

Custer Gallatin Working Group

Special Meeting – July 5, 2015 – West Yellowstone, Montana

In lieu of its normal July 2015 business meeting, the Custer Gallatin Working Group hosted a presentation on July 15th at the Holiday Inn in West Yellowstone, Montana.

This meeting was organized by the CGWG North Hebgen Subcommittee to promote awareness and disseminate information about the proposed North Hebgen Project, and to coincide with a scheduled field tour conducted later in the day by the USFS North Hebgen Ranger District.

Angela Mallon, Stewardship Program Manager, Montana DNRC was our invited speaker. Angela gave an excellent presentation and led an interactive discussion on the goals, benefits, purposes and long term effects of various forest treatments.

Attendees came away with four main take-away points:

- Use direct, targeted outreach (phone calls and mailed invitations) to specific members of the public to get them involved
- Use open dialogue to delve into the complexity of the reasons why we do forest management (habitat! goods and services! fire protection!)
- Find out who your constituents trust, and build relationships upon that trust
- Steer away from using “forest health” as a justification for forest management.

After the presentation most of the group attended the Forest Service field trip in the afternoon.

Forest Service staff present: Keith Konen (Silviculturist), Teri Seth (NEPA Team Leader), Fred Jones (West Zone Fire Mgmt. Officer), Jay Fassett (West Zone Asst. Fire Mgmt. Officer), Susan Lamont (West Zone Vegetation Manager), Scott Barndt (Ecosystems Staff Officer), Todd Stiles (Natural Resources Specialist), Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan (Public Affairs Specialist) and Jason Brey (District Ranger).

Field Tour Stops

1. Visited a treated unit from the Hebgen Basin Project. Location was in the woods at the truck stop just north of the ranger district office. The focus of this stop was to look at a treated unit. The treated unit was done for fuels reduction, with an emphasis on being sensitive to visuals given it's close proximity to the highway and town. We discussed the success of closing down the temp. roads that we used to treat the unit, the need for ongoing work and continued monitoring of invasive weeds, and what the ground looks like a couple of years after we have burned slash piles.

2. This stop visited an approximately 1.5 acre spot fire from the 2007 Madison Arm fire. The idea at this stop was to show the public what an opening would look like in a group selection treatment for North Hebgen. A group selection treatment is where we put openings (cut most to all trees) of approximately 1-3 acres in size across 20-30% of a treatment unit. The effect at the stand level is a multi-story and multi-aged stand.
3. This stop we visited treatment unit #26 along Rainbow Pt. road. Unit #26 is a proposed clearcut to treat the mistletoe infection in the stand. A good discussion ensued regarding the need and merit for the treatment there, with statements both for and against the treatment.
4. This stop was just off of Rainbow Pt. road near the Horse Butte area and focused on a proposed pre-commercial thinning treatment. The focus was to show the public and the CGWG what a typical pre-commercial thinning unit looks like. Units are typically dog-hair thick lodgepole stands that we propose to thin out on a variable spacing primarily for fuels reductions needs.

In addition, we provided two aerial photos depicting the Horse Butte/Rainbow Pt. area in 1995 and in 2011 showing what the area looked like post treatment then, and how it has filled in now, and a second handout illustrating the overall effectiveness of road closures in the area over a period of time. Overall effectiveness of the closures that were monitored in this document is 88%.

The CGWG North Hebgen Subcommittee is working on additional information events which will be co-scheduled with further field tours by the North Hebgen Ranger District. The next proposed date is August 5, with a planned emphasis on wildlife topics.

The next regular meeting of the Working Group will be on August 12th in Bozeman, Montana.