

MINUTES
MFRC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
DNRC Conference Room, Missoula, MT
December 22, 2008 2:00 – 4:00pm

SC Members: Marnie Criley, Dale Harris, Bob Ekey, Gordy Sanders, Mary Mitsos, and Julia Altemus

Staff: Julia Altemus

Contracted Services: Brian Kahn

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Bob Ekey, second by Marnie – approved as presented

Financial Report: Motion by Dale and second by Marnie. November financial report reviewed and approved.

Forest Restoration Committee Updates

Lolo RC – Brian reported out on the December meeting. Chris Partyka gave a presentation about the NEPA process. The majority of the discussion centered on issues with NEPA. There was broad agreement that NEPA is necessary, but given the history of the Act and the new make-up of congress that maybe there is an opportunity to address and amend problems within the NEPA process. The Westside, Eastside and OHV subcommittee reports were brief. Len raised a concern with a press release that mentioned a collaborative project that was in the spirit of the MFRC that led to concerns among some folks outside of the MFRC that the MFRC was misrepresented. The Lolo RC agreed to be sensitive to the use of the MFRC when talking about collaborative projects or processes that are not under the MFRC umbrella but the press release referring to a collaborative project outside of the MFRC was okay.

BNF – Ginny provided November Meeting Minutes. The December meeting had been cancelled due to weather conditions. The next meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2009. Gordy wanted to know how Dave is feeling about the possibility of the group moving to an ad-hoc committee. **Julia will give him a call and visit with him prior to the next SC meeting.**

Lincoln Working Group – The HRC Lincoln WG had a field trip and a meeting afterwards. There was discussion about the lack of environmental representation. John Gatchell was contacted by Amber Kamps. John has committed to finding someone that can participate in the group. There is also a push to get stronger landowner representation. The group is eager to get projects implemented on the ground. R1 RF is traveling to DC in January in hopes of garnering more funding. Scott is concerned about the push to focus on hazardous fuels reduction instead of restoration. Brian said that he saw a risk here. Presently, the WG seems to be driven by red trees and reducing fire hazard. The group needs to design a project that is an outgrowth of the Principles – even

though not all the Principles may be applied – around the zone of agreement concept. The group looked at several areas, but settled on one, pending scientific data that Scott wanted to see prior to approving the project area or not. The project is not in a formal selection process yet.

Legacy Project – Caroline Byrd attended the meeting to discuss the status of the Legacy Project and make a request for a letter of support from the MFRC SC and individuals. The project is the acquisition 312,000 acres of Plum Creek land over the next couple of years. TNC did purchase 100K acres of couple days ago. There is a second closing to complete the FS footprint in the near future. TNC has 3 years after the money is spent to get lands identified as the federal portion into federal ownership. If it takes longer than 3 years, TNC will have to put up a bond. This is considered a donation so there aren't quite as many federal hoops to go through. Dale wanted to know if the project is in phases. Caroline indicated there were 3 phases with the last phase scheduled for completion by 2010. They have engaged Northwest Management to fulfill the Fiber Agreement. They are in the process of getting the Fish HCP transferred to the TNC. Glen Marks and Patrick Heffernan were hired to assist. There is a letter of support from all the counties involved. The Montana Working Forest Project is the title of the State's effort to raise the funds to purchase, Swan State Forest, Potomac and Fish Creek. There is a \$25M general obligation bond proposed in the 2009 legislature. Due to public concerns in the Swan, Bob E wanted to know if it would be helpful to set up a RC in the Seeley-Swan area to start looking at restoration projects. The response was affirmative. A couple sections of land were left out for community forest and community organization opportunities. Dale raised the question about Fish Wildlife and Parks ownership. The FWP would rather own easements than land. Dale reminded everyone how important this project is – once in a lifetime opportunity. Gordy said that the MFRC can weigh in on the concept but it would be difficult to weigh in on actual legislation. **Gordy and Bob E will develop a letter for the Legislature and will work with Chris Bryant at TNC.**

Strategy Committee Update – Dale gave an update regarding the strategy subcommittee meeting where the MFRC staffing was discussed and how best to move forward with the growth, outreach, education, and administrative function of the MFRC efforts. There was a recommendation that the MFRC contract half-time coordinator with the opportunity to go to ¾ time. Mary made a motion and Dale seconded. Next steps, **Julia will do a little research about contracted services. Dale suggested that we need a selection committee** and since Marnie may be interested in applying she will recuse herself. Dale, Gordy, and Mary will sit on the selection committee. **Mary will develop a potential list of candidates. Julia will talk DNRC legal staff.** Bob E said that we need to be aware of the minimum legal requirement and to be transparent as possible. That may mean we run an ad to make sure we don't run into trouble down the road.

Charter Final Approval – Dale moved to approve the Charter with the addition of adding the term “contractors” on page 3 under Duties #2 i.e. “Selects and approves staff, facilitators, and contractors” and since there were quite a few changes from the last full MFRC meeting **we will send it out to the full committee for review by January 6, 2009.**

Annual Report – 500 copies are being printed and will be available for the next SC meeting.

MFRC SC Letter to the MT Delegation – There was a draft letter developed for Montana’s congressional delegation regarding job opportunities within the area of forest restoration. Bob E suggested that we need to stay focused on economic stimulus aspect of the request. Since we don’t know very much about the project list the FS supplied for this request, Mary wasn’t sure that the “shovel-ready” projects are supported by the Principles. Gordy said that almost everything on the FS list does not contain commercial products. Mary suggested that we take out the reference to the “Principles”. Dale and Marnie asked for a caveat in the first bullet since we really don’t know if these projects are restoration or not. It was agreed to remove the FS identified list of projects and approach the request a little more generally and get the letter out by 12.23.08. A couple SC members said that they would sign the letter. There was a question about timeliness and how the SC vets this type of letter with the full MFRC. The Charter was referred to. It was decided to go ahead since timing was critical. Mary suggested that even though individual MFRC members sign doesn’t necessarily mean that the full committee supports the letter and should be so indicated in the letter.

Old Business: Mary expressed concerns with how we are tracking paid or unpaid hours. Dale responded that the issue is to be able to report how NGOs are reporting and contributing hours. Dale believed the three-legged-stool represents the Forest Service, the State and NGOs. Mary suggested it should be government, industry and NGOs. Gordy asked Dale to explain the distinction between real volunteers and those that are paid by their employer and yet volunteer towards this effort. Mary doesn’t believe the distinction is easy to determine. Making the distinction was important to the FS. Gordy and Bob E. suggested that we talk to Steve Kratville to get a better sense of why this was important at the next meeting.

Next meeting to be arranged in January.