

North Idaho Working Group (NIWG) Meeting Record
Tuesday, May 17, 2022, from 5 to 8 p.m. PST
In-person and on Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance

Members:

Stan Meyers, Citizen at Large; Ken Barrett, Selkirk Powder; Aaron Lieberman, ID Outfitters and Guides Association; Hilary Eisen, Winter Wildlands Alliance; Trevor Schneider, Citizen-at-large; John Finney, motorized recreation representative; Jacob Hinrichs, motorized recreation representative; Tim Koerner, motorized recreation representative; Commissioner Tim Bertling, Boundary County; Tom Dabrowski, non-motorized recreation representative; Olivia and Scooter Drake, motorized recreation representative; Orin Moses, motorized recreation representative; Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League/conservation representative; Tony McDermott, Sportsman/Trapping representative; John Finney, motorized recreation representative, Ryan Price, motorized representative

Technical assistants: Mike Lithgow, Kalispel Tribe; Sarah Canepa, IPNF; Jessie Berner, IPNF; Carl Petrick, IPNF, Billy Barquin, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Scott Soultz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Dirk Mendive, Office of Congressman Russ Fulcher; Marc Kilmer Office of Senator Risch; Norm Merz, Idaho Fish and Game; Jace Hogg, Governor's Office of Species Conservation; Trevor Anderson and Nate Sparks, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation; Heather Fuller, IPNF (sitting in for Brett Lyndaker on annual leave); Coby Lane, U.S. Border Patrol; Dave Lane, U.S. Border Patrol; Hilary Whitcomb, USFWS; Rhonda Vogl, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Christy Johnson-Hughes, USFWS; Diane Probasco, IPNF; Patrick Lair, IPNF; Jake Garringer, Executive Office of the Governor; Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Mike Crapo, Dan Gilfillan, IPNF, Carin Vadala, Colville National Forest

Stakeholders: Adam Gebauer, The Lands Council;

Facilitator and Notetaker: Dani Southard and Chloë de Camara, The National Forest Foundation.

Objectives

- Review and discuss the progress that has been made towards consensus-based recommendations for areas that should be open and closed to OSVs in the North Zone based on interest representatives' maps:
<https://nff.exavault.com/share/view/2xwxi-kkyd0mm>
- Review and discussion of new agency and stakeholder information, including areas that currently have closures on the Colville that are adjacent to the planning area
- Identify additional areas/issues that require additional stakeholder discussion

- Develop and agree on process and timeline for final recommendation review and approval from NIWG

Decisions

- If there is not consensus recommendation on certain items, then agree on a recommendation to the USFS
 - Preferred Outcome and Rationale: why it makes sense, why the plan meets other people's desires and a map (narrative and a map)
 - USFS
- Encourage group to start with consensus approach
 - Then we'll work to develop the potentially different alternatives
- Process Committee Meeting: June 7th at 4:30(PDT) Virtual
 - Will discuss how we move through approval process for consensus recommendations at June 21 meeting
 - Will form the basis for how NFF will help this group package that material
- June 16th- next working meeting for stakeholders/interest groups. Contact John Finney for more information if you are interested in participating in this discussion.
- June 21st: Next Full Group Meeting, 5:00-8:00 pm PST
 - Location Bonners Ferry Annex.

Action Items

- Additional info/clarity is needed regarding LAU (Lynx Analysis Units) from USFS; Forest to aim to have information available to and working group by June 16th to help inform internal discussions.
- Dani will go through maps and rename to reduce complexity and create a subfolder system for maps and data in the shared file.
 - Before June 10th, Interest groups will need to label maps with dates to indicate which are most up to date.
- USFS PowerPoint delivered at today's meeting into Powerpoint
 - Diane will check with Jessie to figure out
- Request for USFS to retrieve 2018 maps (den emergence, etc.)
 - Diane and Dani will work with Jessie and figure out who to talk to in District to get those maps.

Bin Items

- For future Discussion: how to monitor closures? USFS lack of capacity.

MEETING RECORD

Welcome and introductions

- Dani Southard reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives. Dani refers to the Code of Conduct. Group feels comfortable with material.

- Participants review the April meeting record. Minor grammatical edits were made prior to the meeting. Suggested edits to meeting minutes:
 - Change P. 2: 2nd bullet point under decisions, as it related to Stans topic. “The group will not consider areas outside of the injunction....” To “ Group would not consider changes to Forest Plan management areas”.
 - P. 3, 5th bullet point: “Stan Meyers suggests having a full group vote on whether or not we will include areas for consideration outside of the injunction.” To “2015 Forest Management Areas”.
 - P. 3 Sixth Group: group should be called “trappers” not outfitters
 - Dani motioned to approve meeting edits, seconded, and approved.
- Grizzly Bears and Lynx on Pan Handle National Forest are added to the agenda.
- Tony requests to add a short discussion of caribou, where the “exit ramp” is.

General agency updates for the NIWG & Other agencies

- NIWG: No updates
- **PowerPoint Presentation: IPNF Access Amendment and Lynx Overview**
 - Two recovery zones; Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak
 - Changes identified and approved in the 2020 Re-consultation on the Forest Plan
 - Bear Management Units (BMUs)-Extend the timeline for achieving motorized access standards. IPNF has four additional years to achieve motorized standards (OMRD:TMRD:CORE) in the Long-Smith and Blue-Grass Bear Management Units (2023).
 - OSV- Extend the timeline for completing an over-snow motorized winter travel plan by 2023.
 - BORZ- (Bears Outside of Recover Zones)-Clarified the environmental baseline in terms of motorized access
 - Updating the existing condition/database road miles
 - Expansion or creation of BORZ—updating road miles in those areas
 - Process for making database corrections.
- **Bear Management Units (BMU)**
 - Areas established for use in grizzly bear analysis. BMUs generally
 - Approximate female home range size; and
 - Include representation of all available habitat components
 - For Management the BUMs use Open Motorized Road Density (OMRD), Total Motorized Road Density (TMRD), and Core standards.
 - Grizzly bear researches used road densities to determine the effects of roads on grizzly bear survival, population growth, and other demographic measures.
 - No permanent reductions in Core
 - TMRD include all open and restricted roads and motorized trails. A restricted road or motorized trail is a road or trail on which motorized

used is legally restricted seasonally or yearlong with a physical obstruction (e.g. gate)

- OMRD includes all open roads and open motorized rails. An open road or open motorized rail is a road or trail without any restriction on motorized vehicle use.
 - Temporary roads fall under open motorized route densities because they exceed the trip limits—considered open for OMRD calcs.
 - Grizzly Bear Core Habitat—An area of secure habitat within a BMU that contains no motorized travel routes or high use non-motorized trails during the non-denning season is more than .31 miles (500 meters) from a drivable road. Core areas do not include any gated roads but may contain roads that are impassible due to vegetation or constructed barriers. Core areas strive to contain the full range of seasonal habitats that are available in the BMU.
 - Cannot have a permanent reduction in those BMUs
- Map
 - Light green on map= bear mgmt. units for Cabinet-Yaak
 - Light Blue: Selkirk BMU
 - Hashed Blue/White: BORZ
 - Dark Green is the outline of the National Forest and Forest Boundary.
- Forest Plan Desired Conditions Standards and Guidelines that pertain to Grizzly Bears and Motorized Access
 - FW-DC-WL-04. All grizzly BMUs have low levels of disturbance to facilitate denning activities, spring use, limit displacement, and reduce human/bear conflicts and potential bear mortality. Spring, summer, and fall forage is available for the grizzly bear.
 - FW-DC-WL-05. Recovery of the grizzly bear is promoted by motorized access management within the IPNF portion of the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk recovery zones.
 - FW-STD-WL-04. No grooming of snowmobile routes in grizzly bear core habitat after April 1 of each year.
 - FW_GDL-WL-01: Grizzly Bear Management activities should avoid or minimize disturbance in areas of predicted denning habitat during spring emergence (April 1 through May 1).
- Timing of Road Calculations of Admin Trips

Timing for Road Calculations of Admin Trips

Ecosystem	Spring	Summer	Fall
Selkirk	April 1 - June 15	June 16- Sept 15	Sept 16- Nov15
Cabinet-Yaak	April 1 - June 15	June 16- Sept 15	Sept 16- Dec 1

The Active Bear Year :
 April 1 to November 15 in the Selkirk Recovery Zone
 April 1 to November 30 in the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone.

- April 1st Spring Emergence and when bears start denning is Nov and early December in the two ecosystems
- BORZ:
 - Identifies areas of grizzly bear residency or recurring use in the SE and CY
 - 2011 baseline carried into the 2015 Forest plan and corrected in '20 and '21
 - No increase in permanent linear miles of open routes in BORZ
 - Temporary roads were allowed anywhere in BORZ as long as they met the requirements.
 - BORZ don't have same limitation as BMU do
 - Looking at linear miles of grow versus density
 - BORZ has Open and Total miles of roads
 - Consultation requirement

Questions from NIWG on Bears

- What is the take-home message for this group?
 - USFS has a federal requirement because of den emergence
 - April 1 is a hard deadline and when motorized use starts overlapping with BMUs and BORZ.
 - Anything outside of this guidance could require additional consultation.
- Are there more grizzlies today than 5 years ago?
 - Yes. USFWS: they are in recovery.
- As the bear expands its range, going places it hasn't in decades. Are you going to make your BORZ bigger? Will we have to have more BORZ as the grizzly recovers more and more?
 - Max. size of how far BORZ can go set in 2011,
 - BORZ could potentially expand around North of HWY 2, HWY 200, and Priest River.
 - Beyond these areas it's more consultation with USFWS about where bears go and the effects of bears outside of those area.
 - BORZ only on USFS land.
- As bears recover, will that decrease access?
 - Most USFS land is already covered in BMUS and BORZ except just north of Priest River, near the experimental forest.
 - Possible extension in 1-10 years.
- That would include Coeur d'Alene NF as well?
 - Anything south of Hwy 2 and Hwy 200, part of Sandpoint district, would not be included in the BORZ.
- If a new BORZ area is designated as part of that process, it would be a snapshot in time. Those areas of access would not go away, they would become the baseline for BORZ. New proposed motorized routes might have an issue.
- Possible de-listing of the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem
 - Recovery criteria that ecosystem must meet,
 - Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak have met some of the criteria but not all of them, especially female cubs.

- If they were delisted it wouldn't be right now.
- There are proposals to delist other areas. The way the grizzly population and recovery plan is written doesn't allow for delisting one ecosystem.
- **Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction**
 - Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs)
 - Incorporated in 2015 Forest Management Plan
 - Objective HU 01: Maintain the lynx's natural competitive advantage over the predators in deep snow, by discouraging the expansion of snow-compacting activities in lynx habitat.
 - Objective HU 02: Manage recreational activities to maintain lynx habitat and connectivity.
 - Guideline HU G11: Designated over-the-snow routes or designated play areas should not expand outside baseline areas of consistent snow compaction, unless designation serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat.
 - Map: light purple all LAUs
 - Lynx food sources are snowshoe hares

North Idaho Working Group Lynx Questions:

- What kind of flexibility do we have for a period that was closed during that baseline period; can you move to LAUs?
Answer was unknown but FS is going to look into getting an answer and reporting back to the group.
- If you have LAUs that has an area that was closed to over the snow vehicle use in 2000 (baseline) can you open that acreage if you close a specific acreage next to it? Or one that is adjacent?
 - LAUs on all the IPNF not just the north zone
 - IPNH does have LAUs on their St. Jones district as well
 - USFS hasn't fully worked through the flexibility.
- Is there a timeliness for the Lynx or is just the snow compaction?
 - USFS needs to look at the research from Squires Research in Seeley. He doesn't show as much competition of other predators in regard to snow compaction. Sensitivity will come in the analysis within the Forest Plan.
 - USFS would not increase motorized routes over the snow. Play areas would be considered new designations.
- Does natural compaction come into play?
Two things:
 - Snow compaction and what that means to the lynx as USFS deals with consultation.
 - Snow compaction side: discussion with USFWS
 - The Forest Plan and the direction USFS must abide by for the Northern Lynx.
 - NEPA side and Forest Plan: how are we meeting forest planning standards and guidelines?

**Progress updates and discussion around consensus-based map recommendations;
Identify areas that need further discussion and/or work**

- Overview from John Finney Discussing Over-Snow-Vehicle users draft map (located in the shared file)
 - Southeast quadrant is the experimental forest south--not deviated from that
 - Include Scotchman far side of Padres, part way to Bonners Ferry
 - Not added any additional closure areas
 - Had an area where skiers desired to have a designated route
 - Further discussions from snow mobilier perspective, we prefer to ride more broadly and leave skier area separated
 - South-end
 - The purple area is closed
 - Great area for compromise
 - Proposed year-round closure, south of the Kootenai.
 - Koonook Basin area
 - Trying to address some of the conservation concerns--made an area that is offset from the road by the creek or ridgeline.
 - Northeast quadrant
 - Question: Are the hatched areas exclusions?
 - Blue hatch would be closed year-round for motorized and over-snow vehicle use.
 - Question: Is this proposing everything outside the closed areas would be designated open? Yes.

Additional OSV maps questions/clarifications:

- No further designation south of divide of Harrison peak and Sandpoint district pursuant to the 2015 plan (includes Management Area 1E)
- Caribou Recovery Area (Critical Habitat Area)
 - Purple snow on injunction map
 - Already in Wilderness or Recommended Wilderness
- OSV maps did not try to identify any timeframes for Bears or Lynx dates in this map. Will try to work on this before the next meeting.
 - Non-nonmotorized recreation couldn't attend the past Thursday meeting; John Finney and Tom Dabrowski will meet prior to the next meeting to work a bit more on specific areas.
 - Continues to be areas of disagreement around Westwood Cabin; Tom noted that this is the only cabin you can ski into, backcountry ski community would very much like to explore the potential to negotiate an area around the cabin that is not open to snowmobiling.
 - Request to negotiate the area around Upper Pack River Area
- Skiers' major interest is to secure opportunities for NMV ski access to the Upper Pack area and Westwood Cabin

- Brad Smith provided an updated version of the Conservation Group Map; Map not been uploaded online just yet (previous versions are available), Brad will upload later.
 - Purple areas are yearlong open for OSV.

Questions: Are April 1st closures just for snowmobiles? Cat skiing? Just motorized or Backcountry skiing? Or single-use closure?

- Applies to motorized use (snowmobile, motorcycle)
- Research along roads and motorized routes and disturbance by motorized vehicles tend to displace bears from roads. Human use impact is not as pronounced in research as motorized use.

Additional Updates from stakeholder groups

- John, Jace, and Brad met the previous week to go over maps.
- Jake Hogg: Updated version of the State map is uploaded in the shared folder
 - Might be some room for conservation at higher elevation areas, looking at peaks for all-year access.
 - Some additional info is needed from LAUs from USFS, further discussion would be helpful. Action item between now and the next process committee meeting. That process has already been started.

Review of additional information provided to the group: *Colville National Forest adjacent closures, grizzly bear denning, white bark pine*

- Important to bring this information to NIWG but shouldn't affect map recommendations from the NIWG
- Colville shared a draft map based off of Forest plan mgmt. areas
 - Green line and red lines represent either designated groomed, designated non groomed, non-designed groomed, or non-designed non groomed
 - Hashed lines are not recommended for motorized use
 - Caribou recovery area starts at the border of Canada
 - Just information sharing, this map is in this folder specific folder for Colville information
 - Colville NF is not doing a travel plan, we call it a recreation users map, there is a similar one for summer recreation. This depicts everything that already exists and areas that are not suitable for motorized use based on forest management plans.
- No questions were asked from group

Discuss and approve a process for final approval of the NIWG recommendation

- Between now and June 21st full-group mtg, some additional discussions will continue to advance the consensus recommendation areas
- Proposal for follow-up meeting: Thursday, June 16th date to work on lynx and grizzly bears. Brad Smith and John Finney have sent an Invitation to USFS and USFWS to pull together the pending information needed regarding LAUs.

Maps and Folders

- May need to go through maps and rename to reduce complexity
- Agency Submitted data= original maps
- Stakeholder submitted data= grizzly bear and white bark
- Identify which maps are which and which are up-to-date
 - Suggestion: rename by stakeholder group name and timeline (version 1.0,2.0,3.0 etc.)
- Create subfolders for stakeholders and version
 - Any new maps the name of the stakeholder is identified along with the date.
 - Eventually will have Compromised Maps (as maps are melding together)
- Provide Lynx and Grizzly Bear information in folder if/when new information becomes available.
- USFS update took off 2018 maps, request to retrieve those maps (den emergence, etc.)
 - Diane: will ask Jessie and figure out who to talk to in District to get those maps.
 - Dani: Will work with Jessie and get what needs to be in this folder.

Discuss the process for developing NIWG recommendation report

- If there is not consensus recommendation on certain areas or items, then agree on a recommendation to the USFS that includes the following:
 - Preferred Outcome and Rationale: why it makes sense, why the plan meets other people's desires and includes a map (final product that contains narrative and a map)
 - Encourage the group to start with consensus approach, then expand on areas where views differ
 - Followed public scoping, the USFS will develop the proposed action. Along with public input, the NIWG report will help shape the proposed action.
 - USFS will then develop alternatives and go through the analysis process
 - USFS states the importance of working collaboratively, does have to be careful to make sure all federal rules are being followed.
 - USFS will keep NIWG up to date regarding the process and timeline
- Question: Once a final decision is made, whose responsibility is the education and enforcement?
- USFS strives to have partnerships for any type of monitoring to get real time information
 - Ultimately responsibility lies with USFS, but they are looking for ways of partnering with non-governmental organizations, agencies, or Tribal Nations to ensure the plan is carried out to its intent.

Members' final thoughts

- Thank you to the Forest Service for coming
- Caribou is never going to come back in our lifetime. Common sense laws make sense. When is there an exit ramp and how long is it going to take to get there?

Could apply the same theory to Lynx. The wolf situation is complicated. Restricting any type of use because of Caribou doesn't make sense.

- The annex is booked for June 21st in Bonners Ferry
- Appreciate the collaboration
- "It's really neat to see people getting together and managing our public lands"
- You have one side of the coin you can claim ESA, climate change. The other side is that we have some of the most intact ecosystems and species, I think we need to look at the USFS taking part in that management. Elephant in the room: winter plan and use, the USFS will not have the money to monitor and manage the routes and closure. Caribou closures have been repeatedly violated on an annual basis. We need to step back and say that USFS will not have the money. The people who are going to use it need to step up and manage this resource. Otherwise, this won't work, and it will be a continuing series of violations. Part of the recommendation needs to include how those areas that are being monitored.
- When the OSV buy their registration, up to 10% of that cost can be to support local law enforcement. OSV group does help supply enforcement in the area
 - need to codify that in that recommendation. i.e., all that 10% goes towards law enforcement, can't be used in other areas.

Meeting adjourned at 7:49 PM.