

Sublette County Forest Collaborative Meeting Notes

January 25, 2021

Welcome and Introductions

Joel Bousman (County Commissioner), Jessica Western (Facilitator), Rob Hoelscher (Pinedale & Big Piney Ranger Districts), Barry Tye (WY State Forestry), Michael Henn (SCCD), Doug Linn (Pinedale BLM), Troy Fieseler (WGFD), Shad Cooper (SCUF), Jennifer Lamb (Nature Conservancy), Jennifer Hayward (NRCS), Julie Kraft (SCWP), Larry Dennis (Industry), Shari Meeks (SCCD), Dave Bell (Non-motorized rec), Richard Stem (consultant), Brian Ferebee (SR Exec USFS Government Affairs), Terry Pollard (Outfitter), Matthew Gaffney (SC Administrator Commissioners), Nate Wilson (Assistant District Forester for WSFD), Kim Bright (Permittee)

BLM Project Ideas & Geographic Focus Areas – Doug Linn

Project Ideas- Fuels, weeds, trails (leverage existing projects)

Geographic Focus Areas- No specific focus areas, but BLM is interested in partnering where BLM lands interface with USFS lands.

Collaborative Opportunity- 1) USFS-BLM Interagency Agreement & 2) use of GNA.

Recreation Information- RMIS (Recreation Management Information System) reported approximately 106-107,000 recorded visits in the BLM Pinedale Field Office (Boulder lake 3415 visits; CCC Ponds 7810 visits; Green River/New Fork 59,000; Boy Scout Camp 400; Dispersed Recreation 36,200 visits). These are significantly higher than reports in previous Fiscal Years. Reports are obtained using direct field monitoring by the LEO, traffic counters, permits and other estimation.

Blowdown Efforts to-date- Scab Creek, Little Sandy, Blucher Creek (Blowdown); Immediate actions were taken as emergency response; future additional actions are needed as access is still limited in these areas.



WY State Forestry Project Ideas & Geographic Focus Areas- Barry Tye

Project Ideas- Timber sale, road corridor work on the way up to the project areas, firewood sale, using receipts from timber sales to help get other parts of the project implemented (or other projects implemented). Using State Lands as a potential “staging area” for federal lands implementation to reduce disturbance on federal lands.

Geographic Focus Areas-

Irish Canyon (Fuels polygons identified, work with BLM and USFS with similar timber types nearby.

Muddy Ridge – railcar as a bridge, replace bridge before doing forest treatments (\$280,000 required); 118 acres of overstocked and suppressed lodgepole; USFS and BLM has similar timber-types surrounding.

Collaborative Opportunity- Interested in landscape-level GNA to work together in an effort to ‘sweeten the deal’ for bidding/timber companies.

Next steps- If the Forest Collaborative prioritizes this effort, then State Forestry, USFS Pinedale RD, BLM PFO, and BLM RSFO should meet to discuss GNA strategy.

USFS Project Ideas & Geographic Focus Areas – Rob Hoelscher

Project Ideas- There are several “tools” available to promote healthy forests. Additional comments to address “tools” are summarized below:

- Information sharing with visitors and public land users.
- MRA that authorizes the temporary use of chainsaws in wilderness sectors of the Big Sandy Blowdown.
 - Frontrunner issue for 2021 Field Season: Many Collaborative members articulated their reasons for considering this blowdown and “emergency”.
 - MRA is very specific to resources used, timeframe, alternatives, site-specific project approval, concise, to authorize “non-conforming use”. Other MRA’s that authorize chainsaw use in wilderness are available and have been successful in other forests, so the Pinedale Ranger District would not have to start from scratch.
 - Partners agree there must be logical reasoning behind using chainsaws in Wilderness Areas: No collaborative members strongly opposed this temporary use although conservation partners need to know and understand the specificity in the MRA before giving full support.
- Shared Stewardship to help USFS and BLM develop a strategic plan to address blowdown and longevity of healthy forests in Sublette County. This is intended to help the Collaborative drive additional support for implementation.
- Request assistance from the USFS Products Lab to assist with identifying opportunities on the BTNF.

Geographic Focus Areas- The 5-year planning focus has done a great amount of effort to assess Muddy Ridge, Upper Green, Union Pass, Kinky Creek areas. These areas are scheduled for USFS analysis.



Blowdown Update- BTNF has requested \$235,000 which has a partial match of \$40,000 from Friends of the BT organization. Funding is intended to hire crews this summer to clear trails at various trailheads. Porcupine Cr, Trapper Cr, Doubletop, Scab, Big Sandy Lake Trail, Fremont CD to clear these trails. Most of the blowdown is in wilderness. Additional support may be requested from Outfitters in Sublette County.

10-Year Vegetation Strategy – the potential for creating this Strategy was discussed. Mike Henn assured Rob Hoelscher that the Collaborative can help with the writing of EIS's and writing grants. The USFS and Rich Stem will present the way the agency can move forward on creating a 10 year supply of timber that will address forest health issues, as well as support economic activities on February 22.

Biden Transition information provided by Rich Stem

Briefly highlighted important notes in the documents sent out prior to the meeting:
Administration Transition documents- Rich advised the group to fully read this document. NOTE pages 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 as they relate to the Forest Collaborative.

Transition letter- (4) key points; there is now congressional bi-partisan push regarding catastrophic fire. The bottom line is that there is a wave building congressionally for future funding of federal agencies to act and work with state and counties, which helps build capacity.

USFS NEPA regs- NEPA regulations are currently frozen. However, 2 VERY important parts– 1) new CE authorities; 2) tiering of previous NEPA work;

California document regarding a progressive program- Bottom line- everyone got together and decided to do this program regarding catastrophic fire and forest management. Execution remains to be seen, but strategy is in place. In summary, 1) huge congressional interest, 2) agencies and collaboratives need to be ready, 3) can industry be ready as well?

New Administration- Brian Ferebee added that the four focuses of the new administration include COVID-19, economic relief, climate change and solutions, and racial equality. The Forest Collaborative should consider “How does our work align with these priorities and outcomes?” Carbon sequestration and climate change are great opportunities under which to “classify” projects.

Status on past projects recommended by Collaborative

Monument Ridge- ongoing project; decision is signed and is implementation for the next couple of years. Additional funding has been acquired for further implementation.

Hoback Ranches Service Improvement District- Shad Cooper- Roosevelt Fire burned through the Hoback Ranches and the situation there today is much different. Shad recommends looking at this goal and change it to a post-fire recovery list of recommendations. Rob Hoelscher added that there may be additional salvage opportunities. Other request such as building materials for rebuilding and reestablishment of native vegetation. SCCD still has the Roosevelt Fire Resources webpage; SCCD can add resources to the webpage;



<https://www.sublettecd.com/roosevelt-fire-2>. It was a consensus of the group to revisit goals and objectives for this focus area.

East Rim- Project area is currently in the 5-yr plan at the USFS, but needs prioritized based on all the other projects in the 5-yr plan.

Boulder Area Dead Soda to Meadow Lake – Julie Kraft and SCWP has made great efforts regarding cheatgrass management in the area. Terry Pollard added that ATV loop trails by Meadow Lake were completed and boat launch roads were improved at Burnt Lake. The group agreed to readjust this list based on the blowdown strategy.

No public comments.

Next Meeting - February 22 9am-12pm

Current Interest Statements:

To maintain and enhance a resilient and ecologically healthy forest in order to:

- To maintain and enhance economic opportunities.
- To instill trust in public land management.
- To maintain multiple uses of a forest as an integral part of the custom and culture of the community.
- To maintain and enhance recreation infrastructure.
- To protect private and public property and lives.
- To maintain and enhance scientific learning.
- To maintain our sense of home.
- To maintain and enhance habitat for wildlife.

