

April 8, 2015
Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Collaborative Committee
Meeting 6

Attending -

Collaborative Members: Mike Bishop, Jordan Alexander, Joe Cohenour, Gary Marks, Leonard Wortman, Ron Alles

Resources: Marshall Thompson (Forest Service), Alan Byrd (FS), Nancy Sweeney (NRCS, Whitehall), Brad Langsather, Ben Irey (ERG), Gregory Kennett (ERG)

Public guests: Diane Tipton, Mitch Jorgenson

Notes – Next Meeting is April 29, 2015* beginning at 1:30, location TBD

Member concerns:

- Melissa has resigned as a member of the collaborative. Sarah will call Julia Altemus, ED Montana Wood Products to find a replacement.
- Sarah will follow up with Nature Conservancy contact.
- *A letter was sent to Steve Kelly at Montana Ecosystems Defense Council in October, 2014, inviting him or his suggested representative to participate in the collaborative. There has been no contact or response from him.*

Public Comment: How is data collection from the EPA (small patches of wetlands) coming along? Following the meeting in March, concerns were raised about FS lack of information about smaller patches of wetlands in project areas. Large burns in that habitat could have large impacts on watershed health. Wildlife presentation was lacking depth the collaborative needs; should consider getting more information to understand the impact of activities in the area.

*At our last meeting, Forest Service representatives said they would contact other agencies such as the EPA to ask them to share layers of maps & data.

Facilitator/Coordinator Update: Ben & Gregory were introduced.

Forest Service Presentation:

Flume project (step 1) is in implementation. Project began August, 2014, and is ongoing based on conditions in the area. Probably 50% of harvest treatment around reservoir is complete, probably 25% along the flume.

How would you characterize the action alternative? Does it address a majority of public comment & concerns?

Yes. Alternative 3 being developed addresses wildlife concerns (i.e. elk hiding cover), and roadless areas. This currently developing alternative shows stark differences

between alternatives 1 & 2, and is responsive to issues raised in public comment and by other agencies such as Fish & Wildlife Service.

One major difference is the inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). Reflecting comments received on the scoping document released in fall 2014, the soon-to-be-released alternative demonstrates intent to use more manual treatment, not mechanical except in residential buffer zones. There are costs & benefits in the alternatives. The FS decision maker will weigh those alternatives with information from the project team.

Summary of public comments will be available in the draft EIS; FS will post the public comment spreadsheet via web somehow.

When planning with different environments, do the features & functions of those areas impact how decisions are made? (I.e. Watershed (Upper Tenmile) vs. non-watershed (South Hills), natural springs, mini-wetlands, etc.

Yes. The FS has standards to meet/comply with, including study of water quality & quantity and water yield. In the DEIS, specialists add what needs to be maintained in each part/unit/area in the project to stay compliant with regulations & policies. In the DEIS, see the appendix: Design Criteria (organized by resource area.) Specialists do not write their sections independently of each other. They collaborate on each alternative (and no action) to connect the proposed action for all elements and to understand the trade-offs.

Public information challenges: Putting things into context regarding three alternatives. Must be able to compare the no action alternative to the 1 & 3 alternatives and how they were designed. Perhaps show 3 or 4 examples of what to look for in comparing alternatives in order to summarize key elements of concern.

What can the collaborative do to help?

Between now and the release of the DEIS:

- Figure out what other agencies in the area are doing and how the project might be able to benefit from (data sharing). Collaborate with those agencies in data collection and projects (build relationships);
- *Review past collaborative group's recommendations*, identify places to build on those recommendations, find opportunities to continue the work of that group and find specific uses of those recommendations in project areas.

After release of DEIS (early-mid July):

- Provide consensus recommendations, comments, and suggestions within the 45 day comment period if possible.

Nancy Sweeney (NRCS)- Works with private land owners (5-20 acre lots). That group started funding private mitigation projects in 2014. They have 14 applications that were deferred last year, and expect them to be funded this year or early next. Funding pre-treatment thinning/slash treatments (\$630/acre), structural & forested fuel breaks (\$1,359/acre) & weed control (\$52/acre vehicle, \$80/acre spot treatment, \$25/acre aerial) projects. They hope to get more Jefferson County applications. She asked that the collaborative help with publicity for applications.

Nancy requested that buffer zone areas between private land & public lands are better defined so private land owners can come directly to the collaborative/city/county/FS to address those buffer areas. FS uses strategy to mimic private treatments to extend from private lots into public lands (buffer zone). Nancy suggested a more clear and publicized definition of that buffer zone will help convince private landowners to invest in mitigation work. It will encourage them to see FS activity in land around them.

Next meeting:

Review past Collaborative recommendations; discuss how those recommendations fit within the larger project area outside Tenmile watershed. Associate those recommendations with site-specific projects within the scoping document. Find specific areas to provide comments.

Review comments submitted by individuals and groups from scoping period.

Invite NRCS, EPA and maybe other agencies (FWP) to attend a collaborative meeting to discuss strategies to cooperate on projects, particularly on private property adjacent to public land. NRCS has a good definition of private/public buffer zone. It was agreed to invite up to three to participate at any given meeting.

June 10, 6-9 pm: Cohen, Finney & Simms doing public presentation, hoping to get the three in Helena earlier that day to visit with collaborative group.

June 17: Public meeting with Colorado Springs fire professionals

Action Items:

- Homework! Read 2009 collaborative recommendations prior to next meeting.
- Invite other agencies to participate in upcoming collaborative meeting (EPA, FWP, USGS, BLM, DNRC, NRCS)
- Put June 10 & 17 on member calendars for Finney, Cohen, Simms event (6/10), Colorado Springs Fire Marshal & Mitigation Manager presentation (6/17)
- **Forest Service** – find a way to summarize and distribute public comment at a minimum to the collaborative group – but also for the public on the FS project website