

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Ecosystem Research Group

Date: January 28, 2016

Re: Meeting notes for the Wednesday, January 13, 2016 Collaborative meeting from 1:30 to 4:00 pm in City - County Building, Room 426

1 **Attendance**

2 Collaborative Committee members - Chairman Joe Cohenour, conservation organization representative;
3 Co-vice Chair Jordan Alexander, fire community representative; Jeff Chaffee, commercial use
4 representative; Gary Marks, commercial use representative; Eleanor Morris, conservation organization
5 representative; Doug Powell, citizen-at-large

6 Committee members absent – Co-vice Chair Mike Bishop, citizen at large representative; Ron Alles, City
7 of Helena representative; Commissioner Cory Kirsch, county government representative; Commissioner
8 Mike Murray, county government representative

9 Stakeholders - Paul Ferry, citizen; Stan Frasier, Prickly Pear Sportsman's Association; Gene Haire,
10 citizen; Bill Hallinan, Wild Divide Chapter of Montana Wilderness Association; Hank Hudson, Wild
11 Divide Chapter of Montana Wilderness Association; Patrick Johnson, citizen; Gayle Joslin, Helena
12 Hunters and Anglers Association; Robert Rasmussen, Prickly Pear Land Trust

13 Resources - Matt Arno, Montana Forest Restoration Committee; Sarah Elkins, City of Helena
14 administrative point-of-contact (POC); John George, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Ben Irely,
15 Ecosystem Research Group facilitator and coordinator; Brad Langsather, City of Helena technical POC
16 and substitute for Committee member Ron Alles; Marshall Thompson, U.S. Forest Service Partnership
17 Coordinator; Pat McKelvey, Tri-County FireSafe Working Group; Rocky Infanger, Tri-County FireSafe
18 Working Group

19 Media - None present

20 **Decisions**

- 21 1. The November meeting notes were approved by the Committee.
22 2. The February meeting will be held on February 10, 2016 from 1:30 to 4:00 PM in Room 426 of the
23 City - County Building.

24 **Bin Items**

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

32 **Action Items**

- 33 1. The Helena National Forest is now accepting comments on the desired conditions for the Forest Plan
34 Revision process; those comments are due to the Forest Service by Friday, January 15, 2016 at 5 PM.
35 2. Matt Arno will get Julia Riber's PowerPoint presentation on the Roadless Rule posted on their
36 website, Committee members should view it there.
37 3. Rocky Infanger will get his PowerPoint presentation to Sarah Elkins for posting on the Tenmile South
38 Helena website.
39 4. Doug Powell will get his PowerPoint presentation to Sarah Elkins for posting on the Tenmile South
40 Helena website.
41 5. Ben Irely will reach out to Committee members not in attendance to see if they can commit to
42 fulfilling their assignments for focus areas when the DEIS comes out.
43 6. Ben Irely will update the DEIS commenting strategy memorandum according to this month's meeting
44 notes on that topic.

45 MEETING CALLED TO ORDER at 1:33 PM.

46 **Topic: Welcome, introductions, approve meeting notes by Chairman Cohenour. Decisional.**
47 **Objective: Welcome, Committee members and attendees introduce themselves, approve meeting**
48 **notes.**

49 [Chairman Cohenour welcomed all attendees.]

50 [Meeting attendees briefly introduce themselves.]

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

52 If there are no other corrections, meeting notes are approved.

53 **Topic: November 30, 2015 Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) Meeting by Chairman**
54 **Cohenour, Eleanor Morris, and Matt Arno. Informational. Objective: Chairman Cohenour,**
55 **Eleanor Morris, and Matt Arno relay their experience at the MFRC meeting.**

56 The MFRC is trying to figure out the next thing they want to do now that they have their restoration
57 principles out. One thing they are thinking of doing is reaching out more to collaboratives such as ours.
58 Right now they are exploring how that might look and what that might mean. They are also looking at
59 establishing restoration principles centered around specific forest types.

60 [Chairman Cohenour submitted copies of the MFRC Annual Report to the Committee.]

61 The principle idea of the MFRC is the help the Forest Service do a better job on the ground.

62 [Matt Arno submitted copies of the MFRC Guiding Principles and Recommended Implementation
63 document to the Committee.]

64 One of the things the MFRC would like to do is to make sure that the information contained in these
65 reports is out there for other collaboratives to use. The idea is to help keep other collaboratives from
66 having to reinvent the wheel. There was a very diverse group that worked long and hard to put these
67 principles together. All forest collaboratives seem to have the same basic goal, to see more good work
68 happen on the ground. Therefore, MFRC wants to be inclusive and bring other collaboratives in.

69 There was a great presentation at the MFRC meeting on the history of the Roadless Rule. It provides a
70 really good understanding for where it came from and what it means. We will get that presentation out to
71 this Committee to review.

Contact the Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Collaborative Committee at: tenmilecollaborative@helenamt.gov

72 **Topic: Lolo Forest Restoration Committee's experience commenting on National Environmental**
73 **Policy Act (NEPA) documents by Matt Arno. Informational. Objective: Tenmile Collaborative**
74 **Committee gains insights from Matt Arno of the Lolo Forest Restoration Committee regarding**
75 **commenting on NEPA documents.**

76 The Lolo Forest Restoration Committee got to where we wanted to make specific comments to the Forest
77 Service that would show up as mitigation measures in the NEPA document. That is, the Lolo Restoration
78 Committee wanted to say, "If you are going to do that action, please consider doing 'x' to mitigate the
79 effects on 'y'". But some of these documents end up having 40 or 50 pages of mitigation measures, so it
80 has gotten to the point where the mitigation measures defeat the purpose.

81 The point is, collaboratives should be thorough in providing mitigation measures to the Forest Service in
82 their comments, but you don't want to overdo it. Sometimes there are pages upon pages of mitigation
83 measures and it gets so complex that it really becomes impractical. Ask yourselves, "Are all of these little
84 things we decide should be mitigated going to prevent us from meeting our big goal of treating this big
85 area?" It is a balance.

86 When writing comments, ask yourselves. "How does the project fit or not fit with the principles of the
87 collaborative?"

88 A comment like, "We don't want to see any more roads closed" is probably too general. You probably
89 want to make a more specific comment about a specific road. Also, it is helpful to propose solutions that
90 would be acceptable to you if you disagree with something. And make sure you do not just tell the Forest
91 Service what you don't like, tell them what you do like as well.

92 There will probably be some things that this collaborative does not come to consensus on in their
93 commenting, we try to make it clear to the Forest Service both what we did come to consensus on and
94 what we did not.

95 **Topic: Discuss draft strategy for commenting on the Tenmile South Helena Draft Environmental**
96 **Impact Statement (DEIS) by Ben Irely. Decisional. Objective: Discuss, amend, and approve a draft**
97 **strategy for commenting on the Tenmile South Helena DEIS and discuss, amend, and approve draft**
98 **focus areas for Committee members.**

99 [Please read the Commenting Strategy Memorandum for a better understanding of this discussion.]

100 We will reinsert the link to the Telegraph Vegetation Project into the Commenting Strategy
101 Memorandum. The Forest Service suggested that the Telegraph Vegetation Project would be a good
102 example of what the Tenmile South Helena DEIS will look like. Keep in mind that the purpose and need
103 is different for the Telegraph Vegetation Project than for the Tenmile South Helena Project.

104 The Forest Service will likely be able to provide the Collaborative with two printed copies of the DEIS,
105 printed summaries for each Committee member, and compact disc copies for the entire collaborative. But
106 the DEIS will come out on the web before those copies are provided. We will need to figure out a way to
107 get the document off line and into the hands of each Committee member as soon as possible. The Forest
108 Service plans to have the DEIS posted on their website by Monday, February 1, 2016. The DEIS will be
109 published in the Federal Register by the middle to end of February. That is when the 45-day comment
110 period will begin.

111 The next meeting of the Collaborative will be held Wednesday, February 10, 2016 from 1:30 to 4:00 PM
112 in Room 426 of the City - County Building.

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113 When the DEIS is released onto the web on Monday, February 1, the Collaborative should start reading
114 Chapters 1 and 2 and reading their assigned resource areas for Chapter 3. The Committee should get their
115 comments to Ben Ireby by Tuesday, March 1, 2016 for compiling. Between February 1 and March 1,
116 Committee members should meet in study groups based on the assignment of resource areas and should
117 reach out to stakeholders for their input. Ben Ireby should send the compiled comments to the Executive
118 Committee for review and send them out to the wider group by Monday, March 7, 2016. The Committee
119 should meet all day on Wednesday, March 9, 2016 to test consensus on each comment. Comments that
120 do not gain consensus should go back to subcommittees for revision and should be tested again for
121 consensus in another all day meeting on Wednesday, March 16, 2016. If the first day of the 45-day
122 comment window is on Wednesday, February 17, then it will end on Thursday, April 1, 2016.

123 Committee members will want to prioritize their commenting time, focusing on the areas that are most
124 important to the Committee. Also, the Committee should view the process of commenting as a trust
125 building exercise, where, by the end of the comment period, there is more trust within the Committee than
126 at the beginning of the comment period.

127 The resource areas that will require a lot of 'heavy lifting' by the Committee will likely include
128 inventoried roadless areas (IRAs), wildlife, fuels and fire, transportation, forested vegetation, and
129 hydrology. Study groups should be formed around those resource areas that will require heavy lifting.
130 Doug Powell, Gary Marks, and Chairman Cohenour will form the IRA Study Group, Doug Powell and
131 Chairman Cohenour will form the Wildlife Study Group, Co-vice Chair Alexander and Jeff Chaffee will
132 form the Fuels and Fire Study Group, Jeff Chaffee and Co-vice Chair Bishop will form the Hydrology
133 Study Group, Brad Langsather, Co-vice Chair Bishop and Gary Marks will form the Forested Vegetation
134 Study Group, and Brad Langsather and Eleanor Morris will form the Transportation Study Group.

135 Q: [Patrick Johnson] Once the comments are assembled, are they vetted by the city in some way?

136 A: No, we do not need to go in-front of the city to have these comments approved. We will need to write
137 into the commenting strategy that we will have a public meeting to present the comments, after they gain
138 or do not gain Committee consensus.

139 This is a living document and might change. Just keep that in mind.

140 Q: It sounds like reaching out to stakeholders is recommended, but not required, is that correct?

141 A: Yes, it is not required, we want this to be an open process and each of you are representing a certain
142 set of stakeholders in the Tenmile South Helena area, so we want to encourage you to reach out to those
143 stakeholders, but you do not need to, say, have all of the environmental organizations approve your
144 comments before you submit them to the Committee.

145 The Committee should consider not getting to specific on too many things. You risk burning out the
146 Committee on this. Be careful scheduling these all day meetings. Pick the sections that are most
147 important to you and get those comments done first. You probably don't need more than a half day
148 meeting to get that done.

149 If we are going to be splitting the resource areas up amongst Committee members and study groups the
150 Committee should keep in mind that often times, conversation is the most efficient form of
151 communication and will be helpful for setting the context of each comment. Committee members should
152 be talking to each other while they are reading and making comments. Committee members should reach
153 out to each other and say, "Hey, what do you think about this comment?" We should front load that
154 process as much as possible so that we don't have to do it during formal meeting time. Also, anyone
155 should be allowed to attend any study group session should they choose to.

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156 **BREAK 3:00 to 3:10.**

157 **Topic: Fire behavior comparison of treated versus non-treated forests by Co-vice Chair Alexander,**
158 **Rocky Infanger, and Pat McKelvey. Informational. Committee gains an understanding of fire**
159 **behavior in treated versus non-treated forests.**

160 [Please look at the PowerPoint presentation associated with this agenda item, posted on the Tenmile
161 South Helena website.]

162 This presentation described a fuels reduction project done on Pat McKelvey's land. There was lots of fuel
163 dead and down in there. By doing this treatment, the presenter predict that fire is much less likely to carry
164 to the crown. The treatments were done in a way that the logs to be removed for sale were cut to a length
165 so that could be hauled off without touching the ground. The slash was piled into hundreds of burn piles,
166 which Pat McKelvey is still trying to get burned off.

167 Canopy cover was reduced in these treatments from 80% to 35%. Also, the BTUs at the ground will be
168 much less and for a shorter length of time, which will really help out the soils in the long run. The big
169 take-away from Pat McKelvey's treatments is that if we don't do preemptive treatments like this, we will
170 have a catastrophic fire that will result in moonscapes and dozer lines. Think about what that does to elk
171 security, as compared to these treatments. As you can see, the impacts of these treatments is much
172 smaller than the impacts of a catastrophic fire. You get more sunlight and moisture getting to the ground.
173 There are some fires that these treatments won't stop, but those fires only occur 1% of the time. If you do
174 these treatments, you'll have more survivability in the vegetation, less soil sterilization, and less risk to
175 structures.

176 **Topic: History of the Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) and flying air attack over Helena National**
177 **Forest by Doug Powell. Informational. Inform the Committee's perspective on IRAs.**

178 [Please look at the PowerPoint presentation associated with this agenda item, posted on the Tenmile
179 South Helena website.]

180 This presentation describes the conditions of the IRAs and poses questions about how and if we should
181 treat fuels in the IRAs. The presenter showed a series of historic and present photos from flights over the
182 area and from the ground to show the historic trend and current conditions of the area. He also described
183 how and when the area was proposed for wilderness designation. The presenter concluded by proposing
184 that the Committee should protect the wilderness character of the Lazyman / Jericho area and that the
185 Committee should prioritize treatments near town and near private property over treatments in the IRAs.

186 **Topic: Public comment and meeting closeout. Informational. Objective: Allow time for the public**
187 **to comment on Committee business. Summarize the meeting.**

188 **Public comment from Bill Hallinan:** I am the President for the Wild Divide Chapter of the Montana
189 Wilderness Association. We submitted a letter to the Collaborative earlier this week. It is our thought
190 that working near structures and infrastructures and near communities is probably the most cost effective
191 way to protect our infrastructure. We want to make a special point about the Lazyman / Black Mountain
192 IRA; it has been included in previous wilderness bills and it has very strong wilderness qualities. We
193 would like to suggest that treatments in those areas be designed to keep the wilderness character intact.
194 You can see our recommendations for treatments in those areas on the second page of our letter in the
195 bullet points.

196 I personally want to thank everyone here at this meeting, because this is a lot of work and the community
197 at large may not understand just how valuable your work is. Your work is quite valuable to the health and
198 safety of this community and your work is also quite complex.

199 Personally, I can tell you why I want to see the Lazyman / Black Mountain IRA protected as Wilderness.
200 I live in the state capitol and I want to walk from the capitol of Montana and walk to the continental
201 divide and to wilderness from my capitol. The Missoula community has a Wilderness, Santa Fe New
202 Mexico has a Wilderness, I think it is a valuable thing for our community to protect our own Wilderness.
203 I walked from Helena to Seeley Lake to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and I can
204 tell you just how special the Lazyman / Black Mountain IRA is, it was the most special place I saw on my
205 walk.

206 **Public comment from Hank Hudson:** I am also a member of the Wild Divide Chapter of MWA and I
207 support the letter that Bill referenced earlier. I am also a property owner in Jefferson County. My
208 property lies at the base of Jack Mountain; I've done everything I can do to keep my property safe from
209 wildfire. In fact, the helicopters dip out of my stock pond to go fight fires. It is important to me that we
210 do not do anything to compromise the wilderness quality of these IRAs. I want my kids and grandkids to
211 look back and be able to say that we saved a little bit of this area as wilderness. I want to see the area
212 eventually designated as wilderness and in the meantime, we need to make sure we don't do anything that
213 compromises the wilderness character of the area for future designation. This collaborative is doing great
214 work and the collaborative model is really what we need more of in this country right now to deal with
215 these issues. Thank you very much for your effort.

216 **Public comment from Gayle Joslin:** I would like to echo what the two gentlemen that spoke before me
217 have said. I too live in the project area, in the Jefferson County portion. I would like to describe for you
218 what the wildlife in the area will face as far as these treatments go. Canopy cover is crucial for big game.
219 What I am nervous about is just how much of the canopy is going to be reduced through these treatments
220 and how that will affect big game. Canopy is necessary for big game to survive out there. Deer do okay
221 in up to about 12 inches of snow. Elk and moose can handle 18 to 20 inches. Closed canopies and thick
222 forests reduces the snowpack and reduces snow crusting. When you open the canopy the sun hits the
223 snowpack and forms a crust. You can see blood in the snow from these animals trying to survive with
224 these crusts as they try to paw their way through. We've seen massive die offs in the Swan Range just
225 after they harvested timber up there. The big game animals were trying to survive in individual tree
226 wells. They could not cross from point A to point B because of the open, crusted snows. So my concern
227 is, "How will these treatments affect the ability of big game to survive in winter snow conditions?"

228 Q: Has the pine beetle not destroyed the canopy cover?

229 A: It has and Doug Powell's pictures show that. But those are natural openings and they form a mosaic,
230 compared to something like the treatments at Chessman Reservoir. Also, those dead standing trees help
231 to break up the crust. Treatments like clearcuts and like the ones at Chessman Reservoir will form these
232 crusts.

233 Q: Isn't the Forest Service proposing a mosaic of treatments?

234 Q: My way of thinking is that these beetles have done a number on the canopy. Why don't we get those
235 dead trees out of there so that we can get the next generation of trees going vigorously and so that we
236 don't lose them all when fire comes through? And aren't we taking a big risk here of losing the wilderness
237 character of these areas by not treating in the IRA?

238 A: That risk is small. Let's work close to the houses. Let's give it time.

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239 **Comment from Chairman Cohenour:** We have 1/6th of the budget left. Hopefully we can make that
240 work to get through the commenting period but that is why I want to be real efficient in our commenting
241 so that Ben doesn't have to spend too much time compiling and what not. If anyone has any comments
242 about how to help us get through the commenting period as efficiently as possible, that would be helpful.
243 Please get a hold of Ben, Mike, Jordan, Sarah, or me if you have any suggestions there.
244 MEETING ADJOURNED at 4:10 PM