

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group Meeting Record

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 3, 2019 at Butte Archives

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Commissioner Dan Allhands, Madison County; Tony Colter, timber representative; Tom Harrington, motorized recreation representative; Nick Jose, timber representative; John Kountz, agriculture/ranching representative; Karen Laitala, quiet recreation and weeds representative; Chris Marchion, hunting/fishing representative; Willy Peck, timber representative; Rick Sandru, agriculture/ranching representative; Darcie Warden, conservation/NGO representative; Commissioner Leonard Wortman, Jefferson County

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) staff: Jeanne Dawson, Range, Recreation, and Partnerships Staff Officer; Alex Dunn, Environmental Coordinator; Betsy Herrmann, Planning and Resources Staff Officer

Guests and observers: Ted McDermott, Montana Standard; Erik Nylund, U.S. Senator Jon Tester's Office; Cindy Perdue-Dolan, U.S. Senator Steve Daines' Office; Commissioner Dan Sager, Powell County; Dave Stone, Anaconda Sportsmen

Facilitators: Ben Irely, National Forest Foundation

MEETING OUTCOMES

Decisions

Meeting record for March approved

Action Items

- Jeanne Dawson to look into when Jefferson County can change their election from Title III to Title II.
- Chris Marchion and Jeanne Dawson to chat about outreach to conservation community for RACs.
- Ben send RAC email back out to the Group.
- ~~Ben send Catalyst Fund information to group, group pings Ben, who connects them with Marlee in NFF's development shop. [NFF is applying internally]~~
- Alex to connect with Leonard to overlay treatment units with fencing/road issues to see how much good the treatments will do for the fence/roads issues.
- Jefferson County Subcommittee meet with Jan Bowey at BDNF to identify "sweet spot" for funding fencing/road work.
- Jefferson County Subcommittee to coordinate with BDNF for monthly report-out on the progress on fencing/downfall/permit compliance issue.
- Steering Committee write Pintler Face support letter.
- Steering Committee draft Red Rocks letter, Ben get Steering Committee previous letter. Send to group for approval.
- Ben coordinate a CFLRP Subcommittee meeting with the BDNF to discuss moving forward or not with CFLRP.
- Jeanne to chime in with her experience with CFLRPs at the May meeting.

Bin Items

Consider outreaching to the local weekly papers re: what this group does.

MEETING RECORD

1. Welcome and introductions, approve agenda and March meeting record

Attendees are welcomed by the Co-Chair and introduce themselves in a round robin fashion.

2. Congressional policy updates

- The President's budget proposed cuts to Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), senators sent a letter to have it fully funded.
- Senator Tester signed onto a letter to restore funding for the roads and trails funding program.
- The President has proposed funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$7.5 billion. Senator Tester is looking to have it funded \$435 billion. Senator Tester will be introducing a bill for mandatory full funding for LWCF.
- Senator Tester is working to fully fund the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program at \$80 million. Landscape-scale restoration funding is zeroed out in the President's budget.
- Senator Daines will be voting in favor of David Bernhardt for Secretary of the Interior.

BDWG member updates and announcements

- There are two Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) for the BDNF – The Tri County RAC and the SW MT RAC. Funds for the RACs come from receipts from grazing permits, timber sales, and mining leases. For SW MT RAC, the Forest Service currently has 24 applicants and is looking for 45 applicants. The Forest Service cannot submit less than three applicants per vacancy, of which there are 15 for the SW MT RAC. For the Tri County RAC there are 13 vacancies, so 39 applications needed. The Forest Service currently has 20 applications so they need an additional 19. The Forest Service needs help getting more applicants. Each committee has three main groups of interests: industry (5); environmental (5); at-large, government, and tribal (5). SW MT RAC made decisions on about \$235K worth of funds for projects while the Tri-County made decisions on about \$190k worth of projects from 2017 distributions. Estimates are similar for 2018. The positions are four-year terms and at a minimum meet once a year.
- Litigation on the Tenmile-South Helena Project on the Helena-Lewis and Clark NF: BDNF's elk security in the forest plan doesn't have a cover component compared to Helena-Lewis and Clark's elk security. The group present doesn't know enough about this issue to present clear information. BDWG can say that the projects on BDNF haven't gone into roadless, haven't added roads, and enhance elk security. Important to remember that this is just a lawsuit, it doesn't mean the Forest is going to lose.
- Jefferson County Subcommittee report out: The Red Rocks project area boundary is now on the map of fences and roads impacted by severe downfall. Generally, the authority to do the necessary work should be in the grazing permits. Permittees should consult with their permit administrator for specific details of their authority to do the work necessary to deal with the problem. There are three issues at hand here: (1) the authority to do the clearing necessary to restore the fencelines, (1) the capacity to do the work, and (3) adjusting expectations of compliance under these extraordinary circumstances.

BDNF staff updates

- The Forest-wide lynx biological opinion (BO): Following court order from the Fleecer decision, the BDNF has been consulting with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding lynx at the Forest level in order to complete a BO. All vegetation management projects are on hold until this process is finalized. The BDNF should be finishing the draft BO in next couple weeks and there should be a timely turnaround with a concurrence from the USFWS. “Not likely to adversely effect” is where the BO is headed. It has been a big analysis. The BDNF has incorporated the N. Rockies Lynx Management Plan into BDNF’s Plan.
- Scot Shuler has accepted a position in Alaska and has a handful of weeks left. The BDNF will be looking for a new Dillon District Ranger.
- The BDNF is excited about the fire funding fix going into effect. Funds borrowed last summer have not been replaced in accounts, which continues to be a drag in their ability to do work. The borrowing causes anxiety and penny pinching. Fire funding fix should remedy that.
- The Red Rocks Project is in the objection period, which will be ending soon. BDNF will work with the regional office to review the objection points. The third-party review panel convenes 13th of May. Should BDWG write a letter of support? It can’t hurt. BDWG should articulate the negative effect of doing nothing. The letter will go in the record.
- The Little Hogback and Myers salvage projects have a bull trout consultation involved with it. The BDNF is hoping to have it sold by end of fiscal year.
- The Pinter Face Project is being prepared to go out for objection. There is less than 50% mortality in that project.
- The Greenhorn project is mostly Douglas fir and has a large prescribed burn component. Now that grizzly bears have been relisted the BDNF has to write an assessment on grizzly bears for this project. There also needs to be an on-the-ground archeological verification done.
- BDNF sold two roadside salvage sales yesterday. Bachman Log Homes and RY Timber bought the sales.
- Rancho Deluxe is out for scoping in mid-March. There has been lots of field work and preliminary analysis done for this. BDNF is hoping to get to a decision quickly. They will be using the insect and disease CE for this project.

Is there a landscape on the BDNF ripe for a CFLRP application?

The BDNF and BDWG needs to know where CFLRP can be used to do other work besides fuels and timber.

In-depth look at the Rancho Deluxe Vegetation Project and initial crafting of comments

General discussion of stream management zones (SMZ).

Crafting a letter of support for Red Rocks

The Steering Committee will craft the letter and circulate to the BDWG for approval.

Round robin: meeting critiques

- The BDWG needs to keep up the conversation about the impacts of the condition of the Forest on the ecology, economies, and communities of the Forest.

- Non-compliance has significant meaning to a permittee.
- It is important to be clear on the “Why?” of our meeting ground rules.
- Collaboration works best when partisan politics are left at the door.
- The BDWG should emphasize the economics of the Rancho Deluxe Project because of the low-value nature of the stands.
- Regarding a CFLRP application, the BDNF likely has as much of a need for forest health restoration treatments as any other forest CFLRP.
- Consider outreaching to the local weekly papers regarding what this group does.

Review decisions and action items

[Decisions, action items, and bin items were reviewed.]

Public comment

[None given.]