

**B-D Working Group
Meeting Record**
Thursday, November 19, 2015
Butte-Silverbow Archives
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Attendees

Karen Laitala, Nick Jose, Darcie Warden, Rick Sandru, Nathan Korb, Tom Rice, John Kountz, Leonard Wortman, Maureen Connor, Nick Gevock

Forest Service

Scott Snelson, Dave Sabo, Jim Brammer, Alex Dunn, Kevin Suzuki

Facilitator

Karen DiBari

Committee Members/Guests

Ray Foote, Nick Jose, Spencer Merwin, Margie Edsall

Action Items

- Action Item: Karen will schedule a Resiliency Filters Committee with Scott Snelson and Alex Dunn to plan the one-day meeting and discuss funding opportunities available to the forest.
- Action Item: Karen will add Leonard, John K. and Darcie to Resiliency Committee.

Meeting objectives:

- Gain an understanding of range and weed management on the BDNF

Meeting Record

1. Maureen Connor opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. All introduced themselves. The 10/16/15 meeting record was approved without changes.
2. There was no public comment.
3. Updates/ Announcements
 - Dave Sabo: Boulder-Lowlands CE decision has been signed. The BDNF has not heard from litigants.
 - May start marking this winter.
 - Discussed scheduling a field trip for ground monitoring, new implementation.
 - Karen reported on meeting with Mo Bookwalter about Boulder-Lowlands and leveraging lessons from that project to the larger landscape.
 - Scott Snelson: Some funding is available through the Forest Service with a late December deadline.
4. Policy Updates
 - Congress having difficulty in finding middle ground on fire borrowing. Still working on it.
 - Second timber task force meeting. All Forest Supervisors attended. Good opportunity to hear from each forest. Dave Schmid talked about fire issue – this year 52% of the budget spent on fire. 30% on non-fire personnel have been reduced over last 10 years and 50% in foresters.
 - Softwood Lumber Agreement – delegation met with Canadian ambassador.

- Lumber coming across the border has been steady (not a dump). The railroad couldn't move everything at once – will likely resolve that issue so increase in timber imports are expected.

5. New members

- Karen Laitala introduced herself and gave an overview of her background.
 - Involved in weed management
 - Believes in integrated management
 - Office is in Deerlodge – has lived there for 6 years.
 - Is a hunter, backcountry horseman
 - Does weed treatment on the Lolo and BD
 - Strong supporter of public lands
 - Would represent backcountry horsemen on the group (recreation)
- The BDWG approved Karen Laitala's membership unanimously.
- Fishing – Tom Rice contacted a bunch of people who are in the Dillon area but hasn't found a candidate who is able to participate. Sherry Cargill from Whitehall was suggested. She is a hunting/fishing guide. Tom will reach out to her.

6. Range on the BDNF - Kevin Suzuki presented.

- Map – green is outside of grazing allotments, brown is grazing.
- Deerlodge portion is heavy timber.
- Madison is heavy allotment.
- Extensive sagebrush in south.
- 240 allotments under a variety of different grazing systems.
 - Most do rotational – 2-10 pastures to benefit forage and spread out impact.
- Have a few seasonal allotments – very small; trying to go to rotational.
- Many allotments solely NF, but some have BLM and State Land.
- 2400 miles of interior fences on the BDNF.
 - FS supplies materials, permittees responsible for maintaining fence.
 - 700 miles is boundary fence.
- 187 miles of pipeline.
- 20+ cow camp facilities; there for sole purpose of managing cows.
 - Solar pump
- 300 permittees access the forest.
- 10 year grazing permits.
- Also have private grazing permits for private inholdings.
- 99% of livestock grazing on BDNF are cattle.
- 7 sheep allotments.
- 1 bison allotment – Gravelles.
- 3 horse allotments – Wisdom.
- Allotments range from 2 head cattle to 828 cattle.
 - Bison animal unit month (AUM) – 1
 - Cow/calf pair – 1.3
 - Bull or Horse – 1
 - Yearling - .74
- AUMs have been set for 50 years and do not take into account change in cattle size.
- FS looks at impacts of any livestock the same – not looking at max livestock production because of multiple use management mandate.
- Permittees have to meet standards.
- Management is done differently than 50-100 years ago.

- Guidelines:
 - Use of riparian zone
 - Upland forage use
 - Riparian input
 - Willow use
- 270,000 AUMs are currently under permit on the BDNF. Don't have number of AUMs previously but know it was higher in 1960s.
- A lot of science and art to range management.
 - Need to look at resource conditions versus calculation
 - Need to be flexible due to number of variables and changing conditions
- Non-leased permits tend to be areas in need of rest or steep, craggy country.
- Permits:
 - \$1.69 per head per month (nationally)
 - No monetary value of permit
- BDNF largest grazing forest in R1.
- Great deal of work required in managing the permits - hard to make it pencil out.
- Permittees must constantly adapt to situation.
 - John Kountz – pays for 289 head of cattle but doesn't run them all
- Concerns:
 - Conifer encroachment has removed a large amount of grasslands
- Stability of ownership important for conservation.
- No big changes in the program *anticipated* in next ten years or so.
- Have been doing allotment updates
- 1994 – Lawsuit from NWF – taking too long to do allotments. Result:
 - FS produces a schedule
 - Developed riparian guidelines and amended forest plan
 - Write an annual compliance report that goes to NWF
 - Protocol in place for what happens when a rancher doesn't meet guidelines
- This is a good time to talk about livestock management – need to work on changing the dialogue
- Big Hole decision coming out 1st Quarter 2016 (allotment update).
- South Gravelly – starting NEPA this winter for allotment update.
- Pintlers – Allotment review related to bull trout.
- Problems/challenges:
 - Lawsuit about sheep allotments (conflicts between domestic and wild sheep)
 - Loss of sagebrush vegetation community – sage grouse habitat is important. Fortunately the BDNF has very healthy sagebrush communities
 - Weeds – forest spends \$400K on noxious weeds
- Cost comparison by Rick Sandru of running a cow on public vs private land as a rancher:
 - \$28.79/AUM to graze on BDNF public land
 - \$24/month on private land in Big Hole

7. Weed presentation and discussion by Margie Edsall

- See presentation (attached)
- Margie described the large amount of work that has been done through volunteer efforts to remove weeds

8. Resiliency filters

- Discussion of projects (Boulder Landscape, Pintler Face, Greenhorn, Selway Meadows).

- Alex: objective to use a common set of criteria to prioritize for outyear planning.
- Next Steps:
 - 1 day facilitated meeting to review projects on list and discuss how each individual project could be ranked
 - Pre-work – FS will prepare a 1-pager on each project for BDWG members to review in advance of the meeting
 - BDWG would do a value ranking
 - Could also add other criteria
 - Could change the FS number system
- Target first two weeks of February for 1 day meeting.
- Action Item: The Resiliency Filters Committee will meet with Scott Snelson and Alex Dunn to plan the one-day meeting and discuss funding opportunities available to the forest.

9. Budget and Staffing Trends on the BDWG – tabled

10. BDWG Roles document review and discussion - tabled

Meeting adjourned. There will not be a meeting in December!