

## **Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record**

12:30 – 4:00 p.m., January 15, 2020

Bonner County Administrative Building

### **ATTENDANCE**

**Members:** Jeff Bynum, conservation group representative; Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Tom Dabrowski, non-motorized recreation representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Mike Gaertner; Alan Harper, timber representative; Phil Hough, conservation group representative; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, community non-profit representative; Eric Nave, timber representative; Mike Petersen, conservation group representative; Brad Smith, conservation group representative.

**Technical Advisors:** Merritt Horsmon, Idaho Department of Fish & Game; Hailey Frank and Andrew Moore, Idaho Department of Lands; Greg Becker, Idaho Natural Resource Conservation Service; Jessie Berner, Philip Blundell, Felipe Cano, Michelle Caviness, Dan Gilfiland, Jeanne Higgins, USDA Forest Service.

**Guests and Observers:** Nate Demmons, Bonner County Parks & Waterways; Butch Horton, Paul Sieracki, citizen-at-large; Kathy Hubbard, The Daily Bee; Susan Bates-Harbuck, Kaniksu Native Plant Society; Jake Garringer, Office of Governor Brad Little; Tracy Morgan, Selkirk Conservation Alliance.

**Facilitator:** Maisie Powell, National Forest Foundation

### **MEETING OUTCOMES**

#### **Decisions**

- November meeting record approved with amendments.

#### **Action Items**

- Lawson will send out a doodle poll to the Forest Subcommittee regarding Hanna Flats.
- Jeanne Higgins will send out the Supplemental Information Report and the briefing schedule for Hanna Flats.
- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (CFLRP) letters of support are due January 24. Maisie Powell will send out info for where to send letters.
- Comments on the draft Environmental Analysis for Buckskin saddle are due February 7<sup>th</sup>. The Forest Subcommittee will have a meeting in Early February to discuss commenting.
- Jessie Berner will follow up with a response to specific wildlife questions and the updated recreation strategy.
- The Forest Service will include endangered species updates in their wildlife updates.
- Felipe Cano will send an update on project timelines.
- The Honey Badger subcommittee will plan a meeting in early February before scoping. Michelle Caviness will send out Honey Badger info.
- Felipe Cano would like to have a conference call with the subcommittee on improving Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM). He will contact with possible dates.

- Maisie Powell will add the Pritchard Creek project to the March agenda
- Maisie Powell will contact Laura Wolf regarding an update on Chronic Wasting Disease.

### **Bin Items**

- Wildlife and recreation presentations from collaborative members. Jeff and Travis from Backcountry Hunters and Anglers would like to give a presentation pending the collaboratives' interests.
- A future meeting with recreation specialists to focus on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest's (IPNF) strategy for trails and what grants were submitted for the year.
- Discuss a possible field trip to Pritchard Creek.

### **MEETING RECORD**

#### **1. Welcome, introductions, and approve agenda for today's meeting**

- Group members review the agenda, agree to ground rules, and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) members review and approve the November meeting record.
- Friday is the deadline for support letters for the CFLRP proposal.
- The Honey Badger subcommittee will connect with Michelle Caviness until Dan Scaife's return.

#### **2. Policy Updates**

- The legislature is in session. No attendance from the representatives. Maisie Powell will reach out to the legislature before the next meeting to get updates.

#### **3. Updates on Shared Stewardship & Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)**

- By the next meeting, Peg Polichio will have more direction from the Governor's Shared Stewardship committee on how they are working with private holdings.
- GNA will be taking on more federal lands in the in the Hoodoo Valley, Spirit lake, and the Ponderay River. Looking at possible fuel reduction projects in this area as well as the transportation aspect because some areas do not have legal access. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has given permission to do some reconnaissance in that area.
- There are no new GNA projects. Hardrock GNA sale is ongoing. There will be a site visit with some North Zone folks soon. A silviculture prescription changed for one of the units, and North Zone needs to sign off.
- Grouse Bear Management unit is past review and is in the purchasing department. Bids will hopefully be in by end of June.
- Scattered Lands is still an ongoing project.
- The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) hydrologist went to Courts Creek tributary to look at a culvert that has been a fish blockage. This will hopefully be replaced this summer after survey and design.
- Shared Stewardship: Jeff Lau is the coordinator for North Idaho, but is on detail. Positions are advertised to be filled. External vacancy opens on Friday.
- There is work on a communication plan with partners for the Scattered Lands project.

#### **4. Joint Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) proposal update**

- Tier 1 was submitted around the holidays and incorporated feedback from the collaboratives.
- The Regional Office recommended adding:
  - More specific about metrics for benefits to local communities;
  - Specifics about the mills where the products would go; and
  - The percent of project work that would be off National Forest lands.
- The final due by the end of the day on Friday.
- Maisie Powell will send out info for letters of support.
- Funding update: \$7 million is left to fund new projects annually. The plan is still to send all three regional proposals to the WO. Existing projects will receive two more years of funding. The 2012 projects can apply for extension next year.

#### **5. Hanna Flats complaint**

- An amended complaint was filed in December. Parameters of the complaint are similar. The complaint still includes access amendments and WUI issue, and whether NEPA was required for Bonner County Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Lawson Fite will follow up with Forest Subcommittee. Mike Petersen will get group together. Lawson believes the modifications the Forest is making should address concerns.
- The Forest Service (FS) has decided to move road closures sooner so more roads will be closed before the start of the project. When the timber harvest is occurring, the FS opens roads during project, so the road total goes up. Barriers have been put in place to reduce unauthorized use. The unauthorized road issue will be resolved before harvest.
- The Hanna Flats project would happen summer 2020 at the very earliest. The FS will close roads that don't impede harvesting.
- The NEPA document will not be amended, but there is a Supplemental Information Report. Jeanne Higgins will send this out to the group, along with the briefing schedule.

#### **6. Project Timelines and Status Updates**

- Buckskin Saddle
  - The draft Environmental Analysis (EA) is out for comments. Comments must be in by February 7<sup>th</sup>. The Subcommittee will have a conference call to discuss commenting on the EA. The National Forest Foundation will set up a call through their conferencing system.
  - The proposed action is the same, but there are small changes in numbers. For example Rock Quarry was dropped. If there are specific questions on the differences, people can reach out to Jessie Berner.
  - Part of proposed action is to relocate Granite Creek Road to be further away from the creek.
  - Heather Fuller will follow up about goshawk surveys for this area.
- Chloride Gold
  - Still ongoing data collection, no changes to report.
- Honey Badger

- There will be a finalized proposed action around the end of the month. Hope to go out for comment in February.
- The Subcommittee will meet before scoping in early February.
- A tentative schedule is present findings and complete the EA in May through June. Complete the formal comment period with following revision in July and August. Hopefully, there will be a decision out by November.
- Bottom Canyon
  - This is a high priority to get funding to complete the reroute.
  - A lot of the road work is complete. There is some stewardship decommissioning that is ongoing. The 206 reroute (the road in the creek) is happening.
- Kaniksu Forest Restoration
  - The Subcommittee has helped this be a highly collaborative project. They have received the hydrology and road reports and have decided on the North Zone.
  - A few quarters will be added to the timeline to be sure all the bases are covered and recent questions are addressed. Now it will be an FY2023 to provide specialists extra time.
  - Felipe Cano will send the timeline update.
  - NEPA data collection is moving forward and is relying on GNA with IDL.
  - There is a priority of developing a communication plan.
- Scattered Schoolhouse
  - NEPA was completed. This summer will start with some fuels reduction projects totaling 240 acres.
  - For clarification, Scattered Schoolhouse is on East side. Scattered Lands is part of the SW Bonner County Shared Stewardship focal area.
- Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan
  - In the mode of regrouping and putting together a plan with a timeline.
- Bog Creek
  - Have a Biological Opinion. Waiting on clearance to release the decision. This should be before the end of January.
  - There will be a briefing meeting with stakeholders.
  - This area is in the Bluegrass Bear Management Unit (BMU). The Border Patrol wants to improve the roads. The FS wants to bring this BMU up to standard through this project.
- Potter's wheel
  - The sale will go out in the third quarter. Big Man is scheduled for first quarter of 2021.
- Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM)
  - The FS has been using EADM with the Kaniksu Community Project through fire modeling. If this works well, other projects in the region will use this fire modeling risk assessment. Felipe Cano would like to have a conference call with the Subcommittee on how to improve their use of EADM.

## 7. Wildlife Update

- A bald eagle survey was completed as part of a statewide monitoring survey.
- The FS is submitting a grant for grizzlies. This will support new infrastructure, education, and outreach.
- The Mill Fork Boulder Creek fish passage project was completed last summer. This improved upstream access for about 2 miles. Several culverts will be replaced on other creeks throughout the Forest.
- The motorized trail bridge over North Gold Creek was replaced. Two more are scheduled over Granite Creek to reduce sedimentation.
- There is a GNA project to replace culverts to increase fish access over Quartz creek.
- There was a question about if there is an equivalent to the five year vegetation plan for wildlife. The FS has an intention to use an integrated approach to achieve goals for fish, wildlife, etc. with all projects. Another goal is early collaboration to work out issues ahead of time.
- The Forest completed a watershed condition framework and prioritize watershed improvement work. The FS is thinking of resurrecting this work, but are using the five-year vegetation management plan right now.
- The FS receives funding specifically to help with their wildlife work.
- The FS hopes the collaborative members will continue to provide feedback and bring their questions to the table. There were some
- Idaho Conservation League has a request for proposals to improve water quality and eliminate mining waste in Shoshone County in case the FS is interested.
- There were comments to include updates about threatened and endangered species work.

## **8. Recreation Update**

- Dangerous trees have been removed from the Kit Price Campground. This will be open this season on a first come, first serve basis. Big Hank Campground has been closed for removal of hazardous trees.
- The FS has a 10-year action plan for recreation. The action plan includes applying for grants to update Kit Price to make it more suitable for RVs.
- There is a River Rangers program through recreation funding on the Coeur d'Alene River. There will be new signage going up.
- Visitor use surveys are done every five years. Last year's found there are 40-50,000 using the Coeur d'Alene District. 50% of use on recreation sites.
- There was a comment for the central zone to put in food storage lockers as grizzlies are moving into that zone.
- The Forest is working on a recreation strategy to have focused efforts. Josh Jorgensen has pulled together a comprehensive recreation strategy. Jessie Berner will email the final document. There is also a one-pager, as well as a timeline of projects and funding sources. All projects have a funding source and a match.
- The FS has few funds available for capital improvements. They receive funding for about one project per year. For example, Priest Lake project is \$182,000. The FS uses every penny

they can get from appropriated dollars to allocate for a match. They also use in-kind services.

- The FS seeks out many grant sources such as SRS or RAC funding. The North Zone got half a million through RAC funding. Dan Gilfiland works with specific interest groups to allocate funding. Stewardship funding cannot be used for recreation and must go towards restoration.
- Luby Bay is under concession. They collect fees for camping. This money goes into a fund that the FS uses to invest back into the campground, and a portion gets pooled to do larger projects on the Forest.
- There are several projects in the North Zone:
  - Priest Lake improvements went through a long, difficult process to move sites to a fee system. An updated facilities assessment was completed last summer. There must be a minimum amount of amenities to charge fees. The FS wants to do updates in order to charge a fee. The FS is trying to do this with many campgrounds on Priest Lake so it can be funded. Same thing for Bonner's Ferry.
  - Beaver Creek is one of the last campgrounds not on a sewer district.
  - Kalispell Bay Boat Launch expansion has problems with ingress/egress. There is a health and safety concern and the FS wants to eliminate congestion to make things easier for emergency vehicles.
- The FS is trying to integrate recreation into larger veg projects. This helps with efficiency and getting through the NEPA process. Westside and Buckskin Saddle are two ongoing projects in the middle of planning process where there are recreation considerations.
  - Buckskin: Largely motorized use, which causes erosion. It is difficult for multiple user groups. The FS is address the backlog of maintenance for more sustainable trails for both motorized and foot traffic.
  - Westside: this is a mix of private and FS lands. Trying to reroute trails and move trailheads to ensure continued access.
- There is free camping on FS land, but sites that are expensive to maintain are moving towards fees. RACs gave feedback to reevaluate the fees every 5 years. RACs have also helped identified trails in need of maintenance.
- Backcountry trails are maintained with a combo of the FS and advocacy groups, as well as partnerships with the state. With a small budget, the FS starts with accessible and highly used areas.
- There is a growing cadre of non-profit partners and volunteers responding to the need for trail maintenance. As the agency shifts funding around, increased capacity for agency to

increase partnership, double the number of active volunteers, miles, and such. The collaborative can help in this area.

- The collaborative members have a vast knowledge of resources and funding sources that can help with trails (i.e. Trail Alliance, the National Wilderness Stewardship Group, the Idaho Off-Road Motor Vehicle fund).
- Trail Alliance is working on securing grants for the Honey Badger project.
- There is a lead trails person on each District. This person completes condition assessments and set priorities for trails on that district.
- If there is interest in the county trail plan, people can get in touch with Dan Gilfiland and Jeff Connolly.
- The Idaho Trail Association is working on a crowd-sourcing trails assessment tool for users. This could potentially help the agency determine projects.
- The recreation personnel compile a list of accomplishments at the end of the year with a goal of improving or maintaining standards. The collaborative is interested in having a report from a trails person at the end of the year to discuss their year-end accomplishments.

#### **8. Public Comment**

There was discussion around needing to clarify the public comment section and when the public is allowed to provide input. The collaborative welcomed the public's participation throughout the meeting, as long as they follow protocols.

#### **8. Round robin: meeting closeout**

[In round robin fashion, each member and visitor was given a moment to reflect on how this meeting has gone and to suggest changes for future meetings.]

**Meeting adjourned at 3:34 pm.**