

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group Meeting Record

1:00 – 5:00 PM, Wednesday, August 7, 2019

Butte Archives

ATTENDANCE

Members: Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large; Nick Gevock, wildlife representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation representative; Chris Marchion, conservation representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Rick Sandru, agriculture representative; Mark Thompson, mining representative; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Technical advisors: Mike Hillis, Ecosystem Research Group; Steve Kimball, Montana Department of Natural Resources; Jeanne Dawson, Cheri Ford, Amy Haas, Molly Ryan, Jeff Tomac, USDA Forest Service

Guests and Observers: Tana Nulph, Big Hole Watershed Committee; Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County; Chris Edington, Trout Unlimited

Facilitators: Ben Irely and Maisie Powell, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

- July meeting record was approved with amendments.
- The Beaverhead Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) approved signing the Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) letter of endorsement for the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act.

Bin Items

- 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.

MEETING RECORD

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

Group members review the agenda and ground rules and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG) members review and approve July's meeting record.

2. Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDWG) member updates

- National Collaboration Cadre Update
 - The Cadre's first visit is three days. The first day is with BDWG on August 27th at the Copper King in Butte, the second is with BDNF only on August 28th at the Dillon Ranger

District Office, and the third on August 29th is with BDWG and BDNF at the Dillon Ranger District (RD) Office. There will be a lunch reservation for the group at the Copper King on the 27th and a BBQ lunch at the Dillon RD on the 29th.

- Objectives of first Cadre visit are to assess the collaboration. Objectives of Cadre second visit are to finalize the action plan and begin implementation.
- The September BDWG meeting is cancelled.
- Forest Project Subcommittee update
 - No update, but keep the Forest Project Subcommittee on the agenda.
 - Summers are busy for rangers and the Subcommittee may not have time to connect. It is valuable to keep the door open for communication.
- Jefferson County Subcommittee update
 - The county is looking at the budget to hire a forester.
- Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) update
 - Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act letter of support: The BDWG should support because there will be a time when our collaborative process needs the support of other groups.
 - The group voted and approved signing the letter.
- Montana Forest Action Council (MFAC)
 - Tony Colter and Darcie Warden are returning from a MFAC meeting this morning.
 - A finished product is due a year from now.
 - They are looking to identify hazard areas and developing concrete actions to address those hazards.
 - MFAC is using a cross boundary and shared stewardship approach. The BDWG should put their CFLRP project in their database.
 - The Forest Action Plan (FAP) is counting on collaboratives to take this plan and incorporate it into their projects. Every state has to have a FAP and update it every 10 years. A goal of this is to describe state-wide priorities to guide investment and bring together federal, state, and private entities to coordinate priorities.
- Grizzly Bear Council
 - Nick Gevock is on the Grizzly Bear Council for the state. There will be several meetings in various locations this year and Butte will hopefully be one of them.
 - Fish, Wildlife, & Parks is advertising for a Grizzly Management Specialist currently.
- Gravelly Landscape Collaborative (GLC) joint field trip
 - There is an invitation from the GLC for the BDWG to attend their fall field trip. This will happen sometime from mid-September to early October in the Tobacco Roots.
 - Any input about treatments to observe or guest speakers are welcome and Darcie Warden will bring these to the planning meeting. The group expressed interest in aspen treatments.

Congressional Updates

- Leonard Wortman had a tour of Marks Miller Post & Pole with Senator Daines this morning. Senators Daines and Feinstein are putting together legislation that looks at projects to clear

back from roadways to increase leeway for injunctions. This would be a mandated treatment of 50k acres for key states, including Montana.

4. District Updates

- **Wisdom Ranger District**

- There have been 2 fires less than ten acres thus far. Both were lightning caused.
- Last week there was a county assist for a powerline spark. There was good interagency coordination on this fire of 300 acres.
- The Trapper Creek prescribed fire was 292 acres this year and 400 acres were pretreated for next year's burn. The Forest is working with the Jefferson Watershed to go cross boundary with this in the future. 250 piles were burned from previous thins. There were 88 acres cut on Christensen Creek aspen project. Trapper and Christensen received funding from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to get crews started early in April.
- 130 acres of hazard trees were cut on 9 campgrounds across the District.
- The District is proposing Steel Creek aspen treatments on 700 acres.
- There is a small NEPA for Trail and Christensen Creek meadow restoration work.
- The District is working with Bitterroot NF on landscape-scale project.
- 140 miles of trails have been cleared in the Pintlers and Pioneers this year. Cabins have been constantly rented and campground use has been average. There has been a Passports in Time (PIT) project this summer.
- The Roadside 9 hazard tree project is moving forward. Pintler Face is going through edits with specialists this August and is going to objection in October. Selway-Sagana has expanded encroachment work.
- Condition-based treatment prescriptions look at specific sites and their restoration needs.

- **Dillon Ranger District**

- Jamie Tripp will be the next ranger and will be attending the October meeting.
- Roadside salvage is a safety Categorical Exclusion (CE).
- Less than one percent of the District is being treated.
 - Q: How is the need for treatments communicated up the chain to demonstrate the need for bigger, landscape scale treatments?
 - A: Demonstrating multiple benefits for these projects will help build the case for more and bigger projects. The Forest is seeing CEs with more acres attached to them which is a little bit of movement in the right direction. Treatments of 50k acres or bigger is on the wish list. All projects have to be matched to the forest plan. The BDNF will start bumping up against the suitable base if we continue to expand treatments.
- There was a request again for a little bit of clearing out of nice spots for dispersed recreation on the Wisdom District and on projects like Pintler Face and a hope to continue the conversation about small recreation add-ons to projects like Pintler Face.
- BDNF has worked in some of the Anaconda Sportsmen's suggestions to Pintler Face, e.g. the creek crossing/campground and ATV loop.

5. Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) Staff updates

- One Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) nomination package has been submitted and are awaiting review. RACs are getting approved with a quick turn-around.
- Notch Cabin burned down and there is an ongoing investigation.
- The Upper Ruby Allotment field trip with range staff and permittees was a success. They looked at monitoring and improving stream conditions to help standardize what people are looking for with stream and riparian conditions in rangeland.
- There was a meeting around Cliff and Wade Lakes where a concession pulled out. This is a high use area and there is a need for another concession. Recreation on the Forest is huge here. This brings in \$60,000 in fees over the course of the summer. Dillon Ranger District fees from recreation totaled \$2,000 in 10 days. There are still vacancies in Recreation across the Forest.
- Rick Collins is retiring at end of September and Leona Rodreick is retiring at end of December. Jeanne Dawson is taking over the Lands Program in FY20. A new District Ranger will be here in late September or early October. There are a few other open positions on the Forest for Wildlife Biology, Rangeland, Recreation, and Fish/Hydrology.
- Roadside 8 and 9 have sold. Roadside Deck should be done soon. Meyers Hogback will hopefully be signed soon. Red Rocks should be signed soon.

6. Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP)

- The Subcommittee met in Dillon recently. Sun Mountain Lumber hired Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) to do some preliminary work. The subcommittee is meeting again today.
- CFLRP requirements: Collaborative based project; supports ecological, economic, social sustainability; addresses wildfire concerns; restoration projects offset treatment costs.
- Selection criteria: an area greater than 50,000 acres; a need for restoration; funding plans; and multiparty monitoring post implementation.
- The funds cannot be used for planning, only implementation and monitoring. 50% of funds can be used for implementation and monitoring. The other 50% must come from a match. A project can receive up to \$4 million a year. Congress authorized \$80 million, but has not yet appropriated the funds.
- The group is in the process of putting together a Tier 1 proposal. There are at least 4 other projects being proposed in the Region.
- The Subcommittee is recommending the Option 1 or 4 landscape in the Bighole. Other alternatives are larger. The BDWG needs to be 100% on board with the recommendation, but ultimately it is the Forest's decision.
- Things to consider when selecting a landscape: Where do we have existing NEPA; What is the potential for future projects in these areas; Do we want to do things in wilderness and roadless.
- National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act – priority areas for trails treatments. The BDNF has one of these priority areas along the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) through this project area.
- What are the concerns with Option 3?

- 4.5 million acres is large and might exceed BDNF capacity.
- FS lands are 1 million acres excluding Roadless and Wilderness areas.
- Option 4: BDNF is concerned about going to big, but maybe option 4 is not big enough. Option 4 was looking for the best 1m acres. For context 4FRI is 2.4 million acres.
- The landscape does not have to be a contiguous block.
- There was a discussion about municipal water supplies and treatment facilities within the proposed project areas. Butte has a robust treatment facility.
- The Big Hole Watershed Committee expressed they are excited about this proposal and has several partnerships to leverage in support.
- Steve Kimball said that at year seven of his CFLRP on the Payette, they requested to the Chief to expand project area because they ran out of work for the original proposal.
- The recommendation from the Clearwater Basin Collaborative and Tim Love was to go bigger. The extra acres can be useful if litigation halts a project. There was also advice to go for the full \$4m, but ultimately the BDNF has to make that decision. Mike Ward advised not to worry about the match, it will come.
- We did not do a slope break out to check for compliance with the Forest Plan.
- What impact will this have on other parts of the forest?
 - One idea for going smaller is so the CFLRP is additive and doesn't take away from other project developments on the Forest.
- There is a lot of opportunity for integrated restoration projects, not only tree cutting projects. There is also the potential to apply fire in roadless within this project area.
- Based on info from the CFLRP webinars, the Washington Office won't support the match. This will have to come from the Region.
- CFLRP does not enhance the limiting capacity factor on the Forest - NEPA capacity. The match can be used for NEPA work. Shifting resources within the POD could help.
- Stewardship projects and GNA are forest wide and these funds can be used.
- The ratio of treatment area and tree value is optimal in the Bighole.
- Do we need to go big so that we leave as many options open to go wherever we can in the forest, within the bigger boundary. What do we hurt by going big?
- Option 3 includes part of 6 counties and more districts. It is the most cross boundary choice.
- All NEPA is not created equal. Some of these projects have more potential built in for applying restoration funds (rather than just getting timber out of the woods).
- BDWG members voice only supporting Option 3.
- Keep in mind that we may be asked to adjust the project after the Tier 1 proposal.
- The Tier 2 proposal will need to have a strategy. The strategy may affect the project area.
- It is important to consider the loss of state insect, disease, and wildfire risk areas with going smaller.
- There was a request to include the Boulder Landscape since it has already been identified as a priority landscape for restoration.

7. Round robin meeting critique

[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.]

8. Public Comment

[No public comments made.]

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.