

## PANHANDLE FOREST COLLABORATIVE (PFC) MEETING RECORD

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. PDT

<https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/panhandle-forest-collaborative>

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Attendance

**Members:** Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Bonner County; Tom Dabrowski, non-motorized recreation representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Alan Harper, timber representative; Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, community non-profit representative; Britta Mireley (alternate), community non-profit representative; Mike Petersen, conservation group representative; Brad Smith, conservation group representative; and Laura Wolf, wildlife representative.

**Technical advisors:** Marc Kilmer, Congressman Russ Fulcher's Office; Derek Antonelli, Idaho Native Plant Society; Cindy Vaughan, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Mike Crapo; Jake Garringer, Office of Governor Brad Little; and Phillip Blundell, Jeff Lau, Kim Pierson, Dan Scaife, Susan Stanley, Will Young, and Dave Wrobleski, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF).

**Guest:** Kristien Lowell, Susan Bates-Harbuck.

**Facilitators:** Ben Irely and Andrew Hursh, National Forest Foundation.

#### Action Items

- Ben Irely will polish up July meeting record and then distribute.
- Next meeting is **Wednesday, November 18, from 1 – 3 pm PST on Zoom.**
- Kim Pierson will provide an update on Great American Outdoors Act proposals.
- Mitch Silvers will send out highlights on the Daines/Feinstein bill.
- Commissioner Connolly may look into the possibility of pursuing a Nixle bear alert strategy in Bonner County.
- Jeff Lau can provide an update on the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Initiative after feedback is received from the Regional Office.
- Laura Wolf took pictures at all the harvested locations on the Bottom Canyon Project and can present some before and after shots.
- For those who are interested, Liz can share figures and other materials on the Hughes Meadows Project.

#### Bin Items

- It may be possible to do a biochar kiln demonstration somewhere this fall.
- A topic to consider for future discussion is approaches to mitigate human waste that comes with increasing trail use.

### MEETING RECORD

#### Welcome/Introductory Comments

The July meeting record is not ready for approval at this meeting – Ben Irely will complete the record and send it out to the group for approval.

### **Idaho Trails Association Update**

- Over 40 trails projects have been undertaken this season. All trails projects were rolled out only after a COVID-19 mitigation plan was in place. There has been a 40% decrease in the number of volunteers this year, with people hesitant to work in groups. There have been no COVID-19 cases related to these trail projects.
- After a windstorm last Monday, some previously cleared trails will need revisiting.
- There has been a higher volume of people out on the trails this year. With this has come a huge increase in trash and mess (and poop). This issue may be a topic for further discussion and brainstorming. One suggestion is to replicate the “goat ambassador” program that has been successful around Scotchman Peak.
  - PFC members expressed general support for this or some other education effort and provided other suggestions, including using social media and using Idaho Trails Association’s “trail reporter” webpage to provide info to USFS.
- An adopt-a-trail program was implemented this year. People can do light trail work independently and report back to the Trails Association. Almost every trail around Scotchman’s Peak has been adopted.
- IPNF has submitted many proposals for Great American Outdoors Act funding this year. Kim Pierson will share a list of those proposed projects with the PFC.

### **Legislative Update**

Senate bill 4431 is working through the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This is the Daines/Feinstein forest reform bill. The USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of Interior provided testimony recently that supported the premise but called for additional work on the bill’s language. The bill is directed mostly at how agencies do work on the landscape and it amends the categories of projects that can use categorical exclusions and it authorizes governor-proposed landscape-level projects. Senator Crapo and Senator Risch are co-sponsors. Mitch Slivers will send highlights of the bill.

### **Boundary County’s Grizzly Bear Alerts**

- Boundary County residents have seen grizzly bears on farms and ranches and Boundary County has implemented an EMS Nixle alert system. Bonner County may want to look at implementing a similar system. They use this to send people alerts via cell phone of a bear’s presence in their area. Residents opt in by subscribing with their cell phone numbers.
- Commissioner Connolly will look into the possibility of pursuing a similar approach in Bonner County.
- This idea might work best if incorporated with education and information – teaching people what to do and what not to do when they get one of these alerts.

### **Project Updates**

#### **Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Initiative and Shared Stewardship**

- The Joint Chiefs' proposal has been finalized and submitted to the Regional Office for review. After the IPNF addresses comments from the Regional Office they will submit the proposal to the Washington Office ahead of the October 15 deadline. The proposal includes a request of \$3.4-3.5 million for projects like Buckskin Saddle and Scattered Lands. The IPNF will update the PFC after hearing from Regional Office.
- NRCS, the counties, and other partners are working on a communications and outreach strategy and a more formal roll-out for Shared Stewardship in north Idaho. The strategy will include planning a public meeting (likely in Blanchard) to educate folks on the land management tools available. More info on this will be shared later. PFC members may be able to provide feedback on the mailings before they go out.

### **Scattered Lands**

This project is starting to frame up and gain form. A scoping letter was mailed out on August 19, which generated a lot of public interest, especially related to the landowner's assistance programs. In general feedback has been supportive. There are currently ~3700 acres of fuels treatment opportunities identified and ~3200 acres of commercial treatment preliminarily identified. The most up-to-date map should be available at the following link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58631>.

### **Buckskin Saddle**

Three objections were filed on this project (see project webpage): one supportive objection from the American Forest Resource Council and two adverse objections from Alliance for the Wild Rockies and the Coeur D'Alene Tribe. A response to the objections is in progress. The regional objections team will make a determination next week. The preferred practice is to hold meetings with the objectors, which should hopefully happen here but it is unknown when. If PFC members were able to attend, it would be in a listening only capacity. The objection reviewing official would be in charge of deciding whether the meeting was public in that way.

### **Chloride Gold**

The decision on this project was pushed back by one year. Specialists are swamped with Scattered Lands and other projects. IPNF is continuing to gather field data and compile information for this project. The new expected timeline for decision is 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023. Scoping should start in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022. After some pushback about using a third-party for NEPA analysis, NEPA process will probably be conducted internally.

### **Rosie Cedar**

This is a North Idaho Strike Team project near the interstate. It is currently in the process of scoping, with proposed action pending. There may be visual issues to deal with, but otherwise it should be low-controversy. If anyone from PFC wants to engage, reach out to Dan Scaife.

### **Honey Badger**

The proposed action for this project is a bit delayed. The Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will likely come out in November. Look for draft decision notice in December. Reach out to Dan Scaife if you have any questions.

## **Bottom Canyon**

This project is going strong. There is a lot of harvesting and planning to do and planting is expected as soon as site prep is complete. Laura Wolf took pictures at all the harvested locations and can later present some before and after shots at the next meeting. The road re-route contract was awarded a couple of weeks ago. Road and stream relocation construction staking are happening now. Most of implementation will begin next year.

## **Kaniksu Community Project**

Data collection is complete and collaborative meetings will likely be in 2021 and maybe 2022. The Priest River Experimental Forest (PREF) project is likely to begin in late 2021. Most proposed treatments will come from the Rocky Mountain Research Station. More experimental treatments will be tried in the PREF, but the rest of the treatments will result from public and collaborative meetings in next couple of years. There will be opportunities in the coming months to gather suggestions on objectives and treatments/tests that will occur in PREF.

## **Jasper 2 West**

Jasper 2 West is nearly done.

## **Hanna Flats**

Hanna Flats is on hold due to litigation.

## **Potter's Wheel**

Contracts continue to be awarded for this project. IPNF was able to get rid of two roads that were thought to be needed to get this work done. The Chicken Soup sale will be awarded in the few days.

## **Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan**

The goal is to move forward on this project within the next couple of months and the aim is to coordinate with the Kootenai National Forest as they are addressing similar issues. There is no definitive steps planned out yet. This will be a priority project for the IPNF's 2021 program of work.

## **Bog Creek**

The project is still moving forward with most parts of the decision, but a couple of issues are tied up by litigation. The project record has been provided to the plaintiffs. Opening of the 10-009 road is not happening yet and will be a several-year process. Attempts are being made to get funding from Customs and Border Patrol for road decommissioning.

## **Hughes Meadows**

The monitoring data is in. Water levels in the meadow have come up, the native channel is running well, and some small fish have been spotted. Water temperature loggers have shown water temperatures rising this year—it may be because the water is so spread out and shallow, or because of beaver activity slowing it down. Liz can share figures and other materials with those who are interested.

## **Prichard Creek**

Idaho Forest Group (IFG) is getting ready to sign an agreement to make Trout Unlimited, Idaho Fish and Game, and the Department of Environmental Quality partners on this project. IFG is working on putting a conservation easement on the property. BLM has some funding to do some planting in some of the areas this fall. 2021 will be the year to see a lot more progress when formalities like paperwork are completed.

### **Public Comments**

[None given.]

### **Final Thoughts of PFC Members**

- Resources at [recreate.idaho.gov](https://recreate.idaho.gov) are one suggestion for future ideas to deal with the human waste issue.
- Mike Petersen is applying for a grant to pursue a scaling up of biochar kiln or ring of fire for treating slash piles. The kiln reduces smoke from pile burning and creates biochar. He is uncertain about the costs of this approach relative to regular burning, but is in the process of comparing costs with figures from Idaho DEQ on other considered alternatives like slash removal. It may be possible to do a demonstration field trip somewhere this fall.