

**Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG)
Meeting Record**

Butte Archives, 17 W Quartz St. Butte, MT
Wednesday, November 7, 2018, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members: Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large representative; Nick Gevock, hunting representative; John Kountz, agriculture/ranching representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation/weeds representative; Chris Marchion, citizen-at-large representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Rick Sandru, agriculture/ranching representative; Darcie Warden, conservation/NGO representative; and Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Technical Advisors: Alex Dunn, Melany Glossa, Betsy Herrmann, and Dale Olson, Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest; Cecily Costello, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Visitors: Gary Carlson, Carlson Ranch; Tom Harrington, MSU Extension Agent for Jefferson County; Glen Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association; Nancy Ostlie, Great Old Broads for Wilderness; Cindy Perdue-Dolan, U.S. Senator Steve Daines' Office; Jennifer Sherry, Natural Resource Defense Council

Facilitators: Ben Irely and Anna Wearn, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

BDWG voting members present approved Tom Harrington to become a member of BDWG representing motorized recreation interests.

Action Items

- Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa will discuss with the other Forest Supervisors in the new "pod" how the joint leadership team (including Melany Glossa's replacement) can best engage with BDWG. Melany Glossa will then report back to the group.
- Ben Irely will make the following revisions to the October meeting record and Boulder Lowlands field trip summary:
 - Adjust some specific language to more precisely capture Glen's comments regarding wild sheep in the Gravellys.
 - Clarify that USFS is not accepting Resource Advisory Committee applications quite yet (awaiting sign-off at the national level). Melany Glossa would still appreciate recommendations at this time.
 - Correct the field trip summary to indicate that the WSA meeting took place in Dillon, not Helena.
- Ben Irely will ask Cecily Costello if she is willing to send a copy of her grizzly bear presentation, or at least a few slides.
- Ben Irely will send an amended list of BDWG's accomplishments to the group for review.
 - Chelsea McGiver requested this summary for her research on the impacts of forest collaboratives.
- Ben will send BDWG's letter on the use of chainsaws in wilderness to BDNF Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa.

- Ben will ask Mark Thompson if he would be willing to serve as the representative for mining interests now that we have a representative for motorized recreation.

Bin Items

- BDWG will consider whether a fuel treatment presentation from USFS would be valuable (see
- Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa has asked the group to consider taking a look at range issues and how the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review process could be improved, such that it is an outcome-based effort, rather than a descriptive effort.
- Glen Hockett offered to invite the Gallatin Wildlife Association wildlife biologist regarding to discuss the Strawberry Cascade allotment. The other alternative would be to invite a USFS biologist.

MEETING RECORD

1. Presentation: Grizzly Movement Through the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) (Cecily Costello, MFWP)

- Summary:
 - Cecily Costello is a Grizzly Bear Research Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP). She oversees the Grizzly Bear population trend program in the Northern Continent Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). She is also a member of the study team in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE).
 - In 1975 Grizzly Bears were listed as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). There was not much data on their populations, but scientists estimate there were 700 or less in the lower 48 states.
 - In 1983, the federal government established recovery zones and population targets therein, including the Selkirks (100 individuals), Cabinet Yaak (50), NCDE (1,050), GYE (725), Selway Bitterroot (no target).
 - FWP has aspired to achieve connectivity between the recovery zones to prevent inbreeding and boost genetic diversity.
 - Human mortality was reduced by addressing issues regarding access to human food, access to habitat, livestock conflict, and illegal kills.
 - In the GYE, the conservation strategy is to maintain a population of at least 800 individuals. The population has surpassed that target and is now expanding its range.
 - The Cabinet Yaak and Selkirk populations have not met their targets.
 - The Bitterroot has been identified as an area for natural recolonization.
 - In 2007 and 2017 USFWS tried to remove the GYE population from listing under the ESA, believing populations had achieved the recovery goals.
 - The court overturned the decision due to concerns about genetic diversity of that isolated population.
 - The long-term goal outlined in bear management plans in Western Montana is genetic connectivity between the populations. MFWP has mapped out potential corridors for the migration of males between the NCDE and GYE populations (females rarely migrate far).
 - The grizzlies would move through these corridors to reach the other population, but not reside in the corridors.

- Corridor suitability is determined by habitat (forest cover, road density, housing density, etc.).
 - The populations are 90km apart currently.
 - This is on the higher end of distances between two bear populations that still allows for connectivity.
 - The mountain ranges most likely to act as connectivity corridors are the Tobacco Root, Boulder, Big Belts, and Bridger mountains.
 - Opportunities for collaboration
 - Protecting wildlife habitat
 - Developing land in a way that is less disruptive.
 - Road and housing density are correlated with a high mortality rate.
 - Protecting working landscapes - grazing areas have the potential to be compatible for both livestock and grizzlies.
 - Conflict resolution - sometimes conflict bears will need to be removed.
 - Waste disposal infrastructure - secure attractants
 - Highway crossings
 - Engage with watershed groups
 - Maps (and their layers) are available for use at sciencebase.gov and Ecosphere 8(10):e01969
- Discussion
 - Question: Would livestock production have to be reduced in the migration corridors?
 - Answer: That is not the intent of MFWP. Less than half of the connectivity corridor area includes public land so migration certainly presents some challenges.
 - Follow-up: What are the most effective techniques for mitigating conflict between bears and livestock?
 - Answer: MFWP's Bear Specialist would be better able to answer that question.
 - Question: Why doesn't MFWP forcibly move NCDE bears to the GYE?
 - Answer: MFWP prefers for that process to happen naturally, but they are considering moving them. MFWP doesn't see the lack of genetic diversity as an immediate threat to either population. They could facilitate cross-breeding if natural migration never occurred and the homogeneity of the gene pool became a more urgent problem. Populations seem to be functioning properly at present.
 - Question: Hasn't there been a higher mortality rate in the past few years?
 - Yes, there was higher mortality last year, but one year does not constitute a trend. Any mortality that we see is not limiting the population. With more bears, the growing population will suffer more mortalities. As the population grows, it expands its range into more difficult habitat to navigate.
 - Question: How effective are the wildlife crossing structures built east of Lincoln?
 - Cecily is not familiar with that data.

2. Announcements and Updates

- Ben Irey followed up with Cody Hutchinson, USFS Region 1 Objection Coordinator regarding our questions from the October meeting regarding the objections process.

- Objection meetings will be kept brief, if held at all. The timing is based on the remedy the objector provides to resolve the issue.
- In regards to the question as to what happens if USFS adopts a remedy from one objection that causes a concern for another interested party, Cody responded that:
 - There is no process for considering objections to the remedies adopted during the objection process. However, the remedy still has to meet the purpose and need of the project.
 - Those objections that fall within the bounds of what was analyzed will be made available to the public.
 - Overall, it would be relatively uncommon for USFS to adopt a remedy at the objections phase because most areas upon which the public and USFS can come to agreement have been worked out previously.
 - Objection meetings will be open to the public, though there is no public notice (you must have commented previously to be informed). It will likely take place as a phone call.
 - Objection Officers welcome input from the BDWG.
- Commissioner Leonard Wortman held the first meeting of the Jefferson County Subcommittee. See October Meeting Record for background on the impetus to form this subcommittee.
 - The meeting was advertised to the public and about a dozen individuals attended.
 - The discussion focused on the issue of fallen trees on trails, roads, and fences in the Red Rocks area that is causing a lot of problems for livestock operations.
 - One individual in attendance was proficient in GIS and said he could create a map of the allotments that are affected to identify priority projects.
 - Perhaps the BDWG could then bring that to USFS to try to advance the project.
 - USFS responds by noting that the issue may be appropriate for a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for all livestock leases with land line issues (fences, water ditches, etc).
- The Montana Forest Collaboration Network is holding its annual workshop in Kalispell on November 14th and 15th.
 - Chelsea McIver, a researcher at the University of Idaho in Moscow, is doing her PhD on the effects of forest collaboratives on USFS projects. She is interested in what BDWG's achievements have been to date.
 - Ben Irey presented a summary of accomplishments
 - Members added these additional accomplishments by the BDWG:
 - Lodgepole strategy
 - Bremer's Fish Key
 - Approved a landscape strategy statement for the Big Hole Divide.
 - Approved a landscape strategy statement for the Boulder River landscape.
 - Developed an assessment of priority landscapes that became the 2014 treatment areas for the BDNF under the Governor's priority landscape initiative.
 - Conducted outreach to motorized recreation users to gain support for targeted decommissioning of roads in the Red Rocks area.
 - This allowed USFS to more strategically reduce road density, which made the project stronger.
 - Ongoing efforts:

- Offer continuing technical advice and feedback to USFS on both planning and projects.
 - This input informs high level USFS discussions, according to Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa.
- Provide support for particular projects under NEPA review that reduces the likelihood of litigation.
- Advocate for greater public participation in land management decisions made by elected officials (i.e. Wilderness Study Areas).
 - BDWG member voiced that, by asking about what *projects* the group has completed, the research question misses broader accomplishments in the following ways:
 - One measure of success of collaborative efforts is the sustainability of relationships. Members of the group believe this is true of BDWG, but it is an “outcome” that is hard to quantify.
 - The amount that BDWG is able to achieve is directly correlated to BDNF staff capacity. There are a lot of projects BDWG would like to work on that USFS simply doesn’t have the resources to tackle at the moment. Therefore, a big role the BDWG has played is in advocating for more capacity on the BDNF.
 - Discussion: If we were able to advance projects like Boulder Lowlands that generated revenue for USFS, would that be an alternative method of increasing staff capacity?
 - Logging revenue goes into salvage sale receipts and 25% goes to general funds. Generally, when these receipts increase, the forest is able to hire more staff.
- BDNF Economic Report Highlights
 - Based on FY 2015 data (most recent data set), BDNF:
 - Supported an estimated 1,510 jobs in 2015 (1,200 jobs in 2014)
 - Generated \$55M in labor income for local communities (direct, indirect, and induced)
 - Largest source of economic output was non-resident expenditures on recreation (\$7.5M).
 - 81% of that goes to wages/benefits and 19% goes to business providers.

3. Congressional Updates (Cindy Perdue-Dolan)

- The farm bill is still sitting in conference committee.
 - Senator Daines seeks to cut red tape, strengthen the role of the states and counties, and eliminate fringe litigation with a pilot arbitration program.
- The Good Neighbor Authority has cleared the committee.
- A package of bills including permanently funding the Land & Water Conservation Fund, the Restore Our Parks Act, the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act, the Protect Collaboration for Healthier Forests Act, and the Clean Water for Rural Communities Act has been voted out of committee. The hope is that the legislation will be passed by the end of the year.
 - The WSA release bill is separate from that package.
- Appropriations bills are in progress.
 - The budget ends December 7th. Hopefully something passes for FY19.

4. BDNF Projects, Timber Sales, and Other Updates

- General Updates
 - Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa announced that BDNF will now share staff resources with Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest (HLCNF), and Custer-Gallatin National Forest (CGNF). The forests will be jointly managed by the three supervisors and referred to as a “pod”. They need to collectively meet their combined targets for fuel treatment and timber production.
 - This reorganization is an attempt to make the most of limited resources to meet the newly increased treatment and fuels targets.
 - The regional strike team that sat on BDNF will now going to CGNF.
 - Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa will be moving to Milwaukie to take the job as the new Deputy Regional Forester for Region 9.
 - Cheri Ford, Deputy Forest Service Supervisor on the Salmon-Challis NF, will serve as Interim BDNF Forest Supervisor until they hire Melany’s replacement in February or so.
 - The current priority on the Forest is conifer encroachment.
 - BDNF staff hope to address this on a programmatic scale.
 - The Fire Lab just produced a tool assessing values at risk in existing vegetation cover.
 - USFS could present on fuels planning efforts if the BDWG would find that useful.
- Project Updates
 - Red Rocks Project
 - The Environmental Assessment will go out for objections next month. The new EA looks very similar to the proposed decision.
 - Some of the delay has been caused by the freeze on external hiring. This leads to shuffling staff around internally, which in turn means time spent getting more junior staff up to speed.
 - Little Hogback Fire Salvage Project
 - Out for objection.
 - Fleecer Logging Litigation
 - When USFS motioned the court to lift the injunction back in 2013, the judge requested USFS accomplish four tasks, which have now been completed.
 - During the recent oral hearing, the judge wanted to learn more about consultation on lynx. He has now given a fifth related task to complete: prepare a biological assessment on the effects of the forest plan on lynx by the end of November. If USFWS agrees with the assessment, the judge will lift the injunction.
 - Pintler Face
 - Completing final review before objection.
 - Not expected before the 1st of the calendar year.
 - Green Horn
 - Need to collect archaeological data over the summer and complete State Historic Preservation Office consultation.
 - South Gravelly Cattle Allotment
 - Preparing EIS.
 - Prison Rancho Deluxe

- Good Neighbor Authority project.
- Scoping Notice should go out before the 1st of the year.
- Strawberry Cascade Sheep Allotment
 - EIS comment period ended on the 15th. USFS is looking at the comments and alternatives.
- Travel Planning
 - Working internally with interdisciplinary team member Scott Marsh from Beaverhead County on pre-planning. Evaluating different ways to do public meetings.
- Chainsaws in Wilderness
 - BDNF Forest Supervisor Melany Glossa sought approval to use chainsaws in wilderness areas to expedite trail-clearing work that resulted from all the bug kill.
 - The request was not approved.
 - Rangers will now be collecting data on how long it is taking to do these projects without chainsaws to better inform future decisions.

5. Public Comment

- Members discussed the importance of trust to the functioning of the group.
- Some also articulated a desire to keep the meeting space as a refuge from partisan politics.
- Others brought up the “80/20” rule: collaborative groups identify the 80% of issues the group can work on together and the 20% of issues on which the group is more deeply divided.
 - It is important to decide intentionally whether or when the group wants to address the most contentious issues (the 20%), and to refrain from making comments that might spark a spontaneous heated discussion.
- Ben Irey reviewed the code of conduct.

6. New Membership Nomination

- See Tom Harrington’s letter requesting to join the group for his more in-depth response to following questions:
 - What are your thoughts about the group?
 - Collaboratives are an opportunity to bring together diverse groups.
 - The group provides an opportunity to support USFS projects and for members to better understand USFS procedures.
 - What do you think you could bring to the group?
 - Experience advancing economic development with stakeholders that have a diversity of opinions.
 - An understanding of how parks, recreation, and trails benefit local businesses.
 - Familiarity with watershed stewardship.
 - Experience participating in travel management planning.
 - Familiarity with forestry techniques (prior employment as a skidder operator).
 - Knowledge of regulatory requirements for mining on public lands.
- Follow-up Questions:

- Transportation planning will be a focus of the group. Many projects involve closing roads. As the potential new motorized recreation representative, how receptive are you towards road closures?
 - Tom has examined proposed road closures for USFS before to provide input on the road's current viability for motorized recreation.
 - For Boulder-Red Rocks, Tom agreed that it would be appropriate to decommission at least 3 out of the 4 roads proposed for closure.
- The group has debated the issue of the potential release and reclassification of Wilderness Study Areas and ultimately decided not to weigh in. What is your position on wilderness?
 - Tom believes the first priority of USFS should be improving management of current wilderness areas.
- What is your understanding of road density standards?
 - In developing these standards, USFS needs to solicit public input and analyze each of the roads in person.
 - A responds that Leonard was successful in getting public support for lower road densities, which is critical to preempt litigation on forest plans.
 - What is your connection to winter motorized recreation?
 - No connection.
- Unanimous approval of Tom as a new voting member.

Meeting Adjourned