

## **BITTERROOT RESTORATION COMMITTEE**

March 31, 2008 (meeting 6 of 11)

### **Session Summary**

#### **SESSION OBJECTIVES**

1. Further explore the 3 agreed upon potential Committee project areas and using a small group approach, complete the first 4 steps of an interest-based collaborative process for those areas.
2. Discuss small group outcomes and recommendations in an effort to move forward on Committee projects.
3. Establish the calendar for the next 3 months.

#### **RESTORATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Julie Altemus	Chris Clancy	Bill Grasser
Wayne Hedman	Mike Jeffords	Jim Miller
Paul Moore	Cameron Naficy	Ron Porter
Steve Powell	Adam Rissien	Craig Thomas
Kirk Thompson	Virginia Tribe - Facilitator	

#### **TECHNICAL ADVISORS/OBSERVERS**

Dave Bull	Dave Campbell	Chuck Oliver
Barry Paulson	Chelsea Pennick	Todd Townsend
Pete Zimmerman		

#### **COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS**

#### **Applying the First 4 steps of the Collaborative Process to the 3 Potential Committee Project Areas**

##### **Darby Lumber Lands**

##### **Important Questions**

- What is our desired future condition and what is the current condition?
- What are the restoration priorities? What is the site telling us to do?
- What restoration principles should be employed?
- What are the causes of those things that need to be restored?
- What are the inventory procedures to be employed?
- What are the measures of success?
- What are the economic options?
- Can we stimulate economics and education?
- What is the story here?
- What options are there regarding the BLM Garnet ghost town?

## **Darby Lumber Lands cont.**

### Issue Statement

The Darby Lumber Lands have an important history in the Bitterroot Valley. There exists a real opportunity to integrate education, restoration, and recreation to meet all the interests. The Lands are in great need of restoration and can be restored over time.

### “Interests”

- It is in the interest of the Forest Service to have a project that is sustainable and can be jumpstarted economically.
- It is in the interest of wildlife to have habitat restored including riparian areas.
- It is in the public interest to maintain water quality.
- It is in the public interest to improve aesthetics in the area.
- It is in the public interest to improve and restore appropriate vegetation and ecosystem processes.

### Guiding Principles

- We believe that restoration of water quality and soils are top priority.
- We believe that restoration processes are experimental and that we will learn as we go.
- We believe in monitoring to see if we are achieving the desired future condition and to learn.
- We believe that successful restoration will return the area to ecological integrity and functionality.
- We believe that the best way to promote the importance of restoration is through education and accessibility.

### Recommendations

- Continue to explore this area as a potential restoration project for our Committee.

### Additional Data Needs

- A site visit
- IRH boundaries
- Important fisheries
- High priority road information
- A vegetation map including old growth stands
- Logging history
- Known trails
- Fire history map

## **Willow Creek -Burnt Fork (Potential East side Project Area)**

### Important Questions

- What has been the departure from historic fire intervals? What areas have missed 2 or more cycles ?
- What areas are in the Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) and how should they be prioritized?
- What Forest types exist in the area?
- What if anything, should be done about encroachment (i.e., Douglas Fir)?
- What's the past fire history of the area including prescribed fire, natural fire, and fuel reduction since 1990?
- What's the historic logging activity?
- What old growth exists and should/how can it be protected?
- Should and how can old growth be recruited?
- What are the fisheries in the area and what impaired streams are present?
- What restoration needs exist related to fisheries including culverts?
- What are the designated Forest Plan Management Areas?
- What's the condition of roads in the area and where might upgrades be needed?
- What's happening with weeds?
- What's happening with insects and disease?
- What wildlife issues exist? I
- Is there adequate elk winter range and cover?
- What resource damage exists from ORV's use in the area and how might mitigation and alternative routes remedy the situation?

### Issue Statement

For restoration purposes, there may be a variety of resource issues and needs in the Willow Creek – Burnt Fork area. Due to fire suppression, some portions may have missed natural fire cycles and may be in need of prescribed fire or vegetation treatments. Priority treatment areas might include the WUI and Forest Plan Management Area One and possibly Management Area Two. Other restoration needs might include weed management; ORV mitigation and/or new recreation opportunities; bringing impaired culverts to Best Management Practices (BMP) standards; enhancing and protecting west slope cutthroat and bull trout habitat; and protecting old growth as well as recruiting potential for old growth for the future.

## **Willow Creek -Burnt Fork cont.**

### **“Interests”**

- It is in the interest of enjoining homeowners to reduce wildfire threat, especially high intensity, stand replacing crown fire.
- It is in the public interest to improve and maintain water quality and fish habitat.
- It is in the public interest to maintain good wildlife habitat including summer and winter game ranges.
- It is in the public interest to maintain access to road and trail systems.
- It is in the community’s economic interest to utilize wood products that might be generated from projects.
- It is in the public interest to manage invasive weeds that compromise habitat.
- It is in the Restoration Committee’s interest not to negatively impact areas that are ecologically healthy.

### **Guiding Principles**

- We believe in Best Management Practices and Stream Management Zones with activities based on the best available science.
- We believe that projects must be economically feasible and that funding could come from wood products and/or outside funding sources.
- We believe that native plant and animal species are indicators of a healthy ecosystem and that projects should take into account their viability and health.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue to explore this area for a potential Bitterroot Restoration Committee Project.

### **Additional Data Needs**

- 303d stream data
- Culvert inventory
- Clarification of old growth – acreage, percentage, types, etc.
- Weed inventory
- Road system and travel management proposed action in the area
- IRA boundaries

## **“Dead Guy” (Potential West side Project Area)**

### Important Questions

- Are there site-specific restoration needs?
- What is the desired condition?
  - Do we keep fir in check?
  - If fires burned according to the last 100 years, what would the area look like and is this what we want in the next 100 years?
- What is the responsibility of homeowners?
- What is the historic aquatic condition and what are current aquatic needs?
- Is there wildlife habitat at risk from fire in the area?
- Can useful wood products be produced?

### Issue Statement

This area has the potential for high severity fires that may threaten private property and wildlife habitat. This situation does not meet our desired future condition. Development is restricting restoration options as it pertains to reintroducing fire. Additionally, there are access concerns because it limits the economic viability of potential projects.

### “Interests”

It is in our interest:

- To reduce the potential for high severity fire.
- To have the fire hazard removed from the neighborhood because it threatens safety.
- That fuel reduction not have significant long term impacts on ecosystem components so the Forest can function as an intact ecosystem.
- To restore natural fire to the ecosystem because it can contribute to improving the overall ecological integrity of the larger watershed and forest ecosystem as a whole.
- To satisfy the purpose of the project in an economically and financially feasible way.
- To allow passive management to play a role in restoration.
- To bring project areas into the timber base.
- That treatment in the area result in a natural-appearing Forest with a variety of habitats because it's necessary for Forest Service management to be seen as successful by the general public so they have support for future management.
- To get engaged and support the project and to engage and support the various interests of the collaborative group because it's a way to get all the interests served.

## **“Dead Guy” cont.**

### **Guiding Principles**

- We believe that restoration activities should not result in long term ecological impacts.
- We believe that passive management is a legitimate restoration tool.
- We believe that there are active management techniques that can be applied in roadless areas without reducing their roadless character.
- We believe in using the best management practices available.
- We believe that “best practices” should be supported by science.
- We believe that what’s happening in the surrounding area should influence how this project is done.
- We believe that project design should be based on ecological need.
- We believe that in this forest type, the needs of citizens in the wildland/urban interface and the ecological needs, may have a lot in common – particularly regarding fire.
- We believe that species like fish and their water – are indicators of a healthy ecosystem.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue to explore this area for a potential Bitterroot Restoration Committee Project.

### **Additional Data Needs**

- Fire history map
- Fisheries inventory
- Soil and vegetation maps
- Old growth data
- Historical harvest areas
- Habitat type maps
- PNRV analysis if available

### **Where do we go from here?**

- Without taking over their regular jobs, we’re hoping that the Forest Service can provide us with the data needed to move ahead with the potential projects.
- The next Bitterroot Restoration Committee meeting will be April 28 – same time, same place. The facilitator will send out an agenda the week before the session.