

## Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC)

### Meeting Record

Bonner County Administration Building  
First Floor Conference Room, 1500 US-2, Sandpoint, ID  
Wednesday, November 14, 2018, 12:30-4:00 p.m.

#### ATTENDANCE

**Members:** Jeff Bynum, conservation group representative; Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Kurt Dyroff, conservation group representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Mike Gaertner, non-motorized recreation interests representative; Alan Harper, timber representative; Travis Icardo, conservation group representative; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, community non-profit representative; Mike Petersen, conservation group representative; Peg Polichio, state agency representative; and Paul Sieracki, concerned community member

**Technical Advisors:** Ed Wingert, Idaho Dept. of Lands; Tom Dabrowski, Idaho Trails Association; Sid Smith, Office of Senator Jim Risch; David Cobb and Will Young, USDA Forest Service

**Visitors:** Dave Blyton, Kilroy Bay resident; Don Holland, Pine Cove, Kilroy Bay; and Jim Miller, Pine Cove, Kilroy Bay property owner

**Facilitators:** Ben Irely and Anna Wearn, National Forest Foundation

#### MEETING OUTCOMES

##### Decisions:

- PFC meetings will continue to be held on the third Wednesday of every other month, as this is the best date for the majority of the group. The next meeting will be on January 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Paul Sieracki, Travis Icardo, and Jeff Bynum have all decided to join the group. Welcome!

##### Action Items:

- Ben Irely will circulate the revised September field trip summary.
- Ben Irely will add Mike Gaertner to the Honey Badger Subcommittee (which currently contains Mike Petersen and Alan).
- Ben Irely will circulate the group's letter on Buckskin Saddle.
- Ed Wingert will share updated shapefiles of the Hannah Flats project with the group.
- Dave Cobb will circulate written responses to the questions regarding Hannah Flats posed at the July meeting, after he consults with Sarah Sink.
- Dave Cobb will circulate the memo regarding lessons learned on cooperation on the Hannah Flats project under the Good Neighbor Authority.
- Dave Cobb will notify the group when the general public notice regarding Buckskin Saddle goes out to the group.
- Dave Cobb will track down and circulate information on what happened during the exploratory drilling on Green Mountain.

##### Bin Items:

- Forest Committee will discuss requesting that USFS do raptor surveys on Buckskin Saddle, particularly for flammulated owls and goshawks.
- Consider asking Phil if he would be willing to identify a colleague at Friends for Scotchman Peaks Wilderness to take his place on the PFC, given that he can no longer attend the meetings.

- Peg Polichio would like to discuss shared stewardship at the next meeting.

## MEETING RECORD

### 1. Announcements, updates, and upcoming events

- Drone flights to get pictures of Bottom Canyon post-harvest will take place on Tuesday or Wednesday. Anyone is welcome to join.
- The Selkirk Caribou International Technical Work Group will hold a public briefing on the draft South Selkirk Caribou Management Plan at 2 p.m. on Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at the Kootenai Tribal Headquarters in Bonners Ferry.
- Julia and Jim Petersen of The Evergreen Foundation invite wildland firefighters, their families, and those that support them to march in the Christmas Tree Lighting Parade in Coeur d'Alene on November 22, 2018.
- New member discussion
  - Paul Sieracki was a member of the PFC previously but then left the group due to disagreements surrounding the Bottom Canyon project.
    - Paul would like to rejoin the group so that he can be aware of upcoming forest projects and survey the units early on. He also hopes he can contribute meaningfully to the PFC.
    - Some group members expressed concerns about Paul re-joining as they felt he had breached the protocol before he left the group a few years ago.
  - Paul affirmed that he agreed to the protocols, including:
    - The provision that prohibits making public comments that disparage the Collaborative
    - The provision that members who vote against a particular action must offer an alternative.
  - Having attended two consecutive meetings, and having confirmed that they had read and agreed to the protocols, three new members joined: Paul Sieracki, Travis Icardo, and Jeff Bynum.
- The Idaho Wild Turkey Federation has hired a new state biologist.

### 2. Policy updates (Sid Smith)

- Congress is seeking to pass the farm bill soon.
  - Both parties are motivated to pass the bill before the session ends. The main hang-up seems to be work requirements for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program.
  - The Idaho delegation is hoping to see additional forestry provisions included.
    - They would like to see a number of the Categorical Exclusions that are set to expire this year re-authorized.
    - They would also like to see the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program re-authorized.
    - The issue of fire borrowing was resolved earlier this year.
- Come January, the democrats will gain control of the House Natural Resources Committee, with Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) replacing Rob Bishop (R-UT) as Chair.
- Q: What is the status of the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)?
  - Bills re-authorizing LWCF have made it out of Committee in both houses of Congress.
  - Senator Risch supports long-term funding for LWCF. However, he does not support permanent reauthorization, nor does he support making funding mandatory (as is

the case with Social Security, for example). The senator believes that the legislation should be subject to periodic debate and review.

### 3. Good Neighbor Authority updates (Peg Polichio and Ed Wingert)

- The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) is a program established through a series of federal authorizations and bills that allows states to assist the Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management with stewardship projects.
  - State foresters and supervisors add capacity to federal agencies and follow federal rules & procedures.
  - There are 12 GNA positions statewide across four national forests: Boise, Payette, Nez-Perce Clearwater, and Panhandle.
  - GNA staff help out with National Environmental Policy Act compliance, or work as specialists on contracts to conduct technical work (e.g. surveys, LIDAR, etc.)
  - Hannah Flats is a GNA project.
    - Dave Cobb served as the interdisciplinary team (IDT) leader
    - The decision memo has been signed.
    - Ongoing GNA projects/contracts include:
      - Non-timber removal (e.g. common stand exams, LIDAR, etc.)
      - Wildlife security gate contract
      - Road decommissioning contract
      - Aquatic passage
        - Replacing culverts that are barriers to fish passage with hard pipes and bridges
    - USFS is using income generated from timber sales to do projects like watershed improvements and fisheries restoration.
    - USFS conducted an “after-action review” to assess how the State and federal agency could work better together in the future.
      - Dave Cobb is happy to share the after-action review with PFC members.
      - From the State’s perspective, projects in the Panhandle National Forest have been very successful.
        - The IDT leader (Dave Cobb) was superb and stuck with the projects from beginning to end.
        - USFS specialists wrote protocols for state contractors.
        - The state and federal employees worked together as a team.
          - From USFS’s perspective, GNA coordination greatly expedited the project not only because of the additional staff, but also because of the State contracting process is more streamlined and their authority is more flexible. The State still built their contracts to meet federal qualifications.
          - One limitation was that it was time-consuming to pass off the task of wildlife analysis outside the recovery zone. The task is very nuanced and technical, requiring a lot of instruction from USFS. Outsourcing the task therefore does not save much time for USFS overall.
    - Q: Has the Hannah Flats project boundary been modified since the NEPA document was signed?

- A: Minor adjustments have been made to exclude areas containing sensitive plants. All boundary adjustments should be complete by the end of the month.
    - Ed Wingert will send the shapefiles with the new boundaries.
- Q: Will GNA be involved in Honey Badger?
  - A: Perhaps with the initial stand analysis.

#### 4. Project updates

- **Buckskin Saddle (Dave)**
  - Please refer to the September 2018 field trip notes.
  - Q: If Kilroy Road goes through a section of the “roadless” area, how can it be classified as roadless? Shouldn’t it be reclassified?
    - A: There are a number of roadless areas in Idaho that have roads.
      - Changing the boundaries would require the approval of the USFS Chief, so it may not be worth it. But the first step would be taking the issue up with the Idaho Roadless Commission.
      - It is likely the area to the west of the road was kept in the roadless area because otherwise it would not have amounted to 5,000 acres (the minimum acreage for roadless areas).
      - It is still possible to complete the work of fixing the road even in a roadless area. Engineers determined that re-alignment (changing its location) is likely not necessary. Rocking, widening, etc. should suffice.
        - Comment: Kilroy has just created its own fire department.
          - Landowners have also cleared brush along their property.
          - In the recent fire, the Kilroy fire department was able to put the fire out manually with one of their fire trucks. The Department of Natural Resources took two hours to arrive, and by that point it would have been too late.
  - Q: How much area will be logged and where?
    - About 10-12,000 acres of the 50,000 total will be improved in different ways (burning, planting certain species, etc.)
  - The proposed action has not gone out formally to general public yet as it’s not quite ready.
    - The FS is hoping to have open house in Clark Fork or Hope.
    - Landowners within a one-mile circumference of the area will receive notice.
  - Timeline
    - February 2019: Scoping
    - September 2019: Draft EA
    - February 2020: Draft decision
    - June 2020: Final decision
  - PFC wrote a letter on Buckskin Saddle a year ago concerning issues such as forest recreation, old-growth, aquatics etc.
    - Ben Irey will send this letter to USFS.
  - Q: Are you looking at putting in any fire protection roads? USFS did a great job on Road 2107 - can that be replicated elsewhere? (Asked by a Kilroy resident)
    - A: It is likely that roads in the area would be improved. Many are 40-50 years old and very overgrown. USFS will take a hard look at each road.

- The public will get a chance to take a look at the maps to make sure all roads are identified.
  - Q: Could you tell the group more about the history of Buckskin Saddle, per the request at the July Meeting?
    - A: On the September field trip, USFS was prepared to answer all of the questions that had been posed about the project at the July meeting, but they did not come up. Dave Cobb will consult with Sarah Sink and then provide written responses.
  - Q: Does USFS have a map of areas that have not been logged yet?
    - A: Yes. This information will be available on the public website for Buckskin Saddle under land management → ongoing projects → Buckskin Saddle.
      - Dave Cobb will send out a link when he sends out the public notice.
- **Hannah Flats (Dave)**
  - See section above on GNA.
  - PFC added a lot of value during the public outreach process.
    - The group wrote two really good letters to USFS.
    - The group acted as an intermediary between the public and USFS at the open houses, which USFS staff really appreciated.
- **Honey Badger (Will)**
  - Fernan District Rangers will begin public outreach in January
    - Starting with a project initiation letter, followed by public meetings.
    - The forest involves a wide range of multiple uses for the public.
  - Timeline
    - About a year behind Buckskin Saddle.
    - PFC members that they were eager to start work on the project, which has been delayed by a year. They also emphasized that this is a critical area.
    - Will would like to do a field trip with PFC this coming year.
      - The group did one in 2016 that was very informative.
  - Mike G agreed to join the Honey Badger subcommittee with Mike Petersen and Alan.
  - The project area is 30,000 acres.
    - The eastern border runs along the ridgeline from Bunco Road to Canfield.
    - English Point Recreation Area has been pulled out of the Honey Badger area because it complicated the intent of the project and is pretty far out there.
- **Hughes Creek (Liz)**
  - The project was supposed to be implemented in August 2017 but was delayed until August 2018 due to fires.
  - Due to the remoteness of the location, which is just south of the Canadian border and north of Nordman, the largest challenge was accessing the project site.
  - Project purpose: restore native river channel.
    - In the 1940s the meadow was drained to make a secret landing strip. It never ended up being constructed.
  - The team dug an encouragement channel (with heavy equipment), replanted willows, and plugged the old drainage ditch to recreate wetlands.
  - The project was a success!
  - The team will continue monitoring it with drones and will put in native plants next year.

- **Lightning Creek Road (Dave)**
  - Recently re-opened after being closed for 3 years.
  - Reinstalled Rattlecreek Bridge for the third time.
    - Rebuilt abutments.
  - Redid Porcupine Trail (up to Divide Trail) to improve access.
  - Re-opened Wellington Road
    - Brushed as part of the fire work. Served as primary containment line for the Cougar Fire.
- **Bottom Canyon (Will)**
  - Last sale was picked up by Idaho Forest Group.
  - Working on Lone Cabin stewardship project.
    - Paid for by the timber sale.
  - Status:
    - 1.4 miles of road construction and gate installation.
    - 2 of 4 aquatic organism passages are complete.
    - 1.6 mi of road decommissioned
    - Pretreated noxious weeds on 20 miles of road.
    - Dust abatement on Road 612
  - On Tuesday or Wednesday they will go out with drones to capture after-harvest pictures.
- **Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Project (Dave)**
  - Large landscape restoration project between USFS and Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) through GNA.
    - Asking IDL to do half of the planning work.
  - Timeline:
    - Just starting at Priest Lake Road to inventory what needs to be treated.
    - Hold collaborative meetings with the public.
    - Put together the proposed action.
    - 2020: formal scoping survey work.
    - 2021-2022: Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement and decision.
  - Q: Will USFS evaluate fisher and old growth?
    - Yes. We will do all standard surveys.
- **Potter's Wheel (Will)**
  - Close to finishing up responding to six comments.
- **Scattered Old House Project (Dave Cobb)**
  - Private landowners in the Sandpoint District (northwest of Farragut State Park) are concerned about doghair (thick) timber stand of lodgepole pine.
  - Developing a proposed action.
  - Q: GNA agreement?
    - A: Unclear at this time.
- **Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan (John Finney)**
  - John Finney will visit with Jessie to discuss the focus group recommendations.
    - Hoping that the recommendations will be issued in January.
  - The northern zone is short a wildlife biologist, which has delayed the process considerably, along with USFS turnover and changes to the process.
    - Under the forest plan, the backstop is Spring of 2020

- They have identified the geographic areas of greatest concern and with the greatest need for analysis.
- Q: What if Canadians introduced more caribou?
  - Selkirk and Purcell pens up at Revelstoke.
  - Those two herds are extirpated at this point in time.
  - No plan in place for responding if they do come back into ecosystem.

**5. Public comment & meeting feedback**

- Q: Update on the drilling on Green Mountain for silica? (Asked by Kilroy resident)
  - A: Exploratory drilling is complete.
    - Q: How could we get more information?
      - A: Dave Cobb will track down a report and circulate it with the group.
- It would be best to reschedule our meetings if we are aware that the USFS Supervisors will not be able to attend. In general they do try to keep their schedules free the third Wednesday of every other month.
- Many expressed appreciation that the Kilroy citizens attended the meeting.
- Some members thanked Dave about the Buckskin Saddle update as they were starting to feel anxious about the project delays.

DRAFT