

**Lolo Restoration Committee**  
**Kick-off Meeting**  
**November 1, 2007**  
**Heritage Hall**

**Present:** Bob Ekey, Marnie Criley, Brian Kahn, Len Broberg, Scott Brennan, Debbie Austin, Cameron Naficy, Garrett Buds, Gordy Sanders, Gary Edson, Rick Deniger, Larry Anderson, Bob Lamley, Sarah Pierce, Bev Dupree, Larry Jakub, Matt Arno, Larry Westcott, John Manz, Tim Love, Denley Loge, Chelsea Pennick

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Members of the Montana Forest Restoration Working Group began by presenting their views on why they felt this effort held significant potential to get good work accomplished on the ground in a way that would move past the controversy and deadlock. They emphasized the commitment of the Working Group members to develop these principles, the number of hours as well as the “stretching” each member did to listen to other points of view and find common ground.

Marnie Criley, who has offered to be chair of the Lolo Restoration Committee, related the fact that she has been involved the development of a number of other principles documents, but this is the first to actually take them to the ground, and for that reason see’s this process as unique and promising.

Marnie also noted that this effort has a number of resources to draw upon including support staff (Chelsea Pennick), a facilitator (Brian Kahn), and \$5,000 to cover other expenses.

Brian Kahn, co-convenor of the Working Group with the National Forest Foundation, and current member of the Montana Forest Restoration Committee (the new name for the Working Group) provided a brief history of how the idea of pulling this Working Group together came about, how it was formed, and emphasized the fact that the Working Group made a brave decision early on the make decisions by full consensus. The responsibility that came along with this method of decision-making was that each person who objected to a proposal had the duty of coming up with an alternate proposal.

The Working Group operated with three committees: Vision & Principles, Process & Implementation, and a committee that organized field trips.

The group then went around the room and shared why they were here and what they thought about the Restoration Committee concept.

Tim Love, District Ranger on the Seeley Lake District, gave a short presentation on two restoration opportunities on the Seeley Lake District: Center Ridge and Auggie. Components of the Center Ridge project included reducing noxious weeds, road decommissioning, upgrading bridges, upgrading roads, improving trailheads, trails and campgrounds. The approximate acreage of the Center Ridge project was estimated at 72,000, but Tim told the group that they could also decide to take on a smaller portion of the project, if desired. Tim also said that he is expecting to be required to complete a full Environmental Assessment due to the populations of Grizzly Bear, Lynx, and other important species. The Auggie Fuels Reduction project,

according to Tim, is a completely different project—which includes a pine plantation with 100% disturbed soils. This project is 600-700 acres and the Forest Service is in the beginning stages of NEPA.

Gary Edson, District Ranger on the Ninemile District, gave a short presentation on a restoration project in the initial stages on his district, on the South Fork of Fish Creek. Two public meetings on this project have taken place with private landowners in the area. Its main goal is fuels reduction/protection of private property. Gary and his staff are in the process of developing a website with all of the maps and information on this project for the public—it should be up by the beginning of December. The project could also include some noxious weeds work in the Burdett area which is big game winter range, prescribed burning in the Great Burn, recreation work, and culvert removals and upgrades. Gary also offered to host a field trip for anyone interested in walking the site.

There was concern expressed by some participants that because this project had already been labeled as a fuels reduction project that it would therefore be less suitable as a first project, because the group has yet to work out how to distinguish between fuels reduction that also meets restoration criteria and goals, and fuels reduction that does not.

Many participants were interested in attending field trips to all of the proposed sites before making any final decisions. Both Tim and Gary were willing to host these and committed to providing their availability dates to Marnie and the group so that the group could get out on the ground before the snow flies.

There was also discussion about whether the Committee needed to pick one of these three projects or whether there were other options. Debbie explained that the Committee could choose to pick a new location and start from scratch; however the downside of doing this would be that the Forest Service would not be able to begin NEPA for another year, as it is not within their budget or capacity this year. This brought up the important point that there are many ways that the Committee can engage in projects, each with their own benefits and challenges. Engagement from the project creation and location selection stage is possible and provides the Committee with a “clean slate” to work with, but the length of engagement will be much longer and drawn out. Engagement at a mid-stream stage offers a little less control over location, but provides a faster timeline as it is likely to be within the Forest Service’s current plan of work. Lastly, the Committee can choose to engage at a later stage by providing feedback on already developed projects.

The Committee set the next meeting date for **Wednesday, December 5 from 5:30-7:30.**  
**Location TBD.**

**Marnie will be contacting the group to set up field trips (via doodle) in the next week or so.**