

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Working Group (CGWG)

Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2015 (1:00 pm)

Gallatin County Detention Center, Bozeman, Mt.

Meeting called to order at 1:00 pm by Vice Chairman Jim Hart. Chairman Prinkki was absent to attend a work related seminar.

Following Working Group members, guests, and congressional staff were present:

Jim Hart, Madison County Commission
Susie Mosness (for Bill Wallace) Sweet Grass County Commission
Joe Skinner, Gallatin County Commission
Marty Malone, Park County Commission
Jeff Schmidt, Red Lodge Mtn. Ski Area
Joe Josephson, Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Scott Brennan, Wilderness Society
Jerry Furtney, RY Timber
Mike Christianson, At Large Member
Kevin Germain, Lone Mountain Land Co.
Liz Delwo, Sen. Daines' Office
Kathryn QannaYahu, EMWH
Steve Kelly, Alliance of the Wild Rockies
Jackie Musgrove, Ashland FH Grazing
Traute Parrie, Beartooth District Ranger
Ron Hecker, USFS Ashland District Ranger
Lauren Oswald, USFS Hebgen District Ranger
Mariah Leuschen, USFS
Courtney Frost, USFS Biologist
Elizabeth McFarland, USFS
Earl Atwood, Beartooth RC&D

Vice Chairman Hart called for self-introductions by those present, and offered an opportunity for any public comment prior to beginning work on the formal agenda. There were none.

Minutes from the February 4, 2015 meeting held in Livingston were reviewed and APPROVED.

Membership Application was presented for Powder River County Commissioner Rod Schaffer. Commissioner Schaffer was unable to attend the meeting due to sudden, urgent County business. Inasmuch as Commissioner Schaffer is expected to be at the April meeting, his application was tabled until he had the opportunity to attend and present his interest in person.

Earl Atwood pointed out that the current language in CGWG Operating Manual would need to be revised to accommodate additional county membership, and offered an amendment for consideration by the Working Group. Discussion resulted in further edits to the proposed amendment to correct a previous oversight in listing Big Horn County in the participating counties. It was then recommended that the remaining two Montana Counties which incorporate the Custer Gallatin National Forest, Carter and Powder River Counties, also be included so that future addition of members to represent these counties, if requested, could be accommodated without amending the Operating Manual. Joe Skinner raised the concern that adding more county member seats to the Working Group might create an imbalance of representation, and asked other members for input on this point. Others expressed some concern as well, but the point was made that there were no additional counties touching the

forest, so this would be the maximum number of county members in any event. And, it is not incumbent on every county to appoint a member.

It was then moved by Commissioner Skinner, seconded by Kevin Germain that the membership section be revised to correct the previous oversight by adding Big Horn County, and to also include Carter and Powder River Counties in the first paragraph of the section. Further to amend the Number of Board Seats allocated to County Commissioners from seven (7) to nine (9), and the total seats from twenty-two (22) to twenty-four (24). APPROVED.

Ashland District Ranger Ron Hecker presented an updated description of the Ashland District program of work, with a detailed discussion of issues, challenges and concerns related to operation of the district from his perspective. His presentation materials will be added to the CGWG archive for future reference.

During the question/answer portion of the presentation Ms. Jackie Musgrove, a landowner and range permittee on the forest introduced herself and briefly explained her interest as a grazing permittee on the forest. She indicated interest in membership to CGWG and described her affiliation with two organizations which would be listed for representation on her application. Commissioner Hart encouraged her to carry information about CGWG back to her affiliates, and explained the process for membership application.

After a short break, Lauren Oswald, Acting District Ranger for the Hebgen District, provided a project overview of the North Hebgen Project. She reported that the CG Forest staff is currently analyzing the preliminary scoping comments received for the projects and assessing these for possible changes or updates to the draft project plan. Their Inter-disciplinary team will be developing an alternatives analysis, as required under NEPA, and hopes to have that ready sometime in June, 2015. During the summer they are planning additional public engagement events to further disseminate information about the project, and by Oct/Nov 2015 expect to release the updated project plan to the public for formal comment. Ms. Oswald distributed resource maps further defining aspects of the project, a NEPA timeline chart, and other materials as suggested tools for collaborative to consider as it works to develop more specific objectives and strategies. These will be added to the CGWG resource library.

It was suggested that a CGWG field trip and options for Working Group participation in the summer schedule for the project be considered, and all agreed we will need to bring this back to the meeting in April to develop details and a schedule for events in the June-July period.

Traute Parrie, Beartooth District Ranger, updated the group on the status of two funding proposals submitted the Forest Service to DNRC under the Forests in Focus Initiative as decided at the February 4, 2015 meeting. Both proposals were funded. The Greater Red Lodge Area (GTLA) project was funded at 100% of the request, while North Hebgen Project received a partial funding. The North Hebgen proposal included requested funding to support and assist the CGWG collaborative with startup and project evaluation resources which remained in full within the approved amount (\$20,000). Ms. Parrie indicated she will need to work with the CGWG over the next few weeks to establish a process for making the approved funds available to the Working Group for its activities.

The final draft CGWG Forest Restoration Principles, or group values document was placed on the table for discussion. Commissioner Malone moved, seconded by Joe Josephson to approve the latest draft which incorporates reference to Montana statutes which define the terms "Health", "Safety" and "Welfare" so to provide clarification of the terms as used in the Principles document. APPROVED.

Jim Hart requested a short discussion to identify items that need to be on the agenda for April, 2015 meeting. Marty Malone requested that we plan some time to discuss scoping comments on the North Hebgen project, particularly those developed and submitted by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. He felt that all the members would benefit from a presentation by Joe to cover the key issues in their comments, and be able to discuss/debate any varying perspectives within the membership on these points to assess our degree of consensus. He further suggested that we consider inviting in someone from the State DNRC to discuss the MEPA process and help us identify key differences between MEPA and NEPA processes.

Joe Skinner requested that we begin to focus on action items in connection to our review on the North Hebgen (and other) projects, so that working group members can have develop a more clear idea about the work products of the committee. Scott Brennan suggested a facilitated exercize to drill down on issues outside our 'zone of agreement' on the North Hebgen project would be valuable to the members. Options for doing this could be discussed in April.

Vice Chairman Hart thanked the attendees for their time, interest and participation. The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Earl Atwood