

## **National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) Meeting**

October 17, 2012

Mystic Ranger District

FINAL DRAFT

### **Members Present:**

Chairman Jim Scherrer, Steve Sisk, Sam Brannan, Colin Paterson, Ev Hoyt, Jim Heinert, Craig Tieszen, Dan Hutt, Bob Paulson, Mike Verchio

### **Members Absent:**

Bill Kohlbrand, Nels Smith, Suzanne Iudicello-Martley, Jeff Vonk, Lon Carrier, Hugh Thompson, Tom Blair, Becky Flanders-Paterson

### **Forest Service Representatives:**

Todd Pechota, Ruth Esperance, Steve Kozel, Ralph Adam, Deanna Reyher, Les Gonyer, Blaine Cook, Marie Curtin, and Twila Morris

### **Others:**

Approximately 10 members of the public were in attendance. Three Congressional representatives were also in attendance; Danica Allmer (Noem – R, South Dakota), Chris Blair (Johnson – D, South Dakota) and Mark Haugen (Thune – R, South Dakota).

### **Welcome:**

**Scherrer:** We have a quorum; call the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Thank you for braving the South Dakota winds today. We have a meeting agenda that is designed to address issues that have been raised by the Board. Craig & Dennis are both in Denver for a meeting with the Regional Forester; so representing them today, we have Mr. Todd Pechota who is the fire commander for the National Forest. Todd is here today in spite of the wind, so far we have no fires.

I have a piece of information that came to me last week, regarding Todd that I would like to share with all of you. Todd works throughout the State and across borders managing fires. Very recently, Todd has been approved by the Regional Forester as a Type I Incident commander. Type I is the highest level attainable; which then makes Todd available to command his own Fire Team. There are only 16 Teams in the nation, and there are far less than 100 of those folks in the country. Todd is a lifelong member of South Dakota – out of state for only about six years getting experience to bring back to South Dakota, after he completed his work in Forestry. Anyone that knows Todd knows that he has quite a sense of humor and is also a great organizer, so I am glad to have Todd here today; thank you Todd.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Pechota:** No, I think you've said it all Jim, thank you.

### **Approve the Minutes:**

**Scherrer:** Our first item of business is to approve the minutes from the September meeting. I would like to apologize for getting the minutes out without a whole lot of time for review, never the less, the minutes were distributed, comments received and incorporated. Do I have a motion to approve the September minutes? Motion made by Colin Paterson, second by Ev Hoyt. Is there any discussion? All in favor of approving the minutes as they read say aye; opposed same sign. The September minutes are approved.

### **Approve the Agenda:**

**Scherrer:** Next item of business is to approve the agenda. Mike has raised the issue of watershed and Ev has brought up some of the issues that are going to be discussed today.

### **Housekeeping:**

**Acting DFO Todd Pechota:** Ruth, thank you for hosting us today here at Mystic District

In case of an emergency, the main exit is to the front where you came in; there is another exit down the hall in the back and out to the back parking lot; restrooms to the front and back as well and refreshments on the table in the back.

### **Comments to the Chair:**

**Pechota:** This Board is very important to Craig and Dennis – they value the input from each person around the table. We are 16 days into the new fiscal year, and things are fast and furious as always, so we appreciate each of you today.

We have a real relevant agenda for what's occurring on the Forest today – we have a great turnout today, thank you for your attendance.

**Hoyt:** I was pleased to meet the new Mystic District Ranger, and thought Todd you might want to introduce her.

**Pechota:** I would be happy to, thank you Ev. Straight from the Boise National Forest by way of Lander WY and various other places, Ruth Esperance is in her third week on the District here. Ruth is a proven line officer and we are happy to have her.

### **Meeting Protocols:**

**Scherrer:** Once again, I would ask that cell phones be put on silent. For those in the audience, we have 15 minutes scheduled for public comments at the end of the meeting. Public comments will only be taken if there is time. I value your time here today. Folks in the audience are welcome to forward your comments to the Board member that represents you prior to a meeting so that your concerns may be addressed.

**Heinert:** Was your intent to formally improve the agenda?

**Scherrer:** Yes it was; thank you for keeping me in line. Do I have a motion to approve the agenda? Motion made by Jim Heinert, second by Craig Tieszen. Is there any discussion? All in favor of approving the agenda as it reads say aye, opposed same sign, agenda is approved.

### Hot Topics

#### Legislative Updates

**Scherrer:** Routinely we have the three Congressional delegation folks from SD at our meetings and we invite the Wyoming delegation. We ask each representative to give us an update on issues related to the Forest Service. Keep in mind that we ask that you keep it to three minutes; thank you. We'll start with Danica there in the back of the room.

**Danica Allmer:** As most of you probably know a continuing resolution was passed which will fund the Government for the next six months. The farm bill did not pass before recess, but we are still hopeful about that. The mountain pine beetle (MPB) issue continues to be a huge concern for the congresswoman; and she continues to work on that issue. Thank you for having us here today.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Danica. Does the Board have any questions? We'll go next to Mark Haugen.

**Mark Haugen:** The Senator was here last week covering many different topics. A couple of topics of interest to you; he visited Judy Allen's home on the west side of Rapid City. The Senator is interested in the urban wildland interface projects. Andy Tate from the Division of Forestry joined us, so the Senator got a good hands on look at that. The Senator also likes the Cooperative Agreements we've seen with the counties and cities, he likes those programs. One thing I would point out, so you know what our neighbors are doing, the National Park Service and the Assistant Secretary from the Badlands are looking at turning the south unit of the Badlands over to the Tribe as the first park managed by the Tribe. The Senator had the bill that streamlined hazardous waste material reporting for several years, and it finally passed. Hazardous waste in this bill includes used oil, dry cleaning material, etc. The reporting process for this has cost small business millions of dollars; so this streamlined process will save them a lot of money.

**Scherrer:** Does that include medical; sharps, etc.?

**Haugen:** I do not know, but I will find out and let you know.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Mark, are there any questions for Mark? If not, we'll have Chris go next.

**Chris Blair:** To add to what Mark said about the south unit of the Badlands; that was an encouraging meeting. The Senator would like to see the agreements developed and working with the Tribe in the next year optimistically. Last week Senator Johnson met with Chief Tidwell's office addressing the MPB issue, and funding. The Farm Bill included the Thune and Udall amendment that increased the funding for the Forest Service; we are still waiting for it to move forward. The delayed decisions regarding funding for Agencies are frustrating for the Forest Service.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Chris. Your boss has supportive of this group over the years. We are now entering into the last 6-8 months of an intact body of Forest Advisory Board members – and by the end of May 2013; this Board is going to be gutted. Secretary Vilsack wants to approve everyone individually now and that takes time. I would like you to encourage you to ask Senator Johnson to push this thru and not wait till the last minute so that we are facing another six month shut down. I would encourage the three of you to communicate this with your bosses and at the November meeting; I'll ask you if they've met are they talking about it. We are actively working behind the scenes to recruit people. One thing that drives me nuts is the bureaucracy in the Government and that it takes nine months to get something to take place. So please push this with the Senators and Congresswoman.

**Blair:** Seeing the Board go through this re-chartering process twice; it has been frustrating. I would say that a joint letter from the Congressional Delegation is not out of line. We would send a letter to help cut thru the red tape to help with the timeliness of the re-chartering process.

**Scherrer:** It is on the Forest Service to provide the information, a list of nominees of who are being sent up for approval, to the Congressional Staff so that they have what they need to support us.

**Scherrer:** Are there any questions for Chris? If not, thank you all for your updates today and for coming to our meetings every month.

### **Introduction Of New Forest Service Staff**

**Scherrer:** Let's move now to introductions; Todd would you like to take this?

**Pechota:** I would like to introduce Scott Jacobson; Scott comes to the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) as our new Public Affairs Officer. Scott had a long career in South Dakota National Guard, and more recently the private sector. We are glad to have Scott on board. Would you like to add anything Scott?

**Jacobson:** I'm glad to be here, and look forward to working with all of you.

**Scherrer:** Will you be the voice and the face of the Forest Service much like your predecessor Frank Carroll? One of the best things we have had going for us in the past is the media coverage. Whatever you can do to jazz those folks up about the issues helps us and the Forest tremendously. We know that you come from private industry and look forward to your assertiveness.

One think I would like a quick update on, and I'm sorry I did not get this on the agenda, is the Pine Beetle Response project. Todd, can you give a quick update?

**Pechota:** Craig talked about this at your last meeting; so just a short update. The EIS remains in the objection period. The legal notice was published on September 22, 2012, and the objection period lasts for 30 days. Those 30 days is part of the process. There are no other developments.

**Hoyt:** We've been it for three weeks, have there been any objections?

**Pechota:** I don't have that information.

**Scherrer:** Ruth do you know?

**Ruth:** I do not believe we've received any objections.

### **Regular Agenda**

#### **Budgeting for the Mountain Pine Beetle Response and Hazard Fuels Treatment**

**Scherrer:** You'll recall at the last meeting when we were discussing issues of interest – Ev made a point and I would like to quote that to you from the notes. Ev said “I was intrigued by you saying that you exceeded last year's goal of trees treated. We talked about this information in the past; about a review on a Forest scale of budget vs. accomplishment vs. planned, for FY2012 and 2013. If we had a review of this information, it would give the Board a feel for what we are doing in the next six months, what we intend to accomplish, and how we'll do it, how we'll fund it, and how we might address short falls. I would like to see a capsulated review of the timber program”.

Based upon that, Craig got the ball rolling, with additional communication with Ev on the questions, so that's where we are at today. Todd would you like to introduce this next topic?

**Pechota:** Blaine Cook is our Forest Silviculturist; he runs point for us on our pre-commercial thinning and many other things. Blaine has put a lot of work into a presentation for you today.

**Cook:** Thank you Todd; Rhonda O'Byrne, District Ranger on the Northern Hills District will weigh in at the line officer level and we'll also hear tidbits from Kurt Allen regarding the cut and chunk program. The point is to address Ev's questions that we got from Craig a week ago.

We'll start out by sharing with you the Black Hills National Forest priorities for FY12.

#### **FY 12 Priorities:**

- Forest Health (Bark Beetle)
- Travel Management Implementation
- Range Decision implementation

#### **FY 12 Dollars:**

- Total Forest \$31,179,400
- Timber \$8,075,500
- Target 207,416 ccf

#### **FY12 Accomplishments:**

- Timber volume sold = 240,251 ccf; of which sawtimber = 228,148 ccf or 95%.

**Paulson:** How does that equate in sold vs. cut?

**Cook:** Sold is when the sale is prepared, it goes to the apparent high bidder; cut may not be cut till a purchaser gets to all the units of a timber sale. Refer to the map showing units that Neiman has under contract. Neiman Timber Company can only look so far into the future based on all kinds of factors including weather, lumber market, certain road restrictions, etc. This map shows the vastness of the whole forest and where the purchaser is doing the cutting.

**Paulson:** We've talked in the past about getting ahead of the beetles; are there cutting goals as well as sold goals?

**Cook:** The Forest Service has no cutting goals; we function on timber sales sold.

#### **FY13 Priorities:**

- Healthy Forests
  - Fuels Management
  - Implement the Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy
- Facilities for the Future
  - Buildings and road access

#### **FY13 Initial Budget**

- Total Forest \$31,574,600
- Timber Management dollars: \$8,117,300 or 25%

#### **FY13 Planned Accomplishments**

- Target: 165,400 ccf
- Forest planning at 180,000 ccf

**Scherrer:** When you said we are not dealing with cutting we are dealing with awarding – we don't care how many you sell, we care about how many are cut. What is the driving force behind the... what drives the marriage of numbers awarded and acres cut? For you to say we don't bother ourselves with what is cut, that is concerning, and again, I'm not laying blame – my follow up question is, that there is a significant number of contactors in the Forest that won't be cutting because they have some legal issues...so I'm just trying to figure out how all of this fits together.

**Cook:** When the FS talks about the report card, Congress functions in timber sales sold, and these sales are two to four years in term length. There are some restrictions – several different items, snow, roads, time of year, so the purchaser has to move around the Forest – they have to marry that into the economy, lumber market etc. But the speed of what they cut is dictated by that contract – there is a window of time, maybe one year or four years.

**Scherrer:** Can you tell us the correlation on a year by year basis on what is sold and what is cut?

**Cook:** We have reports that will give us those numbers. The forest has been top in the nation in sold and cut, and we've been close to number one for several years now.

**Brannan:** My understanding is that when you have timber sales sold, then the more you can cut, and the more options the purchasers have. Unless I'm misunderstanding, don't you get that money to help with future sales?

**Cook:** The money generated from timber sales goes into the general fund, miscellaneous accounts, and does not come back to the Forest. Thru congressional legislation, we are told what to do with the money.

**Pechota:** The only money that comes back to the Forest after a sale is closed, closure of a sale is when the activity is done, and we collect the KV receipts, those money receipts are collected along with BD (Brush Disposal). Those receipts that are generated by per ccf costs are for follow up treatment, burning of slash piles, spraying weeds, etc.

**Heinert:** So if you don't have cutting goals, but you do have a target ccf, how is that established?

**Cook:** The CCF stands for 100 cubic feet. That target is assigned by the Region which is assigned by the Washington Office. Congress appropriates the money for each Region, x amount of dollars and x amount of ccf.

**Heinert:** The money then is appropriated to support operations, more than for any particular need?

**Cook:** In the timber arena, we have three categories that the money goes to:

- Sale Administration – 20%
- Sale Preparation – 32%
- Sale Planning (NEPA) - 48%

As far as cutting goes there is no target – we are accountable for contract compliance, they have so many month to do the job, but we are not held accountable for cut. We keep track of it, as the log trucks go across the scales, we keep track of it, we know how much gets cut.

**Heinert:** No timber is paid for till it gets cut?

**Hoyt:** The Forest has no budget for your own boots on the ground, no cut and chunk money, no plans to do any work out on the Forest? I'm talking about physically cutting trees.

**Cook:** We contract the thinning work, the cut and chunk world gets funded by forest health a vegetation code, a KV or fuels code – there is not that much money for it. Rhonda is going to talk about what we've seen with the participating agreements with the County. The FS does not have an ocean of bucks here. The counties chime in and help.

**Brannan:** Not one penny of the \$8 million is going to the timbering process?

**Paterson:** It is the other \$23 million dollars that comes to Forest that covers some of it.

**Brannan:** That doesn't all go to work on the ground that goes to the rest of the duties as well.

**Cook:** That includes range, recreation, several others.

**Pechota:** Mr. Chairman, Blaine's initial discussion is focusing solely on the green sale program. There are a number of other programs that treat the Forest; we talked about fuels, \$2.8 million in FY2013 that I try to use to manage fuels; application of prescribed fire, thinning, chipping – my contribution in terms of acres is about 4,000 acres of these things. That doesn't count KV thinning and all of those things.

When you bundle all of those things up, we also have another target within 2013; 25,500 acre target – the Rocky Mountain Region target for integrated fuels is 70,000 acres – so in perspective with the other 10 National Forests in the Region – we are taking on 25,000 out of 70,000 acres. It is a complicated process.

**Tieszen:** Please avoid the acronyms; some of us are getting lost.

**Hoyt:** We are new to the process, and we are trying to understand the buckets of money and what they are used for. What I want to know is what funding will be applied to the MPB response plan - the actual attack. There is already a disconnect in the funding, last year that target was 214 ccf, and this year the region has set us a target that is a fourth less.

**Cook:** The initial amount for FY12 was \$6 million, but we got additional funding, and the Forest put the target at 207 ccf; our accomplishment was 240 ccf.

**Pechota:** We are talking about the initial budget advice, and it's become a common practice to get the initial and receive additional money later – so what we are starting at in FY13 is our initial target. Craig has a much higher expectation in terms of the MPB – and there will be three levels of planning for when/if we get extra money. It would be a reasonable assumption that our number will be higher.

**Brannan:** The concern I have – we are proud of what you've done; Craig fought for more last year and we received more. What Ev is saying is that we've put a lot of effort into getting the word out about our MPB epidemic, but yet the Region has set the goal lower this year than last, and it should be higher.

**Cook:** It's 40 ccf less than last year – the Forest got an addition \$1 million so the Forest increased another 20 ccf, then we got the money from Kristi Noem's efforts, and that increased it another 20 ccf.

**Hoyt:** We want to accelerate the effort, and maybe we still will.

**Cook:** internally I use the analogy of the poker table. The dealer is Congress; they deal the hand, which is money. Along comes our planning effort, it takes several years to get these in motion, behind the scenes is all the surveys, heritage, hydrology, vegetation, to feed the EIS document to support our analysis and decision. Out comes, is the second player, third player is the Prep people, they have their marching orders, those folks go out and put up the sale. The next player is the Admin people; they are making sure the sale is in motion. The last place is on the cut side, we get our desired condition for the Forest, a new future landscape, and the timber industry is the fifth player – and all of the players cannot perform at the expectation of anyone

else. If Congress gave us another 20 million would it help? That's why Craig did PBR to open up the door to sale planning – PBR is done, now we have 250,000 acres to go crank on - where does Rhonda go knowing that she has fixed costs. If she gets more people – which we know that Congress isn't in the mode of increasing the size of Government; but it's all a process.

**Esperance:** I would want to play with a full deck, we only have so much capacity – Industry can only help with so much. If we had a full deck to play with, money would help us out.

**Cook:** If we had more money or more people, say we put out and sell 300 ccf...and Neiman's buy it – say they do, can they cut it? The economy is not so good.

**Hoyt:** We know that industry is about tapped out, so that ties with my question is does the Forest Service contract for thinning and cut and chunk projects - and you said not much, we know that Industry just can't do much more.

**O'Byrne:** We get most of our money in NFTM, National Forest Timber Management; and most of that work is for timber sale contracts. We would have to get a different kind of money to do more and we are competing with all of the other Forests in the Region, so we have to convince the RF that we need more money. The BH has been getting a lot of that money from TM because we can spend it and meet those targets, the other Forests can't. If you want to manage vegetation other than timber sales, you have to use a different kind of dollars, and you compete for the money.

**Hoyt:** Apparently there aren't many dollars to begin with.

**O'Byrne:** Most of the money we have to spend is thru the timber sale program.

**Sisk:** Are we going to hear form timber industry?

**Scherrer:** For the Congressional staffers, this is why we need everyone represented on the Board, and we need your help – we've got to have full representation on this group; and right now we do not have the forest products industry represented.

**Sisk:** My concern is for the private forest owners; by the time I pay the loggers, truckers, and sell it to Neiman's, I don't get a penny. I can't even afford to do the work, I'll just be better off to cut the trees, drag them into an opening and burn them.

**Scherrer:** Tom (Troxel) please comment.

**Troxel:** Paul Pierson, Forester with Neiman Timber Company in Spearfish is here today and I'll ask him to comment as well. The first question was on harvest, cut vs. sold – the cut volume mirrors closely to the sold volume – what the BH sold is about 90% of what the sawmills need . The FS has contract dates, and Neiman's want to keep running their sawmills so they have to be out there. The sold volume tracks along pretty closely with the amount sold each year. To address the question that Steve had; stumpage prices are low, housing prices are down, lumber prices are down, by the time you pay loggers, truckers, fuel, there is just not much left over for the landowner; I understand that.

**Hoyt:** Did you say that last year's sold volume was 90% of what industry needed?

**Troxel:** Yes, the mill will process 130 to 140 million board feet; the FS sold 120 million board feet.

**Hoyt:** I thought the take away message was that the industry was overloaded.

**Troxel:** The mill also gets timber from Custer State Park, private landowners, and there are some other obligations the mill has to make up that other 10%.

**Paul Pierson:** We say we are tapped out too – when they sell the 240 ccf – not every ccf needs to be cut this year. We work really closely with the FS, and state, and private to prioritize where to put our efforts on the ground. The best possible scenario would be to have 300 ccf sold and let us choose where we can do the most good. Right now Neiman has about one year's worth of timber under contact – not every one of those sales is where we think we should be. The FS dose influence us a bit to tell us where to go – for certain areas that are urgent. We work thru that with them. The private side, Neiman gets about 10% of the wood from private – there's not much money at the end of the day. If it makes you feel any better we do pay you (private) more than we pay the FS. Targets is something that we deal with every year – there has been some ups and downs, but going forward, with more money means more green sales, gives the Neiman's more options. We can't do the whole forest in one year. Neiman is about 240 ccf. We are restricted during snowmobile season, goshawk season, ski season, and that is something we all need to talk about in the big picture too. The FS has been working really well with us – to allow us into the high priority areas when we need to be in there.

**Cook:** Strategies: we have been working the Western Bark Beetle Strategy, there's the Forest MPB Strategy, the Conservation Leader All Lands Strategy; so how do we go from a pile of paper to cut trees. The messenger is the five year action plan. It's a very tough call for Craig or Rhonda; we have a lot of choices, and we'll have more with PBR. A couple years ago, Rhonda walked away from an area called Bearcat – because it was too late. From the map we have spreadsheets and the timber industry sees the announcement of when the sales will be coming out. There's the holding zone, leading zone, sometimes those zones are large scale, and they take up 1.2 million acres. On the map, the green is around the circle, the white part is where sales are already done; gray is where we are now, and colored is the future. The line officers are strapped with a tough decision about where we go next; we have a lot of choices. Does this make sense at all?

**Hoyt:** It makes sense, but the question is where the overall coordination, the overall plan for the BHNF is?

**Cook:** That is called the Black Hills National Forest Plan that was amended in 2005.

**O'Byrne:** We also have the Black Hills Park Beetle Strategy. The first step is to look at the Forest Plan and then the Strategy.

**Hoyt:** How do you come up with the assignments on a Forest wide level?

**O’Byrne:** All four Districts meet together to make the decisions. I would take all of the ccfs on the Northern Hills if I could, but we meet as a group and decide where it’s going, where are the priorities? The center part of the Forest – we won’t be effective – in areas where the bugs are starting, we’ll look there first. Other areas we can get way ahead of it. The other thing is where have I already put investment? We are already looking at where we’ll be five years from now. What have you already put in and can you still do some good – or do we need to pull out and go somewhere else. The other thing is how affective can I be? On the NH, we jumped way ahead and then came way back in – I still think we are about a year behind. Last but not least is, can I sell it – there’s more than just the FS that is a party to trying to get this done. What are the values at risk? With this last flight – we have bugs everywhere; I don’t think you can go anywhere on the Forest and not see MPB. Do we look at Rochford where there is a community at risk – and don’t even bother with Bearcat – let’s go somewhere we can be effective.

**Hoyt:** You already sold hundreds of thousands of acres, so you’ll offer more this year... how do you direct the cut?

**O’Byrne:** That is already being done. For example, on the Telegraph Sale that was sold in 2010 – that is almost already cut out.

**Hoyt:** We don’t have an inventory of sold to cut?

**O’Byrne:** Yes we do, we have a volume of how much is sold and how much is cut. Annually and I don’t think they are too far off.

**Cook:** Paul mentioned that they have one year under contract – that’s the amount of yet to be cut – it’s sold but still standing.

**Pechota:** I talked about the Regional hazardous fuels target in which all of our colors of money equate to 25,500 acres – all flavors, green sales, prescribed fire, thinning, chipping, burning. Our target for hazardous fuels dollars is \$2.8 million, through the hazardous fuels allocation process. There is a model (and I know people are skeptical of models) that takes into a number of factors such as comminutes at risk, fire work load, the number of starts; community water sheds, threatened endangered species, and based on the model we rank third in the region in terms of hazardous fuels dollars allocation. We try to be smart with the money because it’s an appropriated dollar so we don’t have one EIS going over here to treat 25 acres, and then another one over here to treat three acres. We can focus our efforts on the things that are important and that are at risk; life and property.

**Scherrer:** Let’s complete the budgeting topic and Rhonda’s portion, take a short break and then finish out with Kurt.

**Pechota:** I’ll try to close up the budget process portion; Ev I hope we got down the path to your questions; it is a complicated process and we can’t do it alone. We have to have Tom and folks from industry and others. The plan we use is the Black Hills Bark Beetle Strategy; and we use the Western Governor’s BB strategy as a guiding document along with the five year timber sale plan.

Knowing the budgets will remain tight, the Forest is taking steps to stretch the dollars. The PBR project will allow us latitude, so that we don't have to spend 43% of our budget going thru the EIS process. Knowing what Blaine mentioned about our FY13 initial, Craig has expectations of the FLT to have plans for what we are going to do with another million – Craig expects that we'll plan for 185,000 ccf, and more if the money comes. It may seem like a highly fluid plan and often times it is, but the documents will guide us – hopefully we got at what was important to all of you today.

**Scherrer:** From my seat – this is a very complicated issued, the MPBs don't telegraph where they are going next, and we have 20% of the Forest owned privately – this is not good news. Craig Tieszen talked about making decision s about dollars available, and I would ask that you continue to advocate and support the visionary process of trying to stay out ahead. The landscape will change with fire, etc.; but all of these areas that are at high risk, that is where we need to put our money.

Let's take a break and re-convene at 2:35 and give Kurt Allen his time.

### **Integrated Pest Management Techniques – Cut & Chunk, Thinning, etc.**

**Scherrer:** Kurt Allen is going to be introduced by our Acting DFO, Todd Pechota.

**Pechota:** Kurt has been here at the Experiment and Research Station as an entomologist with the Forest Service. He and Dr. Ball are the two resident experts in South Dakota on the mountain pine beetle.

**Allen:** I am an entomologist with the Forest Service. Our number one horse here in the Forest Service is the timber industry and the green sale program. We treat big landscapes and big chunks of land. That is what needs to happen. Thinning does not work – we have seen it fail – if it is not accomplished at the landscape level. Dr. John Ball was on the agenda today, but he is in Hong Kong. He and I have been looking at cut and chunk as a means of sanitation for the mountain pine beetle.

It really is our green sale program that allows us to treat landscapes in a big fashion. The timber sale kills the beetles, 100 percent, and it thins those landscapes, those portions of the forests, which is very important when we talk about the mountain pine beetle.

Outside of the timber sale program, John and I have been looking at other methods to kill a lot of beetles. One method is cut and chunk. When we take a standing infested tree, cut it down, and cut it into two foot lengths, it is mostly the beetles on the bottom of the log that are able to live out their life cycle. We get a lot of input from people in the hills. During 2012, the trees that were cut and chunked late in the Spring, during February and March, did not really dry out and kill as many beetles as we have seen in previous years, despite the weather being hot and dry. We are still looking at the mechanism that causes the beetles to die. Those trees that were cut and chunked during 2011, during October through December, resulted in almost 100% mortality. The wood was really dry, and it worked really well. The take home message is that we need to accomplish cut and chunk early – the earlier the better. Generally, we do not have people roll the logs. If you cut and chunk in February, you might have to roll the logs to get good mortality.

Some folks run the saw blade up and down to score the logs and bark, but it does not seem to add much to mortality rates, especially if the scored side is lying next to the ground. We found live beetles surviving just adjacent to the scored areas. We are also looking at treatment of different sizes of trees. We tried different chunk lengths, six inches, 24 inches, and leaving the entire tree. We found that when leaving the whole tree or six foot length chunks, you did not get any mortality. You might as well not have cut the tree.

The best chunk length is two foot or shorter, the shorter is better. And, it should be accomplished as early in the year as possible.

**Sisk:** I cut and dropped a tree, and I found that if you let cut and chunk pieces roll into a damp canyon area, you do not get good mortality.

**Allen:** The best method is to leave the chunks out in the sun. We see a difference in mortality rates with chunks left on northern slopes versus warmer south facing slopes.

**Hutt:** My experience with cut and chunk is that with some trees that were cut in February or March, the mortality is not significant. Have you researched the mortality rate, and have you researched how many cut and chunk survivors can fly?

**Allen:** The last logs we peeled, during the last week of July, we found adults, and those adults were going to emerge and fly. You can look from the exit hole to the location from which the beetles emerged. It does not matter when you cut and chunk, the beetles are going to look alive until June and maybe into July. We see an amazing crash when they all die, at the end of June, and into July. The cut and chunk logs will have live beetles in them right up until the crash.

**Hutt:** Is it food supply or heat that is getting the beetles?

**Allen:** It could be heat or lack of food. What we are trying to do is to destroy the phloem. The beetles feed on the phloem. We do not know for sure, but it is probably a combination of a number of things that kill the beetles.

**Brannan:** Did you and Dr. Ball say there were some developments that fought the beetles?

**Allen:** Native wood-boring insects attack dead trees. It has been both shocking and interesting that the wood-boring insect populations have skyrocketed. We can go to green infested trees that have so many wood borers that you can not find any pine beetle larvae. Wood borers begin their life in the phloem. They destroy the food source of the mountain pine beetle. We have seen this in a number of places. We tried to capture mountain pine beetles, using cups on cages on some trees, and instead of mountain pine beetles we caught wood boring insects. They really need dead trees.

We also spent some time looking at aggregation pheromones and anti-aggregation pheromones. The beetles need to mass attack, and they use a chemical pheromone to call the beetles to a tree. The beetles put out an anti-aggregation pheromone when the tree is full. They do not want the beetle population too large. We have tried several different formulations of verbenone. We tried verbenone in combination with green-leave volatiles, thinking that maybe if a tree smelled like an aspen the beetles would not attack it. Verbenone works best when you need it least, in small

infestations. We also did some trials with the aggregation pheromone and it works very well if you are trying to create an infestation. There are limited uses for aggregation pheromones here in the Black Hills. It would have to be done very surgically with a definite outcome in mind. And it would have to be done on a small scale. The largest outbreak of mountain pine beetles that has ever occurred is currently happening in Canada. They used aggregation pheromones, but it was not a good idea. Their epidemic is widespread.

**Verchio:** The legislature is looking very seriously at the possibility of the State of South Dakota paying for cut and chunk on Forest Service managed lands. My concern is how we accomplish it. The State will be looking at return on investment. What would be needed for safety training? There may be available laborers on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Do we need to do this in the fall? We need to be in contact with Dave Thom. For people living outside the Black Hills Fire District, it is a tough sell to convince them we should spend tax dollars on mountain pine beetle treatments in the Hills. If we had 10 million dollars, the chance of getting it all at once is minimal. But, if we get two million a year, how much cut and chunk would be accomplished? Would it be helpful?

**Allen:** Sioux Falls and Watertown folks are not interested enough in the mountain pine beetle that they are willing to give up their money. Two million dollars can be effective, but has to be strategically placed. We would win some battles, here and there. There are parts of the Forest where we probably cannot kill enough bugs to make a difference, but there are some areas where we can kill enough bugs. There is still a lot of green forest out there. I think two million dollars of cut and chunk would be effective in the right place and at the right time, such as February.

**Hoyt:** I think it has been said that the path of the pine beetle cannot be predicted. Can you predict the movement of a massive attack by pine beetles?

**Allen:** Not really. Right now we are at an unfortunate place in that every part of the Forest has some infestation. There is not a place in the Black Hills National Forest that has a low level of beetle infestation, maybe in Bearlodge, and in Wyoming. Across the bulk of the forest, you mostly see large groups. If we are out in some of those, and there is a lot of green forest, that is where we have the opportunity to make a difference. But as far as knowing, where they are going to go next year, I cannot tell you that.

**Scherrer:** Can you give us a better feel for the extent of the flight in 2013, and anything that surprised you about where the beetles might be?

**Allen:** We had a very robust flight this year, and still have an increasing number of dead trees due to populations in the Northern Hills. On the Northern Hills there was substantial growth. The areas where it is spreading are in the southern and western portions of the Forest. Some of the southern-most portions of the Hills are new territory for the beetles. We have seen a lot of activity over towards Newcastle. It really is getting into every corner of the Forest.

### **Participating Agreements**

**Scherrer:** I would like to ask Rhonda O'Byrne, Northern Hills District Ranger, to talk about Participating Agreements.

**O’Byrne:** I will give a history of what we did with Lawrence County and Meade County and “the why.” It was not that many years ago that there was a lot of tension about who was to blame for the mountain pine beetle. A year and a half ago that broke. We realized we had to work together. I met with Meade County folks and a group they had pulled together. We have folks that are willing to donate money. They are asking, “Isn’t there more that you can do?” We wanted to capture their interest. We talked with Dave Graham about participatory agreements with another government entity. The key is all the liability. Lawrence County was willing to take on the liability for anyone working in the Forest on the project. Lawrence County is not a contractor for the Forest Service. The purpose was for the whole local community, including the city, industry, private individuals, and home-owners associations to be funneled through the county and allowed to take actions on the National Forest. There had been participating agreements. We are not measuring effectiveness. We gave permission, so long as you do not create a safety hazard and will not create resource problems. Those who are interested - local cities, individuals, timber industry, and home-owner associations - liked that they could go out and accomplish sanitation. They got started last January. This year, they got going in September and are continuing. Meade County is interested. Several other counties are looking at pursuing similar participatory agreements. It has been a great success in building working relationships to address this problem that we have.

**Esperance:** We just finished a several year program. I look forward to it.

**Guffey:** I think it is a different partnership. In Lawrence County we have less funding, and are focusing on private lands. We want to create a buffer so that they are not continually inundated. We are also looking at escape routes. And we are looking at timber sale owners, accomplishing pre-sale work. And we are continuing with what Silver City pioneered, by establishing shaded fuel breaks.

**Scherrer:** At a recent meeting, we were presented with data regarding the number of trees that were taken out. The Board would like an update of that data in the spring of 2013. That will provide us with the foundation to give indications of trends. I would like to receive updates regularly. I want to know what is going well and what is not going well. Scott Jacobsen, this is a major issue for you. We had KOTA and FOX here for quite awhile today. We need to get individuals to understand what their responsibilities are, and get help for the cost of those responsibilities.

**Sisk:** When you bring these crews in, who has marked the trees?

**O’Byrne:** They know they cannot go into timber sale areas. We train the crews, we inspect the areas, and we teach them to recognize a unit boundary on a timber sale. The private landowners – we have a gentleman who handles that by visiting the area then checking with the Forest Service to see if they have a sale scheduled in that area. If not, he can help them and mark trees. That is coordination between Sale Administration and Sale Management.

**Verchio:** There was concern expressed that the Lawrence County Program was not as tightly supervised as it should have been.

**O’Byrne:** I was told that green non-infested trees were being cut. We did not find that. Lawrence County was not required to cut any trees. If they go to an area and only cut some of the infested trees, they will not be as effective as if they cut every infested tree in an area, but they are not required to cut any trees.

### **Spring Creek Watershed – Silting, Water Quality**

**Scherrer:** Mike Verchio raised a question regarding the Spring Creek Watershed, about silting and the Hill City water supply. We are going to have a presentation about the Spring Creek Watershed in response to his inquiry, and I am going to ask our esteemed Designated Federal Officer to introduce the folks who are presenting.

**Pechota:** Two people are presenting today, Brittney Molitor, Pennington County Water Protection Coordinator, and Deanna Reyher, the Forest’s Soils and Watershed Program Manager.

**Reyher:** We have built this topic off of the Spring Creek Watershed, which is getting some money through the State and EPA. Craig asked me to address why it is important that the Forest Service be involved in this Project. Pennington County is the Project lead.

Here is some new program direction that we have received. Basically, our direction region-wide, is to focus our activities in watersheds to improve watershed conditions, focusing on the landscape of a watershed. Two counties are involved in the Spring Creek Watershed. We are actively participating with the State Department of Environment and Natural Resources to improve impaired waters on FS lands.

One of the Forest’s multiple uses that the watershed provides is recreation. Recreation occurs season-long. Sheridan Lake is the highest used lake in the Black Hills. So it is a priority watershed. The Lake sees a lot of fishing and beach use. Sheridan Lake is close to Rapid and Hill City, and lots of folks in between.

What concerns the Forest Service is that beneficial uses of resources may be at risk from recreation uses. Tourist outreach encourages folks to come to the Black Hills and play. The Forest Service wants to provide clean conditions. Around the Lake, there are 129 single unit campsites and several large group campsites. We are cooperators. Think about fishing and boating permits issued by the State, or the trickle down effect to hotels, restaurants, etc. that benefit from Sheridan Lake.

The Forest Service is at the end of the line for catching a lot of the sediment, and we are also concerned about TMDL. Also there are two smaller lakes within the watershed. We have other important recreation facilities, including Palmer Gulch KOA. There is a bit of the watershed in Pennington County. There have been various actions by the Forest Service to help with this collaborative group – there were some recent range management discussion recently that will result in fencing. There have been some mountain pine beetle treatments. With the recent Travel Management Decision, we have been able to close some routes, and accomplish restoration, reducing silt deposition into the stream. We have Best Management Practices to implement, and design criteria to support decisions to protect water quality.

Beaver are key components to reduce or slow down sediment. We will be doing a beaver monitoring flight within the next week. I think what Mike was interested in was Best Management Practices. What we can accomplish - rolling dips on roads, a certain amount of ground cover, retaining litter and duff to the highest level possible - to hold sediment from coming off a treatment site. Those all fall within the Best Management Practices of the State. The Forest has a Memorandum of Understanding with the State wherein the State recognizes that our Design Criteria meet the State's Best Management Practices. Sedimentation rates depend on many factors, including the amount of disturbance, the geology, precipitation events, fires, development, and the number of impervious features. The 1998 highway construction resulted in a tremendous pulse of sediment into the watershed. A wildfire followed by rainfall resulted in deposition. At one feature in the watershed, a Forest Service Lake near Hill City, beavers are just starting to get a dam built. You can just see the sediment filling in. The Lake is planned to be dredged.

**Paulson:** What impact will the beetle kill in that area have? Will that increase sedimentation?

**Reyher:** Some of those trees have already fallen over. The beetle activity in the area has been going on for years. There is constant dying. There is some aspen and spruce. There is not a lot of sediment coming down because of the coarse woody debris on the ground. But if we have a fire, the area is steep, and sediment could flow down quickly.

**Hoyt:** What do you include in restoration projects? Can you define restoration?

**Reyher:** Restoration activity occurs in areas where you have had a lot of ATV crossing of creeks. Instead of having several crossings on a creek, now we just have one. But the several closed crossings might still be raw, and cause sediment. Some restoration activity includes alteration of slopes or dredging.

**Gonyer:** What they have done at Willow Creek Horse Camp is to install water tanks and kept the horses out of the creek to reduce sediment. In Palmer Gulch, at Palmer Creek and Nelson Creek, there used to be two raw water crossings. We put bridges over the streams to reduce the sore spots. I like to find a raw spot where sediment is coming into a stream and then try to fix the problem.

**Hoyt:** Do you get into the stream and remove sediment?

**Gonyer:** You can. Sediment removal is an option when you get a significant amount of sedimentation in a stream. But in the Hills, most sediment moves through the system and ends up in one of the reservoirs. We have periods of time where we have periodic precipitation. Large precipitation events can flush sediment through the system. Lake Mitchell was affected. At Sheridan Lake, the willows keep moving down the system. Some sediment is good in a system. What I have a problem with is man-induced sediment.

**Reyher:** There is always sediment in the system. Sediment helps to build floodplains and productive soils in your meadows. We need to deal with the overabundance of sediment. If a system is not used to dealing with a level of sediment, you have a problem. With two dams, the sediment cannot move through the system.

**Molitor:** The actual project area is about 93,000 acres occurring above Sheridan Lake. 85% of the project area is public land. There is a lot of private land along the creeks. Hill city is the epicenter. Silviculture, Recreation, Tourism, Residential and Agricultural uses occur in the area.

We have sampled for three years. Issues include fecal coliform and *E. coli* bacteria, temperatures, nutrients, sediments, grazing, septic systems, types of recreation, and the mountain pine beetle. There are many project sponsors and co-sponsors, an Advisory Group, and a Contract Project Manager. The Project will consist of five segments.

Public Outreach is achieved through the Spring Creek Watershed Advisory Group, public meetings and tours, meeting with more than 100 property owners, a Project website and two direct mailings to 1,100 addresses.

The Contract Project Manager is RESPEC Consulting. He works pretty much exclusively in the watershed. He does a lot of engineering for the riparian work. We are just wrapping up the first segment of the Project. Public Outreach is achieved through the Spring Creek Watershed Advisory Group, public meetings and tours, meeting with more than 100 property owners, a Project website and two direct mailings to 1,100 addresses.

Segment One Progress to Date includes approval of 24 projects (12 in design/permit phase, we are completed), public meetings and tours, and sic grant application submitted.

Segment One Riparian/Grazing Projects Summary

- 6 projects implemented
- 9 acres of riparian buffers
- 19 acres of access control (remove cattle for a specified amount of time)
- 26 acres of pest management
- 480 feet of willow vegetation
- 1,040 feet of fencing
- 70 acres of grazing management

Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS)

- Seven OWTS installed, to replace a failing system or non-existing system (e.g. outhouse)
- Three holding tanks
- Four conventional OWTS

Demand for Implementation Dollars during Segment One

- 87 applications requested 520,000 for OWTS and Riparian Projects with \$211,000 of 319 Available Funding. We have over 9 million applications for the money.

In 2010 we started monitoring again. We monitor for fecal coliform, *E. coli*, Enterococci, TSS, TP, NO<sub>3</sub>+NO<sub>2</sub>. We started upwards of Medicine Mountain Road by the Boy Scout Camp and went all the way to Sheridan Lake. In 2010, we obtained 915 analyses for 145 samples at 17 sites. We collected eleven Ambient and ten storm event samples. We just finished sampling in 2012.

Segment Two (2012-2014). We learned allot during Segment One. We did another cost share application. We received about 25 cost-share participant applications in 2012.

We have approximately:

- \$60,000 for four *Riparian Vegetation/Stream bank Projects*
- \$50,000 for two *Storm water Pilot Projects*
- \$36,000 for four *Manure/Grazing Management Projects*
- \$50,000 for two *Forest Storm water Pilot Projects*, and
- \$50,000 for one *Dam and Lake Improvement Project*.

In addition, we have:

- \$6,000 for two *OWTS BMP Implementation Projects*
- \$11,000 for *Information Public Outreach*
- \$112,000 for *Project Management, Planning and Engineering Design*
- \$15,000 for *Grant Administration, Travel, and Project Reports*
- \$60,000 for *Water-Quality and BMP Effectiveness Monitoring*.

We started the project looking for fecal coliform and *E. coli* problems, but found many others.

**Verchio:** How are we coming on work progressing at Mitchell Lake?

**Adam:** Dave Plumber, the Forest's engineer in charge of dams, could not be here today. The sediment from Mitchell Lake - we are trying to get it cleared, hoping to dispose of it on the other side of the dam. With regard to other Lakes, we are looking at what we can do with the disposal of the material.

**Verchio:** Hill City, behind the cemetery, has a location for excess gravel, construction materials, etc. They sell materials to people. That might be an option and would not be too far away from Mitchell Lake.

**Adam:** Disposal of federal material for private gain is addressed in CFR. We can not just give it away. We can give it to another government entity. We just have to get over those hurdles.

**Verchio:** During the 385 highway construction, they stockpiled gravel, etc. Much is still there.

**Adam:** That was a Federal Highways project. Concerns were being addressed by the Federal Highway overseer. The Forest only had oversight of the construction.

**Verchio:** The lakes will all begin to look like Mitchell Lake, which would make a great garden spot right now. I do not want to upset the agriculture folks in my District. I would like to see some of the Project money used to fence off the creeks, and some money spent to install tanks for horses and cattle. That might serve as much or more as planting of willows. The water level is so low now you do not need waders. You can tell the difference. There is sediment beginning to build up. The work at the sewage treatment plant has improved that area.

**Molitor:** After being up there and renewing the applications, there are a lot of good projects that have been proposed. In our monitoring, we are seeing problems from a little bit above Hill City all the way through to Sheridan Lake. There is a storm water plan for Hill City. There is a project implementation plan in place. We hope to treat the areas that our monitoring is telling us

to address. The storm water has been a large issue in the past. This year it was not. The past two years we had high flow. This year we had low year.

**Verchio:** When they irrigate the Hill City football field, the water run-off all dumps into the lake. Those are things I am hoping we can correct in the future. If we do leave the dam in place, we need to address the sedimentation.

**Scherrer:** Within Sunday Gulch, towards Sylvan Lake, the landscape is shedding water more aggressively because there are no longer any live trees above where the creek comes in. That area is marked for a catch and release fishery. I would advocate removal of some silt. Spring floods do flush it out. But we are having a lot more flow of water due to reduction in trees. Removal of some sediment would provide opportunity for pocket fishing. Black Hills Fishers, SD GF&PP could get involved.

**Colin:** Brittney, you are talking about *E.coli* and fecal material?

**Brittney:** Both *E.coli* and fecal coliform showed in the TMDL in recent years. We exceed allowable levels during storm events and during low flow. The School of Mines was researching whether *E.coli* and fecal material move with sediment, and how long they survive in sediment.

**Paterson:** Are there plans to deal with issues of grazing, degradation of spring banks, etc.?

**Brittney:** Yes, there have been some projects to mitigate issues resulting from grazing and from mowing too close to the creek. Going into Segment Two of the Project, we are going to look at more of those.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Scherrer: Thank you to the Board for your attentiveness. Is there anyone here from the public who would like to speak?

No public comments received.

**Scherrer:** Can I have a motion to adjourn?

**Patterson:** So moved.

**Tieszen:** Second.

The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2012.