

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

November 14, 2012

Mystic Ranger District

### **Members Present:**

Chairman Jim Scherrer, Tom Blair, Jim Heinert, Ev Hoyt, Suzanne Iudicello-Martley, Bill Kohlbrand, Colin Paterson, Craig Tieszen, Jeff Vonk, Lon Carrier, Becci Flanders-Paterson, Dan Hutt, Mike Verchio, Bob Burns

### **Members Absent:**

Hugh Thompson, Sam Brannan, Nels Smith, Donovan Sprague

### **Forest Service Representatives:**

Craig Bobzien, Dennis Jaeger, Dave Mertz, Chelsea Monks, Les Gonyer, Blaine Cook, Kerry Burns, Brad Phillips, Jason Ruybal, Marie Curtin, and Twila Morris

### **Others:**

Approximately 10 members of the public were in attendance. Three Congressional representatives were also in attendance at various times during the meeting; Brad Otten (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 1:03p.m. Thank you, Supervisor Bobzien and Assistant Supervisor for the food, very good lunch, thank you. We'll have to call Marilee and thank her too!

Supervisor Bobzien would you like to introduce our guests?

**Bobzien:** thank you chairman Scherrer. I would like to introduce Scott Jacobson, our new public affairs officer for the BHNF. Scott, starting January 2<sup>nd</sup> will be out Committee Management Officer. We're looking forward to working with you Scott.

Secondly I would like to introduce Jason Ruybal; Jason is a Staff Officer on the Bighorn National Forest. Jason is in an Executive Leadership Program, and he'll be spending time with us the rest of this week. Welcome Jason, glad to have you here.

Nearly everyone else in the audience will be a presenter later today, so we will introduce them then. Thank you.

### **Approve the Minutes:**

**Scherrer:** Our first item of business is to approve the minutes from the October meeting. The minutes were distributed, comments received and incorporated. Do I have a motion to approve the October minutes? Motion made by Craig Tieszen second by Ev Hoyt. Is there any discussion? All in favor of approving the minutes as they read say aye; opposed same sign. The October minutes are approved.

### **Approve the Agenda:**

**Scherrer:** Next item of business is to approve the agenda; this is an amended agenda. We get the agenda out a week in advance, and we had a topic that came up that we've added, so you received the amended agenda. Do I have a motion to approve the Agenda? Motion made by Tom Blair second by Jim Heinert. Is there any discussion? All in favor of approving the agenda as it reads say aye; opposed same sign. The Agenda is approved.

### **Housekeeping:**

**DFO Bobzien:** 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. Chairman Scherrer, do call Marilee about the Chili... Thanks to Job Corps for the treats again this year.

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

**Bobzien:** We have another full agenda today as you know. Couple of things – the agenda is a combination of topics that the Board members are interested in. We have other relative topics – such as the white nose syndrome, updates. Hot topics, it's our business practice to get the agenda out a week ahead of time – but we also may have some things to include in the hot topics that have come up in the last week. We have one agenda item that we'll be asking you for advice on today.

### **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.

**Iudicello-Martley:** Chairman Scherrer, I would like to make a comment on the agenda, we talked about having the black backed woodpecker discussion today, and as you can see, it is not on the agenda. I just want everyone to know that the contacts were made early on, and the presenter that we were looking for was not able to make it today. We did do the outreach, but we'll have to do this topic in the future.

**Scherrer:** Thank you, yes, we are working on that to be presented in January.

### **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. Senator Johnson's Representative is on his way, but it looks like Mark Haugen is the only one here, so Mark, you're up.

**Mark Haugen:** They deferred all their time to me, so for the next 15 minutes, I've got the floor. Given how little time they've been in DC the last couple of months, I should have tape recorded my report from last month and just played it back today. The election did not reshuffle the cards, so things are pretty much the same. They are in session this week, out next week. The Farm Bill continues to percolate, the Senator is optimistic. A senatorial letter from Thune, Johnson, Enzi, Udall, Bennet and Barrasso was sent to Secretary Vilsack. The Senators expressed their appreciation for the continued efforts to accelerate restoration of forests across the country, and especially in the Rocky Mountain Region. They also expressed their support for treating more acres in SD & WY, particularly in the wildland urban interface, and backcountry areas with critical infrastructure. They specifically asked the Secretary to expand the timber management program, and prioritize timber sales.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Mark, would you please get a copy of the letter to Twila & Marie so that they can send it out. Are there any questions for Mark?

**Chris Blair:** Not much more to add; we are pleased to see the inclusion of forest restoration in the letter, the need to treat more acres, that is a real goal we have in mind. A couple weeks ago, Tim was out, Craig and Dennis hosted us at the Great Plains Dispatch Center. It is a very impressive center. We also had a good meeting regarding policy, pine beetle strategy; Dennis and Craig were real accommodating and we appreciate that. Like Mark said, not much is going on. We are anticipating a Farm Bill – it is our hope that we can move the Senate version forward in the lame duck session. Also working on the Sportsman Act of 2000, this takes 20 different bills from the sportsman's community, on issues important to the Sportsman, and combines them into one Bill. Continuing Resolution still in effect, funding the Government till March 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Chris.

Chris and Mark, you'll recall last month my concern for the continuity of this Board moving forward – and I encouraged you to talk with your Senators. The first step is the Forest Service needs to get the applications in front of Vilsack. Supervisor Bobzien was not here at the last meeting, but I spoke with him and asked him to let us know where the Forest Service is at with the member applications.

**Bobzien:** We have submitted the applications for the current vacancy for a Forest Products Representative; those are in to the Secretary's office. Vilsack will make the final selection – so it's important that all candidates are top quality. We don't have applications for all of the projected vacancies, but I'm taking the position that I want quality candidates, vs. just applications going in - so when we have those applications, I'm confident we will have a seamless transition.

**Scherrer:** If you are running into difficulty getting folks to apply, you tap the Board members

for help in recruiting, so that we run into January, February March – and still not have a full Board to move forward with. I know that you want quality instead of timing, but we should have both. There are a lot of people that have a lot of understanding, so I would suggest that you have a list full of people who are qualified. Thanks guys – in January, we’ll have a little better feel for where we stand with applications.

### **Pine Beetle Response Project Update**

**Scherrer:** We’ve been doing this update on a monthly basis waiting for the Forest Supervisor to sign off on the Decision. We’ll get another update today.

**Bobzien:** Thank you Chairman. First I’ll give an overview and then Katie Van Alstyne will give you more information. Before I hand it to Katie; you all saw the e-mail copy of the E&E report. This report is a National source; this is one of the most sought after sources – because of the amount of research that is done for their reports. The amount of research was depicted in this article – Suzanne was contacted, just to get different perspectives, and former member Tom Troxel was also contacted. They gave a good perspective to describe the significance of the project. They asked me if there was anything bigger than this going on in the Country – and I said that I didn’t know of any others, the amount of disturbance of the beetle hasn’t been at this level either. You guys have been involved in this, your comments and feedback to me, as I’m crafting my decision, is invaluable. The homework you did, the reading of the documents and the comments will all be considered.

**Van-Alstyne:** Good afternoon, than you for having me back today. The Pine Beetle Response Project is in the 30 day objection period. Meetings have been held with those that we received objections from; we’ve responded to them. We will have the package to the Regional Office for review by the week of the 19<sup>th</sup>, and they will have 30 days to review. Currently we are working on writing the Record of Decision.

**Paterson:** I would just like to have it noted that “Friends of Norbeck” and the “Norbeck Society” are in no way connected, and the Norbeck Society was formed first.

**Scherrer:** Thank you Colin. This topic will be on the agenda again in January.

### **BH Regional Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy Update**

**Scherrer:** The Black Hills Regional Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy group has been in business for several months. Dave Mertz has been working on this from the beginning; Carson Engelskirger was involved heavily; the County Weed & Pest folks were actively involved, as were many of the County Commissioners. It’s an all lands strategy that is very much in the forefront of the newspapers and the community. Dave called me after the agenda was out – so it became clear to me that this topic should be on the agenda. Dave is here today to present.

**Thom:** Thank you Jim, I’m glad to be here with all of you again today. The Working Group is made up of 14 different chairs including:

- County commissions and weed & pest departments:  
Crook, Weston (WY); Custer, Fall River, Lawrence, Meade, and Pennington (SD)
- State of SD Resource Conservation & Forestry

- State of WY Forestry
- Black Hills Forest Resource Association
- Federal: USFS, NPS, BLM
- Black Hills Resource Conservation & Development (Administration)

Current Infestation (1997-2012)

- Over 400,000 acres of the BHNH has some level of infestation (more than 500,000 acres on all lands)
- Epidemic expanded over 67,000 new acres in 2011
- The current infestation is likely one of the largest in recorded history
  - Over 8 million trees killed so far.
  - Minimum of 4.5 million trees infested in 2011
  - 95% of the infestation is on BHNH (predominant ownership)

What has been done: 2011-2012:

Action	Acres	Number
Trees marked	161,045	464,921
Trees treated (non-commercial)	136,386	314,970
Preventive spraying	NA	>120,000
Timber harvest and milling	37,655	Infested trees = 625,000 Total trees = 1,525,830 115 million board feet (equiv. 6,570 houses)
Informational workshops		10-15 (500-600 people)

Black Hills Regional Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy:

- Goal 1 – Reduce MPB populations to endemic levels
  - Sanitation Harvest
  - Cut & Chunk
  - Preventative Spraying
  - Peeling & Chipping
- Goal 2 – Create and maintain healthy forest conditions
  - Species Diversity
  - Landscape Level Treatments
  - Protect Natural Resources and Watersheds
- Goal 3 - Ensure viability of the forest products industry
  - Cost Effective
  - 1,600 Jobs
  - “Surgical”
  - Trained Operators
  - Best Management Practices
  - Utilize Material – New Markets
- Goal 4 – Ensure people and communities are protected

- Mitigate Falling Tree Hazards
- Decrease Risk of Catastrophic Fire; Especially in the WUI

**Thom:** That's an overview of where we are today.

**Blair:** I know it may be early, but are there any projections? We've put a ton of boots on the ground, have there been any reports on the results of those treatments?

**Thom:** Dr. Ball has looked at the treatments in Custer State Park and he has been impressed with the work and in certain areas, it has reduced the amount of the beetles flying this past year. I don't want to make this a really wide open conversation, but there are others that can weigh in on that. But the short answer is yes, there are areas that have been affective impressively.

**Scherrer:** Let me cut to the chase. What is the strategy of the Working Group in response to the Governor's statements of no more money? Lawrence County comes to mind; and I can understand the Governor's position – it may have been wiser for the counties to come together, so what is the strategy, what can we do as a community collaboration, to come up with some kind of a program that can generate money for this battle?

**Thom:** From an all lands perspective, Lawrence County has the most urgent need, they must act quickly. From an all lands, we talked about needing to present this to the Governor in a way to treat the acres needed. This is a six month proposal. Our plan with the Governor and other funding folks is to talk about the "all lands" – the bug doesn't respect property boundaries.

**Scherrer:** Kohlbrand came to me earlier with a concern that he would like to discuss here today, Bill.

**Kohlbrand:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to bring up a little bit of information contained in the participating agreements that the Counties have with the Service. These participating agreements are just critical for getting work done, and it just came to my attention that in an attempt to standardize those agreements, some of the slash components were changed. The effect of changing those slash requirements is that one County was averaging 1,500 trees a day, and now, with the more stringent requirements, they are down to just 250 trees a day. The cost per tree will go up, and we have so many trees to treat. I would hope that we could come up with an equitable way – with the slash components, to make this work. Slash is different from thinning and logging. If there's any shape to the slash from cut and chunk, it will be better than the shape it will be in when they fall later.

**Scherrer:** What is the difference? Be specific.

**Kohlbrand:** In some places they were able to go three foot in their slash, and now they are down to 18 inches. In a timber sale, you have room to settle the slash because you remove the tree, but the slash settles on the cut and chunk wood, so it is very difficult to work with the slash once it is piled on the chunks. We need to ramp up our programs not slow them down.

**Hoyt:** What were those numbers again?

**Kohlbrand:** 1,500 trees a day down to 250 trees a day.

**Blair:** Is that because of the slash or the length of the chunks that we've gone down to 18

inches?

**Kohlbrand:** I would say it is the slash and the addition horsing around that we have to go thru to reduce the slash down to 18". If you have a strict slash requirement t you have to do more labor.

**Bobzien:** Compliance with the slash requirements is something I required of our District Rangers. It was recognized that going out and cutting down the MPB trees has created a fuels hazard and we want to abate that fire risk. The Forest Plan requirements are related to this, which is one of our provisions in the Plan. Going forward with this kind of an issue where the concern is the lost production, we can examine the slash requirements in light of our Forest Plan, but when we do our quality assurance, if it isn't serving us well, and there is a feasible way to achieve those objectives, we will consider those in the future.

**Scherrer:** This situation sucks. I understand, I'm just articulating what I see in the room. Lawrence County is trying to get out ahead of this. They may not have been politically wise, but I give them credit for doing something.

**Blair:** Is there a cap on what Counties can levy as a mill levy for property taxes? You have a cap on school districts, on what they can levy, is there a cap on what Counties can levy from the State at least?

**Verchio:** There is, sort of, an annual cap. We would have to research that.

**Blair:** Coming from Lawrence County, and knowing it's a well to do County – if they are looking for continuous funding they might want to look at home – put a mill levy in place. I know there is a cap on the school districts.

**Heinert:** There are limitations on what the legislature establishes for schools and Counties. Counties do have the benefit of increasing to take advantage of growth. There is another option that Counties can exercise; Counties can opt out in an emergency situation.

**Verchio:** What the Governor has done has not gotten rid of the conversations – they are still willing to discuss that – Nathan Sanderson is one of the point persons – at a meeting a week or so ago – at that point what they wanted me to approach Nathan with, because of the Nemo area, was to request funding, instead of starting even, was to start high, and then work down. Of course one of the problems with that is now we have several things we have to look at the general fund money for after the election. Because it's not in his budget doesn't mean we can't continue the conversations.

**Scherrer:** When this discussion took place, this is not a one year problem, and I would strongly encourage anyone in this room with political insight and input, to talk with those people. And collaborate. The Governor is open to efforts when it's across the State of South Dakota. I encourage these folks – if it means getting a summer study of the effort, then so be it – but this isn't going away.

**Blair:** They don't finish their business till the first part of March – you've missed a whole year.

**Scherrer:** I would rather miss one year and get it the next year rather than sitting on our ass and miss it all together.

**Blair:** If the Governor doesn't have the money – the answer has to be a long term funding mechanism. We're looking at 1 march being around the corner

**Verchio:** Don't be too hard on Dave Thom. We are working on explaining these actions across the State, you are exactly right Tom, for this year it is too late, but we agree that the strategy is to ask for at least a five year plan.

**Heinert:** It would just seem to me that as we're taking an all lands approach, it might be appropriate to talk about an all "Agency" approach to see if we can secure the funding to get the job done.

**Thom:** We have three approaches:

- Public safety/private property – roads and private land perimeter,
- Landscape scale priority areas – special immediate needs, increased insect treatment,
- Federal (sales and non-commercial).

It has to be an all lands and all 'agency approach, and that is what this will be, County, State, Forest Service. It has to be laid out that way – all lands, all agencies.

**Blair:** We have a variety of landowners; private, State and Forest Service, but we have particular Lawrence County – BLM. Have BLM or Department of Interior ever ponied up or been involved? All the land around my campground is BLM.

**Thom:** Betsy Stiller with the BLM was at my meeting this morning. They have an outstanding request into the Forest Service for money to help deal with this. They are a part of that mix, pretty small part, but they are in the mix.

**Hoyt:** For Craig and Dennis, if I get the numbers wrong please correct me. What we heard at out last meeting is that the Forest Service's measurable is ccf sales, which in FY 2012 were 165,000 ccf initially, and we understand that the target and budget was established in Washington, and then sent down to the RO and then down to the Forest. You are hoping for more money – the budget is more this year than last year by \$2 million. We also learned at the last meeting, your funds are used to support the green sales program; administration, preparing for sales, those types of things, and there is very little money for actual cut and chunk work on the Forest in your budget. We also learned at the last meeting that the mills are at capacity, 90% of which is from commercial sales form the Forest Service, the other 10% from private. If the mills are at capacity, the Forest Service has very little money – what alternative is the Working Group considering to increase the amount of cut and chunk in the Forest?

**Thom:** I want to go back a couple of slides in my presentation. In terms of the Forest Service treatment – 600,000 trees were milled out of the 1 million. Those green sales could be a timber sale area, and there are a lot of green trees being harvest. But while they are there they are also taking care of a lot of infested trees as well.

**Hoyt:** I probably used the words "green trees" inappropriately.

**Thom:** Green and dead.

**Hoyt:** If the Forest Service has no funding to do cut and chunk, and industry is at capacity – how are you going to do more?

**Scherrer:** Bill would you address that?

**Kohlbrand:** Quick figures out of Lawrence County; In 2012, Lawrence County treated 68,000 trees with about \$2 million.

**Hoyt:** That was a cut and chunk method?

**Kohlbrand:** On the Wyoming side, we are trying to use salvage where we can; we will augment that with cut and chunk, and try to up those numbers.

**Verchio:** When you mentioned you need a multi-year process, cut and chunk is only effective if you go back in and continue to treat.

**Scherrer:** Dr. Ball has pointed out that you only buy one or two years by doing small cut and chunk patches of work.

**Hoyt:** The last effort of Lawrence County, what was the cost for the 68,000 trees?

**Kohlbrand:** \$2 million.

**Scherrer:** Dave Heck and Scott Guffey are here if any of the Board members wants to speak to those guys, I would recommend that you talk to them on the next break. Next we'll have an update on the Pine Beetle response from Dave Mertz.

## **Regular Agenda**

### **Pine Beetle Response**

**Mertz:** Good afternoon. I would like to give you an update of how we finished up FY12, and what our plans are for FY13. In FY12 we ended up with about 240,000 ccf, budget wise we ended up with an addition a \$2 million, so we are starting out where we left off last year. 160 ccf is our target, \$8 million is our funding. We are starting out planning to do 180 ccf. That is a decision that Craig made, that is above our target – that is with the hope that we will get additional funding. We have plans in place and could do 230,000 ccf, but to do that we would need an additional \$3.5 million.

Last year, we got an additional \$400,000 in Forest Health funding. We did \$100,000 worth of cut and chunk through a contract, primarily around Custer and some up on the Bearlodge. We got a really good rate on that contract; \$5.00 a tree. This year we do not have plans in place to do another contract. We put in a request for \$3.5 million in Forest Health dollars, we probably won't get anywhere near that – and we have a variety of projects ready for that. Last year we

sprayed trees in campgrounds, and we plan to do that again this year, 1500 trees.

For this year – we have our Five Year Plan, which is figuring in 180,000 ccf, for FY13. The sales that are in green are for 2013. We used four criteria to help us develop this year’s sale plan and the 2014 plan. We looked at the Black Hills National Forest Strategy – which is working our way out from the center of the Forest; we looked at those sales where we had heavy components of WUI; then we also said, can we make a difference in those areas? Will we get there in time and will it be affective? And lastly, it has to be where industry is interested in going. We’ve had a couple of no bid sales, so that is a factor. You can plan to go anywhere but at the end of the day someone has to buy it.

We do have a plan in place to bump it up to 230,000 ccf if we get the funding. There’s bug mapping efforts going on, it is a joint effort between the State, Neiman’s, and the Black Hills. It’s close to being done, but they haven’t quite finished that up yet.

**Brenneisen:** Probably within 48 hours it will be done.

**Iudicello-Martley:** Could you explain in terms of the 5 Year Plan, weather and how any of the principals form the MPB Response Project, once it’s approved and out, how those adaptive strategies could flow over into this five year plan.

**Mertz:** Good point, thank you Suzanne. This plan is based on timber sales that we already had planned; PBR is not reflected on that. The District Rangers are looking at those areas, because what it boils down to is that PBR allows us to work in areas that are not colored on that map – and there may be areas that are more important, and the Rangers will identify those areas. There is some time lag there – in some places the inventory is done. The Mystic District has some places that would fall into that. Over time PBR will start showing up on that map and affect that schedule.

**Brenneisen:** To clarify some of those colored areas on that map do not have analysis completed, where PBR is very ready to go. Couldn’t you see projects in some of those areas that could be offered in PBR?

**Mertz:** Yes – especially when you get out in to 2016 & 2017, future planning areas. Once PBR is fully implementable, PBR would take the place of some of those areas.

**Iudicello-Martley:** Once the MPB Response Project is in effect, it could change the areas and the timing of the map as you see what appends.

**Mertz:** Yes

**Bobzien:** This plan is current today – we have a number of plans, contingency plans etc. The other thing is the dynamic nature of the mountain pine beetle; the reality is there are a lot more communities being affected. Over the weekend, I got about 60 e-mails from a group of people in a certain part of the Forest, and their concern is why we aren’t there now. So back to your question – how do we adapt; part of the value of this Board and evaluating and monitoring is important.

**Hoyt:** Did you say that your cut and chunk was done at \$5.00 a tree?

**Mertz:** That is what we got under contract last year from a contractor in Oregon, but when they finished they said they wouldn't do it for that again for \$5.00 a tree, more like \$10.00 a tree. Their quality was really, really good.

**Scherrer:** Before I dismantle this discussion, I want to recognize Dave Heck in the audience today. Dave, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but if you have any input on the costs, would you share that information with us? Is there anything we could benefit from?

**Heck:** We pay \$10.00 a tree right now; we have 100 guys cutting about 5,000 trees a day. Half our money comes thru donations; the other half comes thru the County. When money gets short, we have to cut back and our production goes down to 1,500 trees a day. Lawrence County is also paying \$5,000 in insurance for the folks they've hired rather than contractors. We did that because we had trouble getting contractors.

We have spent the bulk of the \$2 million on cutting the trees, we covered about 78,000 acres. This year we'll move from area to area – right now we are at Strawberry Hill. And we'll go back to Whitewood Peak and around. We do understand that this is not a one year process – going out and asking for the \$4 million has been mentioned this morning, we need it, we'll be out of money in a week. We don't have time to wait – politically it might not have been the right thing to do, but we had to go ahead and ask. I didn't make that decision, but I follow orders.

**Hoyt:** Have you monitored the areas now that there has been a flight?

**Heck:** Last year we went above and beyond the requirements, we've recon-ed the sites, we have 35 people marking trees, and that allowed us the chance to go back into the areas. The areas we've worked in have proven the effectiveness of our work.

A summary of treatments this year:

Spring Treatment at Mt. Roosevelt 8,900 trees cut - 894 new MPB infested this fall - a 10 to 1 reduction between flights.

Hanna Unit, 10,000 trees cut with less than 200 newly infested trees this fall.

Spearfish Peak 7,800 trees cut and now under Pathfinder timber-sale, I do not know the number of new infested trees but the report I received from the Northern Hills District office was that it was minimal.

90,000 MPB trees will be cut this year in 2012 covering 68,000 acres of USFS land in Lawrence County at a total cost of 15.85 per tree, that covers administrative, insurance, Workman's Comp, recon, survey, equipment, and paying for the fellers to cut trees at \$10.00 per tree.

Since the new slash requirements of 18 inches from the previous four feet allowance has resulted in a fivefold reduction in production per day going from 1,500 trees cut per day to less than 300 cut per day with the same crew of fellers. We have also had to double the amount of on-site personal to ensure the slash requirements are being met by helping to scatter slash and make sure all chunk pieces are on the ground.

**Scherrer:** Let's take a 15 minute break; be back by 2:30. Thanks everyone for your participation. Supervisor Bobzien mentioned to me that there is tremendous amount of knowledge in this room, and that is what it will take to achieve any amount of progress. Ev & Suzanne's comments really reflect their knowledge from the Sub-Committee.

### **Research Natural Areas, Botanical Areas**

**Scherrer:** It is 2:42, please take a seat. Before we move on to the RNA topic with Chelsea, I want to conclude the previous topic with some information from Ev Hoyt.

**Hoyt:** Dave Heck, Weed and Pest Supervisor for Lawrence County, had another measure of effectiveness that we should incorporate into the notes. Dave had discussed the areas that were treated and the results of the subsequent treatment. There is another example of measurement that I would like him to explain.

**Heck:** Teatrault Peak was recon-ed in the spring last year; there were 5,400 MPB infested trees at that time. We ran out of time, and those trees could not be cut till after the last bug flight; resulting in an increase to 19,200 newly infested MPB trees that were cut, a 4 to 1 increase.

**Scherrer:** Craig would you like to introduce Chelsea?

**Bobzien:** Chelsea Monks has met with us before she is our Forest Botanist; she will go over our RNA and Botanical Areas on the Forest. For those of you who have been on the Board for many years, in 2005, one of the major accomplishments of the Board was giving recommendations on our Phase II Amendment. And one of those was the establishment of RNAs. Board members said that they would like to hear more about that – it's a very small part of the Forest, but it's important. On one of Dave Thom's slides, he noted that one of the objectives is to protect sensitive areas. This is a milestone topic.

**Chelsea Monks:** Good afternoon I'm the Forest Botanists; I'm also the forest RNA coordinator. We'll talk about Botanical Areas first.

#### **What is a Botanical Area?**

- Management Designation (MA 3.1)
- Areas that “exhibit plant communities, associations, and/or individual species of particular interest.”
- “These areas are protected to maintain their botanical interest values.”
- Management activities are generally only allowed if they do not conflict with the “values for which the area was designated.”

#### **How many Botanical Areas does the Black Hills have?**

- Bearlodge
  - Dugout Gulch
  - Upper Sand Creek
- Hell Canyon
  - None

- Mystic
  - Black Fox Fen
  - McIntosh Fen
  - North Fork of Castle Creek
- Northern Hills
  - Bear and Beaver Gulches
  - Englewood Spring
  - Higgins Gulch

Summary of Botanical Areas in the Black Hills:

- Total of 7,462 acres
- Designated in the 1997 Forest Plan
- Reservoirs of plant diversity for the Black Hills

What is an RNA?

- “Form a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for non-manipulative research, education, and biodiversity conservation”
- Management Area 2.2
- “Selected to preserve a spectrum of relatively pristine areas that represent a wide range of natural variability within important natural ecosystems...”
- Generally characterized as showing little to no human presence
- Designated as candidates in the Phase II Forest Plan Amendment
- Must prepare an Establishment Record
  - Establishment Record is approved by the Regional Forester and the Station Director of the Rocky Mountain Research Station

Five RNAs on the Black Hills National Forest:

Bearlodge

- Hay Creek

Hell Canyon

- Fanny Boles
- Upper Pine Creek

Mystic

- Canyon City
- North Fork of Castle Creek

Northern Hills

- None

Summary of RNAs in the Black Hills:

- Total of 3,126 acres
- Analyzed in the Phase II Amendment
- Establishment Records Signed
- Mineral Withdrawal

**Paterson:** You talked about management activities being permitted in these areas as long as they don't damage or otherwise affect the area. As you know, there has been considerable

citizen monitoring of the Englewood Springs and Dugout Gulch areas and there are activities taking place in those areas that have caused problems. What plans does the Forest Service have to protect those values?

**Monks:** I'll defer that question to Craig.

**Bobzien:** We get citizen and internal monitoring of those sites on a regular basis. We recently had a field trip to look at both Englewood Springs and the Dugout Gulch areas. On sites that I've observed, we have put up electric fences around them because in dry years, those areas are a magnet. We just continue to monitor and evaluate – and take what actions we can on those special sites.

**Scherrer:** Thank you very much. We appreciate the input.

### **White Nose Syndrome Project**

**Scherrer:** We are going to be asked to provide guidance to the Forest regarding the Forest Service's Region 2 Environmental Assessment regarding White-Nose Syndrome.

**Bobzien:** Two months ago Kerry Burns, Forest Wildlife Biologist, talked about bats, and what they mean to the ecosystem. The Black Hills have a rich cave resource and a rich mine resource for bats. Welcome Kerry and welcome Brad Phillips, our district Wildlife Biologist on the Hell Canyon District. Brad has been very active with caves, caving, bats, and abandoned mines. The Region is starting an environmental project, beginning today. What is occurring is a Regional environmental process, which is being done region-wide for efficiency sake. We are one of the Forests that have the richest cave resource. There was a recreation closure of caves on the Black Hills. Kerry and Brad are going to talk about the project, and what is the appropriate adaptive management here on the Black Hills. We are in the scoping process. They will go over details of the environmental process. Board members could carry this forward with the Advisory Board, to provide input to the Regional Forester and guide some outcomes we would like to see here on the Black Hills National Forest. I will be asking for advice from the Board on this subject to guide future management on the Black Hills National Forest.

### **Burns and Phillips showed a PowerPoint Presentation**

**Burns:** I am going to give a brief background on the project. Brad will hand out a briefing paper on White-Nose Syndrome from the USGS. It explains a bit more about the disease. We are also providing a handout of information from the PowerPoint. We talked two months ago about White-Nose Syndrome and where it started. It has killed several million bats in caves back East. Bats are important economically and ecologically. They eat a lot of moths, bugs and mosquitos. The White River National Forest and the Black Hills National Forest are the two Forests with the most caves. Bats are sensitive and White-Nose Syndrome has a disturbance agent that disturbs bats' hibernation. They wake up, which costs energy. We have a closure order that was instituted in 2010, reinstated in 2011 and again in 2012. This is a driver in the project. The closure order ends July 31, 2013. Closure orders have affected recreational caving. The local Grotto has been very good to work with around this closure, but would like caves re-opened. We realize that the emergency closures are not a long-term strategy. We need a long-

term strategy to manage these caves, in light of White-Nose Syndrome and recreational use of caves. That is the “why” behind this project. Brad is one of two biologists on the Regional Team, and is very knowledgeable about bats and this disease.

**Phillips:** As Kerry mentioned, the reason the Region wants to go this route, is they do not want to annually institute closure orders. The last closure order had a few more caveats that allowed Grottos and the caving community to help the Forest Service with White-Nose Syndrome. We are developing a multi-forest Environmental Assessment, and we have it on a tight timeline to accomplish it before the current closure order expires. I am pleased that I was selected to be on this Interdisciplinary team. We want to prevent the spread of White-Nose Syndrome and still allow the use of caves as is appropriate. The caving community has stated we have locked them out of caves on public lands. In response, we have come up with this solution. The Purpose and Need is to keep White-Nose Syndrome from spreading to this area as a result of hitchhiking on backs of cavers. But, in seeing how the disease is spread, we are learning more about what we can do and what minimal risk is. We have to think about “when” because so far we have not seen any reason to believe that it is not going to get here eventually. But we cannot use emergency closures without science to back them up. The handout summarizes what I am talking about now.

Like all Environmental Assessments, we will have a variety of alternatives. We always include a No Action Alternative. The Region could take the Emergency Closure and turn that into a Closure. But we are looking at more of an adaptive management approach. We have both proactive and reactive measures. We are trying to identify triggers. Right now we have that blanket closure, which is just a closure on paper. It was important as a first step. We are currently dealing with access restrictions.

Decontamination is a very important component of this strategy. We are concerned that cavers move from cave to cave without washing their gear, and will arrive to cave in South Dakota and Colorado and spread White-Nose Syndrome that way. We are busy with outreach and education. Any time you can get the word out to deal with how cavers cave, on public and private land, anytime we can education them regarding decontamination, that is a major step.

If White-Nose Syndrome shows up here, we have triggers to deal with it. One thing is that this is a Regional Environmental Assessment, but it will be signed off on by all the Region’s Forests and Grasslands. Some caving areas are far from high population areas. And in some areas, like the Black Hills National Forest, you can drive a short distance and reach several caves.

Distant areas may have fewer restrictions. We are doing a watershed risk assessment, looking at proximity to population areas and proximity to show caves. We have a lot of cave resources here that are open to the public, at the National Parks and National Monuments. The National Park Service is starting to question visitors to screen for caving activities in the East, using the honor system to prevent spreading of White-Nose Syndrome. One proposal is to increase access restriction enforcement. Fewer access restrictions may be appropriate.

White-Nose Syndrome has been confirmed in Missouri. The fungus showed up in Oklahoma, approximately 300 miles from the mountains in Colorado. Monitoring has not shown any additional locations of bat mortality in Oklahoma.

The Environmental Assessment schedule provides a 30-day scoping period. The Notice went out today.

**Iudicello-Martley:** I want you to understand that this question is not motivated by spite, but by curiosity and a cautionary tale. I would like to know how the decision was made to use an Environmental Assessment which must result in a Finding of No Significant Impact. Someone might ask, “How can you be sure of a Finding of No Significant Impact?” I want to understand why the Region is confident that an Environmental Assessment is enough and that we do not need to accomplish an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Burns:** As far as the NEPA process goes, you start with an Environmental Assessment and you can go to an Environmental Impact Statement. Part of the purpose of the Environmental Assessment will be to evaluate the impacts. We will either get a Finding of No Significant Impact, or move forward to an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Phillips:** I think that will also come out during the scoping period.

**Bobzien:** A White-Nose Syndrome Subcommittee would need to respond to three questions. The first is, “What are the appropriate trigger points?” If that can be done, that is one of the options. A second option I would like the Board to consider is, “What are the significant issues?” The third question is, “What are some of the desired outcomes?” Is there anything else the Board can provide during the next thirty days?

**Scherrer:** Please repeat the goals and for the subcommittee.

**Bobzien:** I ask for a Subcommittee to present to the Board in the next 30 days, to respond to three questions. What are the appropriate trigger points? What are the significant issues? And, what are some of the desired outcomes?

**Scherrer:** Our next meeting is in 60 days.

**Bobzien:** I am asking the Subcommittee to send their thoughts to the Chair and to provide feedback electronically to the Forest within 30 days.

**Scherrer:** On or before December 13<sup>th</sup>. I can see from the presentation, that a lot of the work of the Subcommittee has already been done.

**Bobzien:** Tom Blair and Lon Carrier are both highly credentialed in their fields. I am impressed.

**Scherrer:** Lon, I would respectfully request that you and Tom Blair be members of this Subcommittee. Lon, would you be willing to Chair the Subcommittee?

**Carrier:** Yes.

**Scherrer:** I would like one more member of the Board to be on the Subcommittee. I would like to receive information back from the Subcommittee by the end of first week of December. I will

forward the information received to the Board, electronically, to get feedback. Can I ask for one other member for the Subcommittee?

**Vonk:** I would offer a South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks employee, a biologist, to be on the Subcommittee.

**Scherrer:** Please advance the name and contact information for your employee to Craig Bobzien.

**Hoyt:** Could you tell us what the budget is on the Region and the Forest for this project?

**Burns:** We do not know what the planned expenditures are for this project, for the NEPA process to be accomplished during 2012-2013.

**Scherrer:** Twila, I would like you to send Brad's and Kerry's contact information, and Subcommittee contact information to everyone including myself and Craig Bobzien.

### **Forest Inventory Analysis Report**

**Bobzien:** Blaine Cook will go over information from the Forest Inventory Analysis. This is only the second time we have had information at this level. The information is currently being incorporated into a document that will be released in about four months. Blaine will summarize what will be published and available in four months.

**Cook:** The Forest Inventory Analysis accomplished by the US Department of Agriculture is a nation-wide inventory that occurs on State, federal and private lands. There are 222 Forest Inventory Analysis plots. On the Forest, there is about 1 plot for every 6,000 acres. The location is sometimes confidential. Last time we did this was in 2002.

Ponderosa Pine is the dominate tree species on the Forest, 1" and larger. Several things have happened since this report was done in 2002 (data collected in 1999). In the year 2000 we had some major changes to the Forest. The year 1999 was pre-Jasper Fire (August 2000). The Jasper Wildfire was a wakeup call for us. It changed the landscape. We have a lot of snags out there now, and a lot of grass. And we have the Mountain Pine Beetles epidemic and timber harvest. These are the main forces acting on the Forest. In bug hit areas we have a lot of snags. And then, we have active timber sales. The Forest look is changing.

Data was collected in 2007 and 2011 in South Dakota and in 2005 in Wyoming. South Dakota data goes to east to Northern Research Station; Wyoming data goes west to the Northern Research Station in Utah. Ironically, the Black Hills data goes to two different sites. A letter to the Regional Forester from Craig Bobzien requested that a Forest Inventory Analysis Report be accomplished specifically for the Black Hills. Usually the report is accomplished by State. But the Black Hills National Forest wants to know what the Forest has. The difference in level of cubic feet over acre of Forest land = 16% drop. Net growth on the forest has been less. We have 20 million standing dead trees of greater than 5" dbh. Diameter classes from 11 to 16 inches – that is our main tree size. This has been true for a while. The 1999 report said that we have 6.1 million board feet. Ten years, later, we have 4.8 million

board feet. We have had removals caused by insect mortality and fire.

Net growth to removal ration is .88; we are not growing as fast as removals. The forest is changing and the numbers back up the look.

This is just a glimpse of what the Forest Inventory Analysis provides in their report specifically for the Black Hills. The Black Hills report will come out in about four months. It lends support to the Forest to answer questions about what the Forest looks like, about what is happening.

**Iudicello-Martley:** Would you go back to the slide showing the percentages for the different species of trees – the second or third slide. In order of amount – we have mostly ponderosa pine, then aspen, then burr oak, etc.

**Flanders-Paterson:** What is the comparison of availability of cubic feet, the availability of ponderosa pine produced versus ponderosa pine harvested?

**Cook:** The Forest Inventory Analysis is based on Forest-wide analysis. The Forest Plan is different. Six billion cubic feet have been harvested on the Black Hills since harvesting started. Two-thirds of the Forest is in suitable base.

**Flanders-Paterson:** We still do not have a shortage of trees, correct? The supply is still adequate to provide for our Timber Industry, correct?

**Cook:** That is a debatable statement. We have had some large fires – e.g., Jasper and Myrtle. They are using up the ponderosa pine. We want to save the industry. Everyone at the table is trying to help.

**Brenneisen:** What should the standing inventory be? Was 6.1 too much?

**Cook:** Back in 1997 with the development of the Forest Plan, no disturbances were built in to the planning effort. When you have that amount of turf in ages 75-80, dbh 11-16', that is bug bait. We do not know if 6.1 is too great. We have done some analysis on that. I believe that for long-term sustained harvest, you need to cut less than we are currently harvesting. We are cutting high now because of the disturbances - fire and bugs. We are accelerating the harvesting. Trees will always be here. It will be less for a while, and then will cycle back up again. 1999 was the top of the curve. We have lots of thick stands.

**Scherrer:** When did the Forest Service institute fire suppression as the goal for managing fires in the West.

**Mertz:** The 1910 fire started the fire suppression management effort.

**Iudicello-Martley:** You mentioned the 1997 Forest Plan did not incorporate disturbance. Does the Forest Inventory Analysis disturbance? Does the model incorporate big cyclical changes like drought, climate, temperature, water, etc.?

**Cook:** You are trying to predict the future, and predictions are very difficult. I discovered that none of the disturbances were in the 1997 plan. We made assumptions that some where we

would have a Jasper-type wildfire, but everyone thought it would not happen. Should we plan for 100,000 acres of fire every ten years?

**Hoyt:** Will we get an explanation of the final Forest Inventory Analysis Report when it is available?

**Scherrer:** Blaine, please forward electronic copies of the Forest Inventory Analysis Report to all NFAB members when it is available.

### **TMP – Hat Mountain Restoration**

**Bobzien:** Working with all our communities of interest, we developed a Motorized Travel Plan that people could support, but we were also going to designate some areas where motorized travel would not be available. The District took on Hat Mountain, to rehabilitate and recover the area. Lou Conroy, our Forest road crew lead, and many others were involved in the process. Kevin Woster did a great article. Hat Mountain is small in area and is very special in significance. We are not done yet, but I wanted to recognize everyone who is helping with the recovery. It is one of our jewels of the Black Hills.

**Gonyer:** My name is Les Gonyer, and I am the hydrologist on the south half of the Forest. This project was a multiple effort by several people. Shirlene Haas was the leader of the project, and I got involved in restoration work. The Forest's Public Information Office put this video together. So let's roll it.

### **Showed Video and “Before and After” Photographs**

**Gonyer:** If you look carefully at the 1998 photo, there are no trails. In a period of a decade or less the trails were established going up the mountain, as a result of the increasing popularity of all-terrain vehicles. This increased popularity resulted in the Travel Management Planning process. This is a before and after comparison. There was a road up to the mountain on the west side of the mountain. We obliterated the road; we took it off the landscape. This road was original here, not created by the user. I think the Forest Service built the road to the top way back when. The road originally went around the mountain to the top. The users went straight up to the top. From the top, looking to the west and across the top, the roads were obliterated. Here we had three tracks going up the hill. When one got bad, they would move to the side and create another, and another.

During obliteration, we loosened up the dirt, smoothed it out, and then the compost socks were placed about every 20-25 feet. We did add some seed on top of that, although I also think there is a pretty good seed bank. I think we will get excellent recovery as long as users stay off the area. I found a new motorized track at the beginning of November. Ben and I are going to fell a few bug trees to try to deter traffic. This is another area that was pretty well eroded. The trails went straight up the hillside, and when we had precipitation the water carried erosion straight to the bottom of the mountain. The erosion was horrendous.

**Hoyt:** Given normal precipitation, how long will it take vegetation to come back in areas between the socks?

**Gonyer:** I would say with three years we will have a good stand of vegetation. When you plant here, the first year it sleeps, second year it creeps, and third year it leaps. During the first year we will still have a lot of bare ground, which will lessen in the second year, and in the third year it will fill in.

**Flanders-Paterson:** Hat's off, no pun intended. Good job.

**Gonyer:** I feel that I can look back and say, "Boy that was a good project." We just need to block access by motorized users. It is just a handful of folks that have been up there before and who do not want to be stopped.

**Bobzien:** Just north and west of Hat Mountain is Flag Mountain. There is a road that goes up there, and we want to promote motorized travel on Flag Mountain. It provides a great view.

**Gonyer:** Hat Mountain is not that much of a climb.

**Scherrer:** We should contact Kevin Woster who wrote the article, in a year, to bring him up there and maybe we will get some additional coverage.

**Gonyer:** Maybe television coverage as well.

### **Prescribed Fire plans**

**Scherrer:** Todd Pechota and Jason Virtue are unable to attend. This came on the agenda because I saw an article in the paper that said the Forest was going to do some prescribed burns and to expect to see some smoke. It was right after the week of lots of fires in the Black Hills. I asked to have this on the agenda so we can be more aware of the science and be advocates to our colleagues in the community.

**Jaeger:** Todd Pechota, our Fire Management Officer, had a conflict. I will pinch-hit. I have passed out our prescribed burn plan for 2012 and spring of 2013. How we implement this plan is based on the conditions needed, the conditions that will allow us to control the fire. The prescription indicates how many trees we want to kill, and how we will control the fire. This map shows pre-burn, the biggest comments we get is right after the fire when there are red trees, and then six years later. But prescribed burns are another way we can use natural processes to manage the Forest. We started on the Bearlodge, and we have some burns planned on the Hell Canyon District, but they were postponed due to weather. Bearlodge fires were not a go because the area was too wet. We will also have pile burning this winter. We need about four inches of snow on the ground to burn piles.

**Bob Burns:** I have a question for the State. Is there any program for private landowners to accomplish prescribed burns on private land?

**Jaeger:** I will refer you to the State. We use interagency crews. The majority of our fire fighters are seasonal and this is not their season. We pull engines from the four Districts, as well

as the State and other crews.

**Verchio:** The Hill City Fire Department does some small burns in the area surrounding Hill City. It can be difficult to get permits to burn slash piles, because they sometimes burn for weeks.

**Tieszen:** How much pre-work is done in preparing an area for fire? Do you have them prioritized, so when you have a good day you are ready to go? How does the timeline work?

**Jaeger:** Planning begins with a NEPA document, then a Fire Plan (with prescription). And, we look at weather and personnel. Weather is the key – when we have optimum moisture levels, appropriate wind speed and direction – then we bring the crews. Before ignition, we do a test burn, and make a “go/no go” determination. The planning takes years, altogether. The 48 hour mark is when we bring in the crews, although the burn has been scheduled for two weeks. The last 48 hours is probably key.

**Tieszen:** What is the likelihood will you will get this all done?

**Jaeger:** It depends on whether we get windows of opportunity – wet but not too wet, dry but not too dry, and the appropriate winds. A few weeks back we had 40 mph winds and 13 new wildfire starts. But we had the right conditions for prescribed burns on Bearlodge a week later, so we lit them off.

**Scherrer:** What about the criteria for prescribed burns vs. slash piles? This handout is primarily about the fall and spring projects. Piles are a winter activity?

**Jaeger:** Yes.

**Iudicello-Martley:** May I assume these plans are made ahead of time? The purpose of burns is multiple - diversity, composition, reduction of fuels, etc.? I assume that as you implement the Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project that your fire plans may change.

**Jaeger:** In the Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project, prescribed burns was not one of the tools included in the Project. We felt we had a significant backlog of what needs to be burned, so we did not list prescribed burns as a tool in the plan. Why here, why now? We look at spots we can burn, and prioritize depending on the purpose and need and what we are expecting to accomplish with each of these burns.

**Brenneisen:** Do you plan and track this fire activity separate from brush disposal activities that follow timber sales? Is this pot of money separate from brush disposal money?

**Jaeger:** Yes.

**Brenneisen:** Can you give a report as to where the backlog of brush disposal is?

**Jaeger:** Yes, we have a backlog. We cannot keep up. We try to clean up slash piles close to roads, for scenic values, first. Slash piles in backcountry areas might be there a while.

**Brenneisen:** Are brush disposal funds site specific?

**Bobzien:** Money goes into a trust account. It can carry over year to year, but funds have to go back to the specific timber sales from which they were generated.

**Scherrer:** We have completed the agenda.

## **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.**

**Paterson:** In September Rick Hudson gave a report on Motorized Travel Permits. I would ask that the Forest provide the Board with documentation that provides what was spent, etc.

**Scherrer:** Is it possible for Forest to provide info before January meeting?

**Paterson:** Or it could be sent to us in January, to get decision in subsequent months?

**Scherrer:** If it arrives pre-January, we would have January to read and discuss, and then make a recommendation in February.

**Bobzien:** Yes, we can have it provided before the January meeting.

**Scherrer:** Then it will be on the January agenda.

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

**Paterson:** So moved.

**Tieszen:** Second.

The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting is scheduled for January 2, 2013