

North Idaho Working Group (NIWG) Meeting Record
Tuesday, April 19, 2022, from 5 to 8 p.m. PDT
In-person and on Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance

Members: Trevor Anderson, state representative; Ken Barrett, outfitter and guide representative; Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Tom Dabrowski, non-motorized recreation representative; Olivia and Scooter Drake, motorized recreation representative; Hilary Eisen, non-motorized recreation representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Alan Harper, timber representative; Jacob Hinrichs, motorized recreation representative; Phil Hough, conservation representative; Tim Koerner, motorized recreation representative; Mathew Kramer, motorized recreation representative; Jim McReynolds, recreation representative; Stan Meyers, citizen-at-large; Orin Moses, motorized recreation representative; Chuck Roady, private landowner representative; Trevor Schneider, citizen-at-large; Brad Smith, conservation representative; Dave Wenk, motorized recreation representative.

Technical assistants: Jake Garringer, Executive Office of the Governor; Josh Uriarte and Jace Hogg, Governor's Office of Species Conservation; Todd Wernex, Idaho Department of Lands; Nate Sparks, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation; Jessie Berner, Dan Gilfillan, Brett Lyndaker, and Patrick Lair, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF); and Carin Vadala, Colville National Forest; Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Jim Woodward, Idaho State Senate; Mike Lithgow, Kalispel Tribe; Scott Soultz and Rhonda Vogl, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Sage Dixon, State Representative; Marc Kilmer and Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch; Jason Lane and David Wade, US Border Patrol; Christy Johnson-Hughes, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Norm Mertz, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Stakeholders: Becca Rodack, Idaho Conservation League; Commissioner Dan Dinning, Boundary County; Paul Yelk, citizens-at-large; Adam Gebauer, The Lands Council;

Facilitators: Ben Irely, Dani Southard, and Maisie Powell, The National Forest Foundation.

Objectives

- Discuss Stan Meyer's letter and accompanying documents and decide how to move forward
- Discuss the lines on the maps of the six interest representatives.
- Make a decision about the process for achieving consensus on areas open and closed to OSVs in the North Zone based on interest representatives' lines on the map.
- Develop proposals for achieving consensus on areas open and closed to OSVs.

Decisions

- The February and March meeting records were approved with no amendments.
- The group will not consider areas outside of the injunction, but there is enough interest in these areas that a different group could address these areas in the near future.

Action Items

- Interest groups will put maps on the NFF file storage for everyone to view. Representatives will keep GIS files and NFF will determine where to store these.
- The snowmobiling constituency will look at all six of the maps and combine these to bring a proposal to the larger group. John Finney will bring this map on May 17th.
- Brad Smith will continue to work on maps and compile everyone's files.
- Dani will check in with the Process Committee at the next meeting to ensure there are no concerns around the process.
- Dani will find a location for the May 17th meeting as the Bonner Country building is unavailable.

Bin Items

- There is a need to outline dates for grizzly closures.

MEETING RECORD

Welcome and introductions

- Ben Irey reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives. Ben refers to the Code of Conduct for participants to review and get an understanding of how decisions are made.
- Ben informs participants that he will be leaving the National Forest Foundation (NFF) for a new position, and NFF's Dani Southard will be taking over.
- Participants review the February and March meeting record. No amendments were made and both meeting records were approved as written.

Review and Discussion of Stan Meyer's Letter

- Stan Meyers summarizes the purpose of his letter. He strongly believes that the whole working group should make decisions and the model should be one vote per person.
- There should be a full group vote on whether Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWAs) remain open or closed.
- Jesse Berner clarifies the Forest Service's (USFS) regulatory outline to abide by the Forest Plan. This is not something that they can revisit.
 - There is a general understanding that Forest Plans can be amended
 - Berner's reiterates that the USFS has to abide by current Forest Plan. Recommendations from this group must be within that framework. The USFS is not going forward with a Forest Plan amendment at the time being. This process is focused on where OSV use can occur based on Travel Management rule.

- There is a suggestion that these discussions would be great to bring to the Bonner County committees.
- There is concern around tight parameters and the potential room for collaboration. There are also questions around how this fits in the NEPA process and public involvement.
- Group members and USFS personnel clarify that this collaboration will not satisfy the NEPA requirements for public involvement. The recommendation will help the USFS develop a proposed action that will then be brought to the public for full scoping.
- A member shares their agreement with Stan Meyers that RWAs should not be managed as Wilderness.
 - Being mindful of the group's time, there is a clarification that reviewing Forest Plans is not intended to be a part of this process, and that a lot of time and effort was already put in to making decisions around managing RWAs.
 - There is a general consensus that it would be nice to open up the conversation and look at the Forest Plan, but this does not fit in our timeline.
- Stan Meyers suggests to have a full group vote on whether or not we will include areas for consideration outside of the injunction.
- Ben reiterates Stan's suggestion and asks the group for feedback. Does this group want to consider areas closed on the Forest Plan as part of this process, which includes the green and purple areas on the map.
 - There is further discussion that this would not be included in this analysis and additional recommendations from areas outside of the injunction should be addressed in a different processes as this process is specifically looking at over the snow travel management in this particular area. If this group would like to reach consensus for other areas down the road, that's great.
 - There is continued discussion that there is no harm in saying we will consider other areas outside the scope of analysis things that are outside of the scope of this analysis and can make decisions on the amount of time we'd like to dedicate to these discussions and considerations.
 - There is a motion to vote, which is then seconded. The motion does not pass.
 - Anyone interested in keeping this discussion alive should create a second group.

Look at and discuss maps presented by the six interest area representatives

- Voting at the last meeting solidified the process of having six interest groups with representatives to work with their constituencies to draw lines on the map. These groups and representatives include:
 - State, Jace Hogg; Conservation, Brad Smith; Non-motorized recreation, Tom Dabrowski,; Outfitters and guides, Aaron Lieberman; and Motorized recreation, John Finney.
- Each representative has three minutes to share their map with the larger group. There is a suggestion to focus on areas of disagreement as a way to move forward.
 - Outfitters: the main goal is to not have any roads closed. Currently, there are areas in the NW corner that are closed. Their primary concern is that folks can get to

areas to set traps. In total, there are four or five closed roads of interest, with around 20 miles of roads in total.

- State: interest groups include the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), the Office of Species Conservation, Idaho Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Fish & Game. They propose Harrison Lake reopens with the caveat that the NIWG and USFS work together on a plan for this area until April 1st, close the area for grizzly habitat through April, then reopen the area in May for late season recreation. The other area of interest is the North there are a few routes that could be opened for on-trail use only for the purpose of setting traps. This area should focus on adaptive management to take caribou considerations into account.
- Non-motorized recreation: this group combined work from backcountry skiers collaborating in 2019 to gather data on where skiers were recreating. This group is interested in seeing Pack River Road open. A concern for backcountry skiers is to have access to powder and not worry about conflict with snow bikes. On this map, purple areas are areas they would like to see closed on to motorized uses, blue areas are hybrid, allowing the use of snow machine for access and for motorized use on-trail only, and orange routes are options proposed for sled access. The purple areas on this map are the highest priority for non-motorized recreational users.
- Outfitters and guides: A main concern for this group is that restrictions for the guide and outfitter community will have economic ramifications for the whole State. This group is interested to see the motorized recreation interest areas and see which of those places could be opened up after considering grizzly habitat and potential caribou reintroductions.
- Conservation: the light green represents yearlong closure areas, either in connection to the Forest Plan or because they are key wildlife corridors. Areas in purple are open to snowmobile use from November 15th to March 31st. Light blue areas are open to snowmobiles December 1st to March 31st. Dark green is open year long. This group did not include contingencies because this is difficult to enforce. There are also specific designated routes that would be open season long. Myrtle snow is also open year round.
- Motorized: the group's process was to identify key areas to be addressed using the initial USFS mapping but not going to specifically recommend closure areas at this time.
- Discussion: The focus of the discussion is to determine areas where the group is still in disagreement, areas for further work.
- Areas include Scotchman Peaks and the Southern end of the Selkirks. The southern end of Selkirk crest is an area where we might be able to open certain areas for access while still maintaining skier specific areas and wildlife habitat.
- A comment from the snowmobiling community is that many of the proposed closures for snowmobiles follow ridge lines with the East side being closed. With weather patterns, much of the best snow is on north and eastern slopes, so much of the best snow is closed for snowmobile use.

- A group member highlights an area in the northeast up Deer Creek. This area is listed as closed on the Conservation map, but this is an important area for snowmobiling. There should be further discussion around this area.
- There is a need to consider lines on a map that make sense geographically so snowmobilers can easily discern closed versus open areas, as well as figure out easy ways to reinforce closed areas and provide clear access to information about closures.
- Interest groups will put maps on the NFF file storage for everyone to view. Representatives will keep GIS files and NFF will determine where to store these.

Develop proposals for areas open and closed to OSVs

- For the process moving forward, the snowmobilers will take these maps and then make a proposal out of that to move forward with the group.
- Brad Smith will continue to work on maps and compile everyone's files.
- How can the Process Committee move forward?
 - There will be a check in at the next meeting to see if there are any concerns.
- There is a suggestion for the next step to be outlining dates around grizzly closures.
- Ben Irey is departing NFF. All future communication should be directed to Dani Southard.
- May 3rd is the next Process Committee meeting on Zoom from 5:30-7:30. May 17th is next full group meeting. John Finney will bring a proposal to the group. Bonner County space is not available for May 17th so we need to find a space.

Public comment

- There is a question from the public around whether or not the USFS has to use this group's recommendation.
 - The answer is no, but the USFS is attending meetings to provide guidance and the group knows the parameters of the Forest Plan.

Members' final thoughts

- There is a general feeling that the group is making some progress and that several months of hard work are coming together.
- Members express appreciation for the six interest representative leaders.
- Members congratulate Ben on the new job, but will miss working with him.
- The [Payette Forest over snow vehicle map](#) provides a good example of an end goal for this group and the Travel Management plan.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.