

***Cooperators Forest Plan Meeting Notes***  
***0900-1500 April 20, 2007***  
***4-H Building, Jackson***

Notes taken by Joanna Behrens

***Attendees:***

Jim Montuoro - WYDOT, Kent Connelly - Lincoln Co., Margaret Wilson - GTNP, Lyn Shanaghy - Sen. Enzi, Pam Buline - Sen. Thomas, Jay Dunbar - BTNF, Jonathan Teichert - Lincoln Co. Planner, Tex Taylor - UW Ag Econ, Thomas Faulke - UW Ag Econ., Scott Smith - WGFD, Scott Covington - WGFD, Greg Clark - BTNF, Randy Williams - Teton CD, Bill Haagenson - Wyo. Div. of Forestry, Joel Bowsman - Sublette County, Mary Thoman - Sweetwater CD, John Linn - Sublette Co., Kim Johnson - BTNF, Liz Davy - BTNF, Pat Hickerson - Fremont County Commissioner, Michael Schrotz - BTNF, Rick Fox - BTNF, Eric Winthers - BTNF, Craig Trulock - BTNF, Mike Balboni - BTNF, John Kuzloski - BTNF, Joanna Behrens - BTNF, Theresa Moran - BTNF, Faith Ryan - BTNF, Brian Goldberg - BTNF, Russ Bacon - BTNF, Greg Trulock - BTNF, Dale Deiter - BTNF, David Allison - CLG, Rick Dustin - BTNF

***Observers / Consultants:***

Nina Luxmoore - GYC, Aaron Barron - NOLS, Gregory Kennett - ERG/TCD

The meeting was facilitated by Frances VanHouten.

**Agenda**

9:00-9:45	Start up
9:45-10:30	Economic Assessment
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-12:00	Reflections on Economic, Ecological, & Social Sustainability
12:00-12:30	Need for Change
12:30-1:15	Working Lunch
1:15-2:45	Dialogue on Need for Change
2:45-3:00	Wrap up

**Handouts:** Why are we having a Cooperators' meeting now? *An Economic Assessment of the Bridger-Teton National Forest* (draft)

**Main Objectives of Meeting**

To solicit from the Cooperators their own individual ideas about the "Need for Change" in the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) Plan

To present the draft results of the *Economic-Assessment of the Bridger-Teton National Forest*

**Introduction**

Michael Schrotz opened the meeting with a welcome and conducted an overview of the agenda. Dale Deiter was introduced as the new Acting Ranger for the Jackson and

Buffalo Districts. Rangers Russ Bacon and Craig Trulock will be leaving the BTNF for jobs on other Forests. Newly elected officials were welcomed.

### **2005 Planning Rule Disclaimer**

Rick Fox explained that on March 30, Judge Phyllis Hamilton of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California enjoined the Forest Service from implementing the 2005 Planning Rule. The Court held that the Forest Service violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), for not adequately involving the public; the Endangered Species Act (ESA), for not properly consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), by improperly applying a categorical exclusion and not fully evaluating the environmental impacts in promulgating the 2005 Planning Rule. The court remanded the decision to the Department of Agriculture for compliance with the APA, ESA, and NEPA.

This meeting is not occurring under the authority of the 2005 Planning Rule. The Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest Service (FS) and the Cooperators may need to be modified to cite a different rule when the Washington Office sends us guidance on what rule we will be working under. Regardless of the rule that applies, input from the Cooperators on their ideas for “Need for Change” would still be necessary. Therefore, the FS decided that it would be appropriate to continue with this meeting.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) or Notice of Initiation (NOI)—whichever applies—and the Comprehensive Evaluation Reports (CERs) will be released together after receiving guidance from the Washington Office. These will identify “Need for Change” and the public will be commenting on the CERs.

Concern was expressed that the BTNF may need to start over in the planning process due to this court case. Rick felt that was unlikely. What the FS has been doing up to now in the Plan Revision process could be considered pre-scoping. The information that has been gathered is still valid and could be used even if an Environmental Impact Statement is required. Do not erase any of the dates that have been set aside for meetings. A letter is expected from the Washington Office soon and we will inform everyone when we have more information.

The November Public Meetings asked the public to identify “Need for Change” with regard to recreation and oil/gas development. The March Public Meetings focused on the “Need for Change” regarding ecological conditions. The Cooperators received the syntheses of the public’s comments for the November and March meetings via email prior to this meeting. Now, the FS would like to know what the Cooperators’ areas of concern are and why. What are Cooperators keeping on their radar screens? At the end of the meeting the FS would like to have a shared understanding with the Cooperators surrounding the salient “Need for Change” items. The Desired State minus the Current State equals the “Need for Change”.

## **Economic Assessment**

Tex Taylor and Tom Foulke presented a powerpoint demonstration on the results of the draft *Economic Assessment of the Bridger-Teton National Forest*. By noon on Monday, April 23, the document will be posted on the University of Wyoming website at <http://Agecon.uwyo.edu/EconDev>.

There were questions about some of the livestock numbers. Some Cooperators did not think they reflected the true decline in livestock and animal unit months (AUMs) on the Forest. Some numbers were from surveys of ranchers and some were from the Wyoming Livestock Board.

There was a request that they look at what the implications of losing AUMs could be on open space, wildlife winter range, etc. A suggestion was also made that they differentiate between vacated AUMs, retired AUMs, current AUMs, etc.

## **General Concerns**

- Are wildlife migration routes viable and currently used, or are they historical?
- It would be better to split out the economic impacts of oil, gas, and mining.
- Recreation jobs should be broken out by county.
- A lot of visitor use is based on motel occupancy but industry has taken over a lot of the motel rooms.
- Considering private and state lands skews the timber harvest impacts. Just consider timber harvest on BTNF.
- Agricultural values are undervalued. Consider qualitative values such as aesthetics and wildlife habitat; not just economic values.
- Sustaining ranching and timber harvesting are also values. What is the cost of losing industries?
- Will there be a breakout for outfitter and guides in the recreation jobs?
- There are approximately 14 wells on the BTNF.
- Are long-term effects going to be analyzed in the Economic Assessment? No, in Phase II they may do some projections.
- What are the costs of maintaining the Forest: reclaiming land, maintaining trails and campgrounds, mitigating effects of harvesting and extraction of minerals, etc.?
- If campgrounds and other amenities are closed, what are the economic effects on the counties?
- How do private and public lands support each other?
- Find strong multiple use activities.

Recurring themes:

The Forest was not established to make money for the FS; economics is not everything; the Forest is not in business to make money for industry.

Economics is only one aspect of sustainability. The decision maker will take it under consideration together with ecological and social sustainability. Without ecological sustainability, there will be no social or economic sustainability.

Phase II of the Economic Assessment will look at things in greater depth. Tex and Tom are uncomfortable with some of the numbers and they will try to work out those problems. The Cooperators would like a sketch of Phase II to be sent to them when it is ready.

### **Breakout Groups**

Cooperators broke out into three groups to discuss their “Need for Change” issues. Their comments were captured below.

The following issues were identified as the most important “Need for Change” on the BTNF.

#### **Group 1**

1. Comprehensive Travel Plan for all types of travel; hiking, cross country skiing, off-highway vehicles (OHVs), snow machines, motorcycles, four by four trucks and sports utility vehicles. Discuss roadless areas, main roads, loop trails, and connecting trails.
2. Emphasize voluntary cooperative monitoring as means to justify livestock grazing and permit renewal.
3. Healthy Forest Initiative: logging; control burning; grazing as a management tool; small diameter logging.
4. Keep the BTNF “multiple use”.
5. There is a need for local government input into forest management. Strengthening roles.
6. Predator management and the effect of non-management on recreation and livestock grazing.

#### **Group 2**

1. More recreational opportunities (OHV, campgrounds, loop trails)
2. Better understanding of how land management decisions across all ownerships affect overall sustainability for any given resource value and socio-economic condition.
3. Maintain “multiple use” concept as required by law.
4. Actively deal with forest health issues.

#### **Group 3**

1. Active vegetation management
2. Travel management and improved enforcement
3. Partnering and cooperating
4. Watershed health. Watershed scale planning
5. Oil and gas development

### **Additional issues written on cards**

- Stop allowing recreationists and wildlife to control what happens on the BTNF.
- More “Pay to Play” - stop subsidizing recreation. RV hookups, laundry, showers, cabin rentals

- Travel Planning and Implementation
- Travel Management: Road construction/closures, Off-highway vehicles (OHV) opportunities and restrictions
- Partnering to maximize upkeep/maintenance of forest, i.e. timber project coordination for loop road completion, sheep grazing to terrace hillsides to prevent erosion-set seed/enhance top soil on ridges, OHV groups meet to agree on roads needed in exchange for clearing trail
- Expansion of private vendors to manage recreation facilities such as campgrounds and more MOUs with organizations to help adopt trails, etc.
- Cooperative effort for state legislation to assist enforcement capability of counties and Game and Fish Department to work with USFS Enforcement
- Promote Stewardship contracting and large scale projects to better manage and leverage NEPA process
- Refine Forest level project/plan process to include landscape (watershed) project/plan with coordinated use projects (habitat, recreation, transportation, timber etc.)
- Emphasize watershed health
- Decrease oil and gas development
- Increase manpower and money for monitoring plan components to ensure successful plan implementation
- Manage resources (multiple uses) per original intent of Forest creation to sustain the nation and enhance the BTNF; renewable resources (timber, grass etc.); habitat treatments; maintain recreation; maintain transportation.
- Develop better methods to maintain working landscapes
- Recreation; How much? Where? Everywhere?
- Active Vegetation Management; fire, timber harvest etc. Acceptable risk?
- Forest stand conditions versus Desired Future Condition. Including: vegetation treatment backlog; need age class diversity; forest health (I and D)
- Reduce fire suppression and increase fire as a management tool.
- Increase OHV management/enforcement to maintain air and improve forest management.
- Wildland urban interface – implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans; need fuel treatments; this is a growing problem.
- Provide more and promote large scale historic range of variability consistent with disturbance processes.
- Much more aggressive vegetation management (acres/year) – Use all the tools, i.e. stewardship contracting, wildfire. prescribed fire, timber harvest, noxious weed control, other mechanical treatments, intensive grazing – For increased diversity and mosaic and healthier ecosystem
- Revise roadless area/Travel Management Plan for southern BTNF. Should address parking, looped trails, kiosks, restrooms, etc.
- Landscape scale vegetation treatments; willingness to accept temporary disturbances, willingness to apply very best of management practices and their cost, prescribed burning, POL harvest. Get economic use of excessive timber,

- improve vegetation age class diversity and wildlife habitat, and reduce potential effects of insects and wildfire.
- Acquire Title 23 easements for Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) through the Forest.
  - Establish aggregate sources (gravel) for highway use.
  - Cooperative plan with WYDOT so WYDOT can accomplish its mission with FS.
  - Develop recreational trailheads
  - Education – justify existing multiple uses as to role in local economy

### **Discussion**

How do we weigh the stakes? Do we count out-of-state opinions equal with local opinions? Local people who depend on the forest have more at stake.

Local governments are looking out for their counties' finances. That is their job. Extractive industries are responsible for 99% of county tax revenues in Sublette County; whereas 99% of the tax revenues in Teton County are from recreation. However, local governments do care about ecological sustainability because there is no social or economic sustainability with out a healthy environment. It is an issue of balance.

Local county government is the only voice of the local people. Access to public lands has become a big issue because private landowners often block access for the general public. County commissioners are beginning to deal with this problem by requiring access before approving development. More involvement of local government is needed for Forest Planning and access issues.