

BITTERROOT RESTORATION COMMITTEE

January 26, 2009

Session Summary

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Update the Committee on what's happened since the November 2008 meeting.
2. As near as possible, complete recommendations on the Butterfly Creek Project.
3. Get organized to move ahead on other projects.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Clancy	Bill Grasser	Wayne Hedman	Mike Jeffords
Gary Milner	Paul Moore	Ron Porter	Steve Powell
Adam Rissien	Kirk Thompson		
Virginia Tribe - Facilitator			

TECHNICAL ADVISORS/OBSERVERS

Julie Altemus	Chuck Oliver	Dan Ritter	Ruth Wooding
Robert Vanderbyl	bitterrootpellet@hotmail.com		

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Ground Rules Reminder

- Extend courtesy to all Committee members and non-members.
- Contribute to an efficient process by being on time; being prepared when you walk into the meeting; and being succinct in your comments.
- Recognize the facilitator as the meeting manager. The Committee will function without a Chair.
- Raise your hand to speak; avoid side conversations.
- Recognize that consensus is the strongest form of agreement. Commit to using collaborative behaviors and communication that encourage consensus. The facilitator will use interest-based tools and exercises to move the group toward agreement.
- When a member cannot attend a Committee meeting, he or she provide another member with a proxy and fully inform them about the process and content of previous discussion. Without a proxy, absence is considered agreement with the group.
- Restoration Committee members are seated at the table. Observers are recognized by the facilitator and asked to honor the Committee's ground rules.
- Committee members have the right to respond to the media when contacted – but are encouraged to be respectful of other members and not state opinions as if speaking for the Committee. The Committee will issue press releases when appropriate.
- E-Mail addresses for Committee members will be made available for between-meeting communication. Committee members are encouraged not to build alliances outside the meeting.

**“Ratifying” the November 17 Meeting Summary
Restoration Committee members approved the November 17, 2008 meeting
summary with the following discussion:**

- A Committee member pointed out that the last bullet on page 2 of the summary under Desired Future Condition stated:
“Where desired, carefully constructed, effective ORV.”
- It was determined by the Committee and the facilitator that this was placed on the list in error and should be removed.

**Pertinent Factors in the Operating Environment – What’s happened since we met
in November, 2008?**

Committee members, technical advisors, and observers listed the following:

- The Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) representative reported:
 - The MFRC 2008 Annual Report is available (copies were distributed to Committee members). The MFRC has received additional funding for this year with some of those dollars available to support the activities of local Restoration Committees. Three Restoration Committees are currently operating – the Lolo, the Bitterroot, and the Helena.
 - The MFRC would like to have Bitterroot members attend their monthly meetings and asked that they designate Co-Chairs (from diverse points of view) who are willing to do so.
- A Restoration Committee member distributed copies of the Montana Water Quality Best Management Practices for Montana Forests and the Montana Guide to the Streamside management Zone Law and Rules.
- Plum Creek mills have announced several closures – continuing the loss of infrastructure in western Montana.
- In 1989, the timber industry represented approximately 49% of economy in western Montana (17% statewide); today this is greatly reduced with basically no buyers for timber. Haul costs contribute to marginal operations in most places.
- The downturn in the housing industry affects us all.
- Smurfit-Stone is applying for bankruptcy.
- Legacy road and trails dollars are being applied on the ground.
- With the development of the “Chips for Schools” movement, the Committee will draft a biomass statement. Craig’s input would be helpful.
- Numbers and distribution of bull trout in the Bitterroot River are not going well.
- There is indication that motorized groups are working to improve their relationships with local Forests and environmental groups.
- There are four Montana legislature bills related to access this year.
- The overall economic condition of the Country is deteriorating; the new Administration is working to address it starting with the American Recovery and Investment Act that is intended to provide stimulus and funding across the nation. Currently, it includes 1.5 billion dollars for forestry related projects. The new President is hoping to sign the bill by mid-February.
- Montana’s state budget is decreasing with the difficult economic times.
- “Bugs” continue to spread in Forests in western Montana.
- There are Montana Senate bills that address treating the urban/wildland interface.

Moving Forward – Draft Recommendations to the Forest Service on the Butterfly Creek Project

What's happened regarding access since we met in November?

- Bill, Kirk, Gary, Wayne, Craig, and Paul visited the site to evaluate access possibilities. They stated that the current “trail” is very close to the stream and isn't a good alternative for access. They presented these access alternatives:
 - Use the existing road – 2500 feet (Use log forwarder; use log trucks; reconstruct road in place - excessive grade a problem)
 - Come off Butterfly Creek crossing – 4000 feet – to a flat grade.
 - Relocate the road further west – 4000 feet (about \$50,000)
 - Drop down into the unit from above
- The question was again raised – “How much of a road do we want and what do we want to be able to as a result of a road?”

Tentative Agreements Regarding Access

The Committee:

- Agrees that their job as a Committee is to recommend “restoration” projects.
- Agrees that while the Butterfly Creek site is a restoration project, there may be “outputs” in addition to meeting restoration objectives.
- Recognizes that the site is in the timber base in the Bitterroot Forest Plan.
- Agrees that project access should not impact water quality and consequently should not be located on the current trail next to the Creek.
- Agrees that low impact, long-term access should be available for ongoing maintenance of the area – although there is not a clear picture of what that “maintenance” would look like at this point.
- Agrees that the road should not be “permanent” (e.g., as part of a road system) – but still allow for future maintenance. There is not agreement on how the road would “not be permanent” (i.e., put to bed; a wide trail left in place; gated; Kelly-humping; left to go natural over time, etc.)
- Agrees that this is not an area for ORV use.
- Agrees that access should support creating conditions so the site is better able to take a wildfire or prescribed burn without losing old growth character.

Where are we with other projects?

- Adam affirmed the Committee's desire to have him proceed with a request for dollars in support of a Darby Lumber Lands Committee project. The application will address the following:

Portions of the old Darby Lumber Lands were transferred to the Bitterroot National Forest without appropriations to address management needs. A majority of roads built by the former company do not meet Forest Service standards and are eroding in places which may be increasing stream sedimentation in Sleeping Child Creek, Cat House Creek and upper Rye Creek. During 2008, the Bitterroot National Forest began inspecting some roads and this project would help complete these efforts. This inspection will assess maintenance needs and help Forest Service officials determine road management objectives for 63 miles of roads.

- Wayne will assist him in completing the application by the March deadline. He will use the Committee's Darby Lumber Lands initial project framework in the application. Dan Ritter also indicated that he was willing to assist him in completing the application.
- The Committee will move forward in terms of what they are doing on other projects at their February meeting including the possibility of sub-committees.

Committee "Co-Chairs"

- The Committee asked Bill Grasser and Adam Rissien if they were willing to represent them as Co-Chairs at the MFRC meetings.
- Both agreed to do so with the understanding that they might be able to attend electronically if they could not be there is person - and that "Co-Chair" does not come with additional duties (at least at this point in time).

Where do we go from here?

February 25 Agenda Items

Agenda items will include:

- Access "designs" and other work toward the Butterfly Creek Project recommendations; Forest Service access "ideas"
- Discussion/drafting a Committee "Bio-Mass" statement
- A video shown by Bill Grasser that demonstrates a forwarder system and other "tools" in the woods
- Committee intentions regarding other projects
- Update from Adam on funding application

Homework

- Committee members are asked to "design" an access plan for the Butterfly Creek project based on their agreed upon Project framework and the tentative agreements listed in this summary. Members who are not comfortable with "design" will be prepared to list the principles within which they want the access to occur.

Setting the Calendar for 2009

The Committee will meet 6:00 – 8:30 PM at the Bitterroot River Inn in Hamilton on the following dates:

- Wednesday, February 25
- March – No meeting
- Wednesday, April 29
- Monday, May 18
- Monday, June 22