

MT Forest Restoration Committee
Semi-Annual Meeting
January 30, 2008
Holiday Inn

Members Present: Mary Mitsos, Orville Daniels, Marnie Criley, Gordy Sanders, Bob Ekey, Chuck Roady, Ellen Engstedt-Simpson, Bob Harrington, Dale Harris, Len Broberg, Brian Kahn, Al Christophersen, William Geer, Lowell Whitney, Chelsea Pennick

Forest Service: Tim Love, Debbie Austin, Pam Gardiner, Julia Riber, Steve Kratville, Tom Tidwell, Dave Bull,

Guests: Monica Pokorny, Tracy Stone-Manning, Jessica Anderson, Kirby Campbell

Absent: Dan Thompson, Mark Vander Meer, Rick Franke, Jack Rich, Tony Colter, Jeff Juel, Caroline Byrd, John Gatchell, Dave Harmon, Paul Rumelhart, Mike Volesky

1. Welcome and Updates from Members (Gordy Sanders, Bob Ekey):
2. Financial Report (Lowell Whitney)
 - a. Lowell presented the financial report for December 31, 2007.
3. Update on Forest Restoration Committees
 - a. Lolo RC (Marnie Criley, Brian Kahn)
 1. Marnie reported that the Lolo RC has decided to take on four projects.
 2. They have split into two working groups, an Eastside Lolo Working Group and a Westside Lolo Working Group.
 3. The Eastside Lolo Working Group is at more initial stages with their projects so they are developing a charter for the group and establishing their interactions with the USFS.
 4. The Westside Lolo WG is working on a project in the South Fork of Fish Creek which has already had scoping done. They are working on an alternative to the proposed actions. The WG may, however, decide that the project is too far along and discontinue their involvement.
 5. The Westside WG will also be taking on a project from scratch on the Superior RD called Cedar-Tom.
 6. Brian reflected on the lack of distrust among the Lolo RC from the beginning. He also commented on the ability of the group to change their ways of working with the USFS from a reactive to a proactive strategy.
 7. There was discussion about the applicability of these RCs to other forests, considering the time commitment and differing levels of experience with collaboration.

8. Steve K. reminded everyone that the NFF has technical resources available through the Western Collaboration Assistance Network.
 9. Scott Brennan, a member of the LRC representing TWS, shared information on a GIS tool that TWS has developed and is making available to the RCs to use in prioritizing landscapes. They will be presenting the tool at the next LRC meeting on February 13th from 5:30-8 PM at the Holiday Inn. MFRC and BRC members are welcome to attend.
- b. Bitterroot RC (Lowell Whitney)
 1. Has met twice so far. Group has around 15 members, along with 6-8 technical supporters and observers.
 2. Committee is moving slower than the LRC which reflects the different dynamics and history of the area.
 3. The group had a field trip and is considering 3-4 projects of varying size. They are still developing their process for choosing projects.
 4. The Committee is also dealing with a lot of outside influences, such as the Big Sky Coalition.
 5. There has been a challenge with keeping Friends of the Bitterroot at the table, as well as finding a consistent representative, as they have sent someone different to each meeting.
 - c. Defining Success:
 1. Different for each committee. Needs to be defined and clear.
 2. Bob H. suggested providing an opportunity for the BRC to disengage from natural resources issues and work on building relationships and trust.
4. Comments from the Regional Forester (Tom Tidwell)
 - a. Tom discussed the Chief's priorities for the FS in future being restoration and recreation.
 - b. Engaging in collaboration is the way the Forest Service is going to be successful in the future. In the past this has been very agency led and not always had the best results.
 - c. There is benefit in having these processes led by other partners outside of the agency.
 - d. He stressed that he has been and will continue to support this effort and talk about it with all his Rangers.
 - e. Tom feels that there are other areas in the state that are ready for such collaborative efforts.
 - f. There will continue to be a challenge in integrating projects into the FS work plan; there will need to be some understanding that some projects being implemented were begun three or more years ago and may not reflect this "new way of doing business".
 - g. Investment on the front end is the best way to engage, recognizing that there are not short cuts.
 5. State Restoration Coordinator (Monica Pokorny)

- a. Her position came out of Governor's Restoration Forum in 2006 to coordinate efforts and funding among state agencies.
 - b. She is still working to define what position and office will do and gathering information on what is going on and underway as well as high priority areas to focus restoration.
 - c. She is soliciting information from people-would appreciate input from this group.
 - d. Contact: (406) 444-0520, email: mpokorny@mt.gov.
6. Funding Action Plan (Orville)
- a. Mary shared the example of the Tongass Futures Roundtable, an effort much like this Committee, which the NFF just received \$300,000 to support capacity-building for watershed groups on the forest. TU has raised almost as much for the effort.
 - b. Committee brainstormed answers to the question: "Why here?" to help develop the case statement for the MFRC work.
7. MFRC Principles Applied to Other Groups
- a. Dale Harris proposed that the Committee consider beginning outreach to begin another RC on the Helena National Forest.
 - b. According to Dale, Kevin Reardon from Helena NF has been talking to folks in that area.
 - c. There was concern about the potential for litigation and getting the environmental groups involved.
 - d. Len offered to talk to Mike Garrity of Alliance for the Wild Rockies.
 - e. City and County have interest in working in municipal watershed.
 - f. Bob H. requested that the Committee determine how they will expand to other forests in the future (develop a formal process), i.e. develop criteria, etc.
 - g. Tom felt there is a need on that forest, interest from the community and possibly some financial investment from the county and city. Capacity to work with the community/collaborate.
 - h. Strong ally in the Blackfoot Challenge via the Lincoln RD.
 - i. The Committee approved the Steering Committee to begin initial conversations with folks in Helena and to decide whether to move forward.**
8. Annual Report to Regional Forester
- a. Lowell will work on draft of report.
 - b. Once a year Tom to invite one of the co-chairs to the leadership team meeting.
9. DNRC Update:
- a. Bob H. announced that Lowell has taken another job in Kalispell for the US Fish & Wildlife Service and will be leaving the DNRC mid-February. Bob retains his commitment to provide support services to the MFRC, but acknowledged that it may take 1-2 months to fill Lowell's position at which point the Steering Committee will need to decide whether the person is a good fit for working with the Committee.

- b. The Steering Committee will address the interim and long-term coverage of Lowell's position.

10. General Comments:

- a. Dale suggested that someone make contact with the members not present at the meeting.

- b. There was a proposal to invite members of the RCs to observe MFRC meetings, which was approved by the Committee.**

11. Next Meeting

- a. Doodle for May.