

MEMORANDUM

To: Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Collaborative Committee, the City of Helena, resources, stakeholders, members of the public, and media.

From: Ecosystem Research Group

Date: November 24, 2015

Re: Summary and notes for the November 4, 2015 meeting of the Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Collaborative Committee, a follow up email from Gayle Joslin, and John Gatchell's email re: treatments in inventoried roadless areas.

1 SUMMARY OF TENMILE COLLABORATIVE MEETING

2 Wednesday, November 4, 2015. 1:33 to 4:05 pm. City - County Building Room 326.

3 Attendance

4 Collaborative Committee Members – Chairman Joe Cohenour, conservation organization representative;
5 Co-vice Chair Jordan Alexander, fire community representative; Co-vice Chair Mike Bishop, citizen-at-
6 large representative; Commissioner Cory Kirsch, county government representative; Jeff Chaffee,
7 commercial use representative; Gary Marks, commercial use representative; Eleanor Morris, conservation
8 organization representative; and Doug Powell, citizen-at-large representative

9 Committee Members Absent – Ron Alles, City of Helena representative; Commissioner Mike Murray,
10 county government representative

11 Stakeholders - Gayle Joslin, Helena Hunters and Anglers Association; Robert Rasmussen, Prickly Pear
12 Land Trust Trails Director; Norm Rostocki

13 Resources – Sarah Elkins, City of Helena administrative point-of-contact (POC);; Ben Irely, Ecosystem
14 Research Group facilitator and coordinator; Brad Langsather, City of Helena technical POC and substitute
15 for committee member Ron Alles; Marshall Thompson, U.S. FS Partnership Coordinator

16 Media – None present

17 Decisions

- 18 1. The October meeting notes were approved by the Committee.
19 2. The December Collaborative meeting will be held on December 16, 2015 from 1:30 to 4:00 pm in
20 Room 426 of the City - County Building.
21 3. The January Collaborative meeting will be held on January 13, 2016 from 1:30 to 4:00 pm in Room
22 426 of the City - County Building.

23 Bin Items

- 24 1. The Committee would like more information about how resources are affected by the nine key issues
25 and concerns.
26 2. What does "fragmented management" mean from the previous Collaboratives recommendations
27 under Goal #8?
28 3. Get a map of proposed Wilderness Areas in the project area.
29 4. Would the Committee accept mechanical treatments in private land buffers within proposed
30 Wilderness Areas?

31 Action Items

32 1. Ben Irely will send notes from the October meeting for Sarah Elkins to post on the website that will be
33 slightly amended from the version sent out to the Committee before this meeting.

34 **MEETING NOTES FOR WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 4, 2015**
35 **CITY-COUNTY BLDG, RM. 326**

36 Meeting called to order at 1:33 pm

37 **1.) Welcome, introductions, approve meeting notes and field trip summary by Chairman**
38 **Cohenour. Decisional. Objectives: Welcome. Committee members and attendees introduce**
39 **themselves. Approve meeting notes. Committee gets a summary of the field trip. Discuss field trip.**

40 [Chairman Cohenour welcomes all attendees.]

41 [Meeting attendees briefly introduced themselves.]

42 Q: Are there any corrections or additions to the meeting notes?

43 A: The notes you all received have been slightly amended in the interim by Chairman Cohenour and Ben
44 Irely. The amended notes will be sent to Sarah Elkins to post online.

45 If there are no other corrections, meeting notes are approved as amended.

46 I asked Angie Grove and Gary Marks to summarize our last field trip with the Forest Service [FS] to
47 MacDonald Pass.

48 It was a great field trip. We had quite a few representatives from the FS there including District Ranger
49 Heather DeGeest, Vegetation Program Leader Sharon Scott, Wildlife Biologist Denise Pengeroth, and
50 Partnership Coordinator Marshall Thompson. It was interesting to get out there and see the terrain and
51 what they are proposing and to hear them talk about how the treatments correspond with the landscape
52 itself. Mrs. Scott kept pointing out the finger ridges and grasslands that drop into Rimini and how they
53 can be incorporated into the treatments. It was such a nice day, we were able to pick different locations to
54 sit down and talk about things. Heather DeGeest and her staff were quite helpful. We looked at some of
55 the stands of dead lodgepole and Sharon Scott went over some of the ways to deal with that. We talked
56 about age class and in some of the park areas we talked about mechanical versus hand treatments along
57 the fringe. We talked about weeds and reintroduced non-native grasses.

58 Q: Did the FS feel there was great potential for weeds to be introduced with treatments?

59 A: The FS is finding that any prescribed fire which exposes weed seeds that were already there to sunlight
60 results in a flush of weeds after the fire. The mechanized equipment they are using to work in these areas
61 are washed before they are brought on-site. This phenomenon is dependent on what the seed bank is on a
62 particular site. This also occurs in beetle killed areas as soon as the trees lose their needles and there is
63 more sunlight, there will be this flush of weeds, especially mullein and thistle. I think it is mainly the
64 shade intolerant weeds. I think this is similar to what they are seeing in the prescribed burns, you take off
65 that needle mat and the weeds suddenly have the right conditions.

66 Denise Pengeroth said that same thing on the field trip, that there are often tons of weeds that come up
67 after fires. The FS also talked about undulating the clearing on either side of the Continental Divide Trail
68 [CDT] to work with the topography so that it doesn't look like a power line clearing. The FS is going to
69 make the clearing tie in with features such as rock outcroppings up there. They talked about the public
70 safety risk of dead trees falling across the trail and the cost of keeping it clear as it is. That is the purpose
71 of clearing a swath. They said the trail had recently been cleared but on the field trip, there were already
72 several spots along the trail where we had to navigate downfall. The section where the trail drops down
73 off of the ridge is actually an old road and the FS would like to decommission it. As they decommission
74 it, they will allow the trail to move back and forth so it is not a straight shot and doesn't look like a road.

75 There is a private in-holding up there and there are negotiations going on right now with the Open Space
76 Council to try to acquire it in an exchange.

77 We talked about the use of mechanical equipment up there and the opportunities to access those areas
78 from existing road systems instead of marching equipment down the trail. These access points will be
79 used for removing material where that is the best case scenario for the site.

80 One thing that was clear in some of the spots along the way is that it would be a monumental task to try to
81 clear that amount of dead and downed wood with hand crews.

82 The Forest Service has difficulty keeping hand crews hired to do this work because it is so difficult. That
83 reminds me of the memo that Ben Irely sent out regarding his conversation with Gary Ellingson of
84 Northwest Management, Inc. In that memo Gary Ellingson talks about the two main vectors for weeds in
85 treated units: exposed soils and the burn spots. Heather DeGeest also talked about how you mitigate
86 weeds and how they have been finding that the more chemicals you put on the ground, the more weeds
87 you have because you kill all of the naturally occurring forbs. Doug Powell talked about an experience
88 he's had with this.

89 I was involved with treating an acre of toadflax in the Lake Meadow area about 15 years ago. It killed all
90 the weeds at the time but now there is nothing but cheat grass and toadflax and it seems to get a little
91 worse every year. This was treated by broadcast spraying and I see a difference between broadcast and
92 spot spraying. In this case, broadcast spraying killed all the natives. If you end up broadcast spraying,
93 you've got to replant to get the natives to come back. When we talk about heavy equipment and burning,
94 we've got to talk about how to do it in a way that keeps the weeds out.

95 The FS talked about burning the meadow system and how the trees are colonizing the edges of the
96 meadows and the meadows are getting smaller and smaller and that they want to clear those colonizers
97 out and Doug Powell talked about the need for a healthy seed source for those areas.

98 The Collaborative Committee is still looking at the opportunity for other field trips in the future including
99 getting to Cabin Gulch. Denise Pengeroth thought it would be a great example of fuel treatments and fire
100 effects.

101 **2.) Continued from last meeting: Points of contention and points of consensus regarding fuel**
102 **treatments in the project area by Ben Irely. Informational. Committee discusses the points of**
103 **contention and points of consensus regarding fuel treatments in the project area.**

104 Ben Irely, Doug Powell, and Joe Cohenour met this morning with John Gatchell to talk about roadless
105 areas and heavy equipment in roadless areas and possible options for treatments in roadless areas. John
106 Gatchell talked about using a Slashbuster and smaller equipment. We talked about using four wheelers to
107 service equipment instead of marching the equipment back and forth to a road. John Gatchell's main
108 concern is the Continental Divide area and creating that corridor along the trail and decommissioning a
109 road up there. We tried to come up with other options than just using a feller-buncher to do the fuel
110 treatments. We talked about using the meadow system to assist in doing the work. We talked about
111 burning fuels in place instead of pile burning. Another option is to lop and leave the logs in place and let
112 them rot. Another option we came up with was to leave everything as it is and create buffers around
113 them. We talked about expanding the meadows through prescribed fire only.

114 We talked about the need to maintain the park areas and that there is kind of the perfect system of open,
115 park-like areas with road access for working in those areas. They could work off of that big park at the
116 top of the divide and then pull out the existing road when they are done.

117 Q: Doug, it sounds like your area of interest is towards lighter mechanical treatments, is your rationale
118 that it would have less of an influence on the roadless or wilderness characteristics?

119 A: Yes, very much so. Also, my concerns are with weeds and herbicides.

120 Q: One thing that came up in the field trip and is pertinent here is that the FS has a standard of no more
121 than 15% soil disruption, which includes tracks, burn areas, and whatever else they need to do. Isn't that
122 right, Marshall?

123 A: Yes.

124 At the breakfast meeting we talked about small area burns for greater edge effect with fewer disturbances.
125 We also talked about not burning at all. And we talked about burning fuels in place, we don't really know
126 about burning the fuels in place and how severe of a burn that would be.

127 We talked about that a bit on the field trip, that these burn piles are severe burns and if you don't have to
128 pile than you don't need equipment in there.

129 The thing to remember here is that a lot of these places are at high elevation with thin soils, and if we lose
130 the soils that are there, it'll take a long time for those soils to regenerate.

131 A lot of the soil erosion can be controlled by what time of year the work is being done, like when the
132 ground is frozen.

133 Q: Did you all talk about roads and temporary roads this morning?

134 Yes we did. John Gatchell talked specifically about Jericho. This again is not a standard road, it is not
135 cut into the hillside, it was build just through use over time. John Gatchell wants to use that to do the
136 work and then decommission it. He also wanted us to go forward, looking at the Bozeman Municipal
137 Watershed Project ruling [[LINK](#)] not as, "This is what we can get away with in Inventoried Roadless
138 Areas [IRA]", but instead, "How can we get outcomes that improves the roadless character of the area?"

139 John Gatchell sent a summary of what he suggests, based on the discussion you all had this morning. He
140 supports the following principles for roadless treatments: [1] No new roads, [2] avoid temporary roads,
141 [3] obliterate all tracks, [4] maintain or restore healthy native plant communities, [4] recommend
142 minimum tools that minimize the disturbance necessary to get the work done, [5] consider actions to
143 enhance roadless character and values long term. Then he talked just a little bit about how the
144 management goals might be different along the CDT with the focus on recreation and safety along that
145 corridor. He suggests that the CDT should not be used as a track.

146 Sharon Scott recommended that same thing during our field trip.

147 John Gatchell further recommended for the CDT, "Use a combination of hand crews and a small sized
148 Bobcat and Slashbuster."

149 Q: Does anybody have an understanding of what these Slashbusters [[LINK](#)] are?

150 A: Picture a big rototiller on an arm off the front of a machine. It can deal with brush, small diameter
151 trees, and slash.

152 The Elkhorn Working Group calls them masticators. They can take down sizeable trees. There are
153 videos of them on Youtube.

154 The only thing about those masticators is that you're pretty terrain limited as far as where you can work.

155 Masticators basically convert the form of the fuel to chips. It is similar to some of what we are doing on
156 City property. I think Marshall Thompson talked a little bit about the problems with mastication when
157 following it up with prescribed burn.

158 Each area is going to be case-specific as far as what can and should be done.

159 One of the other things we talked about was not getting wrapped up in specific prescriptions for each
160 area, like, "Use a masticator here, and a 'this or that' there." Instead, look at the desired outcomes.

161 John Gatchell really emphasized that he has a lot of trust in Heather DeGeest and her team. John Gatchell
162 feels that if they say they are going to do something, they'll do it and that they really have the public's
163 interest in mind when planning this stuff out, whether it is public safety or water quality or what have
164 you.

165 John Gatchell emphasized on the field trip that down the road this Collaborative could really hold the FS's
166 feet to the fire so to speak, by requiring long-term monitoring of these areas and updates as far as how the
167 projects are being implemented. Heather DeGeest also talked about, depending on how long it takes to
168 get these projects implemented; the landscape could change in the interim. And these are 10 to 15 year
169 plans so after that, they will become stale.

170 Just to emphasize what Doug Powell said earlier, I think John Gatchell is looking at the Bozeman
171 Municipal Watershed ruling in terms of what kind of plan Montana Wilderness Association can get
172 behind and be in support of, as opposed to what we can get away with when doing treatments in IRAs.
173 John Gatchell seemed to be excited about using this project as an example or model for how to get this
174 kind of work done. Also, it seems that one of the points the ruling made was that by improving water
175 quality, the FS is enhancing one of the characteristics of roadless areas, in that IRAs tend to be sources of
176 high quality water.

177 There seems to be a disconnect here, that even in light of the ruling, we still seem to be operating under
178 the assumption that mechanized treatments could or would jeopardize the roadless or proposed wilderness
179 designation, so we are trying to downsize the IRA treatments that the resource apparently needs.

180 We just need to think about the best way to treat these areas without changing the diversity of the plant
181 communities.

182 But a track hoe does not have many pounds per square inch. I've seen some projects that they've done and
183 you can hardly tell they've been there.

184 That is true, but in this country, that kind of work tends to leave little scars for years. You can see some
185 of those scars up there from horse logging operations.

186 The court ruling elucidated the fact that we can do work in there without jeopardizing the roadless status
187 of the area. I think we are in agreement that work can be done that benefits the resource as far as public
188 safety and water quality are concerned, without jeopardizing the roadless status.

189 This morning we talked about the option to cut the trees down and burn them in place.

190 When you are looking at the burn windows that the FS has to operate in, it just becomes unrealistic that
191 you can get a burn to successfully consume those heavy fuels if they are left in place. Throughout this,
192 we need to keep in mind why we are all sitting here. We are sitting here because of the high likelihood of
193 a catastrophic wildfire doing significant damage to our watershed. Don't get me wrong, I think these
194 discussions about the impacts of equipment are valid, but these treatment impacts may be small potatoes
195 when compared to the impacts of such a large scale, high intensity wildfire. I think we want to balance
196 those two impacts, that is why we are here, we are here to come up with ways to mitigate the impacts of
197 large scale, high intensity wildfire on the City of Helena watershed while minimizing the impacts of our
198 mitigation treatments.

199 Right now the FS only has one springtime burn window. They end up with those late spring conditions
200 where those heavy fuels still have retained a lot of moisture into that window and cannot be burned. That
201 is what we would be faced with if we dropped the trees and tried to burn in-place, it simply wouldn't be
202 effective. If we can't remove the material, pile burning seems to be the best method that we have to get
203 the work done. It is obviously better if we can remove the material and lower cost. With those burn pile
204 sites, we are finding that we have to go back in, scarify the burn site, replant with native seed and install
205 erosion control structures, which is expensive. The City has had to do the same thing on some of their

206 projects. If we don't want to go in and treat those burn pile spots with chemicals, we have to scarify and
207 replant to keep the weeds at bay.

208 It seems to me that a lot of the project area is outside the City's municipal watershed. So maybe these
209 methods of fuels reduction to prevent the degradation of the City's water quality would be best for the
210 municipal watershed, but aren't appropriate for areas outside the City's watershed.

211 [What follows has been supplemented by notes from the breakfast meeting, the Committee's consensus-
212 based decisions and ground rules agreement, and from conversations had after the Committee meeting.]
213 Part of the impetus for the meeting this morning was that the Committee's ground rules and consensus
214 document states that if a Committee member does not agree with a particular decision or
215 recommendation, that person must clearly articulate his or her concern to the larger group, and if possible,
216 that person must work to develop a solution and present that solution to the Committee for the
217 Committee's consideration. While consensus has not been formally tested regarding using mechanized
218 equipment to treat fuels in IRAs, it seemed that Doug held the strongest and most vocal opposition
219 perspective to using mechanized equipment in roadless areas. Therefore, in an effort to move ahead on
220 this issues in preparation for the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement [DEIS], it made
221 sense to have a small get-together with Doug Powell to help him craft a statement of his concerns and
222 some possible solutions to present to the Committee as a whole. Doug Powell came up with several
223 solutions at breakfast, including: (1) use some sort of minimum tool analysis in roadless areas, (2)
224 decommission all tracks in roadless areas, (3) make use of the meadow systems for staging, (3) disturb
225 less than 15% of the soil, and (4) focus private land buffer work on areas directly upwind of Colorado
226 Gulch residents. Doug Powell also came up with a few other treatments that he would like to see
227 analyzed as possible options for use within IRAs, those included, (1) leave fuels in place and prescribed
228 burn, (2) drop fuels to the ground and leave them there to rot without prescribed burning, and (3) drop
229 fuels and leave them in place and burn.

230 Q: Regarding the second option, I've been around in that country long enough to know how quickly the
231 downed lodgepole can rot. And then the question was, if those heavy fuels were dropped but remained in
232 place, could they contribute to a higher intensity fire?

233 A: If those fuels are left in place, they could contribute to a higher intensity fire down the road.
234 Regarding those options for treatment that Doug suggested that include prescribed fire, that would really
235 limit our ability to use fire effectively. On the one hand, those heavier fuels would need to be dry enough
236 to be consumed effectively by fire, on the other hand, if the relative humidity was low enough to consume
237 those fuels, it puts us in a riskier position regarding the safety of that prescribed fire.

238 Q: Could we create some sort of rubric for minimizing the impact of the tools used to treat areas?

239 A: That is what I was trying to get at earlier, I think the term 'minimum tool' is a bit misleading, I think
240 the concept we are looking for here is really 'minimum disturbance' because we are not necessarily
241 looking for the littlest machine, we are looking for the least disturbance.

242 So then I think there is a conflict that is introduced regarding minimum disturbance, where the whole
243 point is to create a disturbance that creates a mosaic on the landscape to provide fuel breaks and have less
244 risk of catastrophic fire. I guess I see a conflict between uses of the word disturbance.

245 Q: Are we talking about just IRAs or the whole project? Because clearly we want a mosaic across the
246 whole project, but what about within IRAs specifically?

247 Q: Is the distinction within the word disturbance between disturbances associated with mechanical
248 treatments as opposed to fire disturbance?

249 Q: Or is it just about soil disturbance regarding mechanical treatments?

250 Q: And I think that is Doug Powell's whole point, he is concerned with what treatments will create the
251 least amount of soil disturbance. Is that correct?

252 A: That is correct.

253 Q: What about the impact to soils from catastrophic fire?

254 A: I thought the fires in the Elkhorns and in Yellowstone would have been catastrophic fires, but that is
255 not what I have seen.

256 A: But we definitely know that we do have the fuel loading and conditions in areas to end up with a
257 catastrophic fire and so it comes right back to the question, "How do we deal with that fuel load?"
258 Because all indications are that we are headed for catastrophic fire.

259 Just a comment, one of the things I heard you share from your conversation with John Gatchell is that
260 perhaps, stepping back and looking at the overall values for these areas, perhaps IRAs really are the place
261 to start these discussions about what to protect and how to balance things. It is easy to dive into the
262 weeds as we are here, but perhaps that is the place to start. Perhaps the question is "What are the unique
263 values of these areas that we are trying to protect and how do we balance treatments to try and protect
264 those values?"

265 It seems like we were trying to get to that with the survey.

266 The Roadless Rule gets at that same notion when it says that treatments are warranted when they will
267 improve or enhance roadless area values.

268 And that is essentially what I was getting at. Some of those values were watershed values and the court
269 ruling seemed to say that those were values that warranted treatments to protect.

270 Q: Why are we distinguishing between the roadless areas that are within the municipal watershed and
271 those outside? If we are concerned about these values in general, why distinguish? Wouldn't we want to
272 come up with consensus for treatments in all of the IRAs within the project area? If our concern is
273 biodiversity in roadless areas, why would we make this distinction?

274 A: It seems like the distinction is that the most important areas for producing water, such as along the
275 flume, should receive more intensive treatments to protect the City's water supply, while areas more
276 removed from the City's municipal watershed in the IRAs could be left with jackstraw for habitat and
277 other values.

278 I guess I don't care whether I am walking in an IRA or down some other ridge in the project area, no
279 matter where, I want to have a healthy forest with biodiversity, no weeds, and no new roads. I want the
280 whole area to be healthy forest while still assuring public safety and clean drinking water. I think it's all
281 about the mosaic of treatments.

282 Q: But I can see where Doug Powell is coming from and where the distinction might be important. I
283 think he is saying that he is more willing to accept the potential impact of treatments in IRAs to other
284 roadless area values such as biodiversity in order to protect the municipal watershed. He is less willing to
285 risk those other roadless area values outside of Helena's municipal watershed. Is that right, Doug?

286 A: That's correct. But I'm not against treatments outside the municipal watershed for, say, safety
287 concerns. I think we addressed that this morning when talking about treating upwind of Colorado Gulch
288 residents.

289 I think we have the same concerns across the board, IRA or not. I think we have a lot of conversations
290 that have yet to be had here but we are only focusing on the IRAs, when really we want the same
291 protections across the board. I don't think the conversation is just about the IRA, yet it seems to be
292 dominating our conversations. I think we really need to look at the project as a whole.

293 Maybe what we want to do then is look at best practices for treatments as a whole and then go back and
294 look at how that might change in an IRA. Just to reemphasize, I don't think what we are talking about as
295 far as reducing soil disturbance is necessarily the smaller equipment, at least that is my sense of it.

296 Tracked equipment certainly disturbs the soil less than wheeled vehicles since there are less pounds per
297 square inch. You can get a bobcat with tracks on it that will be about as good as anything.

298 I don't think we want to be at the micro-level as far as trying to determine equipment type, though I will
299 say that sometimes when you are dealing with small equipment, it doesn't have the capacity to reach over
300 to do the work over here and keep its position, so small equipment can actually end up moving around a
301 lot more, which potentially creates more of an impact. It's kind of like when people say they want to
302 horse log an area, when in actuality, some of the most intense soil disturbance comes from horse logging.
303 Just imagine dragging logs with a horse.

304 I agree, I think we want to set the standard for minimizing soil disturbance, not make recommendations
305 about equipment.

306 I think, as John Gatchell said, we need to set some principles and I think most of what he sent me in the
307 email we will want to adopt.

308 I think it comes down to pile burning or not pile burning.

309 I don't even think we have that kind of expertise.

310 The FS has these trained experts in all of this stuff and they have years of experience doing it. If you only
311 knew how hard it is for operators to work under FS contracts, they really set some high standards and
312 they are out there watching for soil compaction and moisture content of the soil and what not. The FS is
313 really out there watching out for the public interest on these projects.

314 [BREAK]

315 **3.) Continuation of previous agenda item, by Ben Irely. Informational. Objective: Committee**
316 **determines points of contention and points of consensus regarding fuel treatments in the project**
317 **area.**

318 There are some things that we can see from this survey you all filled out recently. Taking the first and
319 second questions, you can see that there is more support for mechanized treatments in roaded areas. With
320 Question 3, compared to Questions 1 and 2, there seems to be some consensus around limited use for all
321 of these treatment types in areas of high recreation value. Also, across the board for Questions 1 through
322 3, we are looking at most Committee members preferring prescribed burning and treating private land
323 buffers for treating these three types of areas. Question 4 shows that public safety and water quality,
324 quantity, and timing were most important, followed by habitat, recreation, timber production and lastly
325 scenery.

326 [Please see the survey results document for the results of this survey, what follows is the discussion
327 generated by survey results.]

328 I have a comment on Question 4, I was impressed at how much consensus there was here, as you can see,
329 nobody ranked public safety and water quality below a score of three on the importance scale.

330 I think that's right and the ranking seems to follow with the goals of this Collaborative.

331 One of the things Heather DeGeest said at the field trip was that the private land buffers will be done not
332 as a power line swath around private lands, but will be done if the landowner is treating their property,
333 then the FS will carry over with similar prescriptions for the designated distance into National Forest
334 lands.

335 This project being a Joint Chiefs Initiative, we will be doing private land buffers in partnership with the
336 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), when they are doing projects on private lands. We are
337 analyzing all possible private land treatments as part of this NEPA process.

338 To date, 24 landowners have taken advantage of the NRCS program in the area and there is a lot more
339 funding coming for these projects.

340 I want to bring up that for me, treatments in roadless areas is not just about protecting the biodiversity, but
341 these projects will have impacts on the wild character of the IRAs if machines are used, specifically the
342 sights and sounds. These impacts will be temporary, but they are going to have to go into these areas
343 multiple times. There's a wildness to these areas, running motorized equipment will change that.

344 You will have to watch some of these pieces of machinery work. They are so fast, they are in and out of
345 there so quickly. I can almost guarantee you that the noise impact will be less than if the work is done
346 without these machines.

347 But will the area be more wild after they are done?

348 No, but it will have less impact on wildness than the alternative.

349 This is clearly an important topic for this Collaborative and one that we keep returning to, but in the
350 interest of time and the interests of productivity at this meeting, can we table this discussion for a later
351 time?

352 [All agree]

353 The survey gives us a sense of where we are. We can see a common interest and values, although there is
354 some balance or difference of opinion on how to best protect those values.

355 I feel like, in light of the information about the Bozeman municipal fuels project, some people might
356 change their answers.

357 would change some of my values based on the field trip. I thought we should stay out of the roadless
358 areas because I thought the conservation community would get so mad about it that the whole project
359 would be held up. But when talking to people in the FS about this issue, they said that they felt that, with
360 their expertise, they could mitigate those impacts.

361 Q: We could have Ben Ireby rework the survey and send it out again. Would you all like to do that?

362 [General agreement]

363 Q: Would you all like to suggest changes for him to incorporate into the new survey?

364 I would like to see the survey test if people draw a distinction between treatments in the municipal
365 watershed and outside the municipal watershed.

366 Q: I'm unclear about that, I thought most of the project area was inside the municipal watershed.

367 A: It is actually mostly outside the municipal watershed.

368 The point of having those areas outside municipal watershed included in this project is to stop the major
369 wildfires from jumping over into the watershed. And also those areas such as the South Helena area are a
370 part of this project area to help meet the other goal of public safety. But I can see where Doug is coming
371 from, these areas don't contribute to municipal water.

372 I think it would be helpful for Ben to put something in there for people to include their caveats that go
373 along with each treatment type and each area.

374 Instead of coming up with a different survey, I think we need to start drilling down. I think we should
375 discuss the matrix of treatments and land types and then decide what needs to go into the survey.

376 [General agreement]
377 [Review of acceptability of treatments in types of areas from last meeting notes]
378 Q: Where do we have a proposed wilderness area?
379 There is no designated wilderness areas in the project area.
380 That is correct. But there could be. We are about to decide that. But this is why I am the one that is so
381 into these roadless areas.
382 I take exception when you say that, I don't think it is fair to say you are the only one supporting roadless
383 areas. There is not anyone here that has said they want roads in roadless areas. I think you need to
384 recognize that nobody wants roads in the roadless areas.
385 Q: But will mechanized treatments affect the ability of this area to be designated as wilderness in the
386 future? That is my question.
387 A: Not according to the Bozeman Municipal watershed decision.
388 But we need to do our job that we were designated to do. We are not here to propose wilderness.
389 Q: I agree. But my question is, "Should we preserve the values that led to this wilderness proposal and
390 could lead to future proposals, or not?"
391 I don't see why we can't both protect those values and do these treatments.
392 My recollection from the last meeting is that this Collaborative will distinguish between proposed
393 wilderness areas and IRAs when considering these treatments.
394 I didn't think we came to a decision.
395 Q: It seems like there was plenty of consensus around temporary roads being allowed in roaded areas and
396 private land buffers. How does the Committee feel about temporary roads in roadless areas? It seems
397 like there is little to no support for that in this Committee.
398 Q: To clarify, there are roads in some of these IRAs now. How would the Committee feel about using
399 those roads to assist in mechanical treatments?
400 A: Yes, there are some roads that already exist that could be used to aid treatments and then would be
401 decommissioned after being used for treatment.
402 John Gatchell suggested that we could set a timeframe for pulling those roads out. He said that we should
403 follow up in say three years and ask, "Is the road decommissioned and if not, why not?"
404 Q: Then the question is, "Is this Committee comfortable with the FS using these roads and then pulling
405 them out afterwards?"
406 A: Yes
407 A: I think there needs to be some caveats there depending on the road. Some may be strategic roads for
408 fire suppression. There are some roads that we use currently to chase lightning strikes and it is helpful. It
409 is a road up in Rimini in the IRA. We should consider these types of roads being left for fire suppression.
410 Q: To clarify, will this kind of thing be addressed in the DEIS?
411 A: The alternatives in the DEIS will specify which roads will be decommissioned, but will not talk about
412 the level of decommissioning. As I've said before, there will be an opportunity for this Committee to be
413 specific, road by road, in their recommendations down the line. Rather than going road specific when the
414 DEIS is released, you could put in a general recommendation that the FS consult with this Committee or
415 Tri-County Fire before decommissioning roads to determine if it should be just gated, or if stream
416 crossing are left in, or what not.

417 Why don't I we send out the matrix including the range of treatment types and land classifications as a
418 survey and you all can fill that out, including putting caveats down and we can talk about it at the next
419 meeting?

420 [General agreement]

421 **5.) Strategy for generating comments on the DEIS by Ben Irej. Informational. Committee**
422 **continues the conversation regarding the process for developing comments on the DEIS.**

423 Does the Committee has some ideas about how to best develop comments on the DEIS. Do we break it
424 up by geography or chapter or something?

425 I'd almost advise against breaking it up. So many elements are tied to one another, which might make it
426 hard to break up in a sensible way. It will be hard to get whole picture that way.

427 I feel like this matrix survey will help us comment across the project. When we get the DEIS we will
428 want to look for problems with it from our perspective and things we haven't considered, but we should
429 be able to apply this matrix to the whole project. I think it will be hard to break it up by area or topic.

430 This is going to be a big document. I think the idea here is not to make decisions for the whole in
431 Subcommittee, but to possibly digest pieces of it in Subcommittee and bring that back and present it to
432 the whole group for consideration.

433 When we signed up for this we all knew it was going to be a lot of work. I think we should be prepared
434 to all read it. If we don't, I don't think we'll be able to do what we've set out to do.

435 Here's another strategy, once we have this matrix survey completed hopefully we could just reflect that
436 back into the DEIS. I think we should be thinking about doing that when we fill out this matrix survey.
437 My hope is that each of us will really put a lot of thought into the matrix survey and be prepared to share
438 their answers. If we can do that, I think a lot of our work will be done.

439 I would suggest reading the executive summary of the DEIS, then reading the preferred alternative, all the
440 time referencing this matrix survey. I think that will be the bulk of it for generating these comments. Not
441 to say we don't need to read the whole document.

442 I think both Heather DeGeest and John Gatchell pointed out that it will be helpful for us to have these
443 overarching principles and to apply those to the document, like no new roads in roadless areas.

444 Q: I think we can get those principles from our answers to the matrix survey. But what is the definition of
445 a road?

446 A: John Gatchell said this morning that a successfully decommissioned road does not convey water,
447 people, or weeds.

448 A: The Roadless Rule defines a road as a motor vehicle travel way over 50 inches wide unless designated
449 and managed as a trail. A road can be designated as temporary or classified and the road defines both
450 temporary and classified roads.

451 In my experience, comments are most helpful when they say why something doesn't work for the
452 Committee and when they offer an alternative solution to the problem.

453 The comments that do the most good have more substance than just, "I don't like that." You definitely
454 want to provide some substance with your comments.

455 One last thing I will reiterate from John Gatchell and Doug Powell, we may want to avoid being too
456 specific, like "Use this piece of equipment here." Instead we may want to be more outcome-based in our
457 comments.

458 We don't want to micromanage the project with our comments. I think when Ben Ireys gets those surveys
459 out it will make generating comments a lot easier.

460 Q: Are we going to get a presentation from the FS on the DEIS?

461 A: I think we could have some folks come in and answer specific questions. There will also be several
462 public meetings.

463 **6.) Public comment and meeting summary, by Chairman Cohenour. Informational. Objectives:**
464 **Allow time for the public to comment on Committee business. Summarize the meeting.**

465 Q: Do people still want to skip the meeting in December?

466 A: Provided the DEIS doesn't come out.

467 We've got the presentation from Sonny Stiger to give and we've got to go over the results of the matrix
468 survey.

469 Can we do that in January?

470 We've got to do these things before the DEIS comes out.

471 Any indication as to when the DEIS will come out?

472 It is likely to be finished before the Christmas holiday but will not be released until after the first of the
473 year. I think it is a little optimistic that it will be finished before the first of the year.

474 Let's plan to meeting next on Wednesday December 16 from 1:30 to 4:00 pm and let's plan the following
475 meeting for January 13, 2016 from 1:30 to 4:00 pm. Helena is having an open house at the Water
476 Treatment Plant to showcase the system and recent improvements. The open house is from 6 to 8 pm.
477 Vice Co-chair Alexander will be there to answer questions about this Collaborative. The FS is having an
478 open house on November 19 at 5 pm at the MACO building to discuss forest planning. The Montana
479 Forest Restoration Committee will be having their next meeting on November 30 from 10 am to 1 pm at
480 RDO Equipment in Missoula. John Gatchell is actually on that Committee. They are going to be talking
481 about treatments in IRAs at that meeting. Chairman Cohenour plans on going, so if you want to get a
482 hold of me, we can carpool over from Helena.

483 Marshall Thompson sent out a really helpful email, answering a bunch of questions that we had as bin
484 items. I handed out a hardcopy of that email, so if you get a chance, have a look at that.

485 Is there any public comment on what was talked about here today?

486 [Gayle Joslin] I do appreciate this Committee's willingness to look at different points of view and ways
487 to address protecting the City's water supply and private property issues and fire. But if you have not had
488 a chance to read the information I forwarded to Ben, I encourage you to do so because those papers reflect
489 the science of fire and treatments that do not work with large fires, which I think applies to this project. I
490 am a native of Helena, as I know many of you are, and I live within this project area, as does Doug. I've
491 lived there for 48 years, I've seen a lot go on there and I've seen numerous FS projects come and go but
492 not until now have any of them proposed going into these roadless areas. Someone said here earlier that a
493 road is not decommissioned until the FS decommissions it. In fact, with some of the FS projects in the
494 past, they have failed to follow through on some of the stuff they said they would do. The Clancy-
495 Unionville area has the Brooklyn Bridge Road that was promised to be reduced to a trail, that road has
496 never been reduced and now the decision is to leave it open. The idea behind that again, I think, is for
497 fire. So you can expect some of these other roads to go the same way. And my worst fear seems to be
498 coming true here. That this Committee will sanction actions in the IRAs, intending to reduce fire threats,
499 but instead having all manner of unintended consequences. Assumptions being made for the Tenmile
500 South Helena area may not be correct. Dead and downed trees are not to be feared as fuel. They do
501 decay. They become soil and they are absolutely essential to nourish healthy ecosystems. This is not to

502 say that you cannot take trees out for all manner of reasons. But in our IRAs, this is something we need
503 to consider, the value of our roadless areas is not just that there are no roads. There are other values out
504 there. Treatments for the purpose of fire control are likely to have little effect and are likely to become
505 very expensive. A fire would have to occur in the location of the treatment within three to five years for
506 that treatment to have an effect and, once treated, that area would have to be treated every few years to be
507 effective, thus becoming cost prohibitive. That is all in the literature that I sent out. Not to mention that
508 this frequent cycle of treatments would never allow the land a chance to heal, which would reduce the
509 wilderness value of these lands. And they would be riddled with routes, roads, and tracks that would
510 introduce weeds, reduce security, contribute to sedimentation, and open up and dry out what would
511 otherwise be a much moister environment where fire would be prohibited from moving quickly. No
512 longer would we have these amazing wild, quiet, and magical places within a few miles of Helena. And
513 thousands of people in this community may not feel that their values and interests are reflected in the
514 direction that this Committee is taking, so I would urge you to think about what I've said. Thank you for
515 letting me speak here today.

516 [Marshall Thompson] I wanted to add something to the email I sent out earlier, I brought with me the
517 documents George Wuerthner pulled comments from. I'd be happy to talk to folks about fire effects
518 versus fire behavior if you have questions about what Mr. Wuerthner said. And I'd be happy to hand out
519 copies of the papers Mr. Wuerthner cited.

520 [Robert Rasmussen] Some of the roads that exist in these IRAs, that the Committee suggested earlier
521 could be used for treatment and then decommissioned, may not be suitable for modern-sized vehicles, so
522 we want to make sure that road alignments and prisms are adequate for the intended uses.

523 Meeting adjourned at 4:04 pm.

524 [Gayle Joslin submitted the following message on November 5, 2015 and asked that it be included in the
525 record for this Collaborative] As a member of the public, I am not allowed to speak at the collaborative
526 meetings until the meeting is closing. This is a frustrating situation as members of Helena Hunters &
527 Anglers repeatedly submitted application to participate in this committee, and we believe we reflect many
528 voices in the community that are not currently represented, or in the case of one member, are being
529 constantly challenged by the rest of the committee. But our participation was rejected. So there is no
530 opportunity to voice our concerns except through more public processes. As a result, I hope to get some
531 alternative views out to the public through the IR and on-line.

532 We are deeply disappointed that the integrity of our Inventoried Roadless Areas will be destroyed to the
533 point that they will further severely compromise big game security in this area and other wildlife habitat,
534 and it will no longer be suitable for Wilderness classification. It is important to recall that the Lazyman
535 IRA did accomplish this high achievement, save for a pocket veto by President Regan. Stumps on the
536 landscape are made all the time. Wilderness, and the habitat it provides, is not.

537 To my surprise a letter-to-the-editor from George Wuerthner, summarizing scientific literature I
538 submitted earlier, appeared in this morning's Independent Record [[LINK](#)]. Since this more succinctly
539 expresses the points I was hoping to make yesterday, I would appreciate it if you could passed this
540 information along to all members of the committee as well — not everyone may get the newspaper.

541 **JOHN GATCHELL'S EMAIL TO ANGIE GROVE RE: TREATMENTS IN INVENTORIED**
542 **ROADLESS AREAS**

543 I would encourage you to urge the Committee to endorse the following principles for treatments within
544 inventoried roadless:

- 545 1. No new roads constructed.

- 546 2. Avoid temporary roads.
547 3. Maintain healthy native plant communities/ minimize disturbance.
548 4. "Maintain or enhance roadless area characteristics" (see step 3 in Judge's ruling, pages 40-41) by
549 decommissioning unneeded roads/ tracks (at end of project) in both IRAs.

550 Rather than prescribe to the FS what tools (machines) to use, it was suggested this morning that the FS be
551 asked to do a **minimum tools analysis for roadless treatments**, to determine how to accomplish
552 treatments with the lightest hand/ least disturbance.