

Cooperators Forest Plan Meeting Notes
9:00am – 3:00pm March 9, 2007
White Pine Ski Resort, Pinedale, WY

Notes taken by Joanna Behrens

Attendees:

Theresa Moran - BTNF, Faith Ryan - BTNF, Jim Montuoro - WYDOT, Brad Hill - WY-Trails, Kent Connelly - Lincoln Co. Commissioner, Margaret Wilson - GTNP, Lyn Shanaghy - Sen. Enzi, Pam Buline - Sen. Thomas, Jay Dunbar - BTNF, John Woodward - Lincoln Co. Planner, Kniffy Hamilton - BTNF, Desiree Olsen - UW Ag Econ., Thomas Faulke - UW Ag Econ., Scott Smith - WGFD, Rob Gipson - WGFD, Greg Clark - BTNF, Maureen Meagher - Western Wyoming R&CD, Randy Williams - Teton CD, Bill Haagenson - Wyo. Div. of Forestry, Matt Hoobler - Wyo. Dept. of Agriculture, Temple Stevenson - Governor's Planning Office, Tammie Archibald - Lincoln Co. Commissioner, Jeffrey Jacquet - Sublette County, Mary Thoman - Sweetwater CD, Darrell Walker - Sublette Co., Kim Johnson - BTNF, Liz Davy - BTNF, Andy Norman - BTNF, Michael Schrotz - BTNF, Rick Fox - BTNF, Eric Winthers - BTNF, Craig Trulock - BTNF, Mike Balboni - BTNF, John Kuzloski - BTNF, Joanna Behrens - BTNF

Observers / Consultants:

Nina Luxmoore - GYC, Steff Kessler - GYC, Aaron Barron - NOLS, Gregory Kennett - ERG,

The meeting was facilitated by Steve Daniels and Greg Walker.

Main Objectives of Meeting

Comprehend social survey, linkage to Plan Revision, importance of encouraging responses.

Understand progress on economic assessment; point out concerns for Tex.

Explore need for change with respect to ecological sustainability, ecosystem processes, timber and grazing.

Understand timeline and next steps.

Agenda

- 900 Welcome and introductions; new members; perspectives on Cooperators' Groups(s)
- 930 Plan Revision status report: work on CER/Need for Change; Nov. syntheses; Q&A;
- 1000 Review plans for Social Survey; Q&A regarding application in Revision process; what to tell constituents who receive it; why is it important; why will it help FPR
- 1030 Questions and comments from the public
- 1045 Break
- 1100 Current conditions: ecosystem diversity, ecosystem processes, wildlife, timber, grazing
- 1145 Discussion panel: share observations from the public workshops, specific questions, etc.
- 1215 Questions and comments from the public
- 1230 Lunch

- 1330 Review progress of economic assessment; reviewers; concerns;
- 1415 Questions and comments from the public;
- 1430 Timeline / next steps: procedural options for the next Cooperators' meeting (on development of Need for Change recommendations)
- 1500 (optional) Teton County Conservation District Discussion of SIMPPLLE model and relationship to Forest Plan Revision

Kniffy opened the meeting with a welcome and Michael conducted an overview of the agenda.

Status of Forest Plan Revision

Rick discussed the status of the Forest Plan Revision and current work on evaluating current conditions.

A synthesis of the Oil and Gas Comments and a synthesis of the Recreation Comments that were obtained from the public at the last public meetings (November 2006) were handed out.

The Comprehensive Evaluation Report is due at the end of May. The set of questions we will be answering in this report include: What are the desired conditions for the Bridger-Teton National Forest? Why are these important? What are the current trends? What scale will the Forest Service be using to address the desired conditions? What are the uncertainty and the risk factors? Is there a need to change conditions on the ground or in the Forest Plan's direction? How will the Forest Service monitor changes to the Plan and what are the management implications?

The deadline for the Notice of Initiation (NOI) has been changed to May 25th.

As the Forest Plan Revision proceeds, the Forest Service should emphasize that the public is helping us develop the plan. In addition, the Forest Service should discuss perceived problems with the current Plan not as problems, but as opportunities for improvement.

Social Survey

A draft copy of the Social Survey that was developed by Jessica Clement of Colorado State University was handed out. This survey explores the values of residents living in the four counties that the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) overlaps (Teton, Sublette, Lincoln and Fremont Counties). Cooperators were asked to review the questions in the survey and send written comments to Rick (preferably by email) by March 17th. Rick will send those comments to Jessica. If you think some survey questions should be changed, please explain your reasons for the change. It would be very helpful if cooperators could talk to their constituents about the survey and encourage them to respond.

The Forest Service does not want to create the expectation that the revised Forest Plan will be built upon the results of the Social Survey, but the results will be taken into

consideration when writing the Plan. The survey results will probably appear as an appendix to the Forest Plan.

A question was asked regarding why Sweetwater County was not included in the survey since many people from Sweetwater recreate on the BTNF. A suggestion was made that Fremont County could be removed from the survey and Sweetwater County added. Fremont County residents may confuse use of Shoshone National Forest with Bridger-Teton National Forest. Others thought that it makes sense to include both counties since residents of Sweetwater and Fremont Counties recreate on the BTNF and own second homes in other counties that overlap the BTNF (and therefore are taxpayers in those counties). Jessica made the determination which counties to include and we will ask her if there would be a problem with adding Sweetwater County.

Question #19 on the Social Survey lists a number of mammal and bird species, including four Threatened and Endangered (T & E) species. The Forest Service (FS) does not have a choice about protecting habitat for T & E species. Therefore, is it helpful to ask the public about their level of concern for these species? Is this list helpful to management? Should T & E species be removed and other species listed?

A cooperator felt that the survey should not be asking about factors that the public favors as well as factors that they are concerned about (see questions 18 and 19). Asking about both factors in the same survey may introduce a bias. The pretest may address some of these issues.

Ecological Sustainability Public Meetings (March 5, 6, 7 and 8, 2007)

Liz Davy, Faith Ryan, Kim Johnson and Andy Norman presented to the cooperators the Ecological Sustainability powerpoint demonstration that was shown during the public meetings.

The powerpoint may be downloaded at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/news/forest_plan_revision/fpr_static_links/fpr/eco_public_workshops3_07.pdf

The learning objectives for the public meetings included:

- Helping the public learn technical resource issues and
- Helping the planning team solicit information from the public on key issues.

Comment sheets were handed out at the public meetings. Copies are at each table for the cooperators to review. These comment sheets focus on four information areas:

- Comprehension – How effective was the Forest Service at communicating information to the public? Was the technical information clear?
- Omissions – Is there information lacking that the public needs in order to answer our questions?
- Linkages – What are the connections between the issues?
- Advice – What feedback does the public have to give us on specific issues?

Some comments that were heard at the meetings compared the Forest Service favorably with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The public appreciated that the Forest Service seemed to be listening to them, unlike the BLM which they felt disregarded their feedback.

As the process continues we must continue to dialog with the public, respecting all ideas, and explaining what the choices and tradeoffs will be.

Questions from Cooperators on the Ecological Sustainability Presentation

A question was asked regarding the percentage of grass and forbs in non-forested communities and does the range specialist take these percentages into consideration when classifying grasslands versus forblands. The answer is yes; management of these communities considers their species composition.

Does the Forest Service look at what is happening on public and private lands surrounding the forest when making decisions about habitat needs on the BTNF? Yes, the Forest Plan will consider the impacts on habitats on lands outside our jurisdiction.

What percentage of the suitable timber harvest base has been harvested? Twelve percent has been harvested since 1956.

Where will the Forest Service be managing for grizzly bears? Grizzly bear management applies to the Primary Conservation Area as outlined in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and to areas where the grizzly is biologically and socially acceptable as determined by the Interagency Conservation Strategy. Federal agencies, along with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and other state wildlife departments, have cooperated in developing this strategy for conserving grizzly bears. The Forest Service will follow these already established standards and guidelines.

How will “Desired Conditions” address migration corridors for mule deer and other migratory species? The Desired Conditions refers to “connectivity” between habitats. The Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER) will also have information on migration corridors. Maps that show where the migration corridors exist on the BTNF are needed.

Concern was express that if people did not write their opinions down on the comment handouts, all opinions would not be represented. There did not seem to be as many written comments as at the last public meetings (in November) and some people may have thought that the questions were too technical and intimidating. The tendency may be for people to defer to the experts, especially when the group in which they are discussing a topic is composed mostly of FS employees (as was the case in some break-out sessions). There was concern that the FS may only be getting responses from self-selected well educated members of the public and not from the general public. Did the FS design the comment sheets to get fewer comments?

The FS would never design the comment sheets to get less participation by the public because that would hinder our ability to revise the Forest Plan and manage the forest in

an effective manner that the public would find acceptable. Collaboration is a two-sided process and the team struggled with developing questions that would elicit helpful information from the public. The process could always be improved and the FS welcomes suggestions in that regard. In addition, specialists were taking notes during their sessions with the public, and attempted to capture everyone's concerns even if some members of the public did not write down everything that was discussed.

Another cooperator thought that it was unfair to compare these most recent meetings to the Oil and Gas and Recreation Public Meetings. Many members of the public have strong feelings about oil and gas development and strong interest in their own recreational past times. Therefore, they would have lots of opinions to offer. Vegetation management, weed invasion, insect and disease issues, and even wildlife habitat management would be topics that are more esoteric to the average person. Although they may expect the FS to effectively handle these issues, they are less likely to have specific advice.

Economic Assessment

Tom Faulke of the University of Wyoming provided an update on the Economic Assessment that the State of Wyoming is financing. He emphasized that it is an assessment not an analysis. The exact content will depend on the availability of data. Phase I will end on April 9th and Phase II will end in October, 2007.

Data is being compiled on commercial recreation, utilities and transport corridors, wood products, non-timber products, permitted livestock grazing, minerals, energy resources, carbon sequestration, visitor amenities, and resident amenities. A few points:

- Federal transportation corridors will not affect the BTNF
- One pipeline will cross the forest.
- There are 15 producing wells on the forest and all are in Sublette County.

The preliminary results of this assessment will be posted on the Web in April.

Is the non-economic value of open space and wildlife being taken into consideration in this assessment? That is beyond the scope of what has been done in the past, and therefore, beyond the scope of this assessment.

There were questions regarding resident hunters. Because the assessment looks at new dollars brought into the local economy, money that is spent by local hunters is not considered but they do count the number of local hunters.

There were questions about considering where logging jobs are located. For example much of the harvested timber is trucked to Uinta County. These jobs are not considered.

This survey is just one tool that is being used to develop information to guide revision of the Forest Plan. The FS will be considering Social, Ecological and Economic Desired Conditions.

Next Steps

The Cooperators Meeting originally scheduled for March 29 was moved to April 20th. It will take place in Jackson. During this meeting there will be an exercise designed to help cooperators explain to their constituents how the revision process will work. Attendees will be coloring on maps in 40 geographic areas on the forest.

The Notice of Initiation (NOI) originally scheduled for completion by April 25th will be completed by May 25th.

The next public meetings remain scheduled for July 9-13th. The real map coloring will take place at these meetings. People who can not attend the meetings can participate by logging on to “storyboards” on the Internet.

SIMPPLLE and LIDAR

Gregory Kennett (ERG) and Randy Williams of (Teton CD) discussed a landscape modeling program, SIMPPLLE, and a Light Detection and Ranging program (LIDAR) that may assist the FS in developing the Forest Plan Revision. This presentation will be posted at www.erg.org.

A caveat: All models have to be scrutinized and require quality data. Different assumptions will bring about different results.

Greg handed out two scientific papers: *Potential Influence of Cheatgrass Invasion on the Fire Regime in Mesa Verde National Park – Addendum to the Park’s Draft Fire Management Plan* and *Integrating Knowledge for Simulating Vegetation Change at Landscape Scales*.