

BITTERROOT RESTORATION COMMITTEE (BRC)

February 8, 2010

Session Summary

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Update the group on biomass.
2. Take next steps on the Darby Lumber Lands.
3. Begin work on potential a 3 Saddle potential project.
4. Transition to Marcia Hogan as the new facilitator.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bill Grasser	Wayne Hedman	Mike Jeffords
Gary Milner	Paul Moore	Steve Powell
Adam Rissien	Craig Thomas	Kirk Thompson
Virginia Tribe/Facilitator	Marcia Hogan/New Facilitator	

TECHNICAL ADVISORS/OBSERVERS

Julia Altemus	Dave Campbell	Marnie Criley
Julie King	Cole Mayn	Ed Snook
Cheri Hartless		

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Approving the Summary of the January 2010 Meeting

BRC members approved the January 19 summary without revision.

Updates

News from the Committee Chairs

- There were no new items from the Committee Chairs because a MFRC Committee meeting has not occurred since the January 19 Bitterroot Restoration Committee meeting.

Update from the MFRC Coordinator/MRFC Committee Members

- Discussions are continuing regarding the Smurfit/Stone closure.

What's happened with biomass since we met in January?

- Wayne asked that members look for chemistry articles related to biomass so the Committee can continue to increase it's information base.
- The facilitator committed to continue the biomass agenda item at each meeting.

Project Work - 3 Saddle Area

Overview

- The Forest Service suggested a potential Committee project area of approximately 237 acres in Sections 14, 16, 17, and 20 – out of a larger project area of 6200 acres.
 - Bitterroot Forest Plan Management Areas identify much of the area for timber management emphasis. The larger area is adjacent to the Lolo National Forest with similar Management Areas.
 - Vegetation in the sections suggested consist mainly of Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, and some Douglas Fir. This area is the most southerly range for Western Larch, a species of concern.
 - Suggested restoration opportunities might include treatment within the wildland/urban interface and re-establishing an uneven age class supporting a healthy ecosystem.
- The Agency will start their NEPA analysis in fall, 2010, with the intent of a project on the ground by 2011.
- Discussion with the Lolo in the past did not result in plans for joint work in the area because it was not a priority for the Lolo at that time. Those discussions with the Lolo are continuing.

Getting Started

The Committee offered the following draft work related to the 3 Saddle Area although there is a question about what the Committee's role might be since there is already a Forest Service proposed project.

- The benefits of this project are similar to those of the Butterfly area.
- From the Committee's perspective, restoration issues include:
 - Improve water quality on Ambrose Creek.
 - Improve the road system for management activities.
 - Address the need and opportunity to increase ecological integrity within the 3 Saddle vegetation management project.
- Important interests in the area are:
 - Wildlife
 - Recreation including hunting
 - Vegetation management within a healthy ecosystem
 - Aesthetics
 - Fire management
 - Water quality and soil protection
- A first cut at a desired condition for the area would include:
 - A healthy, more fire-resistant area with increased ecological integrity
 - Uneven vegetative age class with old growth protected/restored
 - Protection of water quality and soils
 - Road needs evaluated and decommissioned where appropriate
 - Enhanced recreation opportunities

- Data needs:
 - Sensitive soils
 - Water quality - 303(d)
 - Weeds
 - Roads evaluation and maintenance needs and possibilities for road decommissioning (i.e., CFR 212 Subpart A in the project area)

Project Work - Darby Lumber Lands

Ongoing Committee work

Committee members drafted the following criteria for evaluating the future of a Darby Lands road:

- Quality of the road prism – Is it eroding?
- Value/need for future management of surrounding area
- Effect on water quality
- Is it diverting natural drainage?
- Effect on wildlife habitat
- Potential effect on wildlife management
- Useful by motorized or non-motorized recreation

Project Work - Butterfly Project

Some Committee members expressed dissatisfaction with the “hand-off” of the Butterfly Project to the Forest Service to be put in their environmental review pipeline. Some expressed disappointed as to what has or has not happened to the project within the Agency to this point – and wondered if the Committee has any value. The Forest Service agreed to present the following to the Committee at their March meeting:

- Where the Butterfly Project is today within Agency process
- Important benefits to the Agency in terms of the Committee’s existence
- Lessons the Forest Service has learned about being part of the process
- Assurances as to why the Committee should continue

What’s next?

- Marcia Hogan will take over as Committee facilitator at the March.
- Future meeting dates were set for the third Monday of the month through June 21:
 - Monday, March 15
 - Monday, April 19
 - Monday, May 17
 - Monday, June 21

