip in the District conference room, keep at 30 mins max.
 - For September meeting, let's have a WSA discussion
 - Wrote letter to Daines
 - What does BDWG want to do to WSA's? Release or no release?
 - Public hearing on July 30th public hearing
 - For October meeting, bring District Rangers into the group to discuss their projects and priorities

- Meeting critiques:
 - Let's continue to encourage the BDNF staff to provide us with the level of detail and sharing of information that we heard today
 - Food for next time:
 - Cold bubbly water, coffee, donuts

10. Review decisions and action items

[See meeting outcomes above]

Meeting adjourned at 4:17pm.

DRAFT