

Draft Notes from Beartooth Travel Management Collaboration Meeting
March 31, 2007 0900-1200
Meeting location: Crowne Plaza, Billings, Montana

Those in attendance:

There were 152 public participants in attendance.

USFS representatives and attendees: Steve Williams, Dave Schmid, Doug Epperly, Fred Prange, Arlin Krogstad, John Lane, Linda Spencer, Beth Kern, Mark Nienow, Mike Bergstrom, Tom Whitford, Terry Jones, Dan Seifert, Lisa Subcasky, Pat Pierson, Sam Beaty, Halcyon LaPoint, Darin Watschke.

USFS meeting facilitator: Brenda Christensen

The group reviewed meeting objectives, which were:

- Review sideboards/decision space
- Review Pryor map
- Break into groups to work on Pryor map

Review Sideboards

Forest Supervisor Steve Williams assured the group that the travel planning process will continue after Dave Schmid leaves. He also indicated that Travel Planning on the Beartooth District was a high priority on the Forest and will continue to move forward.

Lynn Anderson (BLM – Recreation) indicated that the current travel plan management around the Pryors is based on a 2001 decision, which will be revised under a new planning process that is now just starting. This process should be completed by October, 2007.

Doug Epperly reviewed the definition of collaboration and how it pertains to this travel planning process, and shared information on the following:

- Reviewed how the mapping exercise works
- Re-capped expectations for participation – respect, constructive comments, share, listen
- Provided information clarifying that motorized use is not allowed in the Line Creek RNA, except along Hwy 212

If the majority in a group feels their views are not being heard when routes are coded red (no agreement) then notes could be provided on the maps to better define the points of no agreement. This should help the group move forward to complete the map review.

Question about the Lost Water Canyon RNA- Why is it identified as an RNA? What's been studied and what are the results from the study? Post-meeting response – RNA's were selected because they have natural resource values and eco-types that are important to maintain in pristine or near pristine condition for future research opportunities. Question about changing the RNA as a part of the travel management process? Response- Plan revision is the best time and place to address changes to RNA's.

Question- Since roads can affect habitat values, when will we address this issue? Response- This issue will be addressed during the NEPA phase when the interdisciplinary team evaluates effects to biological and physical resources. This collaborative planning process is intended to gather additional information on the social issues surrounding travel management

Overview of Pryor Mountain Map

Tom Whitford (wildlife biologist) provided some detail on the Lynx maps and conservation strategy. Lynx have been documented in the Beartooth and Bighorn Mountains, but not in the Pryors. The last documented observations in the Pryors were from the 1940's. However, the Pryors are managed as a travel link between the two ranges. We are able to map denning/foraging areas in the Pryors because we know the type of habitat Lynx use.

Question- If we plan to close one road and open another to create a loop, how can we be guaranteed the new road would be opened given the funding limitations for new construction?
Response- We have no control over this potential funding problem. The best way to deal with this situation would be to first build the new route, and only close the old route after the new route was constructed.

Comment that the Lynx strategy also directed no net *loss* of snowmobile areas, as well as no net *gain*.

Pat Pierson (Minerals Program Manager) provided an overview of the uranium mine issues in the Pryors. After the Red Waffle Fire, testing was completed on mine adits and tailings to determine the level of radioactivity. Although not widespread, a number of sites were identified as having levels 170-369 times background levels. The Forest Service has the responsibility to identify, manage and reduce health and safety risks associated with these mines. Certain spur roads off the Red Pryor Mountain road were closed to motorized use to reduce these risks. Although the Red Pryor Mountain road itself was not closed, folks are encouraged to travel through the mining area, but not stop. The plan is to remediate the hazardous sites this year and then reopen routes, but still restrict use on remediated sites to reduce erosion and disturbance potential.

Question- How do the radioactivity levels in the Pryors relate to the Basin area in Montana and why are the Pryor Mtn sites such an issue? Response-Pat was not familiar with levels in the Basin area, and explained again that the information we currently had indicated that there was an issue, and that to be responsible the Forest Service was taking actions to reduce the hazard.

Question- Can funds be obtained to re-route roads around hazardous sites? Response- Funding to re-route roads will likely not be available for this. Some road upgrades may occur to facilitate access of equipment during remediation work, but full re-routes are unlikely.

Question- What are the acreages for the WSA, RNA and roadless areas in the Pryors? Response-The recommended wilderness area is approx. 6,800 acres. The RNA is contained within that 6,800 acres. Do not have an acreage amount for the inventoried roadless area.

Question- Where are snowmobile play areas in the Pryors? Response- We are not familiar with any specific snowmobile play areas, but they could be identified by participants through the Pryor map review.

Collaborative Mapping Exercise

Participants were given name tags with numbers, which provided a means to split the large group into 15 smaller groups. Each group was asked to identify points of agreement on the Pryor Mountain map.

Letter size maps of lynx habitat and WSA, RNA and inventoried roadless areas, specific to the Pryors, were provided to each group.

Wrap-Up;

Dave Schmid thanked everyone for being positive and respectful during this meeting. He also requested that everyone help to self-police when out enjoying the Forest to help protect the resources and the recreation experiences.

The next meeting will be held on April 14th from 0900-1200 at the Hampton Inn.

The meeting was adjourned at 12 p.m.

DRAFT