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NOTES

November 29, 2016

Attendees: Jim Caswell, Dale Harris, Rick Johnson, Cope, Alex Irby, Bill Higgins, Scott Stouder, Brian Riggers, Nora Rasure, David Schmid, Jonathan Oppenheimer, Sam Eaton (OSC), Alan Prouty, Dave McGraw, Steve Hadley, Brad Gilbert, Jim Reilly

Visitors: Mitch Silvers (US Senator Mike Crapo's Office), Mike Matthews (US Senator Jim Risch's Office)

Welcome and Introductions

Commission Business

IRR Training Module Outline and Budget

At our last meeting we discussed developing an online tool for training. Contents would include: general overview, process (briefings, meetings) and notes. It would also go through the process regarding a Roadless Area Analysis and provide general guidance and interpretation for Rule implementation via a "Frequently Asked Questions" section.

Previously, we visited each forest individually and conducted training to educate new and changing forest personnel. This is an opportunity to make the process more convenient, in addition to providing backup training. The practice of providing online content is becoming more prevalent as it saves time, conserves cost and provides "instant" availability. This will not completely replace individual unit training, but is expected to decrease the need to some degree.

We have an opportunity to complete the training module with assistance from FS TEAMS. This would cost approximately \$7500, and could be funded through the Cost Share Agreement with Idaho OSC. In the absence of this, the Roadless Coordinator will complete the module, but it may take a year or more. Future maintenance and updates to the website would be performed by the Roadless Coordinator.

- ***Decision: Utilize \$7,500 from the Travel Budget to support the development of an online training resource – all agreed***

Mining Access Interactive Mapping Tool

Occasionally we have projects that come up regarding access to mining claims, and one of the common questions is “does the Forest Service need to allow access”? This depends largely on how the land was acquired and any title restrictions placed on the land. Providing this information at Commission Meetings is important. The Roadless Coordinator presented a new GIS mapping tool that would allow anyone interested to easily access this and other general title information from their home computer. The tool allows the user to search a specific location, and easily link to specific acquisition and status information for that parcel. While it won’t provide title-level search information, the tool will provide most of the information Commission Members are interested in and may help Forest Service units who don’t frequently deal with this type of project to quickly obtain information they need for project planning and responding to questions from the public.

The Roadless Coordinator will send the link to this tool to Commission Members to get feedback before finalizing and making it widely available.

Unauthorized Roads

In many IRAs, unauthorized (non-FS system) roads exist, and occasionally we have projects where we may want to utilize these roads. Over the past six to eight months, the Roadless Coordinator has coordinated the discussion of this topic to develop guidance and consistency under the IRR. At the last Commission meeting, we discussed three potential options for using these unauthorized roads:

1. Use the road in its current condition (i.e., no improvements to meet project needs),
2. Within the CPZ of BCR themes, construct a temporary road over the existing, unauthorized road (allowing for improvements to meet project needs) – the temporary road would then need to be decommissioned following project activities as per the IRR, and
3. Convert the road to a Forest Service System Road to enable maintenance on the road.

Additional discussion and research by the Roadless Coordinator concluded that option 3 is not supported.

The Roadless Coordinator will prepare a final guidance paper for this topic, to be included in the Training Webpage.

Comments:

- *Will there be input from the public before you make this decision?* This isn’t a NEPA process and we appreciate discussions within the Commission, but this is a policy matter. So, no, it would not be a public involvement process.
- *My concern is that this could possibly extend beyond Roadless.* This would only be specific to the Idaho Roadless Rule.
- *This would only apply to roads that are non-FS system roads.*

- *A lot of those roads that are now non-FS system roads were system roads prior to the Rule. Will you review those?* Individual units would need to research particular projects.
- *Whatever is agreed to, it needs to be consistent so that it's a common rule and language that everyone can understand.*
- *Ensure that you retain flexibility to change, modify or repair errors on the landscape or planning. The intent would just be to clarify, not to make new rules.*
- *Do not be inconsistent, but do not remove options from the Field Crews.*
- *Where there are established roads in the IRA, we should remove them. My concern is the third option of converting a road. If it's established and heavily used, then let's modify the Roadless Boundary to be consistent. I have a problem designating a road in a roadless area – there are already very specific rules regarding how that occurs. If you are to mitigate damage by using Options 1 & 2, but Option 3 concerns me.*
- *Historically, we've had Agency people on a mission to close roads – my fear is that there is no public interaction to determine the importance of that particular road. Project planning would always involve public input. That would involve the Scoping, Public Input and process.*

Future Meeting Content Suggestions: succession planning for Idaho Roadless Commission Members

- *General discussion regarding the RACNAC and development of the Commission. There are 5 categories (State, Tribal, Environmental, At Large, User Groups) to consider. We will have a position available January 9th.*

PROJECT UPDATES and NEW PROJECTS

Since the spring meeting we've signed decisions on 21 projects in Roadless Areas – these are not on the agenda, but have been moved to Table 1 (Projects Completed). They are highlighted in Yellow.

Table 2 has been updated to include all projects we will be discussing today. There are no briefing papers for projects where updates were not substantive. I.e., Dairy Syncline had a change in the Record of Decision date. The Roadless Coordinator will provide an update on those projects during discussion.

Salmon-Challis National Forest

Ken Rodgers, NEPA Team Leader; Jeff Huntzman, NEPA Planner; Ken Gebhardt, District Ranger; Jay Winfield, District Ranger

Ramey Creek Vegetation Improvement Project..... Update

Nothing has occurred since the last presentation, the project is on hold. The project has not been dropped from the list of Proposed Actions.

Grouse Peak Vegetation..... Update
Decision expected this winter and implementation next spring.

Salmon Municipal Watershed..... Initial Briefing
The project is currently in data gathering efforts, evaluating a 14,000 project area. This is the source of potable water for the city of Salmon, immediately west of Salmon. Partners include Lemhi Valley Forest Restoration Group, County Commissioners, and the City of Salmon. This is a Fuels project to manage wildfire risk. This is not an easily accessible area. There are some existing roads that might be able to be used; also looking at accessible ridgelines. There may be limited opportunities for helicopter logging.

Continental Divide Trail – Anderson Mountain Reroute Initial Briefing
This project includes work in Roadless in Montana (under the 2001 Roadless Rule). The Continental Divide trail is a national trail of significance primarily used for hiking and horseback riding. There would be about 4 miles of trail re-routed out of the 12 mile section. The main arterial trails, including the Continental Divide Trail, are maintained by the Forest and supported by friends of the trail – this would continue into the future. NEPA is occurring and a Decision is expected within the next couple of months.

Leesburg Land Exchange..... Initial Briefing
This would exchange 950 FS land for 450 acres of private owned lands. NFS would gain 6 miles of riparian area and vegetation, along with the historical site of Leesburg. Relinquished lands would be open pits of the Bear Track Mines and water treatment plants. There may need to be a future consideration for a change in the boundary of the Roadless Area, resulting in a net loss of 930 acres.

The long term need for the water treatment plant is expected to be about 75% complete and they will complete the cap next year. New owners would be required to continue treatment until they can show they can release to surrounding areas without impact. The State and EPA would then (NPDES Permit) assume responsibility for oversight. There would be no FS oversight or administration of the mining site.

FS 60197 is currently open to the public and currently crosses the private ownership – they have allowed the public continued access. The FS would obtain full ownership of that route and would be responsible for its maintenance under the proposed exchange. After acquisition, newly acquired lands would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Napius Creek and possibly South Panther Creek IRAs may need boundary modifications to reflect new ownerships.

The Commission suggests completing the analysis for all aspects (including boundary changes) in one NEPA process and signing two decisions (Chief for boundary change; RF for land exchange) if possible.

Lee to Cove Initial Briefing
Range Analysis-this is the reissuance of range permits for 8 allotments with new allotment management plans within the Lemhi IRA. Most are within the Back Country Restoration Area. No new road construction or reconstruction but would authorize ATV use to manage range fixtures such as fencing and troughs. Maintenance of improvements (fence lines) may include incidental cutting of trees.

Crane Basin Timber Stand Improvement..... Initial Briefing
Almost the entire proposed treatment is within the IRA. This hasn't seen fire in normal intervals, so there will be prescribed fire as a tool for treatment. Not all 5,800 acres would be treated – they would

key in on conifer stands. Activities related to IRA are incidental tree falling. Currently in NFMA state and a potential decision is expected this spring with implementation in summer.

Lower Cabin-Mine Canyon Fence..... Initial Briefing

Fence out a Riparian exclusion zone with a 1 mile three-strand electric fence. Initial planning with Scoping this winter. Small NEPA project w/ hoped for spring decision implement summer. Permittees will construct and maintain. Opportunity for longer grazing season. Mutually beneficial.

Morgan Creek Prairie Basin-Fourth Spring Initial Briefing

Recent surveys indicate that impacts from livestock in the vicinity are impacting Heritage Resources. The proposal is to enlarge the watering area and construction of fencing to protect the Heritage Resources.

Mosquito Flat Fuels Reduction Initial Briefing

HFRA project in planning since 2012. Protects the city of Challis through fuels reduction. The 2013 Lodgepole Wildfire burned 2000 acres near the Challis reservoir. Those acres have been excluded from the planning area.

South 21 Fuels Reduction Initial Briefing

This project is eligible for the Farm Bill, is in the initial planning stage, and is located in the Hwy. 21 corridor. Fuels reduction will protect the town of Stanley from wildfire loss. The project area has severe insect and disease mortality and has experienced catastrophic wildfire in recent years. The goal is to provide fuel breaks. The existing roads are in a corridor outside the IRA. The south end loop road (inside IRA) would be used and returned to existing condition post treatment. There may be grown over skid roads as it's been many years since management has been performed.

- ***Commission concurred this is a Significant Risk Project: meets the exception of history of fire occurrence risk, where it would affect a community or water supply; and, is the core of why this rule was created.***

Significant Risk Projects: that exception is where the history of fire occurrence, history and risk where it would affect a community or water supply.

- Being 17 miles from Stanley, discussions surrounding the issue of significant risk have occurred. The Halstead Fire (2012) provided the local example of fire potential on the landscape. The north Idaho Fire (2015) moved over 36 miles, so the event is plausible from the Forest Service's perspective.
- The third map (red spot, across Hwy 21) is the fire that occurred this summer – you don't have to go all the way to Stanley to find the threat to the area.
- As a practical matter, there are two challenges: across the landscape to reduce fuels and to also find a strategic fuel break location to hold the fire. [Group review of map] There is a companion project in the works on the Sawtooth Forest to help limit fire movement. The FS is working with the community and a collaborative to best plan the project.
- Near Banner Summit, on both sides of the highway, there has been evidence of thinning. Aside from that work, the forest appears to be overgrown and dense. As part of this proposal, there would be thinning on both sides of the highway to open it up.

- This would be for a Farm Bill CE. The FS is right at the limits of what could be treated under that authority. Scoping would be the only time for public involvement and should be made robust. There is nothing to prevent the FS from performing an EA if appropriate.
- Since this is a Regional Forester’s decision, there is also a process to include (or expand) a community or area that may have been missed. This would ensure that private residences and the Stanley Lake area might be considered.
- The purpose of the Significant Risk exception is to enable projects, not deter the Ranger. If they run into a problem, bring it back to the Commission. This project is extremely important to the core of why this rule was created.

Twelve mile Allotment Spring Development Initial Briefing

This came before the Commission last year. Range improvement project that provides water from upland streams w less impacts while closing perennial stream water sources.

Forest Plan Revision Initial Briefing

The Forest is just starting their assessment. There will be the Salmon Land management Plan and the Challis Land Management Plan with 30 and 28 IRA’s respectively. There are various designations, but Back Country Restoration makes up the largest portion. There will be a Wilderness assessment and dependent upon that outcome there could be a need to look at themes. Otherwise, there is no real intent to review the IRR.

- The Salmon Valley Stewardship has begun to engage the local communities already. The Forest has already conducted an assessment with 25-30 stakeholders to better understand what outreach methods would be most useful to the public.
- The FS is encouraged to follow up on the letter from the Regional Forester and the Roadless Rule and its interface with planning. Also, the boundary business on that forest is pretty archaic and there may be refinements that transpire merely as a result of mapping.
- There is a Citizens Guide (issued by the Forest Service) designed to be used by the public and the Forest Service to best facilitates working together.

Projects to return at next meeting:

- Ramey Creek Vegetation Improvement Project
- Salmon Municipal Watershed
- Leesburg Land Exchange
- South 21 Fuels Reduction
- Forest Plan Revision

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

Norma Staaf, Forest Plan Revision Team; Zach Peterson, Forest Planner; Lois Hill, Environmental Coordinator; Melissa Fellow, Wildlife Biologist

Lowell WUI Update/Status

The Strike Team is assigned to this project to work with the Moose Creek Ranger District. No significant changes since the last meeting. There will be a field trip with Idaho Rivers United for Lowell WUI & the adjacent Johnson Bar Project.

- ***The Commission supports this project for developing standards across property lines where similar projects on private property adjacent to this project are encouraged.***

Clear Creek (Litigation Update)..... Update/Status

Clear Creek was first presented in 2013 and all alternatives include 1,730 acres of prescribed burning. Under the Back Country Restoration theme this project would improve stands. Issues over the 2011 Sediment model resulted in litigation from the Nez Perce Tribe- withdrawn in 2016 when NPCLW agreed to re-analyze in a 2017 Supplemental EIS.

Orogrande Fuels Project (NOI update) Update/Status

January 2016 decision – implementation of fuel break portion (120 acres) completed along the Crooked River Road and Community interface. A complaint was filed early November for the timber harvest and temporary roads in 205 acres of the roadless area. Forest Service is currently working on the response.

The primary issues are:

- Significant effects in the Roadless Areas,
- Implementation could affect consideration for Wilderness Eligibility during Forest Plan Revision,

Litigants are requesting that activities in IRAs be withdrawn.

Idaho OSC reading of Complaint: they are not challenging this as a violation of the Roadless Rule. They are saying the FS should have performed a full Environmental Analysis on the project. The other complaint is that there appears to be a discrepancy on how the FS treats Inventoried Roadless Areas and how they are eligible for Wilderness afterwards. The Complaint was filed, Summons delivered, and they have 60 days to respond to the Complaint. There is no request for a Temporary Injunction at this time. There are two routes: defender as Interveners (party to litigation) or Amicus Brief (friend of the court) which is more informational. The Commission may be able to submit an Amicus Brief and may come across as less adversarial, where they could discuss their process of review. That decision should occur before the next meeting and within the next 3 months.

Commission Discussion:

- suggest the Commission pursue the avenue of Intervener status. Past legal support from the Federal Government has not been sufficient to win previous cases.
- This area has been evacuated more than once and they are going to lose their homes and property if not managed. Anything we can do to support this project would be appreciated. This is for the best purpose possible: the people that live there.
- Idaho Association of Counties would be a good resource as they were heavily involved in the design of the Rule.
- Is the lawsuit filed inconsistent with the findings of the Roadless Commission? It doesn't appear that the project is inconsistent. The Roadless Commission's purview is whether or not the project is consistent with the Rule. Where is our realm of relevance? Are the allegations within the Complaint?

- Recommend the Commission seek legal counsel
 - Second
- The Idaho Panhandle Review did something similar, but over the phone rather than in person.
- We would be setting precedence, therefore I encourage the State to do what they can and simultaneously determine what we can do as the Commission.
- I am worried about setting precedent. I know that we have already supported the project – that’s public knowledge. How much further the Roadless Commission should pursue this is not clear to me.
- We are an Executive Order Commission, set up by the State. We have different avenues we can learn about. If we can do something as a Commission, in tandem with the State doing their own pursuit, but we are in fact narrowly defined. We have to be careful and it must be legally sufficient.
- I would have to research how Executive Commissions would interact and whether they have standing.
- As projects are implemented, our position should be that the intent of the rule is that project consistent with the rule should not be removed from consideration in the future. That should be part of the statement and the purpose of our argument.
- ***Motion: agree as a Commission to instruct legal counsel to move forward to reflect our work and decisions to be most effectively brought before the court – second***
- ***No opposed, Motion passed***

2015 Post-Fire Road Maintenance Update/Status

This is the third time this project has come before the Roadless Commission. The goal is to maintain roads impacted by wildfire with the removal of hazard trees. Decision signed in August. The project is 50% Complete. Noncommercial “lop and drop” cutting will be used on 37 miles, with 46 miles of commercial removal. 870 acres of the Roadless Area are affected. 670 of those acres are lop and drop the rest commercial hazard tree removal.

Cool Mush Initial Briefing

This is a landscape level 9,880 acres project, including 3,883 acres of proposed treatment outside of roadless and 1,412 acres proposed within Back Country Restoration areas.

East Saddle Initial Briefing

The preliminary area is 12,600 acres including 457 acres of commercial timber harvest within Roadless. There is a total of 973 acres that are proposed for timber harvest, 516 of those are in management areas E1 and 457 in roadless.

Windy Shingle Initial Briefing

This is a prescribed burn project only. This is the Rapid River side. Unit 11 is outside the Roadless and this burn block would be contiguous to the IRA. The Indian Creek (lower) Road that goes through private land could potentially be a haul road. That is a conversation currently occurring with the landowners. There would have to be major reconstruction done on this road in order to facilitate trucks. With the transfer of this project to the Strike Team, this project is still preliminary. There are

plans to work with the communities and with the Nez Perce Tribe to collaborate on the project. Specifically, using a collaborative process more so than a collaborative group.

Forest Plan Revision (include WZ Inventory/Eval discussion) Update/Status

The Proposed Action went out for Comment in July 2014. The Forest has been updating their existing condition and there is now a dedicated Forest Plan Revision Team to continue the process. The IRR will provide the inventory for recommended wilderness evaluations. In the next six months they will be returning to the public and alternative development.

Projects to return at next meeting:

- Clear Creek
- Orogrande Fuels
- Cool Mush
- East Saddle
- Windy Shingle
- Forest Plan Revision

Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Doug Herzog, Forest Planner

Rainey Creek Vegetation Restoration Project..... Update/Status

Prescribed fire and hand thinning project within 5,000 plus acres of the Palisades Roadless Area. This is a collaborative project with the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game. District scaled down & Decision Memo was signed July 2016. A prescribed burn test patch (to determine visual impacts) would occur this summer.

Winschell Dugway Motorized Trail Initial Briefing

In 2012 Decision was litigated and the Forest Service did not prevail. County is interested in the project so the USFS is making a second run at it. Original proposed action in 2008 was based on a 9 mile route with 3 miles of trail to be decommissioned. Third alt. being reviewed utilizing existing trails between the two destinations.

Gibson Jack Municipal Watershed Fence Initial Briefing

Scoped summer of 2016 and developed partially through a collaborative effort. The City of Pocatello is concerned about cattle getting into the headwaters of Ming Creek which is a critical watershed for the city. Goal is to move and reconstruct a fence to protect the headwaters. Planning CE with little controversy.

(New) Mormon Canyon Motorized Trail Upgrade..... Initial Briefing

This project would reconstruct the trail to foster connectivity and recreation. Scoped earlier this summer with 10 comments, mostly supportive. Implementation is planned for 2017 and would require 3.5 miles and a disturbance area of 2 acres.

Projects to return at next meeting:

Winschell Dugway

Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Eric Walker, District Ranger; Jill Cobb, Team Leader; Doug Nishek, Team Leader

Treasured Landscapes Prescribed Burning & WBP Restoration Update/Status

The FS is looking at reintroducing fire to the area and watershed along with a supplemental planting of White Bark Pine. In 2015, Scotchman fire burned units 2 & 21 proposed for treatment. Delays occurred because of the timber salvage program subsequent to the fires. Consultation is still occurring with US Fish & Wildlife and won't be complete until March 2017. There are no known issues at this time that would impact the project.

Hughes Aquatic Restoration Initial Briefing

A historical fact is there is a secret runway prepared for WWII. During the process the water management was constructed impacting the water flow. Consultation is completed and there is significant collaboration taking place. There is no road construction or reconstruction; there is no mineral extraction or timber harvest. Work is planned for summer 2017. Next to a Smoke Chaser cabin there is a body of water and it's pretty deep and stagnant (8x20) and when you access it you would sink and we plan to put a temporary crossing. The reed canary grass is nearly 6 feet tall in the area. As for the temporary crossing, it will only be there for two weeks and alternatives have been eliminated due to moisture and possible equipment sinkage.

Boulder Creek Initial Briefing

KVRI has conducted several visits to the project. This is 40,000 acre drainage. The last time it burned was 1910 and it burned very hot. There is emergency communication equipment requires protection. The cross hatched area represents water resources for the residents. Where there is access, there will be ground based extraction. Where there isn't access, there will be helicopter logging as temporary roads would not work due to terrain. Scoping is expected to be out in next several weeks. The CPZ WUI boundary was used and is represented by the yellow. This Decision will be issued by the Regional Forester. There is a road up the stream bottom to bring in equipment.

Projects to bring back:

Boulder Creek

Payette National Forest

Sue Dixon, Rebecca Havens

Duck Lake Access Reroute Update/Status

Unauthorized motorized access is damaging the access route. Work was completed up to the Roadless Boundary-handwork along boundary ongoing.

Salmon River Helicopter Radio Repeater SUA Initial Briefing

This renews an existing authorization. The metal enclosed box has a solar connectivity. This was originally placed for shepherds and back country communications. This is the only spot in the area that works. There is no construction, this gets placed with a helicopter and removed with a helicopter.

No projects need to return to the next meeting

Sawtooth National Forest

Pending – may be unable to update due to current litigation and staffing issues.

Goose Creek Update

The temp road construction did not end up being an issue since activities are in GFRG theme. Moving forward with analysis this summer. Should have decision in summer/fall 2017. This project originally had 5+ miles of temporary road, but when we visited the site it was considerably less.

Big Wood Travel Management Update

Scoping was completed in the spring and a Decision is expected within the year.

No projects need to return to the next meeting

Boise National Forest

No new projects. Lowman WUI has not been scoped yet. No updates.

Next meeting:

Succession planning

Unauthorized roads

Update on Training Module

** Thanks to Ruth Wooding for helping to compile all the projects and to Will Pedde for development of the minerals land status tool.

Adjourned