

Lolo Restoration Committee
April 8, 2008
5:30-8:00 PM
Holiday Inn-Parkside

Members Present: Jeff Juel, John Manz, Hank Goetz, Scott Brennan, Al Christophersen, Matt Arno, Larry Westcott, Earl Reinsel, Larry Anderson, Marnie Criley, Len Broberg, Eric Norris, Bob Lamley, Rick Deniger, Cameron Naficy, Beverly Dupree, Brian Kahn

USFS: Sharon Sweeney, Pam Gardiner, Debbie Austin, Tim Love, Scott Spaulding, Chuck Sperry, Scott Tomson

Observers: Mary Mitsos, Dale Harris

1. Eastside WG Update:

- The Committee has decided to use a “passive” (i.e. FS is bringing project to the committee) approach to engage in the Auggie Fuels project. They are in the process of gathering information and preparing for a field trip in the next few months.
- Tim will be giving a short course on NEPA at the next meeting.
- The Committee is also planning to use a more “active” approach for the Center Ridge project.

2. Westside WG Update:

- Committee members attended the public meeting on Cedar Thom. There was a series of brief presentations made by the FS ID Team as well as the Mineral County Historical Society regarding the mining history of the area.
- Sharon Sweeney, the District Ranger on the Superior District, has requested that the two existing collaborative efforts (Lolo RC and Mineral/Sanders Stakeholder Group) work together to interact with the FS.
- The next public meeting is scheduled for April 16th.
- The Committee met with Garry Edson twice to go over the design elements that were approved at the last meeting for the Fish Creek project.
- The second meeting addressed the Committee’s concerns about the reintroduction of fire into the landscape, whether this will be possible and to what extent.
- They discussed inserting some language into the draft EA that will address this issue: that the fuels reduction projects are included to allow for future reintroduction of fire in a more natural way.
- Committee is planning field trips this summer.
- The FS is entering into the field stage and ground truthing of the proposed projects.
- The FS had a public meeting where they presented their proposed action and alternatives, which included elements that the WWG did not reach consensus on. This issue will be further discussed later in the meeting (#4).

- The FS is requesting further input in the next 2-3 weeks on the proposed alternatives that have been submitted.

3. Working with other Collaborative Groups:

- Sharon Sweeney has requested that the LRC work with the existing collaborative group in Mineral County, the Sanders Mineral County Stakeholders Coalition.
- The Cedar Thom project has brought up logistical and other concerns about engaging in this process. How will the LRC interact with this collaborative group if they do not adopt the Restoration Principles? Does the Westside WG have the capacity to travel to Superior once a month?
- Sharon Sweeney provided a brief background on the Cedar Thom project. She shared that her vision is for the two collaborative groups and interested publics to form a cohesive group to work on this project.
- There was concern about working with the Sanders Mineral County Stakeholders Coalition which may have different goals and objectives.
- The committee discussed the importance of trying to work cooperatively with the Stakeholders Coalition, sending a delegation to meet with them, and the importance of the project being framed clearly by the Forest Service as a restoration project.
- Scott pointed out that when the Committee first began discussions about the Fish Creek project there was clear concern about the fact that the project had already been framed to landowners as something other than a restoration project. He felt that this situation has led to some challenges and we should take the issue seriously when considering Cedar Thom.
- The Committee agreed that representatives of the LRC, ideally including timber reps, meet formally with representatives of the Stakeholders Coalition to discuss the restoration principles, what the LRC is, etc., either at the next public meeting or next Stakeholders Coalition meeting (or both).

4. Engagement with Non-Restoration Components of Projects:

- This issue has and will continue to come up when engaging in projects with the FS. Such elements could include: recreation work, ORV routes, etc.
- The Committee reviewed the applicable Principles and discussed how they should be applied.
- The context of the questionable element is important for assessing whether it has an ecological/restorative component or not.
- Rick added that the discussion puts into question why there are motorized recreation representatives at the table. He also felt that providing more motorized recreation routes provide the opportunity to mentor and teach others how to recreate responsibly.
- There was a suggestion to add project evaluation criteria that would include the direct as well as indirect benefit of a project.
- Len commented on the OHV issue and offered that if the component includes opportunities for education, making OHV routes more ecologically benign, and includes restoration of non-sustainable sections/roads, etc. then it would meet the goals of this Committee.

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- The Committee agreed to look into developing a “from scratch” project that does incorporate an OHV element, such as a road to OHV route decommissioning project, along with other restoration work as stated above.
- Len, Eric, John, Matt, Larry W., Bob, Rick, John Manz all expressed interest in working on this issue.
- The Committee agreed that all issues about whether a project element is restoration or not be brought to the entire group for discussion. Elements that are not considered restoration will not be addressed by the Committee.

5. Potential LRC Comment/Endorsement of Fish Creek alternatives:

- Building on the previous discussion, there was discussion about at what point the LRC should choose to not engage in a project because of one or a set of elements that are not supported by the Committee. How will the Committee decide when an element is a deal breaker?
- Scott Tomson suggested that there would be value not only in the Committee evaluating projects at the initial idea stage, but also to evaluate proposed alternatives to help the decision maker make the best decision.
- Debbie further qualified that qualitative input on each of the alternatives and their elements, as well as rating/ranking each as a package would be helpful to the FS.
- To avoid issues with FACA, the FS cannot give more weight to the recommendations of the LRC, but will utilize the input along with that of other publics.

6. LRC Charter

- Marnie put out to the group the question of whether they felt it would be additive to have a charter for the larger LRC.
- There were no comments in support, so the Committee decided not to pursue a charter.

7. Next Steps:

- Field Trip: Julia suggested at the last meeting that the Committee visit a sample fuels reduction project and suggested the Pattee Blue project.
 - Marnie will discuss with Julia about planning and will try to combine with the May LRC meeting.
- Future Agenda Items:
 - The “budget limitations on restoration priorities” can be addressed as part of the next LRC meeting.
 - Contracting will be added to the June meeting.
 - A presentation by the Director of the National OHV Conservation Association can be added to a future meeting.

