

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Working Group (CGWG)

Tuesday, January 24th, 2017

City/County Building, Livingston, MT

Meeting Minutes

Time	Topic	Lead	Outcomes
1:00 PM	Opening and introductions; Agenda discussion, Meeting materials:	Prinkki / Atwood	Welcome, introductions, agenda reviewed
1:05	Consent Agenda: Minutes, Financial report/disbursements	Prinkki / Atwood	Vote on consent agenda items
1:08	Membership seats/applications Big Sky Chamber, Margo Magnant Park County, Steve Caldwell	Prinkki / Atwood	Review and vote on membership applications, update roster for new County appointments
1:10	North Hebgen Project Committee report; Monitoring options	Skinner / Brennan / Warden / Prinkki	Progress report; Consider options for white bark pine monitoring
1:30	Shields Farm Bill Project	USFS	Progress report;
1:45	CGWG Support Letters for North Hebgen and Smith-Shield Projects	Prinkki	Discuss and authorize support letters
2:00	Custer Gallatin Forest Service Plan Revision	Virginia Kelly, Mariah Lueschen	Progress report; Update on Community Outreach Plan
2:30	Custer Gallatin Forest Service Plan Revision Outreach	Prinkki/All	Further Work on CGWG Community Outreach events
3:30	DNRC: Forest In Focus and Good Neighbor Authority	Prinkki/DNRC	FIF & GNA update, Program Personnel changes
3:45	Forest In Focus application status	Prinkki/Arno	Update on status of FIF to County funding
4:15	February meeting plan		Agenda, location, homework
4:30	Close, if not sooner		

Attendance:

Jim Hart
Steve Caldwell
Bill Wallace
Scott Brennan
Margo Magnant
Darcie Warden
Dan Clark
John Beaudry
Jeff Schmidt
Hillary Eisen
Brent Sinnema
Blake Christensen
Ian Jones
Jerry Furtney
Mike Christianson
John Bailey
Joe Skinner
Earl Atwood

Mary Erickson
Virginia Kelley
Margo Magnant
Don Bachman
Richard Lyon
Liz Dellwo
Alex Sienkiewicz
Craig Campbell

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chairman Jim Hart. Members and guests were introduced.

Motion by Joe Skinner, second by Bill Wallace to approve consent list items, which included minutes from the December 2016 meeting, current financial report and Beartooth RC&D invoice for Jul-December of 2016 services. CARRIED

Member application for Margo Magnant was placed on the table for consideration. Ms. Magnant represents the Big Sky Chamber, and has applied to succeed Kevin Germain as the Big Sky Chamber representative. John Bailey moved, seconded by Bill Wallace to approve Ms. Magnant's application. CARRIED

North Hebgen Update: Joe Skinner presented a draft memorandum developed by the North Hebgen subcommittee to document the efforts and outcomes resulting from the Collaborative's engagement on this project. Members present reviewed the language of the memorandum, and through discussion made several minor or grammatical changes, resulting in the following text:

MEMORANDUM

Custer Gallatin Working Group Provides Major Contribution to National Forest Service Decision on The North Hebgen Multiple Resource Project

The Custer Gallatin Working Group (CGWG) is a collaborative established July 2014 to develop agreement around priority areas and approaches for project work on the Custer Gallatin National Forest and to help completion of those projects at a local level. The CGWG represents a wide range of stakeholder interests including County Commissioners, representatives of Conservation NGO's, the Skiing industry, Agriculture and Ranching, Quiet and Motorized Recreation, Hunters, Anglers, Outfitters, Mining, Economic Development and the Timber Industry.

The Forest- in- Focus (FIF) funding played an instrumental role engaging the Custer Gallatin Working Group and the general public. The CGWG formally began collaborating and interfacing with the Forest Service in 2015 on the North Hebgen Multiple Resource project. The CGWG members worked to educate themselves and the local community by organizing several informational meetings, which brought in speakers that were experts on topics such as Silviculture, Grizzly bear and ungulate habitat and fire prevention and mitigation. The group attended all Forest Service (FS) informational meetings and field trips. CGWG members had numerous meetings and interaction with the Custer/Gallatin Ranger National Forest to further understand the multidimensional aspects of the project. This education and information gathering process culminated in the CGWG writing comments to the Draft Environmental Assessment. The interface with the FS and the comment letter facilitated some changes in the Draft EA and promoted some additional ideas that will benefit the project and make it more acceptable to the public.

The CGWG interface with the FS and comment letter affected the final EA in these practical and identifiable outcomes:

- CGWG questioned the scientific reasoning to justify a treatment along Highway 191 at the Yellowstone Park boundary to create a Wildlife Safety Corridor. In response, the FS dropped this treatment from the project. In the interest of finding a solution to wildlife fatality on that section of road, the CGWG was the catalyst in organizing a meeting involving Montana Dept. of Transportation (MDoT), YNP, Custer Gallatin National Forest, MFWP, Montana Highway Patrol and the Gallatin county Commission. As a result of that meeting, MDoT is already in the process of implementing a seasonal nighttime speed restriction. In addition, representatives will continue to explore and consider other options that are reasonable in cost and have high success ratio such as signage, lighting, education and real time alerts to the public and truckers.

- CGWG raised concern of the miles of temporary roads planned for construction and the way these roads would be decommissioned. In response to those concerns, the FS is reducing the number of miles of temporary roads from 21.1 down to 15.6, resulting in a reduction of 5.5 miles. The FS will be accomplishing this by eliminating one helicopter treatment and changing three helicopter treatments to hand treatments, which will not significantly affect the viability or commercial potential of the entire project. The FS is taking a stronger approach to decommissioning temporary roads because of the concern of the effectiveness of closure of these roads in the past. In this project, the FS is committed to adequately using closure devices and decommissioning methods that will impede travel to unauthorized use when the timber contract is completed.

- Because the unique whitebark pine stands in the area are an important indicator of general forest health and an important indicator of habitat of wildlife especially Grizzly bears, CGWG has from the outset advocated for long-term monitoring of these treatments to insure that data obtained from this project can help in the design of future projects. CGWG is currently expending resources and coordinating a project between the FS, Rocky Mountain College and CGWG. This project would establish baselines and monitor the effect of the treatment on these stands with a citizen science monitoring and educational component.

-CGWG had great concern over the proliferation of invasive weeds because of this project and a perceived lack of commitment from the FS to manage any weed increase long-term. In response to CGWG comments, the FS is writing into the document a quantitative commitment to keep the weed level at or below 3% of the landscape in the project area. CGWG will also work with the FS and the Gallatin County Weed district to revitalize the Upper Madison Weed Management District to insure that noxious weeds are not passing from the project to private land and vice versa.

-CGWG has provided financial help that funded many activities which lead to the letter of support for the North Hebgren Project. CGWG and its members provided in-kind match of \$8450 through donated time, travel, rooms, etc. A grant of \$15,000 is being secured from FIF of which approximately \$8000 will be used for white bark pine monitoring in the North Hebgren District. The engagement of the CGWG helped to secure \$75,000 through Forests in Focus funding to assist with the North Hebgren project.

CGWG thanks the National Forest Service for their close working relationship to help our members and the public in understanding and analyzing the project. The comments submitted resulted in changes and adjustments to the project, which the CGWG considered improvements to the project. END

Members discussed agreed the memorandum would be an excellent formal communication from the CGWG regarding its engagement on the project, and evidence of the value resulting from the collaborative effort. It was moved by Steve Caldwell, seconded by Bill Wallace to adopt the communication as an approved message for use by members when explaining the CGWG or advocating the value(s) of collaboration. CARRIED

Members also requested the Memorandum be placed on the web site, and be shared in letter form with specific agencies in the near term.

DNRC Update: Craig Campbell, Bozeman DNRC office was on hand to give an update regarding current activity related to Forests In Focus Funding. He distributed and explained a recap of State Investment in Federal Lands Management with details on human resources allocated to projects, as well as the number of projects and results including key deliverables, numbers of acres treated, and totals of MMBF harvested or projected for harvest.

Craig also explained that current grant proposals under the 2017 FIF were on hold indefinitely as the Legislature works through its analysis on funds availability and priorities. They expect that some or all

of these funds would come back on the table, at which time the grant proposals including the CGWG application would receive further consideration.

Forest Plan Revision: Virginia Kelly (USFS) reported further on the November 30th release of the assessment and individual reports on line. Feedback on these documents will be taken through January. Virginia was particularly interested the members' reaction to the 130 page report in terms of the level of detail and readability. She solicited comments or suggestions from anyone concerning those aspects.

Virginia reminded the members that outreach meetings were already planned by USFS during February/March at Camp Crook, Ashland, Bozeman, Cook City, Billings, Red Lodge, Big Timber, Gardiner, Livingston, West Yellowstone.

Members also discussed whether it would be possible now to determine the additional locations, if any, that County Commissions might want to host further outreach events. Consensus was that it would be best to assess that in February or March once the USFS meetings were winding down, to determine if there are any perceived gaps in coverage that should be addressed. And, having any County outreach meetings after the USFS schedule was completed might be an advantage in maintaining momentum of public engagement overall.

Smith Shields Project: Alex Sienkevicz and Mary Erickson, USFS, reported on the status of Smith Shields decision, just released in December. The members overall were interested in developing an additional communication related to this project, similar to the one shown above for North Hebgen, that would document CGWG efforts and participation with Smith Shields, and which could also be used for advocacy and demonstration of collaborative engagement. Members Bill Wallace and Steve Caldwell agreed to work together on gathering information to be used for the document.

Leadership Discussion: Jim Hart referred the members to the proposed amendment to the Operations Manual which would allow for an appointed County Commission representative who is not a current Commissioner. Upon discussion it was decided that further work was needed on the proposed amendment to address concerns about maintaining the County emphasis on leadership, while making it possible for a non-Commissioner to be elected Chairman. A revised proposal will be developed and brought back for consideration at the February meeting.

Next Meeting – February 8, 2017 – Livingston

Meeting adjourned 4:00 pm