

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

3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 3, 2021
On Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance

Members: Tony Colter, timber representative; Maureen Connor, citizen-at-large; 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; Darcie Warden, conservation representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County.

Technical advisors: Jeanne Dawson, Alex Dunn, Cheri Ford, Mike Goicoechea, Betsy Hermann, Cat McRae, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF); Matt Arno, Steve Kimball, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

Stakeholders: Lawson Fite, Sara Ghafouri, Heidi Logan, American Forest Resource Council; Pedro Marques, Big Hole Watershed Committee; Jim Keenan, The City-County of Butte-Silver Bow Water Treatment; John Meyer, Cottonwood Environmental Law Center; Emily Harkness, High Divide Collaborative; David Laufenberg, Madison Conservation District; Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaboration Network; Bryan Lorengo, Montana Logging Association; Cindy Purdue-Dolan, Office of Senator Steve Daines; Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County; Lindsey Ehlke, University of Montana

Facilitators: Ben Irely and Travis Anklam, National Forest Foundation

Decisions:

February meeting record approved with no amendments.

Action items:

- BDWG Steering Cmte. will discuss a potential shift back to in person meetings.
- BDWG Steering Cmte. will create a plan to engage BDNF district rangers regularly at future meetings.
- Travis Anklam will share Maureen Connor's Pintler Ranger District report with the Steering Cmte.
- **Partnerships Committee**
 - Betsy Herman (BDNF) will follow up with forest staff to identify monitoring needs on the forest.
 - Ben Irely will reach out to contacts at University of Montana Western to discuss monitoring on the forest.
 - Ben Irely add new BLM Dillon Field Manager Amanda James and Western Montana District Manager Katie Stevens to the email list.
- **Recreation Committee**

- Travis Anklam and Ben Irely will work with BDNF to invite recreation specialists to future Recreation Cmte. meetings.
- BDWG Recreation Cmte. members will adapt and adopt the MFCN document at the next meeting.
- **Communications Committee**
 - Travis Anklam and Ben Irely will invite Alex Dunn to join the next communications Cmte. meeting.
 - Cat McRae (BDNF) will follow up with Tom Rice, Rick Sandru, Tom Rice, and Maureen Connor for future BDNF communications posts.
- **Capacity Committee**
 - Tony Colter will connect with Anton Brennick (BDNF) regarding out year planning.

Bin items:

- Recreation Cmte. members will provide comments on FY 2023 projects related to recreation.
- The Montana Forest Collaborative Network will be reaching out for input on their annual collaborative group update document.
- Ben Irely get the handout on Good Neighbor Authority from Greg Archie and distribute to BDWG.
- Travis Anklam will send documents shared by Steve Kimball regarding wildfire adaptation to BDWG members.
- Invite Wildfire Adapted Missoula present to the BDWG on their work.
- Invite BLM Dillon Field Manager Amanda James and Western Montana District Manager Katie Stevens present to the BDWG.
- Invite Michael Albritton Fuels Specialist with the BLM, present on reintroducing wildland fire in the Wales Creek Study Area.

MEETING RECORD

1. Welcome, introductions, approve meeting record

[BDWG members approved the February meeting record.]

2. Cottonwood Rule Discussion

[Members listened to two presentations representing perspectives on the proposed "Cottonwood Rule", which pertains to consultation requirements between the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding threatened and endangered species. After the presentations, BDWG members and stakeholders asked several clarifying questions. Each presenters PowerPoint slides append this meeting record.]

[*The following summaries reflect the views shared by presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the BDWG or its members*]

- Lawson Fite, General Counsel for American Forest Resource Council
lfite@amforest.org
 - The Environmental Species Act requires that any action authorized, funded, or taken by a federal agency does not jeopardize an endangered species. Agencies must consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for any given action that may jeopardize endangered species.

- The proposed rule is an attempt to fix the Forest Plan consultation effects of the Cottonwood Case (Cottonwood Environmental Law Center vs. US. Forest Service), where the court ruled that Forests must re-initiate consultation of 18 completed Forest Plans in light of new information on lynx critical habitat designation.
- The requirement to amend the Forest Plan in light of new information or species listings makes it difficult to enact large-scale forest management with a Forest's existing resources and capacity.
- Following science and consulting on critical habitat is important, though added process and delays without conservation benefit is harmful. New legislation is needed to address the cottonwood decision and ensure large-scale forest management and conservation.
- John Meyer, Executive Director, Cottonwood Environmental Law Center
John@cottonwoodlaw.org
 - The Endangered Species Act of 1973 compels federal agencies to ensure threatened and endangered species are protected.
 - Lynx were listed as a threatened species in 2007, due to forest plans not adequately protecting lynx habitat.
 - New science suggests that certain areas may not regrow after disturbances, ensure a sustainable yield, or maintain habitat for lynx due to climate change and other factors. Forest Plans and management needs to take such science into account.
 - By looking only at site specific locales, there is not an accounting of new or cumulative impacts to lynx. It is important to engage in consultation at a forest level in order to account for cumulative impacts and protect the species.

3. 2021 BDWG Committee Goals & Committee Report Outs

[BDWG Cmtes. shared report outs summarizing their most recent meeting, action items, and goals for 2021.]

- **Capacity Committee**
 - The Capacity Cmte.'s 2021 goals include seeking to understand transportation planning and how to move it forward, generating a "restoration roadmap" to further advance a shared vision for restoration on the BDNF, and working to get involved in project development early on.
 - BDNF has filled several positions in the last round of hiring.

- **Partnership Committee**

The Partnership Cmte. provided updates regarding action items (see meeting summary).

- **Recreation Committee**

The Recreation Cmte. is working to address Travel Management planning on the forest and provided updates regarding action items (see meeting summary).

- **Communications Committee**

The Communications Cmte. provided updates regarding action items (see meeting summary).

4. Public Comment

- Senator Daines is working with Senator Feinstein to forward a forestry bill addressing challenges regarding forest management.
- The Big Hole Watershed Committee meets monthly; the next meeting is on Wednesday, March 17 at 7pm. Sign up at www.bhwc.org.
- The High Divide Collaborative will host a virtual workshop on April 6. Email Emily Harkness at emily@heart-of-rockies.org.

6. Member Comments

- The conversation today was great.
- Borden's conference room in Whitehall is set up for in person/hybrid meetings.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 5 p.m.