

Panhandle Forest Collaborative Meeting Record

12:30 – 4:00 p.m., September 18, 2019
Bonner County Administrative Building

ATTENDANCE

Members: Jeff Bynum, conservation representative; Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Tom Dabrowski, non-motorized recreation representative; 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; Laura Wolf, wildlife representative

Technical Advisors: Andrew Moore, Idaho Department of Lands; Kerry Arneson, Jessie Berner, Felipe Cano, Jasmine Drapeau, Albert Helgenberg, Cole Julson, Brock Martin, Kim Pierson, and Jesselyn Thornton, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF); Aubrey Hoxie and Briana Whitehead, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Tim Kastning, Office of Congressman Russ Fulcher; Jake Garringer, Office of Governor Brad Little; Sid Smith, Office of Senator Jim Risch

Guests and Observers: Bart George, Kalispel Tribe; Lyndsie Halcro, Bonner County Parks & Waterways; Tracy Morgan, Selkirk Conservation Alliance; Matt Nykiel, Idaho Conservation League; Erin Plue, Idaho Forest Group; Paul Sieracki, citizen-at-large

Facilitator: Maisie Powell, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- The July meeting record was approved.
- Eric Nave was approved as a new member.

Action Items

- Agenda item for November discussing the letter from the Idaho delegation regarding travel in Recommended Wilderness Areas, collaborative protocols, and communication.
- Alan Harper will convene a subcommittee meeting by mid-October to discuss the Hanna Flats complaint.

Bin Items

- The USDA Forest Service (USFS) will give a wildlife presentation at a future meeting.
- Members would like a presentation from the USFS about recreation on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.
- A meeting with Sandra Mitchell to discuss the letter from the Idaho delegation and to look at maps of Northern Idaho.

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 May meeting record.

2. Policy Updates

- A letter was sent to Secretary Perdue addressing appointing Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) members more efficiently.
- Senators Jim Risch and Mike Crapo introduced legislation to reauthorize Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). They are beginning the process now so there is no lapse in funding and are asking for a 10 year reauthorization.
- Congressman Fulcher is introducing a bill to enhance geothermal production on federal lands. He is trying to have the exploration of geothermal go through the NEPA process as a CE. The bill is H.R. 4568.
- Recommended Wilderness Areas travel restrictions
 - The letter from delegation to Chief Christiansen regarding travel in Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWA) raises question of transparency and trust amongst the collaborative members.
 - The group feels there is a need to sit down and look at the protocols and address communication and trust issues within the group.
 - There was a suggestion to have four or five collaborative members meet with Sandra Mitchell. Eventually, there is a need to have a big picture discussion looking at maps of Northern Idaho.
 - One member believes each individual RWA should be looked at. Another member mentioned the 2003-2005 forest planning process that looked closely at each of the RWAs.
 - Some members expressed frustration that the legislation did not bring this issue forward to the collaborative sooner. Overall, the collaborative appreciates the members of the delegation attending the meetings and hopes they will continue to bring issues forward that could benefit from collaborative engagement and enhance public policy.
 - Mitch Silvers has meetings scheduled with some members and is willing to talk to more about this issue. Would it be possible for him to attend the next meeting?

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

- There was an agreement signed between the USDA and the Governor to work with stakeholders and use all available tools regarding GNA. There are two priority landscapes for all of Idaho. One of these overlaps with the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The goal is to double the acres treated on FS lands by 2025.
- There was a meeting yesterday with Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the USFS to look at opportunities for cross-boundary work.

- There will be a new position for a Shared Stewardship Coordinator. Dan Childs is currently the Shared Stewardship Coordinator for Region 4 and all of ID.
- The Scattered Schoolhouse area could rise to a higher priority with Shared Stewardship. It is a great place to have all parties involved.
- GNA updates: There is a stand contract on the Kaniksu, two projects on central zone, and one in the south zone. Task order #8 is almost complete, which is part of the Kaniksu Community Forest.
- There are two sale preparation contracts with North Star and Robin Hood, as well as another one that is part of the Potter's Wheel project.
- GNA employees are working on the Kaniksu Community Project looking at travel routes and proposed management areas.
- Quartz and Solo creek have two projects proposed. Writing contracts will begin after the field season.
- Hardrock GNA sale operations are ongoing.
- Jasper 2 is on a day to day basis. Hopefully this area will pick up again next month.
- Black Boulder was sold to Stimpson in July.
- The Hanna Flats auction was on the 5th and went for no bid. The auction date is set for the 26th.
- A member commented that equipment and labor costs have gone up. This has not been reflected in the appraisals.

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

- There were great conversations amongst all three IPNF collaboratives and came together for a joint CFLRP proposal. The groups discussed values and a way to work together across the landscape.
- The Tier 1 proposal was completed and defined the boundary as entire IPNF. Tier 1 did not identify areas for treatments.
- Projects under CFLRP cannot build new roads. Projects that need new roads would not use CFLRP funding. The RO had more questions after Tier 1, so a refined proposal is due this Friday. Kim Pierson will send a draft out to the collaboratives for feedback.
- The proposal will still include the entire IPNF, but it will not include projects that require new roads.
- The original proposal suggested 120,000 acres of treatment. They are scaling back to 100,000 acres considering the roads issue.
- The FS will still have conversations and discussions with the collaboratives about NEPA projects that include road construction.
- The USFS looked at lynx, grizzlies, and fisheries during the proposal process.
- The USFS Regional Office (RO) asked the proposal to address uncharacteristic wildfire and how the IPNF will address this, their plan for hazardous fuels treatments, and wildfire for resource benefit.
- Very little of the proposal area is under current NEPA. The USFS needs the collaboratives to weigh in about where there should be other projects.
- The next steps are to define the focal areas.

5. Hanna Flats complaint

- The legal complaint was filed by The Alliance for the Wild Rockies against Jeanne Higgins and the IPNF and stated that the Forest acted arbitrarily and capriciously regarding the Hanna Flats Project.
- The complaint has three claims relating to the Endangered Species Act and access amendments related to grizzly bears.
 - The complaint alleges that the project does not comply with the Priest Bear Recovery Zone Area and leaves too many open roads.
 - The project does not qualify for a Categorical Exclusion within the project's defined Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area.
 - The project uses the Bonner County Community Fire Protection Plan which would require undergoing the NEPA process.
- The government has 60 days to respond and the proposed case schedule would be filed by the end of October.
- The group discussed options to support the Forest through this process. Alan Harper will set up a meeting with the Forest Projects Subcommittee to determine next steps for the PFC.
- Lawson Fite may be able to help. He works with parties to submit an amicus brief.

6. Project Timelines and Status Updates

- Priest River Raft Slide
 - The Idaho Transportation Department is working with the USFS to enlarge parking area for safer access to the river at the Priest River Raft Slide area.
- Buckskin Saddle
 - The scoping comment period finished last week. The USFS is now reviewing the 15 comments.
- Chloride Gold
 - The FS is still collecting field data for Chloride Gold.
- Honey Badger
 - This is still in a pre-scoping effort. The FS is working with local organizations and the county and state to get input. There were three open houses. The FS is trying to get more residential input. The FS is looking at how to make current trails sustainable and how to deal with the social trails that are forming. They are hoping to go to a proposal for the project by late January.
- Bottom Canyon
 - There is ongoing road work.
- Kaniksu Forest Restoration
 - There is a GNA component to assist with data collection. There is a change in personnel with David Cobb retiring on the 20th. The contract has been signed and there will be a subcommittee meeting to get everyone on board with the IDL team leader. They are looking to share models of fire assessments and deviation from natural conditions. The goal to increase pace and scale and address WUI concerns. There is a focus on roads and hydrology. The remainder of the resource areas will be included in data collection in the future before going to public to discuss

proposed action. There is a possibility of making this project into a Joint Chief's project.

- Scattered Schoolhouse
 - The NEPA for this project will be finished within the next week.
- Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan
 - There is still work with regional office as to next steps.
- Bog Creek
 - The FS is in the process of waiting for a biological opinion to come back from the Fish and Wildlife Service. There were some adjustments made from the resolution meetings. The USFS looked into some additional public access. The grazing permittee asked for more trips with limited access to lessen impacts. Because of these changes, the USFS had to update the biological assessment that was submitted in July. They anticipate a draft biological opinion by November and a final decision by December or January.
- Hughes Creek
 - The water table is back up. The group installed plugs and beaver dams. There is continued monitoring for this project. Overall, it was a great success.
- Regional modeling
 - Congress wants the USFS budget to be on a landscape level. There is a team of folks working on some modeling to look at priority areas. Factors include key outputs, where people live, fire risk, insect and disease, and shared stewardship areas. They are working to figure out scope and scale within PODs. This work lines up nicely with the 5 Year Action Plan (5YAP). The USFS will re-engage folks to talk about 5YAP sometime in November. This helps describe the "why" of where the USFS is doing treatments.

7. Public Comment

- There was a comment about the collaborative supporting too many logging and roads projects and that Congress needs to provide more funding to the USFS.
- Pine Street Woods will open on Friday. There is an event all day Saturday to see to trails work they've completed.
- A potential topic for next meeting could be to discuss the metal boxes for wood chips and slash to make biochar. Wilson biochar has a video of this process.

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 3:12 pm.