

## **National Forest Advisory Board Meeting**

March 16, 2016

Mystic Ranger District

### **Members Present:**

Chairman Dick Brown, Alice Allen, Dave Brenneisen, Wayne Bunge, Bob Burns, Lon Carrier, John Gomez, Dave Hague, Keith Haiar, Jennifer Hinkhouse, David Miller, Derek Nelson, Luke Ortiz, Perry Rahn, Victoria Sprague, Linda Tokarczyk, Lauris Tysdal, Josh Van Vlack, Mike Verchio, Jeanne Whalen, Danielle Wiebers, Mary Zimmerman

### **Members Absent:**

Derek Alexander, Jessica Crowder, Kelly Hepler, Susan Johnson Nancy Trautman, Ben Rhodd, Dennis Yellow Thunder, Patty Brown, Tony Leif, Craig Tieszen

### **Forest Service Representatives:**

Craig Bobzien, Jerry Krueger, Scott Jacobson, Beth Doten, Rhonda O'Byrne, Twila Morris, Brain Fields, Tracy Anderson, Dave Mertz, Kerry Burns

### **Others:**

Approximately 15 members of the public were in attendance. Four Congressional Representatives were also in attendance; Mark Haugen (Thune – R, South Dakota) Brad Otten (Noem – R, South Dakota), and Jeff Marlette and Katie Murray (Rounds – R, South Dakota).

### **Introduction & Welcome:**

**Krueger:** Call the meeting to order, 1:00 p.m. Welcome everyone, it has been a long pause and we are glad to be back in business. Welcome to our new members; we have a very full house. Craig Bobzien's flight didn't leave Denver this morning, so he is still trying to work his way here. Housekeeping; restrooms on each end; in the event of an emergency, exit out the front of the building, if that exit is blocked we'll exit out the back.

**Brown:** Welcome everyone, welcome to the new members, we are delighted that you are here. The agenda for today has been amended; copies available.

### **Approve the Agenda:**

**Brown:** We would like to approve the amended agenda that is before you; motion made by David Hague, second by Lon Carrier; comments or observations? All in favor say aye, opposed say nay; the March agenda is approved.

### **Approve the June 2015 Meeting Notes:**

**Brown:** We do have minutes from the June meeting, but we will resend those out to all the members so that everyone will have time to review. We are all newly appointed members, so we'll be approving old minutes, but we'll go forward at our next meeting with that.

## **Meeting Protocols:**

**Brown:** Please turn your cell phones on vibrate or off. Primary members or the alternates should be sitting at the table; alternates are welcome to sit at the table if there is space. We will orient you today about how the Board works, the 16 member groups, and how this Board gives us a chance to share with each other and the Federal Government to provide advice to the Forest Supervisor and then to the Washington Office. Public comments are reserved for a time at the end of the agenda; comments from the public should be those that relate to the issues on the agenda. If there is no time for public comments, please meet with the representative from your interest group; and share your concerns. Back to Jerry to talk about NFAB and the BHNF.

**Krueger:** For Primaries and Alternates, there is a binder for each one of you. The Advisory Board here is unique; we are a FACA approved group, FACA refers to a sanctioned Federal Advisory Board. Congress, through legislation back in the 1970s, decided that there were far too many ad-hoc Advisory Boards operating at the Federal Level, so to gain a handle on that, the Congress mandated an approved process to establish true Advisory Boards, and it is that Federal Law that allows us to operate as a sanctioned Advisory Board. We are one of two, the other one is on the White Mountain National Forest. Tab 3 in your binder talks about the objectives of the National Forest Advisory Board. The objective for our Board is to “Provide advice and recommendations on a broad range of forest issues such as forest plan revisions or amendments, forest health including fire and mountain pine beetle epidemics, travel management, forest monitoring and evaluation, recreation fees, and site-specific projects having forest-wide implications”.

The Board operates as an investigation tool of concerned citizens, it allows folks in a federally approved way to provide specific recommendations to the Forest Service. In my time on the BHNF the consideration that the Board takes in providing leadership is vitally important and we take great heed and are grateful for the time this Board invests. Do all primaries and alternates have their binder?

The binder is full of information; there are briefing papers included that are about the high profile interest areas on the Forest. Many of the topics we’ll cover today are included in the briefing papers. The meeting schedule is included in the binder. If you have any questions, talk with Craig Bobzien, Scott Jacobson or myself.

As a FACA approved Board, we have by-laws and a charter which are included in your binder. Meetings are open to the public. Minutes of the meeting are available. There is some formality, we do have an election, and a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

## **Introductions**

There are 16 groups represented here; we would like you each to tell us about your interest in volunteering for the Board and a little bit about yourself. The rich diversity and backgrounds of the folks on this Board offer great advice and input to the Forest Service.

## Hot Topics

### Legislative Updates – Federal

**Brown:** Next on our agenda are the Legislative updates. We are happy to have four Congressional Delegation representatives here today; we'll start with Mark Haugen from Senator Thune's office.

**Haugen:** The Senator is taking up the GMO (genetically modified organisms) labeling bill in the Senate; there are different labels in every state, and this is very hard for both consumers and producers. The Senator is hoping for a compromise that would be a voluntary way of doing GMO labeling that would be consistent across the US.

The Senator is also taking on the foreign seasonal labor law. I had no idea how prevalent foreign seasonal labor is in the Black Hills; in talking with the owner of Krull's Market in Hill City; they are still unable to get their seasonals hired because of a problem with the system. They have run into computer snafus that is causing panic amongst businesses in the Black Hills. The Senator sent a letter to Perez asking him to figure this out and make sure it doesn't happen.

Senator Thune's Burn Bill has been a long time in the process, but it has been progressing, the Senator testified before the Ag Committee and it may be attached to a fire funding bill in the near future.

Senator Thune will be in South Dakota later this month.

**Brown:** Thank you Mark for that update, we'll move now to Senator Round's office, Katie or Jeff.

**Murray:** Thank you. The Senator has been busy with several things including the National Defense Authorization Act, passing an Omnibus Bill, Long Term Highway Funding Bill, Substation Infrastructure Bill, Education Reform Bill; which does away with no child left behind – getting the Federal Government out of the way and putting the process back in the States hands. Transpacific Partnership, made public in November, will vote on that after the election.

Last week Senator Rounds met with the Veteran's Affairs Committee working on increasing transparency in the VA system, telling them to give a reports to Congress. The Senator is also involved in the Environment and Public Works Committee; Army Corps of Engineer and their flood management plan.

**Brown:** Thank you for that update Katie, next we'll hear from Brad Otten with Representative Noem's Office.

**Otten:** The last time we met together with the NFAB, our concern revolved around the Rainbow Family Gathering; several things have happened since then. Kyle Holt left us to go to work with the Department of Agriculture. Sandy Marlette, who worked for Senator Thune for many years, came to work with us at Representative Noem's office. If you'll remember, Sandy worked with us when Kristi first took office, Sandy helped get the office up and running. Between Sandy and me, we'll report at the NFAB meetings in the future.

The President put his budget on the table on February 9th; the House and Senate will take up their own versions; might have trouble getting the budget through the floor.

Kristi has been all over the world so far this year; she was here during the stock show; she was in Pierre to talk about State priorities, last week she was in Africa as part of a congressional trip. Next week she'll be hosting a conference in Sioux Falls called "Women of Influence".

The Representative's Rapid City Office will be moving, the new address is: 2525 West Main, #310. This is in the Clock Tower Plaza, our office will be facing the National Guard Camp, so we'll be easy to find.

The Representative appreciates the positive response to the letter to the Chief from the SD Congressional Staff, from the Forest Service, agreeing to additional timber sales. Speaking for Kristi and all of the delegation we will miss Craig's leadership on the BHNH; he has done a great job for all of us.

**Brown:** Thank you Brad. If there are no questions for any of the SD Congressional Staff, we'll move along to the Wyoming Congressional Staff. Jeanne, do we have any representatives from Wyoming here today? Thanks again to the Congressional Staffers who attend our meeting and give an update; it is significantly important to have the Congressional Staff here; it makes a big difference to have this on site relationship. With that, we'll go to Jeanne for an update on Wyoming.

**Whalen:** I reached out to both Senators in Wyoming, and it appears that they are busy with the prairie dog and sage grouse meetings in Weston County. Matt Jones from Representative Lummis' office did respond. Matt reported that Lummis is the Chairman of the Western Caucus, and they passed Bill number HR2406, Sportsman Heritage and Enhancement Act. This act allows sportsman to be better able to access public lands for hunting and fishing.

Jessica Crowder reported that Governor Matt Mead set aside funding in the amount of \$500,000 per year for the next two years, and \$1 million from the fire suppression fund that would not be spent till fall.

**Van Vlack:** The Governor has yet to identify the criteria of how the \$500,000 will be spent. The State of Wyoming will have a new Forest Health Specialist in mid-April and they will work with the Governor's Office to determine how to spend the \$500,000 per year.

**Brown:** Thank you Jeanne and Josh for those Wyoming updates. We'll pass the mic to SD State Representative Mike Verchio who represents elected state officials in South Dakota.

**Verchio:** We held the Forest harmless this year in the House of Representatives and the Senate; since Secretary Hepler is not here, we'll wait on the controversies on the SD GF&P Elk Management Plan. I sponsored two bills this year. The first was to have the CCC museum in Hill City named as the Official CCC Museum in the State of South Dakota; the Governor signed that bill. Railroad Safety was the other bill I worked on. This was about the obstruction and vandalism on the rail line. There was a discrepancy in the way the law was worded; now with this approved bill, when a train is carrying lumber or humans, it is a felony to obstruct or vandalize the rail. Both Senator Tieszen and I fought to bring money to the mountain pine beetle fight.

**Brown:** Thank you everyone for your reports. Next we'll go into the Forest Service Hot Topics, each and every one being very current and important issues.

### **Forest Service Hot Topics ~ Craig Bobzien & Jerry Krueger**

**Krueger:** We'll talk about the changing elements that are front burner issues concerning the Board or elements we've been addressing over the last couple of years. In the binder, in tab number 8, there are two briefing papers related to the first two topics.

#### **Bear Lodge Project**

Proposal to create and operate a rare element mining operation in the Bearlodge north of Sundance Wyoming. The Forest Service spent a considerable amount of time and effort working with 50 different cooperators to produce a draft EIS. The Forest Service released the EIS in January. Rare Elements Resources then petitioned the FS to suspend the EIS process at that time. Craig Bobzien agreed with the proponent petition to suspend; we were at the public comment period on the Draft EIS; we pushed the pause button, and we will proceed when the proponent decides. There are 50 different cooperators involved in this process. And we all hit the pause button. For more information, see the current briefing paper dated March 15; if you need addition information, call Steve Kozel on the Bearlodge District. Jeanette Timm was the Project Manager for the EIS; she took another job with the Bureau of Reclamation in Nebraska. It will be difficult to replace Jeanette.

#### **Mineral Withdrawal**

There is also a briefing paper in your book on this subject. When we published our Forest Plan, our land and resource management plan, which is a very large document that lays out a plan of action or course of action proposed for the Forest. The Phase 2 amendment was signed in 2005; and contained in that decision was a plan for the Forest Service to proceed with a mineral withdrawal. We are working on an environmental assessment at this time and are in the public involvement process.

The mineral withdrawal that is proposed amounted to 17,000 acres, it is a proposal, the BLM and Department of Interior make the decision. The mineral withdrawal itself relates to preventing mineral development in a particular area; this covers a span of time of 20 years, at which time we would have to re-apply. There were a number of botanical and research natural areas contained in our proposal. We received a lot of comments back from the public. We were told that we had to work with 40 acre legal designations, and that involved a lot of extra acres. We have since negotiated down to 2.5 acres, so that we can refine the area surrounding and including the areas proposed for withdrawal. Our Forest Surveyor has been working for two months on this. The new revision will be part of a public release, and the EA will be done by the end of 2016 or beginning of 17. Chelsea Monks with the Black Hills National Forest is your contact person for this project.

#### **South Dakota Elk Management Survey/Permits**

**Krueger:** We would like to welcome Mike Kintigh, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks. Mike is the local expert on the South Dakota Elk Management Plan.

**Mike Kintigh:** Thank you for having me here today; Secretary Helper sends his apologies for not being here today.

We worked on this Plan for over a year; and worked extensively with the Forest Service, particularly Kerry Burns. We are fortunate that we have this plan to manage from. There is a link to the Plan on the SD GF&P website. We will be having an open house on March 24<sup>th</sup>, at the Outdoor Campus West.

Elk Management Plan - Key Objectives:

1. Maintain, manage, and protect existing habitat throughout the Black Hills.
  - a. Work with public land management agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners.
2. Manage for biologically and socially acceptable elk populations in each elk management unit within the Black Hills, Custer State Park (CSP), and Prairie units of South Dakota.
  - a. Biannually evaluate environmental and range conditions.
  - b. Allocate sufficient antlerless elk licenses.
3. Manage elk populations in the Black Hills and CSP for quantity and quality recreational hunting opportunities, with emphasis in CSP on view ability for visitors to the Park.
  - a. Evaluate license application and lottery system.
  - b. Evaluate current landowner preference system.

Results of the aerial survey of the Black Hills:

- Total count 6,356 elk in the Black Hills, SD side.
  - Model adjustment estimate 7,185.
  - Management Plan dictates that we manage for 6,000 to 8,000 elk in the BH.
- Total count for CSP 378.
  - Model adjustment estimate 460.
- Total count for Wind Cave NP 484.
  - Model adjustment estimate 699.
- Total count for Black Hills of Wyoming 923.
  - Model adjustment estimate 1,100.

Recommended changes from last year:

- Increase licenses for any elk from 430 to 443.
- Increase licenses for antlerless elk from 500 to 1,255.
- Changes to season dates will be made.
- For Archery licenses, increase licenses from 144 for any elk and 56 for antlerless elk, to 147 for any elk, and 140 for antlerless elk.

Impacts of proposed changes:

- Population objective 6,000 to 8,000 elk.
- With no change to license offered in 2015, the winter 2017 estimate would be ~8,000.
- With recommended changes, the winter 2017 estimate would be ~7,400.

**Brown:** Thank you Mike, are there any questions?

**Verchio:** I feel sorry for the people at Game and Fish working on this plan, it's a tough situation; certain people love it, certain people hate it. I think it's a good plan.

**Kintigh:** If we were to make no changes over last year; our model shows that our elk population would be over 8,000 next year. We are really counting on this being passed so we can manage the elk properly.

**Krueger:** If I read this correctly, if the new plan is adopted, the population still increases.

**Kintigh:** Yes, it would increase by 200 in the first year, but we are projecting for two years; and we start to decrease after that time.

**Burns:** What is the percentage of hunters that are successful?

**Kintigh:** There is a slide on the website that will explain that. There is a very high success rate for the any elk tag; 71%. Slightly lower success rate for cow elk hunters; 60 %. All those success rates are figured in to our numbers.

**Haugen:** When will the decision be made?

**Kintigh:** The Commission will finalize on April 7 & 8 in Brookings SD. Right now we are in the 30 day public comment period.

**Brown:** Again, thank you Mike, This Advisory Group does hear what the Department goes through, and the more you can do to explain it the better. The Management Plan is a good way to do that. I congratulate the State for their work on this, it impacts the Forest Service in a big way as well.

Without any questions, we'll take a break (2:40).

### **Regular Agenda**

**Krueger:** I would like to make a correction to an earlier statement I made; the NFAB has been meeting for 13 years providing advice to the Forest supervisor.

The first item on the overview, Working Groups; Working Groups have been formed and meet to address particular subjects that either the Board wants to submit a recommendation for or the Forest Supervisor feels the topic is complex enough that he wants the Working Group to develop a presentation that would come to the Board and the Forest Supervisor.

We have three current Working Groups that are active and some have been active for a long time; others were formed before the Board went into hiatus. Forest health is one that is very well established, very long track record, as well as the Recreation Facility Group, both will be providing an update today. The Over Snow Working Group came out of the Motorized Trails Working Group and they have both been meeting for some time. The Motorized Trails Working Group was at its peak during travel management.

The over snow transportation issue came about due to a legal decision mandated by a judge, called Subpart C, which is the winter version of the summer motorized travel plan. It is a little less directed in terms of how the designations will be made, but given the interest in winter recreation, Craig asked for an Over Snow Working Group to provide recommendations on how we might proceed, also considering competing trail use in the summer time.

If Board members have a particular interest in setting up a working group, you can bring it in and suggest it to the Board and the Forest Supervisor. With that, I'll turn it back over to Chairman Brown for our next topic.

**Over snow and non-motorized Working Group report update ~ Bob Burns, Dave Hague, and Mary Zimmerman.**

**Brown:** Working Groups are very significant parts of the process and have a large part to play in how recommendations from the Board get made.

**Burns:** This came about as a national directive, a large part of this Board's concern was the off road travel, and the direction from Washington that we come up with a travel management plan. Later on they said we needed plans for over snow travel as well. At the same time, a group of Fat Tire riders came forward with a need for trails. Fat Tire riding is an active pursuit in Wyoming, where many of the trails are funded in Wyoming. In the Black Hills our snowmobile trails are paid for by snowmobile registrations, and there is a Forest Service rule that says only non-wheeled vehicles can use the trails.

We had an organizational meeting; received advice from Wyoming and South Dakota; we also met with the Fat Tire riders who have actually made their own trail. We've also met with the skiers. We have lost traction over the last couple of months but will be rejuvenating very soon.

**Brown:** Thank you Bob, are there any questions for Bob or the Over Snow Working Group?

**Adam:** Physical Resources Staff Officer; We have a new Recreation Program Manager, her name is Anne Apodaca; she takes Scott Haas' place. Anne will be attending future NFAB meetings; she's in New Mexico getting ready to sell her house right now.

**Allen:** Can you give us an update on where you are at with the Recreation Facility Analysis?

**Adam:** There are seven steps in that Analysis, and we are in step three which is internal to the Forest Service. We will be meeting with line officers and District Rangers for recommendations. Part of the site analysis is to right size our facilities for our budgets. The Recreation Working Group will be important to us in the near future. Our next meeting is in mid-April; then we'll be picking back up with the Working Group.

**Krueger:** As Ralph mentioned, we hired a new Recreation Program Manager, Anne Apodaca. Anne will be integral to all of the Working Groups activities. We are fortunate to get Anne, she comes to us from the Santé Fe National Forest with nearly 30 years of experience in Forest recreation management.

**Brown:** Any other questions for Bob, Ralph or the Working Group? We have 140 recreation sites on the Black Hills National Forest that are run by FS, and many of us have been going through the process and making recommendations that we think we can do to keep things up and running. The Working Group will be analyzing this and making suggestions, and then coming back to the full Board to attach a position we would like to take.

## **Restoring Large Landscapes Video ~ Scott Jacobson**

**Jacobson:** The video we would like to show you now started with a focus on the Vestal Project. We also received a \$1 million Chiefs award to continue to work on projects that are being done collaboratively addressing the fire/bugs issue in the Custer area. We decided it would be better to tell the story across the Black Hills restoring large landscapes. We included the use of prescribed fire; Norbeck Section Two burn, Silver City area, Northern Hills and Wyoming.

[Video]

**Brown:** Any questions for Scott?

**Jacobson:** After today we'll put a link to this video on the Black Hills website, and we'll send the link to the Board members as well.

## **Wyoming & SD Delegation Letter**

**Bobzien:** That video is a great introduction to our next topic, thank you Scott and Beth.

It's so great to have everyone back here today and to have all of our new members here today as well. Thank you all for being here.

The video helped tell the story; and people are really carrying out the work on the ground. For the people in here and some that were featured, we all know about all of the work that is taking place. Some of our Working Groups were reviewed today, but we want to invite our Forest Health Working Group up to give an update.

The SD Federal delegation, and the WY Federal delegation wrote a letter to the Chief requesting an increase in the Black Hills timber production. A ccf stands for a hundred cubic feet; there is about 8 ccf on a loaded logging truck, if we produce 200,000 ccf and that would be about 25,000 loads of logs hauled to the sawmills. The request was for 220,000 ccf, our allowable sale quantity is 202,000, and we've been running pretty close to that. The Chief wrote back and said that they are working to fund the BH Forest at 207,000 ccf, and in FY17, and FY18, we will be more around 202,000 ccf. There is a strong indication that we will receive the funding to do that.

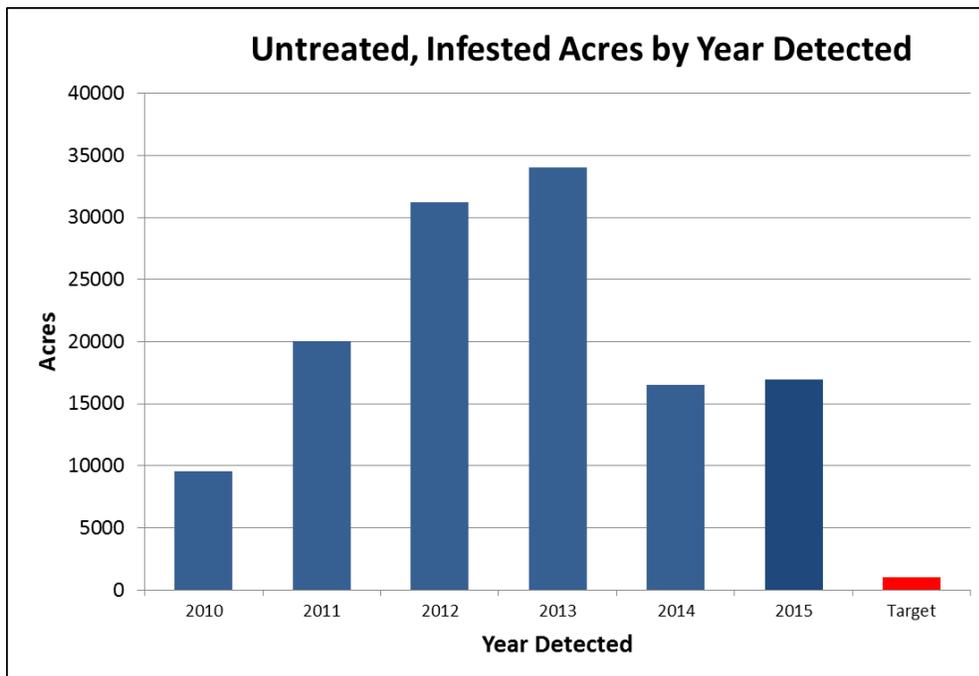
We got another million dollars competitively to reduce risks in the urban interfaces. We would like to invite the Working Group Chairman, Jim Scherrer, to recap the work of the Working Group. My ask is to have the group along with the FS to work toward a recommendation at our April meeting for review and recommendation. I would like to invite Jim Scherrer to come up. I want to also recognize Jim as our past Chairman, he was a charter member. He won't say this, but I also want to recognize Jim's service as a SD sports official for many years. Jim will be inducted into the SD Sports Officials Hall of Fame for his work with youth and education.

**Scherrer:** Welcome to the new people – the new folks, Josh and Rosie, this is a great opportunity to bring home some expertise and help the Forest Service. I have learned so much in the last 13 years, I encourage you to embrace it.

Sub Committees were the name prior to Working Groups; they are made up of people who have an interest, who get together and try to resolve an issue. This Working Group originated in 2010, 2011 when we started addressing the MPB. We are going to lose Craig Bobzien, Supervisor Bobzien has been instrumental, head and shoulders above, in moving us forward far and above the rest of the nation. He called together about 50 people a few years ago and called it the Conservation Leaders Group. He asked them to provide guidance to the FS, and unlike some, he listened, he got really good input. From that group, there was a Working Group that was assigned, and that was called the MPBWG. We were fortunate enough to employ Dave Thom, who had 34 years of experience in natural resource management, and he stepped into that position. In order to get the bridge built, Bobzien said we have to have a Working Group, so John Gomez, Nancy Trautman, myself, and the late Bill Kohlbrand took it on. During the sixth month hiatus (because of people in Washington), the Working Group has continued to work and accomplish a lot. Recommendations will come from our Working Group and will be presented today, and then will provide recommendation. Supervisor Bobzien can use that for fire power to continue to push forward and get some things done. Dave Thom is head and shoulders above everyone else in the Country for sitting in the middle of the Conservation Leader Group and working with the Working Group,

**Thom:** It's good to be here with NFAB today, I appreciate all the work you do. I would like to point out a briefing paper in your packet about the All Lands Accomplishments. We'll discuss this and our recommendations in the PowerPoint presentation.

[PowerPoint]



## Epidemic Status - 2015

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd490746.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd490746.pdf)

- ~447,000 acres affected since 1996
- 128,000 acres new untreated, infested since 2010 (6 years only... high resolution photos... data 1 year behind)
- “Brood” survey samples (13): 8 declining, 4 static, 1 increasing)
- Entomologist ground surveys (194 cruise lines):
  - 82% low (<3 TPA)
  - 13% moderate (3-9 TPA)
  - 5% high (>10TPA)
- State (SD) - field survey and marking (< ½ infested TPA average)
- State (WY) – 1/3 the amount of green infested in 2015 from 2014. (< ¼ TPA across 90,000 ac)
- Epidemic is not over (highest activity) -
  - West central Hills (SD/WY line)
  - West of Lead (SD side of Black Hills)
  - SE of Custer
- Active management helping reduce population

### 5-Year Timber Sale Plan - WG’s Recommendations

- 1) 2015 Recommendations – review the main points.
- 2) “Bang for the Buck”
  - Maximize treatment within planning areas
  - Utilize and expedite Pine Beetle Response Project. Complete surveys where needed.
- 3) Key Areas – highest risk areas, e.g. NW corner of Black Hills (SD) adjacent lands in WY, & Custer area.
- 4) 2019-2020. Highest MPB risk areas first using Forest-wide view.
- 5) Increase capacity (agreements). Continued, increased, and uniform acceptance and use of agreements with States/counties.

**Scherrer:** That last slide on resiliency will be the most important concept that we on the Black Hills will have to address. The Working Group will change its focus to resiliency as the MPB epidemic becomes endemic.

**Thom:** That slide didn’t show the 300,000 acres of land affected; which is why it’s important that the Conservation Leaders will address resiliency.

**Brown:** You’ll be meeting with the Forest Service on April 20 to come up with a recommendation, the NFAB has some sense for what’s coming down the line.

**Thom:** We’ll work with Craig to make sure the recommendation is framed correctly.

**Brown:** Our recommendations are in the context of advising the Forest Supervisor on the direction we would like to go. That’s the role we’ll play.

**Bobzien:** Thank you Dave and all the members of the Working Group.

The Working Group will be meeting to discuss the timber plan for FY16, 17, and 18. Last year we did a full five years. In April we'll have a chance with the Working Group to look at the nature of the recommendations, if the full Board is here, if they have questions, we would be seeking recommendations on FY16, 17, 18, and advice on all things considered to be the best place to invest our time and energy. \$10 million investment.

**Burns:** In a presentation by Steve Kozel, he mentioned bug killed trees in the Bearlodge; he mentioned a lot of trees that have been affected, and under the bark there are predators to the mountain pine beetle.

**Thom:** There are predators, fungi, and bacteria that prey on MPB. As an epidemic proceeds, the beetles ramp up and ramp up and then somewhere along the line, the predators start to ramp up, so you get to the top and we start to see an increase in them.

**Zimmerman:** The term epidemic and the term of endemic; what is the definition, how do we know the epidemic is over, if and when it is; also, explain why this epidemic has lasted so long?

**Thom:** We tend to talk about the epidemic, as one epidemic, but across the Black Hills there are small ones that have all come together. Beaver Park was in the late 90s, central BH was mid 2000's so there were several sets MPB epidemics happening in the Black Hills.

**Zimmerman:** What is the length of those outbreaks?

**Thom:** Beaver Park was probably five or six years. An epidemic emerged southeast of Custer in the past two years. It's not one epidemic, there are thick forests that are susceptible. As far as a trigger point that we would say is the end of the epidemic, that would be 1 tree per acre, which would be an endemic level. We're at that level in many places, but not all places. Wyoming surveyed 90,000 acres, in the Bear Lodge Mountains, the state of Wyoming has picked up those small areas before they were able to spread.

**Scherrer:** One of the things that his Working Group and Conservation Leaders are addressing is how we transition smoothly, without losing momentum in to the resiliency issue. Not a simple black and white issue. Three to five years from now, the resiliency will be the front and center; we may be needing funding for the process. We have to figure out ways to deal with all of the new saplings, etc.

**Gomez:** Is the 207,000 ccfs what you have been approved for in FY17?

**Bobzien:** We don't know for sure till we get our annual appropriation. This years is firm and it is my understanding that we'll be very close to the Forest Plan level is 202,000.

**Scherrer:** Speaking on behalf of the past members and current members of the NFAB; I want to thank you Supervisor Bobzien; you have done a hell of job and the reality is we will miss you, it has been an honor; and speaking for the people who aren't here today – it has been an honor to work with you.

## **Black Hills Resilient Landscapes Project (BHRL) ~ Rhonda O’Byrne**

**Bobzien:** Thank you Jim. Next up is Rhonda O’Byrne, our Ranger on the Northern Hills. Rhonda will be telling us about our next very big endeavor and that is the Black Hills Resilient Landscapes Project. This project is similar to the Pine Beetle Response Project; we are implementing that and we will continue to, as we go into the competition we need to take a fresh look. Resilient landscape, it’s the whole forest; large trees, and smaller trees.

**O’Byrne:** Thank you. A lot of work went into the PBR Project; most of the Districts had NEPA decisions to implement; we are full force in affect implementing the PBR; all Districts will be doing this in FY 17 & 18. We are at a point that we need to get something going for the future.

### Purpose and Need:

- **Focus Areas**
  - Address Phase II forest health objectives including structural stage objectives
  - Hardwood restoration
  - Fuels treatment in high-priority WUI areas
  - Reduce stand density in younger stands
  - Infrastructure
- **Land Management Plan Goals and Objectives**
  - Goal 2 – Provide for a variety of life through management of biologically diverse ecosystems.
    - Objective 201. Manage for a minimum of 92,000 acres of aspen and 16,000 acres of bur oak in current bur oak during the life of the Plan. The highest priority for hardwood restoration is where conifers (e.g. spruce and pine) have outcompeted aspen adjacent to riparian systems that once supported beaver. Increases in bur oak will be focused away from the Bear Lodge Mountains.
  - Goal 3 – Provide for sustained commodity uses in an environmentally acceptable manner.
  - Goal 10 – Establish and maintain a mosaic of vegetation conditions to reduce occurrences of catastrophic fire, insect and disease events, and facilitate insect and disease management and firefighting capability. Reduce extent and intensity of stand-replacing fire, insect and disease events (Goal 10)
    - Reduce susceptibility of vegetation to stand-replacing fire and outbreaks of insect and disease pests
    - Where outbreaks of mountain pine beetle could present risks to management objectives for ponderosa pine, reduce acreage of ponderosa pine stands that are in medium or high risk for infestation

- Forest Plan Monitoring
  - Structural Stage Objectives

<b>SS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	<b>3C</b>	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	<b>4C</b>	<b>5</b>
Objective	5%	5%	10%	15%	5%	25%	25%	5%	5%
Current	8%	3%	9%	3%	2%	54%	14%	6%	1%
Acres	77,223	27,355	80,694	23,909	14,004	481,636	120,435	54,424	4,191

- Aspen – The Forest Plan objective is 92,000 acres. The current acreage is 44,480 acres.

Legal Authorities:

- HFRA of 2003 originally focused on fuels, with some provision for insects and disease
- 2014 Farm Bill amended HFRA to provide more support for insect and disease projects (HFRA Secs. 602 and 603)
- “Declining forest health” defined as a forest experiencing, 1) substantially increased tree mortality due to insect or disease infestation, or 2) dieback due to infestation or defoliation by insects or disease (Sec. 602 (a)).
- Requires that designated landscape-scale treatment areas be 1) experiencing declining forest health, or 2) at risk of experiencing substantially increased tree mortality over the next 15 years due to insect or disease infestation (Sec. 602(c)).
- Specifies designated areas may be treated to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, insect or disease infestation in the areas (Sec. 602 (d)).
- Most of the Black Hills National Forest in both South Dakota and Wyoming was designated by the Secretary of Agriculture at the request of the Governors for landscape-scale treatment areas.

Definitions: The Forest Service directives define the following terms (FSM 2020.5):

Resilience – the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change.

Restoration – the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed. Ecological restoration focuses on establishing the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes necessary to facilitate terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem sustainability, resilience and health under current and future conditions.

Future Planning ~

- Decision to Be Made: The FLT will decide on a roadmap for future planning on the Forest. The roadmap will take into account the assessment presented at the last FLT meeting and develop a list of focus areas. Suggested focus areas are: address Forest Plan structural stage imbalances with emphasis on 4A, conversion of mixed stands to aspen and oak stands, fuels treatments in high priority WUI, and MPB treatments in areas not covered by PBR. In addition, the roadmap will select a planning approach for the Forest.

## **Focus Areas**

1. Address Phase II forest health objectives including structural stage objectives
2. Hardwood restoration
3. Fuels treatment in high-priority WUI areas
4. Reduce stand density in younger stands
5. Infrastructure (#5 added by FLT)

## **Decision: Creating and Maintaining Resilient Landscapes on the Black Hills-Decision on Large Landscape NEPA**

November 20, 2015 ~ Craig Bobzien

### **1. One interdisciplinary team will prepare a large landscape scale EIS aimed at creating and maintaining resilient landscapes and communities.**

Focus areas include:

- Addressing Phase II forest health objectives including structural stage objectives
- Treating fuels in high-priority WUI, and to protect natural and community values at-risk
- Reducing stand density, especially in younger stands

The Why: We have experience and success conducting large landscape analysis. One focused team will be more cost efficient, timely and affordable, given that we will have many employees still implementing projects from prior decisions over the next few years, and others engaged in smaller NEPA projects. The focus areas were generated from our Forest Plan, the Forest Plan Monitoring report and ensuing assessments conducted over the past year. One assessment identified some 267,000 acres in need of restoration located in priority areas.

### **2. The landscape scale proposed action will include at least one hundred thousand acres of priority treatments that can be implemented commercially. The treatments will be adaptive and include of full range of tools.**

The Why: Nearly eighty percent of our restoration work on the forest is accomplished commercially, benefitting the resource, communities and the economy, and our current plans will be implemented through 2018-2019. We have large areas already analyzed for noncommercial work, and we can augment those plans as appropriate.

### **3. The analysis and process will be highly collaborative and use authorities such as the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and Farm Bill to the extent possible.**

The Why: The Black Hills NF has a number of collaborative groups and communities in place and interested in forest health, restoration and resiliency. The Forest has demonstrated success using these authorities to engage the public and streamline the process without shortcutting laws and regulations.

**4. Representatives of Districts and S.O. will be involved in developing purpose and need, proposed action, and revision of field guides, as needed to meet the intent of this project.**

The Why: Being involved in the design helps build understanding and a better project through planning and implementation. Team members will be from diverse backgrounds and locations.

**5. The Record of Decision will be completed by September 2017.**

The Why: The Forest needs to implement projects from this decision in 2018 under the current 5 year plan. While the Forest has experience completing large analyses and decisions in 12-14 months, staff members suggested increasing the timeline another 6-12 months.

**Brown:** How do you see the Advisory Board interfacing with the Forest Service on this?

**Bobzien:** It's a matter of ways and means; I think it's a very important and large project. Mr. Chair, it's an opportunity for Board members to be involved; everyone is very busy. The level of involvement will come back to the Board, but we will be looking at some Working Group members to get into those details; it's important to look at the current Working Group and see if we have a need for a separate group.

**Verchio:** In the previous presentation, it was mentioned that there is a product that can be applied to the saplings to kill them. Is that application by air or hand?

**Guffey:** We are just now looking at some test plots; seeing how we can contain some of that regen.

**Tysdal:** When the powerline went across the Black Hills, they've sprayed to kill the trees so I know it works.

**Allen:** Rhonda you talked about the structural stage objectives in the Forest Plan, and you have listed what is current; what is current is almost what we have; do we really want to go back to the Forest Service objectives?

**O'Byrne:** I don't know that we ever met structural stage objectives? I think we were denser than what the objectives were.

**Brown:** There is a significant and strategic component, all the interfaces in the works, without a doubt, we'll be involved. Thank you Rhonda.

We'll turn it over to Kerry Burns for his presentation on the Northern Long Eared Bat.

## Northern Long Eared Bat Report ~ Kerry Burns

**Burns:** Thank you, I am the Forest Wildlife Biologist. The NLEB was proposed for listing in 2013, the expectation was to have it listed by 2014 and then it was extended to 2015. It was proposed to be listed as endangered, but ended up being listed as threatened; which allows a rule called the 4d Rule, about “take” to be included. The listing was finalized on January 14<sup>th</sup>, it was approved for areas that have the White Nose Syndrome fungus. We do not have WNS in the Black Hills. Purposeful take is not allowed; so going into caves and doing surveys, we do need a permit from the Fish and Wildlife. On most activities we will continue to consult with the Fish and Wildlife. This new 4d Rule allows us to stream line.

There is an up to date briefing paper in your binder. WNS is a fungus that has caused a lot of bats back East to die. WNS was transported here from overseas; closest to us is in Eastern Nebraska. Last month there was a site in NE Minnesota at a State Park Mine tour that the fungus was discovered. Once the fungus is discovered, it takes a couple of years for the bats to die. We want to do everything we can to keep it from getting here; with that said, the scientists believe it will reach the Black Hills in an estimated five to eight years.

We are continuing to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on a programmatic agreement; biological opinion. The goal is to cover all of our actions from a broad prospective; that should help in conjunction with the 4d Rule.

Does anyone have any questions?

**Whalen:** Devils Tower had a netting project where they caught bats and put a tracking device on them. This was to find out what their habitat is. Is the FS considering doing any of that kind of work?

**Burns:** The BH has done nothing like that to date. We may tag on to that research up there at Devils Tower. We did not have the funding in the past, but we’re hopeful to get funding in the future. We are looking at possibly checking caves and mines for WNS this coming winter; and that’s what we have going on. It was interesting what they found at Devils Tower; they found that the habitat for the male bats were small oak trees and logs on the ground, these were the roosts during the summer. The males have a broader range of where they will stay. But the females are the one we are also concerned about. The Devils Tower was a small study, so we would like to get more info on that.

**Tysdal:** Is there any chance you can get the money from the F&W to do the study?

**Burns:** We have not pursued that, there hasn’t been money coming our way from them; but we could certainly talk with them about it.

**Tysdal:** Maybe the Congressional delegation could talk with someone at F&W about it.

**Brown:** This topic is significantly important and this group should be aware that the NFAB provided a position and input as it relates to the USF&W endangered species process. We played a big role and a collaborative role in providing comments all the way to the Secretary of Agriculture. It was probably the most important document the F&W got on the issue.

**Haugen:** You said that the nearest case of the WNS is in Eastern Nebraska and that it has not been found on the Black Hills, is that correct?

**Burns:** We have not found the fungus here, but we have not done a lot of checking. We've gone into some caves and did not see evidence of bats dying or evidence of the WNS, but we have not checked the caves thoroughly yet to see if the fungus is here.

**Haugen:** Without the WNS even present here in the Black Hills isn't restricting access to caves a bit too premature since it's nowhere close at this time?

**Burns:** One of the things the Board provided input on was cave management; and the recommendation was to close access to caves during the winter. If bats are awakened two times or more in the winter, they will starve to death. They have nothing to eat until the bugs come out in the spring. There are a number of caves closed in the winter; and one cave is closed year round for safety reasons and because of vandalism. If WNS gets closer than 250 miles, we would look at other options for closing caves.

**Tysdal:** What are you doing about Jewel Cave?

**Burns:** We do not manage that cave, the Park Service manages it. There are NLEB in Jewel cave, not so much in Wind Cave, but we don't manage those cave; they still allow tours in areas where bats are not so close. They do some screening of people entering the caves to make sure the WNS is not on their clothes or shoes.

**Brown:** Thank you for that presentation Kerry.

### **Election Update – Chairman/Vice Chairman ~ Chairman Brown**

**Brown:** Tabs three and four in your binder are about the Charter, bylaws and procedures of the NFAB including elections. We will defer this till the Aril meeting; we will want to visit with all the new folks. While we have 32 members, 16 members vote; each area has a vote, either the primary or substitute. Those who have an interest in running, bring it up in April.

**Bobzien:** Most of the things the Board deals with are pretty complex. The 16 areas that are represented are a good mix of different viewpoints, and it is good to have them all. Before we had the pause from the Secretary; we had planned a recognition for the existing members; now with the welcome of new members; we want to recognize all of you.

[Certificates and vests passed out]

### **Public Comments ~ Chairman Brown**

**Brown:** At this time we would like to take comments from the public. If there is anyone in the audience that would like to make comment related to the topics discussed today, please do so at this time.

**Sam Griner:** I represent the prospectors and miners in the Black Hills. With the RNA amendment and mineral withdrawal you are taking 18,000 acres away from miners and prospectors. Chelsea Monks said the reason is because the “fairy slipper” is important and needs to be protected. I looked it up on the internet, and it says the fairy slipper is a whitetail deer delicacy; so in theory the 18,000 acres is being withdrawn for deer droppings. You are taking something away from us for what reason? Can anyone give me a good reason? You already have eight botanical areas that you research and there are five or more research areas that you already research, but you want to take the biggest area away from us.

**Bobzien:** When you said the taking away, what we are also doing is preserving. During the Forest Planning process in 2005, we found that a number of these areas should be preserved; there are restrictions...

**Griner:** I understand all about that; we don't think it's necessary to take away our main area for prospecting.

**Bobzien:** We evaluate areas that are suitable and they become part of a public decision making process.

**Brown:** We don't have time today to discuss the details of this situation, but I'm sure you can visit with anyone at the Forest Service about this issue. I understand you have a specific subject matter, and I know you'll have additional comments. Thank you for being here.

**Wudtke:** I'm with BHFRA, we represent the Forest products association, 1,500 individuals – we are also the tool the State and Forest Service goes to for getting work done on the ground. What an agenda to come back to after a long absence, many of the topics affect our Association and the companies we represent.

**NLEB:** Kerry did a nice job, thanks to Kerry and Steve Hirtzel; they have been proactive and we appreciate them.

**MPB epidemic:** We don't always know what causes certain things to happen, but extensive research has been done by Dr. John Ball on past MPB epidemics. Dr. Ball's research confirms that there is zero correlation between climate change and the MPB epidemic. It all goes back to density of the forest.

**Future Planning:** Glad to see PBR being implemented; hope the Forest Service can learn from PBR. 100,000 of the 200,000 acres had been thrown out; hope the Forest Service can move past the 50% of implementation rate on the BHRL project.

**Letter from the Wyoming and South Dakota delegates;** we support that and thank them for writing to the Chief. That letter hit on the need for healthy forests; meeting or exceeding the ASQ on outputs. The sad news is that the McLaughlin Sawmill will be closing; and they state three particular reasons; markets are not favorable, their mill needs improvements, and they couldn't see that logs would be coming in the next week. The company can weather the first two but not the lack of logs coming in.

**Brown:** Are there any others that would like to comment?

**Marlette:** On behalf of all the Congressional Delegation Staff, I want to thank you all for serving on this Board. The Black Hills is a regional treasure, economically and for beauty. We come to these meetings because we not to learn about all of the issue, and when we are approached by constituents we meet, we understand their concerns related to the Black Hills National Forest. When certain issues surface at these meetings, we would never just take it and run with it, we would have to have it drawn up as bill. We very much value what is said here, and you all represent constituents as users of the FS, we encourage you to come and visit with us any time. We are very happy to be here, and this is a very important Board to us. Also for your information, Katie will be leaving us; moving to the East side of the state.

**Tysdal:** All I ask for is that you ask someone to look into assistance from the F&W Service.

**Marlette:** And we definitely would if that were to come from this Board. We don't have earmarks anymore; in the past we could say we'll go get money for the FS, but now, other than to fight for an item in a budget, and an item that we'll get behind, we don't have a way to get money. And we'll always advocate for the things this board feels are important.

## **ADJOURN**

**Brown:** Are there any more comments? If not, could I have a motion to adjourn? The motion is made by Lon Carrier and seconded by Mike Verchio, the motion passed unanimously.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 20, 2016.