

**Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group (BDWG)**  
**Meeting Record**

3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, December 2, 2020

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Attendance**

**Members:** Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large representative; Chris Edgington, fishing representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation and weeds representative; Chris Marchion, hunting representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Commissioner Tom Rice, Beaverhead County; Rick Sandru, grazing representative; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County.

**Technical advisors:** Cheri Ford, Mike Goicoechea, and Catherine Mcrae, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) and Steve Kimball and Ann Parks, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

**Guests:** Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaboration Network; Bryan Lorengo, Montana Logging Association.

**Facilitators:** Travis Anklam and Ben Irey, National Forest Foundation (NFF)

**Decisions**

November meeting record approved.

**Action items**

- Steve Kimball, Nick Gevoch, Darcie Warden, and Chris Edgington report what is going on at the legislature to BDWG.
- Travis Anklam and Ben Irey work with Tom Harrington and Tony Colter on applications to the Tri-County and Southwest Montana Resource Advisory Committees for funds to support BDWG facilitation.
- Schedule a call next week to discuss the Forest Action Plan (FAP) grant. Include Darcie Warden, Tony Colter, Mike Goicoechea, Karen Laitala and Cheri Ford on that call.

**Bin items**

As the BDNF is hiring they can start updating the status of those positions at meetings.

**MEETING RECORD**

**1. Welcome, connect to call, sort out any technical issues**

**2. Quick review of [BDNF project tracker](#)**

- The lynx biological assessment just needs a little more review before going to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
  - What can we expect after it goes to USFWS?
    - They have 130 days to work on it but they've been kept in the loop all along. Helena-Lewis & Clark and Custer-Gallatin forest planning efforts will be a higher priority for them, so the BDNF's lynx issue is third on their list.

- BDNF has a sequencing plan in place for project-level consultation. Cheri Ford can give an update next month on the project-level consultation sequencing.

### **3. Montana FAP Request for Proposals**

- The [request for proposals](#) to implement the FAP is out. DNRC is the conduit and is taking the lead but there are a lot of partners involved in the selection of proposals. DNRC has \$4 million in state funds available and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) is contributing \$1.5 million. The due date for proposals is January 29, 2021. DNRC is looking to fund landscape restoration projects that are cross-boundary and collaborative with a minimum of 15% match that are in the \$50 to \$500k range. If NEPA is required for the project, it must already be completed. The grants are available to landowners, federal lands, state lands, and cross-boundary projects.
  - Who is going to be making the selections?
    - A subset of the Montana Forest Action Advisory Committee and a group of agency line offices, including the USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), DNRC, and possibly Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP). The committee will rank the projects and the State Forester, Sonya Germann, will make the final determinations.
    - This program will not be just about large projects. Smaller projects that fit in well with other projects will also be competitive.
  - What do you see as the future of this program?
    - We are looking for projects to go up to two years. It is DNRC's hope that this program will continue. The idea is to build this program into a statewide restoration program and build the funding.
  - Is there any ability to use this grant for planning projects?
    - So far this grant is only for project implementation. DNRC will continue to support project planning but those are going to have to be other dollars.
  - Does the BDNF have any projects to fund that are shovel ready?
    - Mike Goicoechea plans to meet with folks in early January to see if Greenhorn is a fit for this or for the Joint Chiefs program. Based on what Steve has shared today, aspen categorical exclusions (CE) may be a good fit. The Highway 43 project might be a good fit too. The Highway 43 project is going to cost money and will not generate revenue. Forest-wide aspen CE could be a fit especially if the treatments involve conifer encroachment treatments.
  - Let's schedule a call for next week and include Darcie, Tony, Mike, Karen and Cheri on that call.
  - There are three scheduled Zoom Q&A sessions on this program. December 10 and 16 and January 12. There are more details on this program on the FAP website.

### **4. Good Neighbor Authority presentation (Ann Parks)**

- FAPs were initiated in the 2008 Farm Bill. A completed FAP allows states to be eligible for USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry funding. This plan has identified 3.8 million acres as a priority for treatment. The identified areas are at high risk of catastrophic wildfire. 60% of those lands are federally managed. The FAP is helping to locate or isolate potential project areas. GNA allows agencies to collaborate across land ownerships.
- What does this mean for the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)? Montana is facing forest health issues that cannot be cleaned up by any one agency. The GNA allows for agreements

between the feds and states, counties, and tribes. GNA allows agencies to collaborate across land ownerships. DNRC currently has projects on all seven national forests in the state. Revenue from those projects goes back into the pot for less commercially viable restoration projects. DNRC is doing fuel treatments that will benefit the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and some watershed work has downstream benefits for both wildlife and people.

- There are currently two main GNA projects in the area. One is with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the other is the East Deerlodge aspen project, which is using the forest-wide aspen CE. That project is going to allow DNRC to do some commercial removal of conifers within aspen stands. DNRC has identified three areas with smaller aspen and obvious conifer encroachment. These projects are small potatoes but it is work that needs to be done. GNA Foresters have the ability to do work that the Forest might not be able to do.

## **5. Should the BDWG outline their zones of agreement?**

[Ben Irey briefly described this topic before tabling it for a future meeting in order to catch up on time.]

## **6. Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) opportunity for funding**

- RACs come out of Title II from the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act. For administrative reasons, the BDNF area has two RACs – the Southwest Montana RAC and the Tri-County RAC. Project proposals for consideration by the RACs are due January 14. A link to both RAC request for proposals are on the BDNF webpage. The application is straightforward. Members of the RACs that are also members of the BDWF want to encourage others to consider if there are projects that you want to apply for RAC funding for. It is best to get together with your District Ranger if you have a potential project. Projects need to benefit forest lands. Each RAC has about \$300k to distribute. Project proponents and the applicants will present their projects to the RAC. BDWG could put in a proposal to support facilitation. It would help if county commissioners support the request.
- Travis and Ben will work with Tony and Tom Harrington to draft an application for both RACs asking for \$4k from each to support facilitation. They will look for letters of support from all the commissioners (Leonard Wortman, Tom Rice, and Dan Sager).

## **7. Identify a BDWG member to be the Madison District recreation liaison**

The Recreation Committee has identified a Madison District recreation liaison during their meeting preceding this one and will reach out to that person soon.

## **8. Committee updates**

- **Recreation Committee**
  - The Recreation Committee still has a lot of energy. They have been working with the BDNF on their lists of projects to be funded by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) for 2021 and 2022. The national list is interesting to look at.
  - Tom Harrington is the recreation liaison for the Butte District, Chris Marchion and Mark Thompson are the recreation liaisons for the Wisdom and Wise River Districts. The Recreation Committee is pursuing someone local to act as the Madison District

- recreation liaison. Maureen Connor will be the liaison for the Pintler District. Same goes for the Dillon District. The Committee will be settling on a Committee Chair tomorrow.
- The Recreation Committee is interested in learning more about visitation numbers and is hoping that the National Visitor Use Monitoring data will be available soon for the BDNF. Travel Montana is another good resource for visitor use data as is the Institute of Tourism and Recreation.
  - The Recreation Committee is hoping that Jeanne and Noel can be at the next Committee meeting. Once the Committee gets more traction the Committee is hoping Catherine can help use with some promotion.
  - The BDNF has discussed having BDWG liaisons for each districts and has the following recommendations. These liaisons were not specific to recreation.
    - Madison Ranger District – Darcie Warden or Nick Gevock
    - Wisdom & Wise River Districts – Nick Jose
    - Butte Ranger District – Commissioner Wortman or Tom Harrington
    - Pintler Ranger District – Maureen Connor or Tony Colter
    - Dillon Ranger District – Willy Peck or Tom Rice
- **Capacity Committee**
    - The Capacity Committee had a good chat with Mike Goicoechea about all the capacity questions that have come up. As the BDNF is hiring they can start updating the status of those positions at meetings. The BDNF currently needs a silviculturist and a couple wildlife biologists. The biggest next step that comes to mind is that there is obviously competition for funds across the region and the Capacity Committee needs to advocate for the BDNF in those competitive processes.
    - Even though the GAOA is a great thing, things like that take away capacity from an already strapped Forest. The BDNF needs more capacity to take advantage of these opportunities.
    - Is there a role for contracting and agreements to make use of outside funding?
      - The Region has been very supportive in getting contracting officers in place and putting together Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts. The Region is doing a lot to get ready for the moneys from GAOA.
  - **Communications Committee**
    - The Communications Committee talked about how we effectively communicate between the Forest and the Working Group. We are going to reach two weeks prior to sending out communications so that we can get joint communications out there. We need to capture the character and personalities involved in this relationship. Personalization of our folks is key. If you have ideas, feel free to reach out to Catherine.

## **9. Public comment**

[None given]

## **10. Round Robin of members' closing thoughts**

- Tim Lahey is the new Butte District Ranger. The BDNF will introduce him to the Group at the January meeting.

- The legislative session is starting up. Steve Kimball can help track what is going on and report back to the BDWG. Also, we should ask Nick Gevoch, Darcie Warden, and Chris Edgington to relay back to the Working Group.