Monthly Meeting Minutes
January, 25th 2022
1:30 – 3:00pm PST

Attendance
Ahlf, Reid – Idaho Forest Group
Bales, Stefany – Senator Risch’s Office
Bowman, Kaitlyn – IPNF, Timber
Boyle, Mark – Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Bradley, Jeanne – Idaho Department of Lands
Carver, Peg – Benewah County
Carver, Tom – Benewah County Admin support
Davis, Matt – IPNF, St. Joe Ranger District
Garringer, Jake – Governor Little’s Office
Hansen, John - Shoshone County
Higbee, Chantilly – Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Hughes, Christy Johnson, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Johnson, Dean – Benewah County
Kilmer, Marc – Rep. Fulcher’s Office
Lyon, Kurt – Idaho Department of Lands
Parker, Darren – Senator Risch’s Office
Petersen, Mike – Conservation interest
Petrick, Carl – IPNF, Supervisors Office
Pierson, Kim- IPNF, Supervisors Office
Plue, Erin – Trout Unlimited
Polichio, Peg – Citizen
Roetter, Karen – Senator Crapo’s Office
Scaife, Dan – IPNF, Cda Ranger District
Short, Bob – Benewah County
Silvers, Mitch – Senator Crapo’s Office
Slifko, Matt – IPNF, St. Joe Ranger District
Smith, Brad – Idaho Conservation League
Timchak, Ben - IPNF, St. Joe Ranger District
Witcomb, Hilary – US Fish & Wildlife Service
Wolf, Laura – Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game

Greetings, Introductions, Admin

November Meeting Minute Approval
November meeting minutes were prepared by Dani Southard. No comments or amendments were made by collaborative members and the minutes will stand as written.

Legislative Updates

Darren Parker reported that the Senate is in recess this week; last week there was discussion of getting rid of the filibuster. No changes were made which means the minority party still can object.

Secure Rural Schools: Mark Kilmer reported that legislation on the house side is being considered for as technical fix for Secure Rural Schools (SRS); there could be a hearing as soon as next the couple of weeks. Darren Parker added that SRS was reauthorized in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (which passed in November) but there were some challenges in the way the way it was written. Counties would need to make funding elections before the end of the fiscal year or risk having the county elections default back to $0. The fix removes the limitation on funding allocation due to fiscal year change over. Both the Senate and the House will be working to take up the fix as soon as possible.
Federal and State Agency Updates

Idaho DEQ and Idaho Department of Lands
The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Idaho Department of Lands is having the first workgroup meeting to explore smoke management for Idaho that would address Idaho-specific needs and better utilize existing authorities.

US Fish & Wildlife Service
Funding opportunity: The US Fish and Wildlife Service has some funding opportunities right now linked to recovering candidate species. This is an internal funding at the office level for projects; decisions about the funding can be done quickly and easily. The hard deadline is the end of the month, however if anyone is interested in learning more, contact Hilary Whitcomb directly. The funds are limited to support projects connected with federally listed species and candidate species (species listed under the ESA and other high priority candidate species (based on our annual Candidate Species Assessments) or other at-risk species)

Forest Service Updates

CdA River RD, Dan Scaife

Deceitful Fire Salvage Project
- Comments were solicited and the comment response was good. The district will be working through the response to comments over the next month and will post comments online. The collaborative was unable to discuss submission of group comments given the deadline over the holiday season. The Forest Service noted that anyone can comment at any time, however if comments are received after a comment deadline, there is not legal standing to object later down the road.
- The interested party list is comprehensive and project notifications get generated from that. If anyone is not on that list, you can sign up online to receive notifications via email
- The project team is having weekly discussions and taking in lessons learned from the Grizzly Fire Collaborative process and will be working on a proposed action soon.
- Question was asked if there had been any work on the fire salvage last year? Response: the FS will be treating in about a quarter of the burn. There are some specific criteria for what salvage areas are in or are out based on slope, aspect and burn intensity. There will not be harvest in the severely burned areas. The reforestation acres are bigger than the proposed harvest acres and the agency will be targeting areas that are northern aspects or more wet to have better survival rates with reforestation.
- Most of the salvage objectives are white pine and larch opportunities.
- Anticipating contract to go to bid in March, early fall for contract.

Honey Badger Project: Project link-https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56220
The decision was signed, and the notice went out the following week.

Rosey Cedar: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58938
project is still ongoing, and the comment response is also ongoing. This could be a good one for the collaborative to have some discussion around.

The Deputy District Ranger position has been filled. Ashley Nettles from the White River NF (Dillon RD, wildlife biologist background) will start next week.

Darren Parker inquired about the emergency situation determination, is the Forest using new or existing regulations? These are existing regulations, and this was used in the Grizzly fire. The decisions are made at the Chiefs level and the Forest needs to make a strong case to pass muster.
- Emergency Situation Determination (36 CFR 218.21) and a link to the regulation language: https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/36/218.21
Brad Smith noted that the group would benefit from identifying a Forest Service project to work together on through the planning stages. The Bottom Canyon Project was an example that was really galvanizing for the group. An early on field trip to the Copper John Project also had provided some good discussion. Timing is critical for collaborative engagement and the earlier in the planning process, the better.

**St. Joe Ranger District, Matt Davis**

Timber Management Projects: 7 to 8 contracts actively going out. Veg related activities will encompass 65,000 million board feet. In addition, the Forest is halfway through NFMA and NEP for a couple other projects. This will be a busy spring for the Silviculturists.

Halfway through planning for Emerald and Homestead projects

Lacy Lemoosh Project halfway through the consideration of comments. NFMA is complete, will still need to go through NEPA. Have not begun proposal yet and this one could provide some good discussion with the group [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=60853](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=60853)

The Smegal project is about 100K acres. Matt noted that this project will be a big bite and could drown efforts of the collaborative group but could also be one that the group may want to learn more about.

Lindstrom is a GNA project, there are also a couple of other GNA projects that will likely be CEs.

Matt noted that there are several places that could provide good field trip opportunities when the snow melts. We could consider going and looking at some tethered logging, aquatics, fish passage, road decommissioning projects, etc.

Recreation
- Hiawatha trail saw 75K visitors this past year
- Lots going on in the Garnet area with the Emerald project recreational interface
- Lots of work is also ongoing in developed campgrounds and trails, including with funding opportunities associated with the Great America Outdoor Act (GAOA), the Forest put in a proposal for Shadowy St. Joe campground
- Saint Joe will have closures above Avery (MP161) from the Nugget Creek Campground to Red Ives intersection with hwy 50. Due to some safety concerns. The jurisdiction is with the Shoshone County sheriff. The FS and Sheriff will be working closely.

The Forest is thinking a lot about fire, fuels and smoke management. Collaborative group may want to consider getting more engaged on the fire/fuels reduction projects.

Matt noted that it’s important that whatever direction the group wants to go, it’s important to start at the beginning and be at the table the entire way. He cautioned that taking on more than 1 or 2 projects can be overwhelming and too much to expect the participants to really be able to delve into.

Brad Smith inquired about the status of the Upper Saint Joe Restoration Project: The project was approved three years ago and all the NEPA is complete. Some of this project exists in the recommend wilderness and backcountry zoned areas in the Forest plan. Matt has requested the development of a five-year action plan for the project including bridges, roads, and improvements to recreational sites. The action plan may be able to utilize mitigation/restoration funding. The Forest is considering who and what partners could be possible for doing some of the work. Red Ives Damn could potentially be a good model for this kind of work.

Bob Short inquired about the Granite Project on the divide and noted that the lodgepole pine stands are starting to die off. The Forest Service has talked to industry and there doesn’t look to be any merchantable opportunities. The project may need to fall under wildfire management, fire or fuels program.
Supervisors Office, Carl Petrick

The Forest has been in some good discussion with the Idaho Department of Lands and Idaho Forest Products commission around some tools and resources to help citizens better understand active forest management needs and support better communications around insect and disease issues.

Some early conversations with utilities, including Bonneville Power, to address fuelbreaks around existing transmission lines. This will need to be in strategic locations rather than everywhere, but the agency has some existing authorities that could help with this.

Cross Collaborative Discussion

Observations from the Payette Forest Coalition (Paul Klasner)
- The Payette Forest Coalition formed in 2009 and works in Southern Idaho on Region 4
- Currently, there are 21 voting members. So far, they have worked on twelve projects. Three are through decisions, one went through litigation and lost
- The group prefers to work on what Paul calls “kitchen sink projects.” These are multifaceted projects that cover a lot of interest areas and take into account timber sales, wildlife, wildfire, watershed health, recreation, and restoration. They are on their fifth large landscape project. These projects take a lot of time and capacity, but the group likes to dig into the details of these types of projects
- Recommendations:
  - Determine where you are on the spectrum of participation from informing to collaborating. The Payette often operates between consulting and collaborating depending on the project.
  - The earlier the collaborative is able to start in the process for a particular project, the better.
- Things that have worked well for the Payette Forest Coalition:
  - There are several roles in the collaborative: a steering team of collaborative members; an advisory group from FS personnel; and a liaison who works with the facilitator
  - Share the Forest's NEPA roadmap. Identify which projects the Forest needs help with and where the collaborative has interest, then determine how the group will support. Each project has its own set of expectations. Determine the decision space early on, the FS can help determine the regulatory aspects.
  - Look at the project and the desired level of participation on the public participation spectrum. Is the project well-suited for the desired level.

Observations from the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (Mike Peterson)
- The Bottom Canyon project was the project to kick off the Panhandle Forest Collaborative. The key was a lot of field trips and personal engagements between the FS and the collaborative. The recreation focus came later with the Honey Badger project.
  - Recommendations: Find the interests of members to help find the right project. Get out on the ground more. Start early.

Charting Course for SBFHC in 2022

Discussion
Q: How can NFF help you outline goals? What are the big picture items you’d like to see out of the group to keep you at the table?

Al Casile noted that the primary thing he’s learned is that interested parties must involve themselves in projects very early if they want to help determine the outcomes of projects. His trails group got involved with Honey Badger by working on trail information and classification for years before the project with the intention that one day there would be a need for the data. They worked with the District on scoping materials, explaining the situation on the ground, and working with the team on where things should be located in terms of recreation. Communicating intent is important.
Brad Smith noted that there are different levels of engagement. The Bottom Canyon example was hands on. The Panhandle Forest Collaborative has engaged in a variety of ways, from developing sets of units and prescriptions to letters of support. The Bonner’s Ferry District will present a preliminary proposed action to the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative. Discussions about projects happen in the meetings as a focus group-style discussion. There are many ways to work together and collaborate. The right fit depends on level of interest and time to spare.

Carl Petrick is interested in using adaptive management to learn. Many places require integrated treatment for timber and fire while improving habitat and forest health. He is interested to learn together and try new and different things. It could be worth partnering with a university. He values everyone’s thoughts and ideas and these are critical for to make changes and improvements.

Reid Ahlf observed that we’re getting to a point where we could meet in person. It is easier to accomplish things while meeting in person, like looking at maps together while having these discussions. He looks forward to field trips.

Peg Polichio agrees with everyone’s sentiments about field trips and meeting in person. She inquired about the biggest challenges for the District Ranger and wonders if having the collaborative’s support for the St. Joe to get more fire on the landscape is that an area where the Forest could use help.

R: Matt Davis responded that there needs to be a shared glossary, as well as the ability for shared risk. There is a need for a vision with terminology and definitions that match. Having a glossary can build into the trust factor. Field trips will also help show the active management and the work on the ground. It is helpful to have photos for visual examples and to build this shared glossary.

R: Carl Petrick noted that they need Forest-wide NEPA, public support, and windows of opportunity. Anything the collaborative can do to help move the needle, we need to be thinking about this.

Wrap Up & Parking Lot Topics for February Meeting

- Dani will think about ways to move forward with hybrid meetings and preparing for field trips.
- Collaborative member homework: Think about who is not here that should be. Dani will compile everyone’s responses and report back to the group.

The next collaborative meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 22nd at 1:30 – 3:00pm PST