

**Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group  
Meeting Record**

Butte Archives, 17 W. Quartz St., Butte, MT  
Friday, May 4, 2018, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Members:** Maureen Connor, at-large representative; Nick Gevock, wildlife representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz and Rick Sandru, agricultural representatives; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

**Technical Advisors:** Alex Dunn, Betsy Herrmann, Dale Olson, Sara Rouse, Scot Schuler, USDA Forest Service

**Visitors:** Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Chris Marchion, Anaconda Sportsman's Club

**Facilitators:** Ben Irely and Naomi Neal, National Forest Foundation

**MEETING OUTCOMES**

**Decisions:**

- Approval of letter to Senator Daines and Representative Gianforte on the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) bills.
- Revisions to Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) Operations Manual:
  - Under the "Nominations Process" heading, "invite to next meeting" will be added to the third bullet.
  - Prospective members will be required to attend an initial meeting before writing a letter of interest in the group.
  - The steering committee will perform the duties of the ad hoc membership committee.

**Action Items:**

- April minutes will be revised by Ben Irely (as discussed) and approved at the June meeting.
- Alex Dunn will send out scanned studies of Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) WSAs from past years to the group.
- Ben Irely will:
  - Disseminate an up-to-date member list.
  - Post the introduction to BDWG and funding request letters on the website for members to use.
  - Update the BDWG Operations Manual per group decisions, including updating the regular meeting day to Wednesday.
  - Deliver the Selway Landscape Vision document to the BDNF.
  - Talk to Leonard Wortman about setting up a presentation for the counties.
- Nick Gevock will:
  - Talk to Brian Ohs regarding recommitment to BDWG.
  - Possibly also talk to David at Trout Unlimited about the importance of the collaborative.

- Wait for the all-clear from the Steering Committee to gauge Casey Hackathorn's interest.
- Talk to Matt Vincent (potential conservation representative from Butte).
- Leonard Wortman will:
  - Wait for the Steering Committee's all-clear, then reach out to Tom Harrington about potential involvement as a motorized recreation representative.
  - Coordinate with Dan Allhands regarding membership and a letter of interest.
- The Steering Committee will discuss proposed members and present ideas to the full group at the next meeting.
- 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).
- Presentations requested/to be scheduled:
  - Chelsea Pennick McIver or Jerry Drury, both presenters at MACo Forest Summit who talked about the 25% payments.
  - Presentation on trust funds, authorities, county payments, and opportunities for creative strategies arising from there.
  - Mark Finney on fire history.
- Agenda item for next meeting: discussion of omnibus spending implications for BDNF, led by congressional staff.
- Agenda items for future meeting:
  - Five-year and long-term planning: BDWG members to perform prioritization exercise using past work as jumping off point, hear a presentation by BDNF, then identify alignment or misalignment.
  - Presentation by USFS on implementation of the Selway Project.

**Bin Items:**

- Alex Dunn will present on Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM) at a future meeting.
- Inconsistencies between guiding documents (which in some cases refer to "co-chairs" and in others to a chair and vice-chair) will be resolved once Tony Colter gives input.
- A Boulder Lowlands field trip is tentatively planned for July.
- Consider whether to distinguish between members and non-members in meetings (suggestion: color-coded name tents).
- Carry-over agenda items for upcoming meetings: Community Wildfire Protection Plans on the BDNF; state of timber industry economics by Sun Mountain 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 USFS' long-term plan for building BDNF capacity?
- Circulate Headwaters Economics' report on their community wildfire planning meeting in Helena, once published.
- Some members would like to draft a letter to the Montana congressional delegation regarding changes and additions to the farm bill.

**MEETING RECORD**

## **Welcome and introductions (Ben Irely)**

### **Review agenda and April Meeting Record (Ben Irely)**

- Presentation on EADM will be saved for a future meeting with more attendees.
- Review of changes to be made to the April meeting record as requested by Erik Nylund. All present agreed to the changes; the updated April record will be voted on at the June meeting.
- Review of April action items:
  - The Colorado State University (CSU) focus group originally scheduled for May 24 will be held on June 6, the day of the June BDWG meeting.
  - The BDWG's letter in support of Cameron Rasor's chainsaw exemption request has been submitted.
  - Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects will be studied to understand the pros and cons of the authority, and the agency will report out on findings to BDWG in an ongoing manner.

### **Announcements and upcoming events (Ben Irely)**

- Summer field trips:
  - Members discussed whether field trips should be scheduled in addition to or in lieu of monthly meetings, but did not make a decision.
  - One suggestion was a trip to the Selway project area on the heels of putting together the project initiation letter and with other planning steps taking off. The USFS is particularly interested in getting input from the group on this project once its scope is more fleshed out.
  - Another field trip suggestion is a trip to the Boulder project site. The remaining portion of implementation will be done through GNA and attendees agreed that it would be of interest to see what's already been done.
  - Another potential destination is the East Deerlodge project area, where two timber sales are nearing the end of implementation and some of the approved restoration work has already begun. More information on how things are going should be available after a late May monitoring blitz.
  - Ultimately, the group decided to plan a trip to the Boulder Lowlands project area, and to decide whether to make a trip to the Selway area after a USFS presentation on the project at a meeting sometime this summer.
- Report from the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) Forests Summit
  - Leonard Wortman and Scot Schuler attended. The summit provided an opportunity for county commissioners to get together and talk both formally and informally with USFS and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) staff.
  - One valuable aspect was conversation about and increased understanding of the 25% payments to counties. An important takeaway was that payments are based on the percentage of the forest within the county's boundaries, not on the county in which timber is harvested, which means that the best path forward is to advocate for forest-wide sales that help everyone. Another takeaway was that Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payments are based on per capita income, which hurts counties with urban centers.

- The summit also provided good information on GNA. GNA funds are not part of the 25% payments, so in some sense using GNA may cut into county receipts.
- The attorney Lawson Fite spoke about the power and importance of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the relative power of an amicus curiae briefs compared with a comment letter.

**BDNF updates** (agency staff)

- East Deerlodge project: The Ninth Circuit ruled in BDNF's favor in an unpublished decision (not precedent-setting). The plaintiffs' case concerned the snag standard in forest plan and whether existing riparian management objectives were adequately described, and the court found that they did not comment specifically enough on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the USFS was thus procedurally correct in not acting on their comments.
- Gravelly Mountains: The Gallatin Wildlife Association's request to enjoin sheep grazing was unsuccessful; there are still issues to settle in the legal arena, but sheep grazing can go on in the meantime.
- Fleecer project: USFS is waiting for a decision on whether a 2013 injunction will be lifted.
- Red Rocks project: Some changes regarding impacts around the Continental Divide Trail will be made to the plan to correct inconsistencies.
- Pintler Face project: The plan is almost ready to go out for objections.
- Greenhorn project: This project plan is also almost ready to go out for objections.
- "Rancho Deluxe" Prison project: A scoping meeting for this GNA project will be held in Deer Lodge this month.
- Staffing updates:
  - The yearlong hiring freeze was lifted in January. 13 full-time positions were posted and many have already been filled, with a second hiring phase to begin in mid-May and 15 more permanent positions scheduled to be posted. None of these positions include law enforcement hiring, which is organizationally separated within the agency.
  - Members discussed the downsides of USFS's robust internal recruitment and relocation policies. Lack of continuity in key positions can slow process improvement. There is less incentive for USFS staff to keep moving in order to advance than there used to be, but it's still an agency cultural norm. Transfer of station cost associated with relocating employees takes up a sizeable chunk of agency's budget, but are unavoidable if the forest wants to be a competitive employer.
  - New Deputy Forest Supervisor Jeff Tomack comes to BDNF from Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Oregon and has extensive experience in different regions and unit types. He has expressed interest in collaborative work and starts work on May 14.
  - The Forest Range Program Manager position has been filled. The occupant of this new position will hopefully help to oversee the whole program, despite regional vacancies.
- Five-year planning: Now that legacy projects dating to the collaborative's beginnings are being completed, BDWG should decide where to go next and develop multi-year plans. The BDNF needs input on an ongoing multi-year project development process and to understand which criteria are important to BDWG so the process can reflect its needs.

- The group discussed ideas for planning exercises, to be conducted at a future meeting, and the value of clarity provided by similar efforts in past years. Agency staff encouraged members to think outside the vegetation treatments box.
- Update on chainsaw trail-clearing exemption request by Cameron Rasor: This was discussed at a recent forest supervisors' meeting, and opinions were divided. The decision will not be made lightly as it will have regional implications. The one concern about which all supervisors agreed was safety and risk exposure, so this will likely drive the decision on whether or not chainsaws can be used in this wilderness area. The forest supervisors agreed to engage the regional safety coordinator to help determine the potential exposure risks for using or not using chainsaws.
- History of attempts to resolve WSAs on the Forest: The Montana Wilderness Study Act was passed in 1977, and two WSAs were created on the BDNF. The Act required that the agency analyzes the areas' wilderness potential and submit a report to Congress. The West Pioneers study was completed in 1980 and the report recommended that the entirety be managed as non-wilderness. The Sapphires WSA was also not recommended for wilderness designation. In 1996, the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) sued the USFS for violation of the Act because the areas had not been managed to preserve wilderness character. This prompted 2002 and 2005 studies of the West Pioneers and Sapphires WSAs, respectively. These studies were intended as monitoring reports comparing the areas' wilderness character to 1977 records. They found that some site-specific changes had occurred, but the overall wilderness character of both WSAs was undiminished. The MWA lawsuit was settled in 2007. Forest roadless areas, which have a similar footprint to these WSAs, were inventoried during the forest plan revision process in the 2000s.

**Wilderness Study Areas draft letter** (Ben Irej)

The group reviewed a letter about the WSA bills, originally composed by the Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance and edited to apply to BDWVG, which would be sent to Daines and Gianforte if approved. The letter is a polite, constructive, and specific way of addressing concerns about public involvement in the process without being divisive. A few typos were corrected and the group voted to approve the letter and send it to the representatives.

**BDWVG membership, chairmanship, and fundraising** (Ben Irej)

- The group reviewed the various guiding documents' descriptions of the BDWVG membership policies and process for adding new members.
- Members identified points of drift in practice from established protocol: the Steering Committee has been playing the role of an ad hoc membership committee. Potential members have been attending an initial meeting before submitting a letter of interest.
- Members decided to replace the ad hoc membership committee with the steering committee in the guiding documents to bring them into line with practice.
- Members discussed whether to do away with the letter-writing requirement but ultimately decided to keep it. They did decide to ask that prospective members attend a meeting before writing an interest letter.

- Inconsistencies exist between documents and it's unclear whether the group should have two co-chairs or a chair and vice-chair. This will be resolved after consulting with co- or vice-chair Tony Colter.
- Discussion of potential new members:
  - Matt Vincent, a potential conservation representative from Butte, has already been vetted.
  - A representative from Friends of the Pipestone could fill the motorized recreation spot, making Mark Thompson strictly a mining representative.
  - Chris Marchion is interested in coming back aboard as a voting member, and also suggested Jack Atchison, an outfitter, as a potential member.
  - Depending on whether current TU representative Brian Ohs decides to remain in the group, Casey Hackthorn from TU could be a good replacement.
  - Dan Allhands, Madison County Commissioner, is interested in joining and in attendance.
  - Tom Harrington was suggested as another potential motorized recreation representative.
  - Willy Peck of the Idaho Forest Group has attended several meetings and is interested.
- The steering committee needs to meet to discuss membership addition protocols before members do any outreach to potential new members.
- Members decided to add "invite to next meeting" as a third bullet under "Nominations Process" in the BDWG Operations Manual, so that in the future this invitation will be a part of the individual member one-on-one outreach process for recruiting new members.
- The steering committee will meet to discuss those proposed today and present their thoughts at the next meeting.

**Round robin: meeting critiques & comments** (Ben Irely)

- Suggestion that unproductive discussions should be cut short.

**Review decisions and action items** (Naomi Neal)

[See meeting outcomes, above]

**Meeting closeout** (Ben Irely)

- The BDWG website has been updated.
- The group's funding from Sun Mountain Lumber has been half spent. The group needs to discuss how to attract additional funding moving forward. Ben will talk to Leonard Wortman about a presentation to the counties.
- The next meeting will be June 6th.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:21 pm.**