

MINUTES
MFRC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
DNRC Conference Room, Missoula, MT.
July 8, 2008 © 9:00 – 11:00

PRESENT:

SC Members: Chelsea Pennick, Gordy Sanders, Julia Altemus, Orville Daniels, Marnie Criley, Steve Kratville, Bill Geer, Dave Bull, Brian Kahn (phone).

Guests: Bruce Fox, Melissa Hayes

::Agenda Addition::

Discussion of recent 9th Circuit opinion: The Lands Council v. McNair. This case overturns some cases and it reduces the standard of judicial review. Debbie Austin has been getting a lot of calls regarding this opinion, and she was concerned about the excessive reaction – and feared there may be backlash as a result of the opinion. She did not want the collaborative process to be damaged.

It was agreed that this is the time when we step up the collaboration. It is a time for leadership, and this decision reinforces this effort, rather than detracts from it. It is not a quick and easy fix, and the hard parts still lie ahead.

Is there anything that this group needs to do? It might be a good idea to contact the full group and let them know that the steering committee has discussed this issue and it is more important than ever to maintain a collaborative effort.

The opinion itself discusses the Forest Service's obligation to balance competing interests, which reinforces our opinion.

::IRSPS & the Principles::

How do you distinguish between the two?

Though they are different, they are also compatible.

*Maybe Gordy and Bob should meet with the regional leadership team to talk about the principles?

The IRPS identifies broad 'where-to's' – where we have id-d priorities for restoration. The Principles are the "how-to's"

Tool – Ecological Management Decision Support (EMDS). This program will give decision support. It has a GIS component and ID risks can be built into the decision model, as well as feasibility (socio-economic, litigation, etc.).

Since many of our principles include community involvement, and that sets where things will get done, if we use the EMDS, the social aspect of it should be roust.

This program would just give you a map and ideas for opportunities within the area – and then this is where the principles would come in – the 'how-tos.'

This program has been used by Keith Reynolds of the PNW Research Station. He is kind of the guru of this program.

This model also allows you to play with various scenarios – and you can rationalize why a certain criteria is a priority. You can weigh various options and criteria to build a strategy and document the different outcomes. Local information can also be added and refined.

There is a regional workshop in the fall – so work over the summer is being done to prepare for it.

We want to avoid coming into a community with a proposal, asking people to make some comments, and then just going back into a room to make a decision. This is not a black and white process – there has to be room to do different things.

The Auggie presentation was really good, and they laid everything out. That should be a model of how things are done in the future.

There is concern that the IRPS is an internal Forest Service effort and the principles were a collaborative effort, but there is an opportunity to fold in the principles.

The concern at the last meeting was with the different definitions of ‘restoration.’ The FS is going to look at it much more broadly – and they may have proposals that will not fit under our restoration principles – but a project does not have to always meet all of the principles.

One way to think about it is that this is a regional assessment where priorities can be viewed as information which you take in and then design a project around it.

Maybe there can be an advisory group that determines the priorities and how the region will report restoration accomplishments.

The agency will do a good job with the science aspect, so we may have an opportunity to assist with the feasibility aspect of assessment.

We will have to figure out to integrate the community interests in the priorities, because it will be difficult to have the appropriate representation. There is never going to be a perfect group, but maybe we can bounce ideas off of different groups to see where everyone is at.

::Approval of Minutes & Financial Report::

Julia moved to approve the minutes and Marnie seconds and also moved to include the financial report for approval and Bill seconds.

::FRC Updates::

-Lolo FRC-

Brian wrote a report for the SC that can be used for the annual report. Things are going well. The Auggie Fuels presentation will be at the meeting tonight. The group has also extended itself on the OHV. Len and some other members are working on the OHV part.

One concern is when members move or change jobs – and how does that reflect continuity. Also, Marnie is an unpaid chair-person, where others are paid.

The strongest concern is the lengthy delays in projects and the time it takes to implement a project – it could cause this whole thing to collapse. So, the issue is how to maintain enthusiasm and momentum.

With the court decision last week, how many months can get chopped off the timeline?

Do we also encourage creative thinking on the part of the agency? If the SC thought this was a real issue, and the normal timeframe kept us from moving forward, it could be brought to the regional forester to discuss if there is an alternative that could speed the process along.

-Bitterroot FRC-

The last meeting was in May and there is a field trip scheduled for Aug. 4, as well as two other trips in Aug. & Sept.

An issue with this group is that they do not have a chairperson. Ginny is the leader and facilitator, but there is no leadership from a chair. Maybe we should be creating an expectation with Ginny to begin to foster this idea, and think about how a transition would occur. The potential exists that the process would fail if she is the only leader and then leaves.

Mary tried to get a hold of Ginny, but now Chelsea has taken over that task.

-Lincoln FRC-

We need a list of people to invite. The goal is to send out the invitation letter on Aug. 1, for a mid-Sept. intro. meeting.

Jim Stone would be good to add to the list. Craig Osterman is on the list as the OHV rep., but we may want to consider someone who is not just associated with snowmobiles.

John Gatchell has expressed concern with moving forward with restoration before the travel plan was complete. But, since two ID teams are working on it, we should keep moving.

As for a lesson learned, one or two people from the MFRC should be members of the Lincoln RC – maintain a link and history to the big group.

Scott B? Hank Goetz? Jack Rich?

We should also consider involving the Lincoln schools. Liz Burke could maybe get a teacher and students to participate.

Al Christopherson would be a good choice and would also be a link to the big group. Jack Rich would also be a good choice as a rep. for the full group.

Brian should strongly be encouraged to be the facilitator for Lincoln. It is a different kind of infrastructure, so they need a good facilitator.

::Annual Report::

We have a draft report from Brian and Ginny is writing one as well. The welcome letter from the co-chairs can be drafted from the intro. to the principles that Brian wrote.

We have to be careful how we discuss the financing aspect, and should talk to Steve about it. We should just look at this year's financing and not worry about next year.

We should also have a donor list of organizations that have contributed food, etc.

::Other::

-Monitoring-

Some of the NFF funds can go toward monitoring.

What did everyone have in mind for this? There are different definitions of 'monitoring.'

-Membership-

Protocol on nominations – if people leave, how will they be replaced? There are different roles within the group, and although people still contribute and comment on things, it is hard when only a few people show up to meetings. But, we can't let Bob E. go, he has to be on the SC.

As far as replacing Dan T., he has not talked to Craig yet, so he needs to do that and then let Gordy and Bob know.

Marnie is not leaving the group, just changing roles. Jeff Juel has moved. He is still engaged with the full group, but is not part of the Lolo RC or Eastside Working Group. Cameron got a Fulbright, so he will be leaving soon.

There is concern in the Bitterroot with Cameron leaving. The question is, do we need to replace the people with equal thinking. If one facet left, for example, would other in the group stand up for that interest?

It requires sensing – what are the emerging trends? What groups are going up? Down? How is OHV doing? Industry?

We don't have to be equally balanced, but are groups being represented? The loss of Cameron may be felt. Should he be replaced? - In terms of his influence in other circles as well. We need to know when he's leaving and for how long.

Periodic discussion is needed – though a unified approach may not be – except for being unified with the values and consensus voting. Any member has to be able to live with the principles and consensus voting.

We have embraced radical ideas before and it has worked – we looked at personalities and who would be able to listen. We need to use the same criteria. Whatever has happened in the past gets left at the door – we just need to look at the future.

::NEXT MEETINGS::

Aug. 13 & Sept. 10