

National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) Meeting
January 3, 2008 – 1:00 p.m.
Forest Service Center, 8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD

Members Present:

Tom Blair, Chair; Jim Heinert, Hugh Thompson, Everett Hoyt, Jim Scherrer, Bob Paulson, Becci Jo Rowe, Mac McCracken, Matt Hoobler, Aaron Everett, Doug Hofer, Donovin Sprague, Nancy Kile, and Pat McElgunn.

Forest Service Representatives:

Craig Bobzien, Dennis Jaeger, Frank Carroll, Bob Thompson, Dave Thom, Craig Kjar, Mike Lloyd, Diane Dodson, Ed Fischer, Jackie Groce, Blaine Cook, Twila Morris - Recorder.

Others:

Approximately eight members of the public, and three congressional representatives; Chris Blair, Mark Haugen, and Rick Hanson, were in attendance.

Members Absent:

Nels Smith

Welcome and Roll Call:

Chair Blair: Quorum present, called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

Happy New Year! No real formal agenda today, we'll be covering things we talked about in November, and setting a direction for 2008. We'll bring the Board up to date on certain things, and we'll start off with some presentations by Craig.

Comments to the Chair:

Carroll: Thanks to Boxelder Job Corps for continuing to provide the treats for our meetings. Thanks to the Mystic Ranger District and the Forest Service Center here for hosting our meetings.

Housekeeping:

Carroll: Everyone should be familiar with the building, ask if you have questions.

Meeting Protocols - Issues:

Chair Blair: Hot topics to be discussed today are: Charting our direction; Energy Bill that is still floating in limbo in Congress, and very close to being passed; Meeker Ranch; Update from Doug on the OHV Task Force; Open Space letter of recommendation.

Hoyt: I would like to suggest that the Vice Chairman draft an executive summary of the meeting notes within 10 days of the minutes being sent out.

Blair: For several years we had more of a summary, and some of the Board members wanted a little more detail, particularly when we get into discussions that involve who/what an individual Board member represents. As a charter, our minutes do go to the Federal Register.

Carroll: The minutes go to the GSA website, and eventually are filed with the Federal Register on a yearly basis.

Scherrer: I was one of the folks who were adamant about the fact that we did not have consistent documentation, and we were faced with Forest Service folks doing things above and beyond their duties. Craig Bobzien came in and decided we needed better documentation, and took the ball forward. I would say without question, that the way we are doing it is the way we should continue. If I miss a meeting, I need to take the responsibility to read the full minutes. I think it would be unnecessary for one person to go to the extra work of writing a summary, just to make it easier for some of us.

Hoyt: I did not mean to get us bogged down in a discussion, and understand there is not support for my suggestion.

Blair: Is there any more discussion on this suggestion? If there is none, our legislative session starts next Tuesday, and we've spent three plus years dealing with OHV, through our system here, and the Governor's Task Force, so I would like Doug to bring us up to date on the issue.

Hofer: Several members of the Task Force have sat down with the Governor and brought him up to speed on the proposed legislation. Since that time we've been waiting and wondering if the Governor would ultimately introduce this as a piece of Governor's legislation, but in just the last day, one development has occurred. The bill in the form that it is in, and based on the recommendation of the Task Force, includes the establishment of a registration or licensing fee for OHV, and those funds would be dedicated to the OHV program. The establishment of a fee automatically requires a 2/3 vote to pass, which is a big deal, and makes it much harder, that's in the mix of the decision making right now. There is concern in the Governor's office that it may be difficult to get the legislation passed with the 2/3 vote. Right now I can't tell you whether it will get introduced or not. I suspect that if it is not introduced, maybe the draft will be shared with others in the legislature to start to develop the necessary consensus to introduce in the next session. No decision has been made to introduce this piece of legislation.

Paulson: A question for Mac, is anyone else considering introducing this legislation?

McCracken: Doug has explained it very well.

H. Thompson: Who would oppose the legislation?

McCracken: To get a 2/3 vote in either one of the bodies is very difficult, when you want to raise a new tax or introduce a fee, it is just very difficult.

Hofer: My biggest concern would be ultimately a piece meal approach to the whole body of issues. Regardless of if it gets introduced or not, it will get a lot of discussion. Pieces of the legislation may be in other bills that get introduced along the way individually. Some of us here or those of us on the Task Force may be called on to speak to the virtues of a comprehensive approach to this. A piece meal approach is worrisome.

Bobzien: The OHV legislation has a lot of similarities to the snowmobile program, which has fees. How did that go through, and what are the differences?

McCracken: There are years when you could probably bring legislation forward, and be reasonably sure that you can get it through, and then there are years when you can't. The time being right dictates a lot of it.

Blair: One, it's an election year, and two; it's a short session – neither one of those play to this type of legislation. To answer Hugh's question about who is out there to oppose it, we've held lots of meetings and fielded a lot of questions, and there are any number of parties out there that would oppose this. One of the Governor's concerns, because South Dakota is such an agriculture State, is dealing with the agriculture end of it. Also South Dakota is tight on their budget, so for us to change some of the registration process and where

the money goes might make it even more difficult. Mac is right, there are years that are easier, and one of my real concerns is putting something in piece meal. We need to have a comprehensive package, and we don't want it to fail the first time out.

Scherrer: Is there a way that the folks in the Governor's office can look at the global picture, and look at alternate sources of generating revenue that don't require a 2/3 votes. In no way do we want to introduce something that will be defeated, but surely there is more than one way to skin a cat.

Hofer: Currently in South Dakota OHV users are able to operate anywhere as long as they are licensed as a motorcycle. That is what OHV users are doing today – licensing as a motorcycle. There are already a whole set of problems that come from that, but without licensing them legitimately, there is no basis to have them on public roads, right-of-ways (ROWs), etc., and how do you regulate an unlicensed vehicle. Another issue is that it's probably the core of the funding system, the excise/sales tax which is already going into the sales fund. Without the licensing there wouldn't be much to develop a funding system with. If you continue to operate on public ROWs, and the OHV users are guarding that right, they would oppose this in a hurry.

Scherrer: Assuming that we don't get the legislation introduced this year. What, if anything, does that do to the progress that the Forest Service is making and to the planned unrolling of the additional steps necessary to get into compliance of the 2009, closed unless otherwise noted rule?

Bobzien: It won't affect our time line, we remain on schedule, but it will impact our ability to maintain and build trails.

Rowe: If it does not go through, would it be an option for the Task Force to reassemble and go back to the drawing board with a new proposal?

Blair: I can not speak for the Governor. I think all options are on the table, when we delivered our recommendation, it wasn't a gigantic document, but it had areas that could be pit falls. We knew going in that a 2/3 vote may be necessary. We left it as the Governor's call, because he was the sponsor, and it enhances the bill to have him as the sponsor. I'm still the eternal optimist, I think something will be worked out. If nothing else we'll have some really good discussion, and hear from people we haven't heard from to date.

Rowe: I would not ask you to speak for the Governor, but would like to suggest that perhaps we could re-work the legislation, so it would be more acceptable.

McElgunn: Is there a point in time when the Forest Service will lay out some mandates, if we don't have the support that was derived from this effort, won't the two collide?

Blair: Certainly there would be some mandates.

McElgunn: What is the date?

Bobzien: January 2009.

Blair: This Task Force process does not preclude the Forest Service from developing their system. We think our process dovetails with the Forest Service. We have a hard and fast rule that somewhere within the next year we will have some rules; the program will be as good as we can afford.

McElgunn: The legislation needs to understand that there are two ships moving, and if one goes off course, the other is in danger. The reality is that there will be a division of the effort. In 2009 there will be a crisis when the Forest Service has to enforce rules.

Blair: That is a good argument, but who knows what percentages of OHV travel is done on the Forest Service, it's a pretty good percentage. If that is true and we say better than 2/3 is happening out here and will be affected by rules in about one year, and there will be a fee structure, it takes away some of the arguments from the state wide program. In other words, it's going to happen anyway, come the spring of 2009 we will be there. It's a good argument, and because you folks (NFAB) are known by a lot of people, you have the chance to tap the legislator on the shoulder and tell them your concerns.

Bobzien: The recommendation from the Board about working with the State, Counties, and Tribes, is better than the National Forest being out on their own, especially with the mixed ownership we have here on the Black Hills. The other part politically is that Senator Baucus introduced some legislation, and having fees on the National Forest is not popular. To have the ability to rehabilitate some areas that have been black marks, and do all that in one package would be beneficial. This is the best track to be on right now. While there are users who would not like some of the restrictions, there are a lot of reasons that this would be a good investment. The registration fee is small in comparison to all the other costs. It's the right thing to do; we'll spend some time with the Department of Tourism later this month. This board has set the stage for this legislation.

Paulson: Would it be appropriate to re-convene the ad hoc group?

Bobzien: It would (through the Travel Management Sub-Committee), and working with Mac to know what it takes to get personal contacts, to make sure people understand the value of this. The re-establishment of the Travel Management Sub-Committee is good.

Blair: We heard a variety of numbers, but we did not hear a large objection to the fee schedule.

Scherrer: It would seem to me that that the legislators are so pressed to deal with the issues, and bills, presented to them, that unless it comes to them as a bill, the people in Pierre are not going to act on something if they don't have to.

McCracken: It's very encompassing, and it covers a large variety of people, departments, etc. It will boil down to an education process. One, it isn't feasible to get it passed in 08, it may have to go to a summer study in 08 so they can understand it, and bring it back in 09. It's a big issue Jim, and that's why I shared with you that we have to keep it in one piece of legislation.

Scherrer: If it doesn't get introduced, it won't get discussed, but even if it is introduced and lost, and least people will be aware of it and can discuss it.

McCracken: Don't ever make the assumption that it will go to a summer study.

Hofer: On a positive note, we've come a long way; we have a good set of recommendations. It's not perfect; there will have to be a lot of compromise. Sure it can be tweaked, but the fact that it is in a bill form now, and as this issue comes forward, I think it will get more discussion, and that will be prompted because there are issues in different parts of the state. The fact is we are in pretty good position to use the information we have up to this point. I would encourage everyone to look at whatever happens as the beginning of the journey, and not the end of the road. I would be disappointed if it doesn't happen till next year, but at least now we have something that represents the work of the Board.

Scherrer: Has the Governor's Task Force been dissolved?

Hofer: We have not been formerly dissolved.

Scherrer: You are the Governor's Task Force, and it would not be procedurally appropriate for the Task Force to meet and discuss this issue any further.

Hofer: We wouldn't have anything to discuss.

Scherrer: If the legislation fails to secure a sponsor, I would agree that if the bill is not introduced it will not be discussed. If we feel that 08 is not the time to advance the cause, how do we keep hope alive that we can re-introduce when we feel it is appropriate?

Hofer: This group had a sub-committee as part of the NFAB. If this doesn't pass, should we re-look at the sub-committee for focus on the BBNF issues? That's a different question than if the Governor's Task Force should re-convene.

Scherrer: It is my opinion that the Governor's Task Force is done, you've done your work, and you've given the recommendation. Has the Governor made the decision?

Hofer: No I have not heard that he has.

McCracken: The LTF is leaning toward this not being a viable product at this time.

Blair: The sub-committee of this Board took recommendations to Craig and to Rick Cables etc., but it is not empowered to put a piece of legislation together at a State level. We won't go to Pierre with a piece of legislation even if we could find a legislator do carry the load. That does not stop us from moving forward with our effort with OHVs. If we have to re-convene, or make a recommendation about fees for use on Forest Service ground, we will be able to do that.

McElgunn: A question for Craig, how much latitude do you have in setting a fee for an activity. If we get to the end of the session and the legislation does not get introduced, would it be appropriate for the Advisory Board to step back in and get involved with the Forest Service in setting a fee. Could you figure out how to get a plan moving forward?

Bobzien: We have as much latitude as Congress allows. Most of the fee pilot programs were designed to invest the money back into the program. It is a little difficult to know what a fee system would look like, but we have to look at that alternative if the South Dakota legislation doesn't go forward. And the course we take should be for years in the future. A fee system proposal would be a challenging question for the Board to wrestle with.

Paulson: The ad hoc group that Craig pulled together was the group I was suggesting that would bring forth the request for a user fee.

Blair: Any other questions or comments? My statement early on that losing the bill would damage it – well it may not. There are bills that have developed legs and suddenly pass, and I've been a part of a couple of those bills. In 1987 we were told that the Deadwood "You Bet" bill wouldn't pass, and today it's thriving. If it doesn't get in the hopper this year – we still go forward, and we take away some of the arguments and some of the opposition and confirm that this is going to happen anyway. If we have to develop a funding mechanism with a caveat that if and when we can cooperate with other Government agencies, it will happen, and it is coming to you, you can count the days. The last thing I'll do is take away the arguments that the Governor has asked us to provide, and I'll be here to support him. If this is not the time, it's not the time.

Scherrer: I would close by asking that as soon as Doug and Mac know the outcome; would you get that information out to all of us?

Blair: Because it's a short session, if we don't have some kind of an answer by the 18th, which is the Governor's Conference on Tourism, it probably won't happen. Everything speculates down by the time we get past January 20th.

Hot Topic ~ Meeker Property

Blair: As you noticed in the Rapid City Journal, we made some print and pictures regarding the Meeker property. If you were with us on our field trip this summer, we spent an hour and a half at the property and discussing the owners wishes. It is no doubt a beautiful piece of property. Mike, would you like to bring us up to date?

Lloyd: We acquired that property in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation four years ago using Land and Water Conservation funds. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation held the property until we were able to acquire it. Ina Davis owned the property.

Ina did not live on the property, the house was not livable. When we acquire properties, we do an evaluation, and we submit a report to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). There is one building that had historic value; the other buildings did not have the qualifications. We made a decision to let those non-historic buildings just molder into the ground while mitigating safety concerns. We would have to write a new decision with a new study to do something different.

We have another site, the Williams Ranch, south of Custer. It too has buildings that are in poor shape, but they have historic value, and we are struggling to keep them up. The one cabin on the Meeker place, may be able to be made into a rental cabin, a study is currently being done. The other houses are in really bad shape.

Hofer: Who is behind the effort to preserve the building, what is the issue, is it grass roots?

Lloyd: As I understand it, Jon Crane from Hill City is leading the effort.

Rowe: What are the liability issues? If a group was willing to take the liability and release the liability from the Forest Service, would that be an option?

Lloyd: We can not allow the buildings to exist as they are because of the shape they are in; we can not transfer that liability. On one of the buildings, there is a cistern under the porch, with a piece of ply wood over it, and someone could fall through.

Scherrer: Taking out the emotion, I'm certain that this isn't the first time that the Forest Service has had buildings that someone wanted preserved for whatever reason. What is there for precedence, and what are the options, based upon law and precedence? We would spend a ton of money on this, but what are the real options?

Lloyd: The option is to find a third party that can write the grants, and find the groups to restore the building.

Scherrer: So that third party would be Jon Crane.

Lloyd: There would have to be a viable entity to raise the money, and then maintain the property. I've been involved with these previously, and in one case, a group came forward to restore and operate a lodge. If it has a use, you may be able to do it. The Cold Springs School, south of Pringle dates back from the pioneer days, and there is a group that fixed it up and maintains it - that's what it would take. The Forest Service does not have the funds.

Scherrer: I hope that the options get in the newspaper.

Lloyd: Yes, they need to.

Paulson: In the Alabaugh fire, The Nature Conservancy lost a house that had been there 110 years. The biggest risk to the Meeker property would be wildfire. In our land exchanges there have been 30 – 40 houses acquired, which I personally burned before transferring the land. Everyone should keep in mind the risk of fire.

Hoobler: In seeking alternatives, one is to tear it down; the other is to restore it. Why is it that Wyoming seems to have many restored historic buildings? What if you could focus on and fix the main liabilities?

Lloyd: It's really difficult to protect people from everything that could possibly happen.

Rowe: The location is so remote, it is a walk in area, if it remains as it is, wouldn't there be very few people who would know it was there.

Lloyd: Yes, that keeps the numbers of people who access it down.

Blair: Are there any other questions? There are monies available from Deadwood, and it's up to about 25,000.00 a year, maybe that money could be used on the historic building.

Lloyd: We are working with an heir of Ina Davis and they are willing to contribute money to preserve the one cabin as well.

Blair: There are people who use that old barn wood, and it could be sold. I remember a building at Moon that folks tore down and used the barn wood.

Bobzien: I spoke with Jon Crane, and have read numerous e-mails; Jon had a lot of ideas. When Jon returns from Mexico, we will be looking at all of our properties, and we'll listen to Jon's ideas of how he can help. We'll look at the big picture, and in the mean time we will not be doing anything with this property.

REGULAR AGENDA

Blair: We will be moving to our regular agenda item at this point.

Bobzien: This next topic will be a primer on our National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and how we apply that on the Black Hills. We'll talk about tools and process. We'll have time for discussion, and clarification. It will be old for some of you, but brand new for others. Today will be an opportunity to better understand the process, and determine if there are things we need to refine or do better.

Carroll: In our last meeting, we were accused of yelling fire in the theater, because what we did was show you a picture of Spring Creek and the beetle problem. The question that came up was - what are you doing? The first timber sale happened on this Forest, and it took two years to move through the Washington Office, and now it is taking about 18 months so we are making progress!

Everett: And this, ladies and gentleman, is why Frank is in PR!

Carroll: Ed and Jackie will be taking us through the process, and what the appropriate actions are. Jackie will take us through the process of an actual case.

Ed Fischer: I have been the Environmental Coordinator on the Black Hills, for the past nine years. I've admired the work the Board has done, especially on efforts such as the travel management, etc. I'm glad to be here to try to provide some understanding in the work that we do.

Presentation Title:

Forest Service Vegetation Management Project Planning Process, or Why Does it Take You Guys So Long to Do Something? (PowerPoint/Handout)

As Ed presented his information, the following questions were discussed:

H. Thompson: Isn't it more bullet proof if you just do the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)? It only adds about 90 days.

Fischer: The EIS is a little easier if we get challenged in court.

H. Thompson: Is the Forest Plan Consistency portion the place you decide if we are consistent with State, local, and county plans?

Fischer: At this point we are striving to not surprise ourselves or the public. We are trying our best to identify all plans that we need to be consistent with. We would be evaluating consistency with all relevant plans in earlier stages, but we would be documenting it in the Forest Plan Consistency portion.

Blair: You've invested over a year before you even get to the appeal period.

Fischer: Yes, sometimes up to three years to get to the appeal period.

H. Thompson: Are you going to address the concept of changing the eligibility to appeal projects?

Fischer: I won't go real deep into eligibility to appeal projects, but I'll touch on it.

Blair: Under the Healthy Forest Initiative, are the 1,000 and 4,500 acres individual projects?

Fischer: The 1,000 and 4,500 acres under the Healthy Forest Initiative are for an individual project.

Blair: Are there any questions on this first portion? If not, we'll take a five minute break.

Jackie Groce: I am the Forest Planner on the Northern Hills Ranger District, and I will be discussing the Citadel Project Area that we recently had a decision on.

McCracken: Is that 14 month period in addition to the 14 months you just went through?

Groce: It is, but they run concurrently.

Blair: Who were the appellants on the Citadel Project?

Groce: Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, and Prairie Hills Audubon Society.

Hofer: How long did it take to have the Deciding Officer decision?

Groce: The Responsible Official that made the decision made it prior to the appeal process.

Hofer: How long did it take to uphold the decision? And who was the Appeal Decision Officer?

Groce: Craig Bobzien was the Appeal Deciding Officer in this case.

Bobzien: All these appeals were very lengthy. All appeal points raised are evaluated by other Forest Service employees, outside our Forest entirely. They go through the files and make a recommendation to us. In this case it was an easy decision because of how the Ranger had addressed the project. But back to the question of the time line, it is within the 45 days, and then 15 days to affirm the decision.

Hofer: And there is another 45 day time frame for the public to appeal, so it's a 105 days.

Hoyt: Is that period a settlement conference? So the initial decision might be modified?

Groce: Yes, we did meet with the appellants, and shared additional information.

H. Thompson: How often has that been successful?

Groce: I've only been involved in Timber Sale appeals, and our appellants on the Forest I came from did not allow much room for negotiation, but I have seen parties that have been willing to negotiate. One of the great things about this process is that it allows us to further clarify the process, so we do take the opportunity to do that whenever possible.

Bobzien: It's based on the willingness of the appellants. It's not an all or nothing deal, there may be certain things that are agreed to, but an appeal still stands, but some of the points are just changed, or a partial agreement is made.

H. Thompson: I've seldom seen the informal disposition work. I guess it is who appeals it. If you risk changing the decision, a new party may decide to appeal.

McCracken: After the 105th day, if the appellants don't agree with the decision, could they continue their appeal?

Groce: After that time the appeal process is complete, and that is when it would go to litigation.

Hofer: There is any number of reasons it could take longer.

Groce: Yes, there could be changed conditions, such as a fire that occurred in the area, or litigation.

Hofer: As an example could a discovery such as a historic site delay the decision?

Bobzien: In consultation with other laws, such as historic preservation, etc., there are parts that may need to be delayed in order to make a decision.

H. Thompson: Do you give the Counties a chance to review the documents before they go to the public?

Groce: They do have the opportunity to review the documents with the public.

H. Thompson: You have to request and be granted cooperating agency status, but that would add another 30 days to the process.

Blair: Jackie and Ed, thank you very much. Are there any other questions?

Kile: Are US Forest Service project tasks or specialized tasks taught at tribal colleges with input from the Forest Service?

Bobzien: Yes in a general sense, it depends on the discipline and location. There has been some work at Haskell in fire. At all the colleges that teach historic preservation, we've had input there. Recently we've had folks on the District teaching some classes. As far as having Forest Service on staff at the colleges, no, it's more of an advisory position.

Jaeger: We recently had a short course presented on the incident command system.

Bobzien: Does the Oglala Lakota College have a program in that area?

Sprague: It's more advanced study, graduate studies.

Blair: I did a little study on my own, and in that 100 plus years since the first timber sale in the Black Hills to the present, we've been able to shorten the process by 180 days – that is a new definition of lightening speed!

For your information, we've finalized the letter on open space and that will be sent to the congressional delegations of both Wyoming and South Dakota. A copy is being sent around for your information.

Everett: This version of the one pager is not the same as the one we voted on. The last three bullet statements are missing.

Scherrer: This document is not what we decided on, and voted on.

McElgunn: This is the final product which I received from Craig Kjar.

Kjar: The only difference is that we changed the font so that it would fit on one page, all of the bullet statements are there.

Scherrer: This group spent a lot of time on this document, when I saw this yesterday; I expected the exact document that we voted on in October. Why would we do this, these changes? I don't know who gave Pat the commission to change this. What did we spend two hours hammering out, only to have it changed?

McElgunn: The red edit marks you saw were from the word editing process, and as I understood it, this was the product that was agreed upon. I did change the heading to read the Board recommends rather than the sub-committee recommends. As far as all the other facts that were agreed upon, it was my impression that this was the final document.

Everett: The top two paragraphs are the only two that are different, these were added.

McElgunn: I put those in to clarify.

Everett: The in-holding paragraph is correct.

Scherrer: What I understand now is that this is the correct document.

Blair: Does the board want to re-affirm their vote on the white paper? (Consensus was that there is no need to re-affirm).

Blair: The last thing is an important hot topic that we discussed a variety of times, and that is the Energy Bill topic. Several weeks ago, it hit the ground and said that the Forest Service as an entity was going to be exempted out of some of that language. It was done in the House of Commerce and Transportation Committee where we were dropped off. I feel that the Energy Bill and the biomass projects both on going and in the future, is really to me the answer on the Black Hills.

I kind of listened to the carbon credit issues over the last few months, thinking that it was a California thing, and truly it applies to South Dakota now in this energy bill. If we are going to do business as usual and burn our slash piles, and we won't have a reason to use them, I'm mad about that, because on the Black Hills we've talked about this Forest being prolific in growing little trees. When we talked about the need for long term contracts to make these types of contracts viable, all those things fit to the Black Hills. I was mad that it just seems to be another stumbling block in the way of making this Forest a viable project. If that process is not a workable process, then we don't have any business being in this room, and it is not fixable.

If you managed your businesses the way we manage the Forest we would be bankrupt. We are painted into a corner because of that and it is paralysis by analysis. At a minimum even our CE projects are in the 15 to 18 month range. We are going from 25 bug trees to 400 – it doesn't work, because by the time we get ready to put the saw to the wood, it's too late. In civilian life, if you had someone who wanted to sue you, the court would litigate it and post a bond. They would make you pay for stalling the project.

The other idea that I have toyed with, is we have gone down the road for decades in refining process, but no one really has an answer - some of the Forest Service folks, if they do three or four projects, it's a career. We need to have the ability to send a request to Washington to operate like a demonstration forest. The Black Hills is the perfect place for it because it has all the components that we need to look at; wilderness, fragmentation, roads, a prolific forest. I would be willing – in the next year – to take a look at this, and simply ask. It isn't working, the affects of that are you can drive anywhere in the Black Hills, and it looks like a war zone. The bug trees no longer have cycles, they just get bigger and bigger.

H. Thompson: I would second what you are saying. Part of the role of this Board is to offer advice to the Forest Service, and we sit here a lot of the time with you advising us - we probably ought to spend a little more time looking at things that are broken, and giving you (the Forest Service) advice. I would like to second what Tom is saying, let's look at some things that are broken, and maybe the Forest Service could glean some advice from the Board.

One more comment on the open space letter, as we send this to the local governments, and Governor, they are going to want a contact person. I suggest that the contact person be Matt in Wyoming, and for South Dakota there may be a different contact. We need to add a contact person.

Paulson: You could list sub-committee members as contact people if you would like.

McCracken: Add a cover sheet that has the Wyoming and South Dakota delegations names and addresses, so that everyone knows who the letter has gone to.

Scherrer: We really spent a lot of time on the letter, and it seems like the way it ended is that it kinda just got pushed through. There was really a lot of time spent on this; Pat, Bob, Matt, this is a good document and you did a heck of a good job, and I really appreciate what you did, and all the effort you put into it.

McCracken: Who drafted the document? Let's send the document to all of the Board members and confirm that all three documents are good to go.

Blair: Let's do that with a reply due by Tuesday the 8th.

McElgunn: Who will make sure it gets to the respective Governor's offices?

Hoobler: I spoke to the Governor, he has requested an update, and I've already given it to him.

McElgunn: It would be appropriate that the Governors know about the letter.

Blair: Are there any further questions? If not, we'll move on to public comments.

Public Comments ~ Chairman Blair

Chair Blair: If anyone from the public wishes to address the Board, please do so.

Paterson: I would like to present a book titled "Thrillcraft" to the key decision makers. It's a beautiful book of pictures that are disturbing, and essays on various aspects.

Blair: The next meeting on the February 20th, we can expect an update from Mac and Doug.

McCracken: I did hear a cell phone ring and I believe it belonged to Chris Blair.

Carroll: The February meeting will be at Camp Rapid, in the theater hall. We'll have Dr. Linda Joyce, from the Forest Service, who is a scientist and who was recognized as a Nobel Peace prize winner along with Al Gore.

Adjournment:

Chair Blair: If there is no other business to come before the Board, I will ask for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made by McCracken and seconded by Thompson. Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

2008 Meeting Dates:

February 20

March 19

April 16

May 21

June 18

July – No Meeting

August 20 – Field Trip

September 17

October 15

November 19

December – No Meeting

January 6, 2009 - Tentative