

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Working Group (CGWG)
Wednesday, September 14th, 2016
Meeting MINUTES

Time	Topic	Lead	Outcomes
9:00 AM	Opening and introductions; Agenda discussion, Meeting materials:	Hart / Atwood	Welcome, introductions, agenda reviewed
9:05	Consent Agenda: Minutes Financial report/disbursements	Hart / Atwood	Vote on consent agenda items
9:08	Membership seats/applications	Atwood	Review and vote on membership applications
9:10	North Hebgen Project Committee report;	Skinner / Brennan / Warden	Progress report
9:15	Shields Farm Bill Project	Malone / FS, Tera Little	Progress report; When do "boots hit the ground"
9:30	Local Government Center: Survey and facilitation of CGWG membership	Blake Christensen	Develop priorities for collaboration. Set agenda/timelines for project completion
10:30	Forest Plan Revision Committee; Wild and Scenic Rivers Wilderness	Forest Service; Virginia Kelly, Mariah Luschen & Pam Novitzky	Forest Service process for WSR and Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation Process
11:00	Hyalite Shooting Range	White/Forest Service	Status Update
11:10	DNRC: Forest In Focus and Good Neighbor Authority	Mo Bookwalter / Matt Arno/ DNRC	Forest in Focus update Good Neighbor Authority Local Government Forest Advisor activities
11:30	Collaborative Funding Sources		Discuss sources; Internally and externally
11:45	October meeting agenda		Staying on task
12:00	Close, if not sooner		

Attendees:

Marty Malone (Chairman pro tem)
 Bill Wallace
 Darcie Warden
 Blake Christensen
 Mike Penfold
 John Bailey
 Jackie Musgrove
 Jerry Dell
 John Beaudry
 Bent Sinnema
 Barb Cestero
 Darold Zimmer
 Ian Jones
 Jerry Furtney
 Mike Christianson
 Earl Atwood

Mary Erickson, USFS
 Lisa Stoeffler, USFS
 Jason Brey, USFS
 Virginia Kelley, USFS
 Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan, USFS
 Scott Barndt, USFS
 Pam Novotsky, USFS
 Don Bachman
 Liz Dellwo, (Sen. Daines)
 State Senator Hinkle
 Jeremy Carpenter (Rep. Zinke)

Meeting called to order at 9:00 am by Chairman Pro tem Marty Malone. (John Prinkki and Jim Hart were both absent.)

Attendees introduces themselves, and the agenda was adopted.

Consent agenda items, including the previous meeting minutes and current finance/disbursements report were moved for approval by Bill Wallace, seconded by John Beaudry. CARRIED

There were no new membership applications under consideration.

NORTH HEBGEN Project Committee report: Since the adoption of the CGWG Official Comments adopted at the July meeting, nothing new was reported by the Committee. A project report from Jason Brey, Hebgen District Ranger was made available and reviewed. Updated timeline for the project anticipates a December, 2016 release of the Decision Notice which will begin a 45 day objection period. A final decision is expected in March 2017.

SMITH SHIELDS Project: Scoping notice for the project has been released. It was noted this is the first project to utilize a regional strike team, which is headed by Tera Little. Marty Malone reported that he is not having much success with obtaining area stakeholders' participation on the project committee, therefore it may be up to individual CGWG members to bring forward comments, if they have them. Marty Malone asked for an explanation from the USFS staff present regarding the reduction of acres within the project proposal, now about 1,600 down from approx. 2,200 in the original proposal. The answer was that it was done to maintain economic viability of the project due to the cost of roads. Mr. Malone indicated more acres could be available on private lands but those might need access through the Forest. He will follow up on a letter sent to Tera Little from a local (Mr. Seacrest) on the matter. Regarding further work on linking private land opportunities with the project, USFS Staff indicated they would need an understanding of what activities would happen on the adjacent lands. Malone requested a conference call with Tera Little and Alex Sienkiewicz to study the issue further.

HYALITE SHOOTING RANGE discussion: Lisa Stoeffler, USFS provided an update to the members regarding the status of the emergency order banning shooting at the Hyalite area. Efforts have been underway to identify alternatives, including the establishment of a shooting range, however no promising alternative has been identified yet. The process is moving forward with scoping comment period ending this week. They want to launch further public engagement for October, and invite any CGWG members with interest to participate. Jeremy Carpenter from Representative Zinke's office, appealed to the Group to assist the Forest Service with engagement on this issue however possible. Additional comments from others present addressed various aspects of the current problem at Hyalite, and the historical use of the area.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER Facilitation: Blake Christensen reviewed elements of the previous survey, and conducted a further session to clarify the survey results and more clearly define action items for the CGWG as we move forward. Breakout groups were asked to work on various topics and reported their conclusions to the group. Summarized thoughts were captured and will be distributed after the meeting electronically.

CGWG will need to match up to the following timeline regarding the Forest Plan Revision:

No FS meetings are planned before year end. During Oct-December they will be finalizing the assessment. In late January to June, 2017 FS will develop plan for additional public meetings, and may need assistance from County Commissioners to work with the team on enhanced public meetings in each district. During 2017, the FS will be addressing Wild and Scenic Rivers and Wilderness areas, and will developing the Draft Plan. During 2018, the NEPA phase will be underway. Throughout, there will be a continuing emphasis on education and public outreach to maximize public engagement.

DNRC – Mo Bookwalter and Matt Arno were not able to attend. In advance of the meeting Matt Arno provided a letter to be distributed concerning Funding Availability to Counties in 2017 to facilitate commissioners efforts in working with the Forest Service to improved forest management in their Counties. Applications for the funding will be accepted through January 15th 2017. For additional details, please contact Mr. Arno at 406-542-4239.

The DNRC/National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative will be hosting a workshop in Missoula later in September and wanted to include collaboratives in the event wherever possible. A poll of attendees did not turn up any members whose schedule would permit in-person attendance, but Michael Christianson did offer to sit it remotely if the the live-streaming option was available in the Billings area. Contingent on that possibility Jerry Dell moved, seconded by Ian Jones, to authorize reimbursement to Mr. Christanson from CGWG funds in the event there is a registration fee or other costs as needed. CARRIED

Next meeting: There will be not meeting in October. The November meeting will likely need to be moved by a few days to avoid conflict with Election Day. Specifics and location to be announced later.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

9-13-16

Custer Gallatin Working Group
Forest Plan Revision Subcommittee Meeting
Location: Custer Gallatin Forest Supervisor Office
10 East Babcock Ave., Bozeman, MT 59771
3:00-5:00pm

Attendance: Jeff Schmidt, Jackie Musgrove, Darold Zimmer, Barb Cestero, Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan, Pam Novitzky, Virginia Kelly, Blake Christensen, John Beaudry, John Prinkki, Darcie Warden

Forest Plan Revision – Virginia Kelly -- Fiscal 2017 big year for Forest Plan revision

Schedule

Fall 2016: Draft Assessment of Existing Conditions and the preliminary version of need for change **will go out to public late October/early November tentatively**. At that time the public has 30 days to comment. The Forest Service is not scheduling meetings for the release of the draft Assessment. The plan will be posted on web and copies available in all of the libraries. The Forest Service will also utilize social media and press releases, along with the mailing list and all available online. Throughout the fall the Forest Service will also start designing what the public engagement and public meeting strategy looks like for developing the plan portion of Forest plan revision.

Fall-Winter 2016: The Forest Service will take feedback from the public into consideration for final assessment and preliminary need to change.

Winter 2016-17: The final version of the Assessment and Draft Need for Change will be released at the end of 2016 (Intend to have it out prior to Christmas).

Late January 2017-Fall 2017: Forest service will implement public engagement strategy and get public feedback on the development of the forest plan.

2017 develop draft plan, wilderness inventory and evaluation, wild and scenic river evaluation.
A draft plan out to the public with wilderness and WSR around New Year.

Virginia notes that new information is welcome after the assessment is released. They will use it throughout the planning process.

Wild and Scenic Rivers – Pam, gave overview of process

Eligibility

Identify river segments named on USGS quad maps (over 1,000 named river segments in the CGNF). No hierarchy with naming of rivers. No flow requirements.

Methods: GIS, several rivers and creeks named with the same name so work to separate those out.

- Identification of named rivers
- Look for free flowing nature (this forest most rivers will be free flowing. River, creek, stream all the same under this act).
- Outstandingly remarkable values: scenery, recreation, geology, fisheries, wildlife, cultural, other –botany. These qualities have to be river dependent.
 - o Use region of comparison to determine the remarkable values. CGNF needs to define the region of comparison. Each value could have a different region of comparison.

- Possible to look at values as one forest but yet to be determined
 - CGWG could work with the experts for these values to determine the region of comparison
- Forest Plan Revision team will run the current eligible rivers through the eligibility process again.
- Determine Level of Development
 - Wild
 - Scenic
 - Recreational
- Forest Plan Revision stops at eligibility. Congress needs to act in order for the rivers to be designated. The FS manages the eligible rivers so that qualities are not degraded over time. Management area includes a quarter mile on either side of the river.

CGWG Coordination

Questions asked by the subcommittee:

What level of involvement do we want and how do we structure that?

- Coordinate with the Forest Service (also means CGWG shares information about forest plan revision with the public)
- Help get the information and public engagement opportunities out to the public
- Help bring local knowledge and information back to the CGWG and the Forest Service

Has the working group set goals for forest plan revision yet?

- Yes. The subcommittee identified the WSR process, wilderness designations, desired conditions as areas of focus. The CGWG would like to reach a consensus with what FS is proposing. Similar to N Hebgen project process.

Desired conditions: The Forest Service needs to figure out how to develop desired conditions. CGWG FPR subcommittee would like to work with FS on the approach.

Suggested approach: The Draft Need for Change comes out in December. Have a meeting between FS and CGWG about what has to be done and evaluated.

Commissioner Prinkki asked if a CGWG member could join the FS meetings when determining how to develop desired conditions. Virginia will see if that is okay.

CGWG Outreach Strategies

- County commissioners with district rangers host a public meeting. Especially if the FS is not going to hold public meetings after the Assessment comes out. Goal of those meetings is to help the public understand what is in the document and the upcoming process.
- FS works with CGWG on talking points, ie: fire, not doing travel management planning..... (inform public what the planning process is and what it isn't)
- Use CGWG as a way to present and provide feedback to the FS about the process

****Determine when Custer Gallatin Working Group members are speaking for our organizations/group or when we are representing the CGWG.**

Wilderness Process – Pam, overview of process

Step 1 – Inventory (really broad outreach. Map will look big but all areas won't go into wilderness recommendation)

Size – 5,000 acres or larger or less than 5K typically adjacent to Wilderness or RWA or National Park

Improvement – avoiding roads of certain maintenance conditions, air strips, cell phone towers, developed recreation facilities. Set back from roads.

Prior Recommended Areas from Previous Forest Plans. 7 Recommended areas from previous forest plans.

Step 2 – Evaluation

- Naturalness character
- Solitude/primitive unconfined recreation, ie: no roads or trail access for backpacking, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing
- Areas under 5 K acres – practicable for preservation and use in unimpaired condition
- Resource values, ie: areas effected by forces of nature, timber harvest, timber treatments, invasive weeds, past harvesting, habitat connectivity, geologic
- Manageability for Wilderness Character

Step 3 – Analysis

NEPA Phase of Forest Plan:

- DEIS
- FEIS

Step 4 – Recommendation

- Based on analysis and input received during public participation and documented in the forest plan decision document

Then up to congress to act or not act on the recommendation

USFS methodology

- GS exercise
- Go out and validate: determine what was missed
- Look at aerial photos

** The FSR planning team is depending on the knowledge of the forest service employees who have the first hand field information. The experts will review the mapping exercises. Then ground truth the real character of what is shown on the map. Jackie noted that local knowledge is really important to help inform the body of information.

Next Meetings

Oct-Dec: may not be much to do until the New Year when a draft comes out. We need to wait for the FS documents to give the WG something to work on.