

MINUTES
Montana Forest Restoration Committee
Steering Committee Meeting
DNRC Conference Room
February 16, 2010, 2-5 p.m.

Members present: Julia Altemus, Scott Brennan (phone), Bill Grasser, Dale Harris, Mary Mitsos (phone), Chuck Roady (phone), Adam Rissien, Gordy Sanders, Mark Vander Meer.

Guests: Marcia Hogan – BRC Facilitator, Mike Niccolucci – FS Region One, Steve Kratville – FS Region One, Erin McGlinchey (minutes).

Staff: Julia Altemus

● **Approval of SC Meeting Minutes** ●

Julia made a motion to approve the January Minutes and Bill seconded. All agreed. January Minutes approved.

● **Financial Report** ●

Julia made a motion to approve the January Financial Report. Adam seconded. All agreed. January Financial Report approved.

DALE: Follow up with Leslie Weldon regarding budget for 2011.

● **2010 Coordinator Work Plan** ●

This agenda item will be postponed until the March meeting when Marnie is in attendance. Dale commented on the usefulness of the weekly reports that Marnie submits to the Steering Committee.

● **New Website** ●

The Steering Committee has been sent the link to the new website and should provide feedback or suggested edits to Marnie.

Steve wants to help Marnie edit the “Funding” section of the website. Steve would like to see the description expand on the volunteer/in-kind contribution that supports the MFRC.

The full MFRC will have the opportunity to review the website before it goes live after Steve’s edits are incorporated. The MFRC will be asked to provide comments and suggestions within a short turnaround (3 days). The website will go live at the deadline, but individuals can continue to provide input ongoing.

STEVE: Follow up with Marnie with suggested edits to Funding section.

MARNIE: Send link to full MFRC after Steve’s edits are addressed.

● Forest Products Roundtable ●

The MFRC will host (not sponsor) a meeting for an invited group of individuals to discuss the short-mid and long-term actions that can be taken to address the close of Smurfit Stone. The group will brainstorm ideas to address the lack of outlet for materials, as well as ways to help those who are suffering from lost work/jobs and how to keep those skilled people in Montana.

Based on January's SC discussion, some members had different expectations about the level of input that would take place. A few members were caught off guard at the Lolo Restoration Committee meeting because they were unable to address questions posed to them about the Forest Products Roundtable meeting.

There was also some concern that the entire Steering Committee was not consulted about the invite list.

In order to swiftly schedule the roundtable and keep the group small enough to make progress, the meeting and invite list was prepared quickly, which resulted in a delay in informing Marnie and the Steering Committee about the approach taken and the meeting details.

The working group used the model for inviting the original MFRC members to the table. The invite list includes individuals and organizations that do not have a stake in the conversation and may have a different perspective and resources to help (than those close to the topic). After the initial group there may be subgroups to follow-up on ideas which will likely include more people. There are a few spots available, thus Steering Committee members can submit names for review by Gordy, Dale.

The working group noted that the Steering Committee members and Marnie should have been copied on the developments of the meeting to keep them in the loop. It was an unintentional oversight and all will keep the Steering Committee in the loop.

Marcia Hogan will facilitate the meeting. Gordy, Marcia, Julia, and Dale are meeting February 17th to craft the agenda. The Steering Committee was asked for input to the meeting agenda and will be provided with the agenda to review.

It was suggested that Gordy and Dale speak at the roundtable to describe the MFRC, its roles and efforts, and its reasons for being interested in the questions presented to the attendees.

Agenda thus far:

- Gordy and Dale will describe the MFRC, its roles, efforts, members, and its interest in the questions presented to the attendees.
- John Manz will frame the current state of affairs – he has a credible and objective perspective. The working group will tell John which key areas he should focus on.
- Jason and/or Chuck will provide further details about Logger Association perspective.
- Brainstorming Session (Short-mid and Long-term options; requirements to execute ideas; keep in mind other efforts that may be addressing topic from different perspective)

GORDY: Find someone to take notes at the meeting.

STEERING COMMITTEE: Submit suggested attendees to Dale and Gordy.

WORKING GROUP: Refine the language of the questions that the roundtable attendees are expected to address.

● Presentation of President's 2011 Budget Request for Forest Service ●

Mike Niccolucci, Budget Coordinator, Renewable Resource Management, Forest Service, Region One, presented the fiscal year 2011 Forest Service budget request made by the President to Congress.

Highlights of presentation:

- This budget is the President's request to Congress – Congress considers the request in developing appropriations spending bills.
- The discretionary funding request is \$5.38 billion, which is a \$61 million (1%) increase from the 2010 enacted budget.
- The budget supports Secretary Vilsack's shared vision for America's Forests through five key objectives:
 - Restoring and Sustaining Forest Landscapes
 - Protecting and Enhancing Water Resources and Watershed Health
 - Making Landscapes More Resilient to Climate Change
 - Responsibly Budgeting for Wildfire
 - Creating Jobs and Sustainable Communities
- The Forest Service will work with partners to restore and sustain forest landscapes and provide incentives to prevent the loss of private forests and other working lands to development.
 - \$40 million for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund
 - Budget realignment: Integrated Resource Restoration budget line item to focus on ecosystem sustainability and restoration
 - \$349 million for Hazardous Fuels focused primarily in the WUI.
- The Forest Service will promote the restoration and maintenance of watersheds to ensure abundant clean water, the protection of soils, and the health of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
 - \$50 million for the new Priority Watersheds and Job Stabilization initiative
 - Large scale (10k acres +) restoration projects in priority watersheds
 - Selected projects will be developed in collaborative manner with local stakeholders and land management agencies
- There is a 21% decrease in funding request (versus enacted FY 2010 budget) for Capital Improvement & Maintenance.
 - The reduction reflects an emphasis on maintenance of existing transportation system with a curtailment in funding for new road construction and upgrades to existing roads.
 - The focus of the work will be on ensuring public safety, resource protection, and critical access needs.
 - No funding is requested for the capital improvement of roads.
 - This includes a 44% decrease in Legacy Roads and Trails.

- The President's proposed budget calls for a national timber target of 2.4 billion board feet, but there are no region-specific targets. Of that target, 2 billion board feet will be produced through stewardship.

• Where's the Logs? •

Gordy asked that all facilitators and committee chairs make sure that all of the opinions are considered when designing restoration projects. Gordy wants to make sure that all of the interests are at the table in the committees and wants to add the topic as an agenda item for the next full MFRC meeting.

JULIA: Add topic to MFRC May meeting agenda.

• Lolo FRC •

At the last FRC meeting, Chad Benson (the new Ninemile District Ranger) introduced a project. Stark Mountain looks like a great project that can use some more work. Chad is in tune to the FRC and its role in helping to develop on-the-ground projects. [Gordy noted that he is meeting with Chad in March to talk about the MFRC.]

Missoula District Ranger Paul Matter attended to discuss the Marshall Woods project and recent meeting. He noted that the Forest Service was expecting more fireworks at the meeting held at the library this month. At the next meeting (February 24th at 6 p.m. at the International School), the Forest Service will discuss more specific details of the project, which may inspire more discussion.

The Eastside Working Group reported that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will take over the administration of the Forest Service land where the Auggie project is located.

• Bitterroot FRC •

During the last meeting in the Bitterroot, some members of the group expressed their frustration that a project hasn't hit the ground yet. The group feels the need to get something accomplished.

The BRC was concerned that the Butterfly project was being dropped. The Forest Service will get back to the group to report the status of the project. The understanding is that the Forest Service shifted its analysis to a larger landscape that includes Butterfly, and the broader analysis will require more work and time. The Forest Service will get back to the group with the project's status and where it sits on the NEPA planning list.

The Darby Lumber Lands project is moving forward. Ravalli County Off-Road Vehicles members inventoried roads documenting resource concerns. They identified 18 miles of road over 3-4 sections where they support removal. Section 1 is still being evaluated; it is not drivable or reachable and may be a good candidate for a roadless area. This project allows for motorized travel as well as road removal. The group is hoping they can identify a smaller portion to work on and move ahead.

For the Three Saddles timber sale, the group looked at three sub units. The group agreed upon restoration for the lower elevation mix of ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir where there is access. The group will make specific recommendations. The project is in the scoping period now; the Bitterroot National Forest will take our input. There will be a project decision by the end of the year. Hopefully that will give the group some ownership of a project as well as some logs.

• **Lincoln Working Group** •

The group is making progress. Amber has been supportive and transparent.

● MFRC May Agenda ●

The committee agreed upon Heritage Hall at Fort Missoula as the next venue for the full MFRC meeting in May.

All were asked to think about possible agenda items and presenters for the meeting. It was agreed that the Mixed-Severity Working Group be included on the agenda. It is a possibility that the Mixed-Severity Working Group will have a proposal for the MFRC to vote on at the next meeting.

STEERING COMMITTEE: Brainstorm agenda topics and send to Dale and Gordy.

JULIA: Check availability at Heritage Hall in May.

MARNIE: Schedule meeting for Mixed-Severity Working Group

● Steering Committee Membership Review ●

The Steering Committee wants to reach out to its members who are consistently not available for meetings (and do not provide proxies) to see if they would like to be replaced. It is important to have individuals who have the time to participate.

Specifically, Orville Daniels and Bill Geer should be approached to ascertain interest in continuing their Steering Committee positions.

Open slots should be filled based on keeping a balanced Steering Committee and to engage individuals who are enthusiastic about being on the committee. However, slots need to be filled according to the bylaws.

The group discussed the prospect of Pam Gardiner as a Steering Committee member when she is allowed (based on Forest Service retirement rules) to take a leadership role.

Someone noted that Al Christopherson will be retiring from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and wondered if he still plans to stay involved with the MFRC.

JULIA: Review bylaws for rules regarding the addition of Steering Committee members.

DALE: Contact Orville Daniels about his interest in remaining on the Steering Committee.

STEVE: Determine when Pam is able to take a leadership role.

GORDY: Contact Al Christopherson to determine his post-retirement intentions.