

BEAVERHEAD – DEERLODGE WORKING GROUP (BDWG) MEETING RECORD

12:30 to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Jefferson County Clerk and Recorder's Office

<https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/beaverhead-deerlodge-working-group>

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance:

Members: Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Tony Colter, timber representative; Chris Edgington, fishing representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, ranching representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation and weeds representative; Chris Marchion, conservation representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; and Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Technical advisors: Cheri Ford, Dave Sabo, and Jamie Tripp, Beaverhead - Deerlodge National Forest; Scott Haight, Bureau of Land Management; John Huston, and Sean Steinbach, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DRNC); Erik Nylund, Senator Tester's Office; Ryan Picken, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Guests and observers: Doug Dodge, Jefferson County; Bryan Lorengo, Montana Logging Association; Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County; Dave Stone, Anaconda Sportsmen

Decisions:

- November meeting record approved.
- Members voted to skip the January meeting and move the February meeting of the BDWG to the Anaconda Job Corps.

Action items:

- The February 5th meeting of the BDWG will be held at the Anaconda Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (1384 Foster Creek Rd., Anaconda). The Job Corps has offered to give attendees a tour of the Center and to cook lunch for attendees. The tour will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will last for two hours. Lunch will be served at noon and will cost \$4.00 per person. The meeting will start, as usual, at 1:00 p.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. Please RSVP to the meeting, and include whether or not you will eat lunch and attend the Center tour.
- Please see the attached email from Jeanne Dawson re: the application process for Resource Advisory Committee proposals.
- Stakeholders can send letters of support to Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) Supervisor Cheri Ford regarding the Miller Lake Valley Acquisition, 10,421 acres adjacent to the Pintler Wilderness Area and the Garrity Mountain and Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Areas. RMEF plans to facilitate the purchase of this land from the land owner to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest using Land and Water Conservation Funds. According to BDWG

member Chris Marchion, "This area is great habitat for elk, mule deer, bighorn, goats, west slope cutthroat, and is known to be home for wolverines". If you have additional questions about this acquisition, please call Chris Marchion at 406-563-6145. Mail your letters to BDNF Supervisor's Office, 420 Barrett St., Dillon, MT 59725.

- Darcie Warden will provide a list of partners active on the BDNF to Ben Irely.
- Jeanne Dawson to send Ben Irely the partners list generated for the CFLRP application.
- Ben send partners list out to members for review and additions.
- Cheri Ford and Tony Colter talk through pairing Anton's presentation at the February meeting with some fire modeling.
- Wisdom and Wise River District Ranger Molly Ryan will give an update on the Selway-Sagana Project at the February BDWG meeting.

Bin items from this and previous meetings:

- Have a presentation from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation about the Miller Lake Valley Acquisition.
- Next fall, members and stakeholders should think about applying for Pittman-Robertson funding for invasive species management. It is a complex grant application, so start early!
- Scoping for Selway-Sagana scheduled to begin in mid-February.
- Field trip to Selway-Sagana in the spring.
- Jeanne Dawson is looking to members to get out in the field and take the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey when it is being conducted and to give her feedback from the participant's perspective.
- Have a BDNF range person present on the subject of timber encroachment.
- Anton Brennick to present on the forest-wide restoration strategy at the January 8 meeting.
- Apply to the Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership in the fall of 2020.
- At the Montana Forest Collaboration Network and Montana Watershed Council joint meeting, Oct 14 and 16 of 2020, Mark Finney will present fire modeling in relation to the municipal watersheds and WUI.
- Have a presentation on Chronic Wasting Disease at an upcoming meeting.
- BDWG and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) to look at user created recreation features (e.g. user created campsites) and consider incorporating some features into the system.
- Maureen Connor suggests finding someone who can speak to group re: spruce budworm.

MEETING RECORD

Welcome, introductions, approve agenda, November meeting record, and meeting ground rules

[Co-Chairs welcome attendees. Attendees introduces themselves. The November meeting record and the meeting ground rules were approved.]

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) member updates

- Wisdom and Wise River District Ranger Molly Ryan will have an update on the Selway-Sagana and Strawberry Cascade projects at the February meeting.
- The Rancho Deluxe Project includes about 11,000 acres of restoration treatments, 700 acres of lodgepole salvage, and 800 acres of aspen restoration treatments. The hope is that the decision will be signed in January of 2020. The Northern Regional NEPA Strike Team is working on this. There was significant lodgepole pine mortality in the area in '07 and '08. This project had DNRC and Forest Service (FS) on the same page. As a result, there was only 200 acres of treatments lost through the planning process.
- When the FS and DNRC enter into a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement they are working within a broader, statewide agreement. Amendments are project-specific, so Rancho Deluxe will have its own amendment. Typically on a GNA, DNRC is responsible for any boots-on-the-ground stuff while the FS oversees the sales to ensure adherence to the forest plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations.
- A big concern regarding the Rancho Deluxe Project is that logging costs will keep growing with the pace of downfall. The more green on a project, the more acres of dead and dying that can be treated. The state's GNA program is supposed to be self-sustaining in two years but it is difficult to derive funding with such a big blow-down component of a sale.
- The state can contract the NEPA for a GNA if they have the money to do so.
- Industry and conservation partners have contributed to the initial operating funds for GNA in the state.
- There are two to three other GNA projects going on statewide at the moment.
- Q: Is the state raising the awareness of the additional benefits of GNA projects other than fire risk reduction and timber receipts?
- A: In order to have a GNA project in the state it needs to be in the Governor's priority landscapes. Fire risk, insect and disease risk, and other factors went into that prioritization. In summation, those priorities are directly related to the public benefit. As an example, road access is being fixed on the Rancho Deluxe project, which the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation supports. This is just a part of the additional benefits of this project.
- If you care to write a letter in support of the Miller Creek area being purchased by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation send them to Cheri.

Congressional policy updates

- John Kountz is leading a big effort on a land exchange north of Delmo Lake, which is a big win for conservation.
- There is an emerging issue of feral hogs coming down from Canada. Feral hogs cause \$2.5 billion annually in losses nationwide. Senator Tester has sent a letter to the Secretary of

Agriculture in support of augmenting control of these hogs. Let your state legislature know that you think this is important.

- Montana Wildlife Federation got state legislation passed so that feral hogs can never become a game animal in the state.
- Department of Livestock is managing this issue. They are in constant communications with the Border Patrol and are looking at social media for game camera images of feral hogs. The state is being very proactive.
- Interior Department funds are still being reconciled between the House and the Senate.
- Senator Tester has requested more information about the Pilgrim lawsuit on the Kootenai National Forest. That lawsuit could affect other forests in the Region.
- Erik Nylund is looking into the budget history for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and is trying to figure out how it can be remedied moving forward.
- Q: What is going on with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) water compact?
- A: Senator Tester introduced the compact previously. It needs bipartisan support. CSKT is working with Senator Daines to change some of the things in the compact. They seem to be working those things out. The Trump Administration supports it. January is the deadline set by the judge.
- Full authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund has bipartisan support, but it has been put on the back-burner.
- Expect there to be a clean Continuing Resolution in late December.

Report out from the Advocacy, Partnerships, and Communications Subcommittees

- There will be some ex-officio members of these subcommittees, including Jeanne Dawson on the Partnership Subcommittee and the Forest's public affairs officer on the Communications Subcommittee.
- The Communications Subcommittee has decided that it will be a case-by-case basis to decide who can speak on behalf of the BDWG.

Grizzly bear attacks in the Gravelly Mountains

- There were five human-bear conflicts this fall on the west side of the Gravelly Mountains.
- [Sheridan Game Warden Ryan Picken describes each of the five incidents]
- The volume of attacks this year in this location is probably due to bear density.
- Try to avoid hunting alone when hunting in an area dense with bears such as the Gravellys.
- There is a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks regarding bear depredation and conflicts with livestock and people.
- Issues with left-behind carcasses needs to be addressed in the Gravellys.
- In Madison County, the range rider quit because of all the bear issues. There was approximately 14% loss of livestock last year. There is also only one wildlife services position Madison and the two surrounding counties.
- Q: Has FWP considered getting wardens certified to blast carcasses?
- A: No, but that is a good idea.
- Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance is looking for solutions to bears on the landscape including deterrents, problem bear removal, and carcass composting.

Butte District Ranger and BLM updates

- The BLM's acreage in Montana is spread over a wide area. It is important for the BLM to be partnering with other land owners, including the U.S. Forest Service.
- Dave Sabo and Scott Haight get together once a month for breakfast to discuss their programs of work. In the past they've given joint updates to Jefferson County. Dave and Scott hope to partner more on cross boundary work in the future.
- Thanks to the BDWG for their patience the last five years – going from the Boulder Lowlands Project to the Red Rocks Project. Boulder Lowlands is being implemented and Red Rocks has been signed, which approves 6,700 acres of treatments. Red Rocks is not only about salvage; there are 11 culvert upgrades, four stream fords improved, five stream restoration projects, 17 miles of open road being changed to a level 1 and six miles of road being decommissioned. Funds from this project can go into the KV account for more restoration work in the future.
- Dave Sabo deserves some credit because he really resurrected the Red Rocks Project.
- The BDWG identified the Boulder as a priority watershed for the state. That has been the key to getting that work done.
- With the help of the BDWG, the BDNF has been able to communicate better on permittee issues.
- There has been 160 acres of noxious weed spraying done this year, with a target to get to 1100 acres by the spring.
- A lot of the surrounding BDNF has travel management completed. Not having travel management completed on the Butte and Jefferson Districts is kicking the Districts in the butt.
- There is a new trailhead just over Pipestone Pass for the CDT. The access is much improved.
- The Butte and Jefferson Ranger District did some good minerals cleanup this year.
- Last summer was mild for wildfires, except for the McClusky Fire. Thank you to the counties for their close coordination on that fire.
- We've done a lot of fuels treatments on the Butte and Jefferson Ranger Districts, but we need to be better at going back to maintain the benefits. There will be a proposal coming out for a District Vegetation Maintenance Project that will include 27,000 acres of treatments. With this, we hope to meet Jefferson County's concerns that stem from the fire modeling they have seen.
- The Butte and Jefferson Districts has a project put together for the Aspen Categorical Exclusion called the North Whitetail Aspen Treatment, which will treat 300 acres.
- Travel management has been a priority on the BDNF, but they've been asked to set it aside to focus on timber targets. The BDNF is looking at short term fixes so that we are ready to pounce when the time is right. Dave has been spending a good chunk of his time on travel management lately.
- The BDNF needs a travel management plan, but they also need more enforcement of travel management violations.

BDNF Supervisor's Office Updates

- Jamie Tripp is the new Dillon District Ranger. She started at the end of September. She is a 4th and 5th generation Montanan from the Musselshell. She spent 6 years in California in fuels

operations and prescribed fire. She has experience using partnership to leverage capacity. Please reach out to her if you have any questions or comments.

- The three buckets of partnerships, communications, and advocacy came out of the Cadre experience as being priorities for both the BDNF and the BDWG.
- The group Efficient Public Collaboration is forming a new collaborative in Southwest Montana focused on coming up with recommendations for restoring historic uses of recommended wilderness. The Regional Office met with them and asked that they pick a pilot project. They have chosen three recommended wilderness areas on the BDNF. Whatever proposals they come up with will require a forest plan amendment. They will be contacting BDWG members soon.
- The aquatics management position on the BDNF has not been outreached yet.

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