

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Montana Forest Restoration Committee
DNRC – Forestry Division Conference Room
2705 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804
December 15, 2009
2:00-5:00 p.m.

Steering Committee in Attendance: Julia Altemus, Scott Brennan, Dale Harris, Gordy Sanders

Proxies: Mary Mitsos and Bob Harrington by Julia Altemus

Adam Rissien by Dale Harris and Gordy Sanders

Facilitators: Brian Kahn

Staff: Marnie Criley

••Opening Comments••

- Attendance for the meeting is not sufficient for a quorum.
- Bob Harrington is resigning from the Steering Committee due to other pressing issues.
- The Lolo National Forest selected Chad Benson as the new Ninemile District Ranger.

••Review Minutes from Last Meeting••

The group reviewed the minutes from the last meeting, but could not approve them since there was not a quorum in attendance. The minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

••November Financial Report••

The financial report will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting. There was some discussion about the increase in the annual report printing costs.

••Coordinator Work Plan••

For her role as Coordinator, Marnie completes a weekly report showing the activities she worked on during the week. From this point on, Marnie will circulate this weekly report to all members of the Steering Committee. **Action:** Marnie to distribute weekly report to all Steering Committee members on ongoing basis.

There is not a formal work plan for the Coordinator position; the committee decided that at the January meeting the Steering Committee will come up with a work plan for Marnie for 2010. In the meantime, Marnie will work on her quarterly goals for the position and distribute the most recent work plan draft (from October). **Action:** Marnie will create quarterly goals for 2010 and distribute the last draft of her work plan. Put the topic on the next meeting's agenda.

Marnie reported on a few other activities that are taking place: her contact with Jim Burchfield regarding monitoring; progress on the new website; her attendance at the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) conference. **Action:** Marnie will write up and distribute a summary of the RVCC conference.

Marnie asked for direction on how much time she should dedicate to committee meetings.

- The group agreed that Marnie need not attend all meetings, but needs to attend each periodically.

- She should check in with the committee co-chairs or facilitators before the meeting to see if there is a need for her to attend. Chairs and facilitators can ask Marnie to attend if they see a need.
- Once a month Marnie should touch base with the facilitators and Scott to see how things are going and if they need help.
- Marnie is responsible for keeping the Steering Committee abreast of each committee's progress or issues.

••Expansion Criteria••

The group reviewed the expansion criteria document and discussed the following:

- The language needs to be more neutral, particularly for the question related to the FS's interest in MFRC presence.
- Mary suggested (via Marnie) to lay out the questions in a decision tree. Mary also emphasized the importance of the question related to a diverse group of individuals and the question pertaining to ongoing efforts on the Forest that fit MFRC principles.
- Regarding the question about appeals and litigation, the group questioned whether this was something that should be included in the criteria or is just a point of interest to discuss with the FS for the Forest/District being evaluated.
- It was suggested that a principle related to Mixed Severity Forest Types may be needed before approaching new groups.
- The group agreed that distance from Missoula should not be among the criteria.
- All are asked to provide input or feedback to Marnie regarding the criteria by January 8.
- **Action:** Marnie will create new expansion criteria document (to fit on 8.5x11 paper), including priorities, for review at the January meeting. The goal is to have the Steering Committee finalize the document at the January meeting.

••Mixed Severity Fire Regimes••

The committee discussed the role of Mixed Severity Fire Regimes in the principles and MFRC efforts. It was suggested that the MFRC have a response as to why it wants to get into mixed severity. Some have been questioned about it and felt they did not have a sufficiently-detailed answer. **Action:** Marnie will come up with a short statement as a response and will circulate it to the Steering Committee members for review and feedback. Marnie will incorporate the concept that if one is looking at the whole landscape for restoration, then it would include mixed severity.

Marnie will restart the efforts to have a meeting with Len on mixed severity fire regimes. She will first obtain Len's date options and then she will send out a Doodle poll. **Action:** Marnie to orchestrate a mixed severity meeting with Len and others.

••Temporary Roads••

The committee decided to disband the volunteer group that was assessing temporary roads for a few reasons: the group is not sufficiently balanced; temporary roads are addressed in the principles; and all agreed it is best to address temporary roads on a case-by-case basis.

••Draft NEPA Timeline••

This subcommittee met last Monday to discuss the possibility of the FS shortening timelines. The subcommittee and Steering Committee members decided that this issue needs to be raised at a higher level, such as the new Regional Forester or the Washington Office. The subcommittee is on hold for the time being.

••Draft – Adding a Principle••

This topic will be deferred to the January agenda since Mary Mitsos was not in attendance.

••Monitoring Protocols••

Currently there are a few different conversations occurring within the MFRC related to monitoring protocols, these efforts should be combined. Marnie, Jim Burchfield, and Travis (Tom DeLuca's replacement at TWS) should orchestrate efforts. A framework for protocols is important to address each principle through monitoring and to learn if project objectives are accomplished.

Marnie indicated that she is working with Jim Burchfield on the Auggie project monitoring, which may or may not be relevant to the other monitoring discussions. She will incorporate the details of the Auggie monitoring plan that are relevant to overall protocols. Marnie plans to meet with Jim in January.

The question was raised regarding the availability of money in the MFRC budget for monitoring. Some recalled Steve Kratville saying it depended on what type of monitoring was implemented. The committee decided it would be helpful to better understand how the FS budgets for monitoring. Who is in charge of monitoring in the Regional Office? **Action:** Marnie will find out who is in charge of monitoring in the Regional Office.

The Committee decided we should come up with protocols that reflect a reasonable amount of time and cost so that the FS will engage. We have previously modeled behavior that the FS likes, so if we can create a model that the FS agrees with, then the FS may make the investment into monitoring that we desire. The FS does some monitoring, but not at the level we would like to implement.

••Lolo FRC Update••

Mark Vander Meer was elected as co-chair of the LRC – note that he expressed a desire not to run the meetings. The group discussed potential new members.

The Westside Working Group's Marshall-Woods project seems to be moving forward well, with Jake's spearheading efforts and support of the committee. The group reached consensus on the draft purpose and need statement. The LRC and the FS will co-host a public meeting about the Marshall-Woods project on February 3rd (tentatively). Julia offered Paula's help with communications if needed. Scott thanked Dale for Beverly's much-appreciated and valuable efforts on the LRC.

The Eastside Working Group's ongoing efforts have been put on hold in order to work on a proposal for the Forest Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA). The proposal is to bring in resources for Lincoln, Seeley, and the Swan. Scott was reminded that the closing of Smurfit-Stone may alter details in the proposal.

••Bitterroot FRC Update••

While the Steering Committee had heard previously that the Bitterroot group was abandoning the Butterfly Creek project, that information is not true. Butterfly Creek is part of a bigger landscape project.

Jason Toddhunter and Paul Moore went to the Butterfly Creek project area to get GPS data in order to create a map. It helps to have a different perspective from people who aren't a part of the

Bitterroot Committee. Paul mapped the project and Jason wrote up a one-page summary. Paul was planning to present the information to the committee at the Bitterroot meeting the previous night. No one had received a report from the meeting.

Ginny Tribe indicated that the group has come a long way from the first meeting. She is very optimistic regarding the relationships being developed and the continued commitment of the committee.

Ginny will not be able to facilitate the meetings after February.

••HRC – Lincoln Working Group Update••

At the last meeting, the group discussed mixed severity fire regimes. The idea of prescribed fire is seen as controversial with most of the locals. The Working Group discussed project #2 with minimal controversy. The group approved the project description. If given the green light, the group will approach mixed severity cautiously.

The Helena National Forest has been very supportive of the Lincoln Working Group's efforts, which is a huge benefit. There is less skepticism than before. District Ranger Amber Kamps wants to get involved with mixed severity.

••MFRC Assessment••

Dale suggested a gathering of the original MFRC to assess where the MFRC is today compared to the group's original vision. The assessment will include a review of accomplishments as well as a look ahead. Brian Kahn will facilitate the gathering, and provide a write-up. Dale and Gordy will take the lead on this event and develop a list of invitees. **Action:** Dale and Gordy will develop a list of invitees.

••Future Steering Committee Discussion Topics••

- Repercussions of Smurfit-Stone Closing. The Steering Committee would like to have a discussion about Smurfit-Stone's closing and its ripple effects. More information will come to light by next meeting, which will be helpful to discuss. The closing will impact every project due to the volume of material collected, with no outlet. The mill receives 30,000 truckloads per year and there will be a void of reasonable options. Unfortunately, more restoration materials will have to be burned.
- FLRA Proposals. Since FLRA-type proposals may be a trend for the future, it would be helpful for the Steering Committee to discuss how those proposals integrate with MFRC's work.

••Summary of Action Items ••

- **Marnie** to distribute weekly report to all Steering Committee members (ongoing).
- **Marnie** will distribute the last draft of her work plan and create quarterly goals for 2010.
- **Marnie** will write up and distribute a summary of the RVCC conference.
- **All Steering Committee members** should provide feedback to Marnie on the expansion criteria document.
- **Marnie** will create new expansion criteria document (to fit on 8.5x11 paper), including priorities, for review at the January meeting.

- **Marnie** will come up with a short statement as to why the MFRC is interested in mixed severity fire regimes (for answering questions). She will circulate it to the Steering Committee members for review and feedback.
- **Marnie** will orchestrate a mixed severity meeting with Len and others.
- **Marnie** will find out who is in charge of monitoring in the Regional Office.
- **Dale and Gordy** will develop a list of invitees for the MFRC Assessment gathering of original members.
- **Marnie** will confirm with the NFF that there isn't overlap or conflict between its annual cap grantee meeting and the MFRC's plan for a NW Regional Collaborative Summit.

••Next Meeting••

January 19, 2010 from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.