

National Forest Advisory Board Meeting

February 19, 2020

Mystic Ranger District

Members Present:

Chairman Danielle Wiebers, Vice Chairman Dick Terry, Dave Hague, David Wolff, David Miller, Paul Pierson, Dick Brown, Corissa Busse, Lloyd La Croix, Michael Golliher, Ben Wudtke, Tony Ortiz, Greg Josten, Lauris Tysdal, Patty Brown, Alan Johnson, Mary Zimmerman, Wayne Garman, Dennis Yellow Thunder

Members Absent:

Alice Allen, Bob Burns, Rachel Day, John Gomez, Kevin Robling, Travis Bies, Jennifer Hart, Keith Haiar, Richard Hanson, Ben Rhodd, Jessica Crowder, David Johnson

Forest Service Leadership & Speaker Representatives:

Andrew Johnson, Acting Forest Supervisor; Jerry Krueger, Deputy Forest Supervisor; Scott Jacobson, Beth Doten, Twila Morris, Steve Kozel, Jim Gubbels, Mike Gosse, Tracy Anderson, Ralph Adam, Jake Jackson, and approximately 10 other Forest Service employees.

Others:

Approximately 15 members of the public were in attendance. Two Congressional Representatives were also in attendance; Danica Allmer (Johnson – R, South Dakota) and Jim Selchert (Rounds – R, South Dakota).

Introduction & Welcome:

Wiebers: Welcome to the February NFAB meeting.

Andrew Johnson: I'm here as the Acting Forest Supervisor for the Black Hills since Mark Van Every retired, and in this role, I'll be the Designated Federal Official for the Committee today. This is Danielle's first meeting as Chairperson, and welcome Dick Terry as the Vice Chairperson. Thank you all for joining us today. Thanks to those of you in the audience, thank you for joining us. This is an Advisory Board meeting, an opportunity for Board members here at the table to talk about the issues on the agenda. There will be time at the end of the meeting for the public's questions and comments, so I ask that you save your questions till the end of the meeting.

Approve the January Agenda:

Wiebers: The first item on the agenda is to approve today's agenda. Motion made by Al Johnson, second by Lauris Tysdal all in favor say aye, opposed nay; agenda is approved.

Approve the January Meeting Notes:

Wiebers: Motion to approve the January meeting notes made by David Wolff second by Dick Terry all in favor say aye, opposed nay; January meeting notes are approved.

House Keeping:

Krueger: Restrooms out both doors of the conference room. There are exits in the front and the back of the building; in case of an emergency, we'll exit out the front of the building the way you came in; and gather out on the far parking lot.

Meeting Protocols:

Wiebers: Thank you to the board members, both primary and alternates that are attending today. I realize you're volunteering your time to participate and those who are slated to present to us today also have projects they have had to step away from to come share with us today so I will do my best keep things moving out of respect for everyone's time.

If you are an alternate and the primary for your area of interest is not attending today please join us at the table.

The duties of this board made up of 16 individuals representing 16 areas of interest include providing timely advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture through the BHNF Supervisor regarding forest issues and project level issues that have forest-wide implications.

There will be time allowed for board members at the table to ask follow-up questions at the end of each agenda item, please keep the questions and comments relative to the topic being covered. If you would like the topic to be expanded on in future meetings please let me or Forest Supervisor Johnson know after the meeting so that we can add it to a future agenda.

We do have public comment listed at the end of the agenda if time allows. We simply ask that comments be limited to three minutes and that they are relevant to topics on today's agenda. If you have questions for Forest Service staff or a Board member representing one of your areas of interest, please reach out to them at one of the breaks or after the meeting.

Hot Topics

Legislative Updates – Federal

Johnson: With that, we'll move on to the Legislative updates.

Jim Selchert, Office of Senator Rounds:

- The Senate is not in session this week.
- Senator Rounds visited the stock show in Rapid City.
- Every year the Senator gets to nominate young South Dakota students for the Service Academies. Ethan Wipf from Rapid City was awarded an Air Force Academy nominee. Max Martin of Sioux Falls got a nomination to both the Naval Academy and the Army Academy.
- Senator Rounds along with Senators from MN, NE, and WI started a Senate Rural Committee Group to discuss some of the issues we have in our rural states.
- Update on Jean Rounds – she was able to “ring the bell” at the Mayo Clinic.

Zimmerman: Have you or the Senator had a chance to look at the new FIA data that has been released?

Selchert: I have not, and I can't speak for the Senator.

Danica Allmer, Office of Representative Johnson:

- Dusty is in town today, so Katie is working with him today.
- Dusty was here for the Stock Show. He'll be at the School of Mines today, and Western Dakota Tech tomorrow.
- Protecting America's Wilderness Act passed through Congress; Dusty voted no on this Act. It would designate 1.4 million acres of public land as wilderness in Colorado, California and Washington, which would limit multiple use and other management tools. All of the lands designated in Colorado are located outside the Bill sponsor's District which Dusty felt is a troubling trend of not considering local stake holders.
- Dusty recently had lunch with the Chief of the Forest Service, Vicki Christensen, to discuss timber and forest management programs in the Black Hills.
- Surprise Medical Billing Act; one that Dusty Johnson is a co-sponsor on just made it out of Committee. Dusty's quote: "This is a pro-patient Bill; when families are faced with medical crisis, the last thing you want to receive is a surprise bill in the mail. Patients deserve transparency, and that is exactly what this Bill is about". The bill basically protects patients from unexpected medical bills. Allows providers to resolve the payments through arbitration.
- Bills coming out about meet processing and labeling. Dusty Johnson and Darin Soto recently introduced the Food Safety Modernization for Innovative Technology Act. This is a Bill that would formalize a regulatory framework for food derived from cell cultured technology. This is different than meat that is made from plants, this is meat that is cell cultured. Earlier this year, the Trump administration established an agreement between the Food and Drug Administration and the US Department of Ag to ensure food and labeling safety. Quote from Dusty: "South Dakota ranchers already produce a safe quality product. Anything lab grown should have to meet the same standards for consumers. As cell cultured foods make their way to the supermarkets, American's deserve to know exactly what it is they are feeding their families".
- The Congressman is still reviewing the FIA data and will hold off on public comments till the stakeholder meeting.

Johnson: Anyone from the Wyoming Delegation? We'll move on to State Representatives.

Josten: There are about 15 Bills that would affect the Game, Fish, and Parks. Department of Agriculture has five Bills in front of the Legislature; three have passed both the House and Senate. One Bill was to make an appropriation for Coordinated Natural Resource Conservation Fund for the State Conservation Commission. Another was to make an appropriation for costs related to fire suppression, wildland suppression in the State. The way fire suppression works is, we have a fire, we put it out, we charge the State for the cost of suppression, and then at the end of the year, the Legislature backfills that fund. The third Bill was with regard to certain provisions regarding pesticide resignation and application. This was a Bill to clean up language within the existing Legislation; this Bill passed both House and Senate. Another Bill regarding pesticides is an Act to provide certain provisions regarding pesticide registration, pesticide

application, and enforcement of pesticide laws; that Bill has passed the Senate with amendments and has been referred to the House. Another one is an Act to revise fees for pesticide registration, private applicator licenses, commercial applicator licenses, pesticide dealer licenses; that has passed the Senate with amendments and has been referred to the House. Information on all of these Bills is available on the website, if you want help accessing that website, please let me know.

Johnson: Anyone from the State of WY have anything to add?

Forest Service Hot Topics – DFO Andrew Johnson

March Meeting Date Change

Johnson: We need to change the date of the March meeting to Wednesday the 11th. Andrew and Jerry will be in Denver the week of March 16.

F3 Gold Proposal – Open House on January 16

Johnson: The Black Hills had an open house for F3 Gold exploratory drilling proposal. There was a great turnout. It was an open house format where we were able to provide information and answer questions about the proposal, proposed Plan of Operations and timeline process for the Environmental Analysis.

Mineral Mountain Proposal

Johnson: The Mineral Mountain Proposal will follow a parallel process to F3 Gold; it will be slightly behind in timeline. Well likely have an open house for this Proposal as well. That Environmental Analysis process will be like F3 Gold, open for public comment and will go through the same NEPA process. On both proposals there will be a third party NEPA contractor; paid for by the Company, but works for the Forest Service, and has to meet our standards for that work.

Yellow Thunder: Dennis Yellow Thunder, Oglala Sioux Tribe. I have some concerns on the F3 Gold exploratory drilling and the Mineral Mountain proposal. The January NFAB meeting minutes state that at some time there would be Tribal consultation. We as Native Americans regard this entire area as very sacred, and any type of drilling, exploratory drilling, or any type of mining is really a detriment to the water resources that exist in these areas. As I read the minutes, I see that the Forest Service has agreed to an Environmental Assessment; in my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of a lot of the other individuals and Tribes, I don't believe an Environmental Assessment is going to be sufficient and hopefully at some point we can start discussing a full Environmental Impact Statement for the area. I believe it is the Forest Service that will eventually allow this, is that correct?

Johnson: It's our decision regarding how the activity would take place.

Yellow Thunder: The Forest Advisory Board will say how these Companies are going to conduct this. If this Board is going to approve how this exploratory drilling and these proposals are going to be conducted, then who is saying OK, you can go ahead and do this?

Johnson: Thank you Dennis for your comments and questions. Yes we do have a Government to Government responsibility for consultation which is underway for both proposals which is standard practice. We will be going through consultation on the Proposal. As it pertains to the level of analysis under NEPA, these activities are categorically excluded from analysis under NEPA. The Forest made a choice to voluntarily conduct an EA given what we knew would be high public interest around these proposals. If you look back to the enabling legislation of NEPA, one of the purposes of drafting an EA is to determine whether or not effects may be significant and if they are they would then be analyzed under an EIS. Through that EA process that is a determination that will have to be made as to whether or not there are significant environmental effects that warrant further analysis than an EA. As it pertains to the decision authority, that decision is with the Forest Supervisor. It would be the role of this Board, if the Board so chooses, to provide advice to the Forest Supervisor and to the Forest.

Yellow Thunder: Who is the lead Agency?

Johnson: The Forest Service.

Yellow Thunder: I know it's eligible for a categorical exclusion, but it says in the notes that there are a lot of concerns over water quality and of their potential effects. So if the Forest Service is a Federal Agency, and this exploratory drilling is on Forest Service land, then at what point does the National Historic Preservation Act come into play?

Johnson: That's one of the laws that we are obligated to follow and is part of the process.

Yellow Thunder: Then under 106 Regulations, cultural resource surveys will be conducted out there right?

Johnson: We will conduct field surveys as we always do for any ground disturbing projects, so we'll follow our NEPA processes consistent with the Regulations, we'll complete section 106 compliance, we'll do all those things. I think Dennis, that this probably warrants a more in-depth conversation than we have time on the agenda for right now, so why don't we add a topic to our March agenda where we can wade into both of these proposals in a little bit more detail, and provide that opportunity for a more in depth dialog.

Yellow Thunder: OK, thank you very much, also, one other issue, I did the homework I needed to do in order to come here and speak in opposition to some of this stuff. Since the Forest Service Advisory Board is the lead Agency that is going to give advice, does that entail that everyone in here will have to agree to this?

Johnson: The National Forest Advisory Board is not the Lead Agency. The role of the Advisory Board is to provide advice and counsel to the Forest Supervisor. The Forest Service is the Lead Agency.

Yellow Thunder: So the Advisory Board members are allowed only to make comments and to say whether or not they're opposed to this or if it is a good thing. Are we allowed to do that?

Johnson: Yes.

Yellow Thunder: OK, then I myself as an Advisory Board member, want to go on the record and in the minutes that I advise against this. And to further supplement that, we have a resolution that was passed by the City Council, first it went to the Finance Council, the resolution was then voted on and passed on to the City Council, which I had the opportunity to speak to Mayor Allender, and the City Council approved to oppose this exploratory gold drilling with a vote of 6 to 4. There is a lot of opposition to this, and as an NFAB member, I also advise the Board to really think and consider all of the implications of the contamination that's going to occur. Thank you.

Johnson: Thank you Dennis. We can build time into the March agenda for us to have more of an in-depth conversation, and another update on the progress of the process.

Deer Valley Land conveyance

Johnson: Deer Valley parcels are three parcels adjacent to the Forest Supervisor's Office in Custer. It's an administrative site that was surplus to the Agency's needs. Those were offered for sale, via the General Services Administration in an on line auction on our behalf. We have accepted the winning bids, and we will move forward with closing on those real estate transactions. The authority granted to us by Congress that allows us to sell surplus administrative sites, also gives us the ability to retain the revenue; it doesn't go off to treasury. We intend to invest that money into the Bearlodge District Office, which we recently acquired; we own that building now, and it is need of a lot of repairs.

Mount Rushmore Fireworks on July 3

Johnson: As you know the State of South Dakota has a proposal to the National Park Service to bring fireworks back to Mount Rushmore. We are a part of that planning process as the neighbors to Mount Rushmore; fellow Federal Agency. We will be coordinating extensively with the Park Service, Pennington County and with the State around the potential overflow on to National Forest from that event. The National Park Service is drafting an Environmental Assessment that will be out for public comment soon. So again, the event is sponsored by the State of SD and hosted by the National Park Service and we're participating as a sister Federal Agency in support of the Park Service and their effort.

Rushmore Connector Trail

Johnson: The Rushmore Connector Trail project is moving forward again. It came off the shelf and is progressing, so we will be carrying that Environmental Analysis/Environmental Impact Statement work forward. We anticipate being able to give you more of an update on this project at a future meeting.

Veteran's Hiring Event on February 11 and Staffing Challenges

Johnson: The Forest Services hosted a Veterans recruitment event, we had a great turn out from Veterans from all over the place; about 65 people came. We provided information about the motorized trails positions that this Board has talked about extensively, trying to recruit to fill those positions under the Veteran's Retention Authority (VRA), which allows us to non-competitively hire certain categories of Veterans. Found some solid candidates for the trail ranger positions and other positions on the Forest as well. Something we'll probably do again because it was that successful.

That said we still have some significant staffing challenges. Our current workforce is down about 8% from a year ago on top of a 20% turnover. As we work to fill positions, we lose them just as fast as we fill them. This presents some challenges and impacts our capacity to get work done. We'll continue to make good selections and fill positions.

Higgins Gulch Road

Johnson: Higgins Gulch Road will likely be getting some media attention. The County holds an easement over the first mile of that road across the Forest; property owners would like to see improved maintenance of that road. The Agency and the Forest Service does not have a need for snow removal on that road; that is up to the County. The Forest Service does not have a need to do significant maintenance on that road, which is a concern to the homeowners on that road. We are not funded, nor is it our jurisdiction to do road maintenance to serve private entities.

Regular Agenda

Wiebers: That wraps up our Hot Topics, so we are ready to go into our regular agenda.

Ethics Discussion – Andrew Johnson

Johnson: Board member representation on public meetings; last month Scott talked about the ethics as it pertains to your role on the Advisory Board. Just a simple update to clarify a question that came up. The purpose of this Board is to advise the Forest Supervisor, but not to speak on behalf of the Forest Service. As a member of the Board, you may identify yourself as such to the public, but recognize that you don't speak for the Board nor do you speak for the Forest Service. As a member of the Board we sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate and be a Board member. Your role is to represent the constituents that you are selected to represent, to provide advice to the Forest Supervisor, but it is not to speak for the Board or on behalf of the Forest in other public settings.

Yellow Thunder: When I went to the public comments for the Finance Committee meeting, I did identify myself as the Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board member, but I did not say I was speaking on behalf of the Board, only that I was on the Board, and I was here as a concerned Oglala Sioux Tribal citizen. I feel like maybe that came up because I went to that meeting and told them that I was on the Board, and I did that at both meetings, the City Finance Committee meeting and then when I spoke to Mayor Allender. It asks what your title is, so I said concerned Oglala Sioux Tribe citizen and Advisory Board member of the Black Hills

National Forest, but I did not say that I was speaking on behalf of the Board, I made that clear that this was my own thoughts and concerns, but I was sitting on the Board. I just wanted to make that clear that it's not something that I would have participated in.

Johnson: Thank you Dennis, you did that exactly right thank you.

Highway 244 Bridge – Tracy Anderson, Drew Miller and Rich Zacher

Johnson: The next topic on the agenda is the Highway 244 Bridge, Tracy Anderson Hell Canyon Ranger District, District Ranger and Rich Zacher from the SD DOT.

Anderson: Introduce Rich Zacher, works for the SD Department of Transportation out of Custer. Today we want to talk about the Hwy 244 Bridge, which is just to the east of the Palmer Gulch KOA. This bridge needs to be removed and replaced.

Zacher: Today I'll go through what we'll share at the public meeting. We're at the stage now in the process where we are seeking public comments. This is still in draft format.

What makes this project different from most structures is, we don't always have live water and we don't always have a horse trail underneath. The DOT is trying to accommodate the horse trail that serves Palmer Gulch and Willow Creek Horse Camp.

The bridge at Palmer Gulch, was constructed in 1966 – and it is at the end of its service life, so that's why we are replacing it.



Traffic on 244 is around 1500 cars today, we anticipate it to be 2000 a day in the future. The crash history is pretty limited; rate of just over 1, state wide average is just over 1.6.

Improvements:

1. Replace the bridge.



2. Put in twice the bridge that is there now, add left & right turn lanes at Mt. Rushmore Resort & Lodge.
 - While making the bridge bigger, we have to accommodate the horse trail. The current bridge is a three span structure. We plan to do it with a single span, to open that up and provide room for the horses. To do this, we'll need to put retaining walls in.
3. Construct retaining walls.
 - The new concrete trail will be wide enough to accommodate a skid steer to make manure removal easier.
4. Increase site distance east of bridge
 - We would like to take the borrow material off the hill side to improve the sight distance down to this busy intersection at the Palmer Gulch KOA.
5. Reconstruct section of trail

Traffic during construction:

- Option 1: On-Site Traffic Diversion - \$565,000 estimated cost to build a diversion.
- Option 2: Road Closure – Preferred Alternative
 - Construction through winter
 - Road closed Oct. 1, 2022 to Apr. 30, 2023
 - **Why is road closure preferred?**
 - An on-site traffic diversion would result in:
 - greater environmental impacts
 - longer construction
 - higher project cost
 - additional maintenance needs
 - **Other road closure details:**
 - SD244 only closed at the bridge replacement
 - Access east of the bridge maintained from the east
 - Access west of the bridge maintained from the west
 - SDDOT will conduct winter maintenance on SD244 east and west of the project through construction

Right of Way

- Existing Width - 200 feet
- Temporary Easements as needed for construction
- No additional ROW proposed

Environmental, Economic, and Social Concerns

- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires that federally funded projects be reviewed to determine the social, economic, and environmental consequences of the action. Public involvement is beneficial to the implementation of a project's NEPA process. This project is being developed in accordance with applicable State & Federal environmental regulations. Your input on the following will aid in the project's development and NEPA review.
- **Section 4(f) Property**
- The project was reviewed to determine potential impacts to Section 4(f) properties, i.e. publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife & waterfowl refuges, or public & private historical sites. The project lies within the Black Hills National Forest. A recreational horse trail begins at the KOA campground north of the highway, extends under the existing bridge, and then continues south. The horse trail will be temporarily closed during project construction; and will reopen after construction.
- **Section 106**
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal actions to take into account the effects of project undertakings on historic properties.
- **Contaminated Materials**
- No contaminated materials have been identified along the project, to date. If you have information on contaminated materials, or underground/above ground storage tanks that could be encountered during construction, please let us know.
- **Threatened & Endangered Species**
- According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the following species are known to occur in Pennington County:
 - Birds: Whooping Crane, Red Knot, Least Tern
 - Mammals: Northern Long-Eared Bat
 - **Awaiting a final determination, but at this time no impacts are anticipated to these species by the project.**
- **Wetlands**
- Federal regulations require that unavoidable wetland impacts caused by highway construction be mitigated. If you are interested in creating or restoring wetlands on your property, please complete the Wetland Mitigation Registry Form in the handout.
- **Awaiting final impact analysis, but no significant impacts are anticipated to wetlands along the project. SDDOT Environmental Office is coordinating with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.**

Estimated Cost: \$2.4 Million

Next Steps:

- Final Design – Spring 2020
- ROW Acquisition Process – Spring 2021
- Construction – Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

Public Meeting:

- March 9, 2020 from 5:30 to 6:30 at the Hill City Senior Center.

Zimmerman: What is the management area this project is within; including the diversion?

Anderson: Norbeck scenic byway; I'm sorry I don't know the Norbeck number, it is in the Scenic-By-Way. Most likely it will go into the Norbeck Management Area.

Brown: Are any of your decisions tied to the alternative routes of the Rushmore Connector Trail?

Anderson: No, it is a separate trail. The Rushmore Connector Trail comes out of Hill City, and would still be north of Hwy 244. The proposed crossing is on the north side of Palmer Gulch property. We did consider the options but there was no good way to combine the two.

Mineral Withdrawal Update – Jerry Krueger

Wiebers: Next we'll have an update on the mineral withdrawal area from Jerry.

Krueger: We've talked about the proposed mineral withdrawal for a couple of years, and spent a considerable amount of energy working on this. We're at a point with staffing challenges, our writer editor will retire in four weeks, and our geologist is unavailable to work on the project. The Black Hills Forest Leadership Team made the choice to hit the pause button on the mineral withdrawal. It doesn't mean that we're giving up on the project, or forgetting about it, but at the present time we don't have anyone to staff this project, so we're simply putting it on hold. It was important to keep you informed about this. Not too long ago, this group provided input to the Forest Supervisor; those comments were heard, and we actually modified our project based on some of those concerns, and when we get the opportunity to move back out on this, we certainly will.

Zimmerman: What is the nature of the modifications that were made?

Krueger: In particular the Upper Sand Creek Botanical Area; given the expansion of mineral claims in that particular location we dropped that one from consideration.

Wiebers: Thank you Jerry, we'll take a 15 minute break

Motorized Trail Program Recommendation – Danielle Wiebers

Wiebers: The next topic is the Motorized Trail Recommendations. Alice Allen is not here today, but she did do all the leg work on this and made sure that we got copies mailed out to us. Did not receive a lot of comments from the Board. Two pieces of the document that were highlighted; Action number 1 and Action number 8; don't believe she received any further comments.

We are in a position today where we can either discuss this more, or if everyone is in agreement, we can move it forward on to the final recommendations. Does anyone have any comments or changes?

Al Johnson: Could you talk about the two changes?

Wiebers: I'll start with Number 1, I'll read the whole recommendation, and then stop right before what was added at the end. Additional sentence: **parking on bare ground in dry conditions to prevent wildfire.**

Number 8 – the additional piece was added at the beginning and reads: **Recommend developing connector routes between the various riding areas on the motorized trail system that will help develop a connected stacked looped system for an enhanced user experience.**

Brown: I make a motion that the Board adopts the recommendations as modified and presented here today.

Wiebers: Can I get a second to that motion?

Terry: Second the motion.

Brown: Only comment, the Working Group did such an excellent job and presented this at the last meeting, there is no substantive reason to withhold this; get it to the Supervisor so they can get moving on it.

Wiebers: Next steps would be to clean up the draft, I would sign the recommendations, and they would be forwarded on to the Forest Supervisor.

Zimmerman: Wouldn't mind discussing a few other items, I have notes in 7, 10, and 16.

#10: Looking at seasonally closed trails, those are by enlarge in the 5.4 wildlife wintering area. We need to think about the habitat we are providing for wildlife.

#7: Recommending the FS buy tools; a few years ago, Back Country Horseman received funding through the RAC Committee and got funding for a trailer and tools. Just want to point out there are other alternatives than having the Forest Service purchase tools.

A general comment, we have a problem with lack of enforcement to meet the needs of the number of users on such a large system and then the consequential damage that is not in many cases being followed up on which encourages more users going off the trail.

Alice and her group did a great job of rounding up a lot of information and collating it in this document. One more general comment, why aren't the dealers that sell passes getting more information from the users? They sell a sticker, but they have no idea who bought it or how to contact them. I'm sure the Forest Service is aware of a lot of this and won't be going just by these recommendations.

Wiebers: Procedurally, what we have on the table, is to approve the recommendations as written (with the two changes previously noted). With that being said, and your comments being heard by the Forest Service, I think it's still reasonable to move forward with the recommendations. Let's move ahead with the vote. All in favor of the motion made by Dick to approve the recommendations say aye; opposed same sign. Motion passed.

Krueger: Thank you to the Working Group that worked very hard, as volunteers on the motorized travel recommendations. I would like to address three items, the first being our Veteran recruitment event.

The principal purpose of the Veteran recruitment event that we held last week was for us to be able to utilize a very specific hiring authority to bring folks on and get them on in time to get them trained and then placed out on the land for our motorized trail program. It consists of two big chunks, one is the actual trail ranger piece of the compliance issue; and that is a presence out on the landscape; an educational component with our visitors, and a cohesive effort at writing citations. We will hire approximately seven individuals to work as trail rangers and we'll hire some seasonals to work as trail rangers for the coming year, this would be the actual trail ranger presence. And we will hire a dedicated maintenance team (five members) for the motorized trail system. Both groups will work with the Districts on the highest priority pieces of the landscape where we have events, or known maintenance issues to try to resolve those. We are at the final stages of trying to hire that team. We are also hiring a person to be the motorized trail system manager and volunteer services coordinator. This is a new position that we've not had in the past, and we're consolidating several position duties into one. This position will manage the maintenance team, the trail ranger team, they'll work with our volunteer groups, and commercial permit vendors to try to get a handle on the business side of the motorized trail system. Position will work in Custer, and report to the Rec/Lands Specialist.

The second item has to do with our recommendations and what are we going to do with the recommendations. The first thing is hiring the organization I just described. Also we'll have a small team, including myself, to look through the recommendations and apply that to the development of a revised overall motorized trail strategy.

The third piece that I want to talk about is the Law Enforcement approach to the management of our motorized trail system. We are not fielding a law enforcement team. The trail rangers will get Forest protection officer training, they will have compliance responsibilities, but they are not law enforcement officers. Recently Andrew and I were approached by our Region 2 Patrol Captain, David Hartley, who has a keen interest in our motorized trail system and the challenges we have. He brought forward the ideal of cooperatively funding a reserve law enforcement officer. This reserve LEO would work for the motorized trail program leader, work on the ground with the trail ranger crew, but would be a sworn LEO. We would hire that LEO for the motorized trail system, and the first year, they would have to go to Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia, complete their field training, and eventually this person would show up here and be assigned to the motorized trail system team. David Hartley will pay for the LEO training, pay for a pick-up truck, hours for training, and be an asset to us on the motorized trail system. This is in response to a lot of input we have received, and it's part of a management approach for our motorized trail system.

Tysdal: Would this person be able to go across state lines?

Krueger: They would be a federal law enforcement officer, so yes they can go across state lines.

Hague: You mentioned that the LEO would be buying a pickup, and I would recommend a UTV/ATV, trailer, because that's where they're needed, not on the road. Also, after last year's monsoon season, we have lots of areas out there that have damage, where are we at on categorizing that on a Forest level and are we approaching some RTP funds to pay for that.

Krueger: I can't tell you how they are being categorized, but the Districts are working on a priority list for maintenance. RTP grants, yes – when we were in Pierre we talked to them about RTP grants.

Hague: Before Mark retired, we were going to help the Forest Service write some grants. We don't have the money up front to support it, but would have to come from the Forest Service. We can help write those grants, but you have to share them with us.

Krueger: I agree.

Krueger: One more thing – gates were brought up; we have 30 roll over gates at the Hill City Shop and our Districts will determine where the gates will be installed.

Terry: For the Wyoming side of that; since it's a different trail system, Wyoming has the ORV, and South Dakota is OHV; since they're two different trail systems, that LEO could go across and enforce both sides. Does it include those portions that are going off the Forest Service land and on to private land?

Krueger: If those are being operated under special use permit to the Forest Service, the answer is yes. If it's an accommodation between the land owner and the State of Wyoming, the answer would be no.

Terry: The landowners cooperate with the trail system, so it's probably not in conjunction with the Forest Service.

Wolff: In reference to the Reserve LEO, what does reserve mean?

Krueger: It means their main job is not being an LEO, only as needed.

Yellow Thunder: How many miles of motorized vehicle use is there throughout the Black Hills; roads or trails.

Krueger: Motorized trails are separate from motorized roads.

Ralph Adam: 680 miles of motorize trails.

Yellow Thunder: So that justifies the use of the LEO reserve officer, and what kind of law breakers are they going to be looking for? What happens out there that you need a police officer out there?

Krueger: The principal job of a Forest Service LEO is to protect natural resources.

Yellow Thunder: That's right, exactly what I wanted to hear; but not only that but also the animals, protection for wildlife, protection for people that are using those things, so I think it's a good idea that you have them out there. Sometimes we have incidences of Native Americans being out there, they may be accosted or permitted from traveling through certain areas, so something like this would benefit greatly our freedom to practice our religion in those certain areas or to practice our harvesting of certain medicinal plants in those areas when the Forest Service allows us to do that.

Orientation Topic – Forest Service Trust Funds – Jake Jackson

Kruger: The next topic is the monthly orientation topic. Jake Jackson will be presenting this; Jake is our timber contracting officer. Jake is in charge of all the active timber contracts, the development of timber contracts as they are sold, and the administration of those contracts with our purchasers. Jake's job takes him all across the Forest, he works day in and day out with our purchasers, working together to execute timber sales across the Forest. Jake will talk to us today about two different Trust Funds.

Jackson: The Forest Service has the authority based in law, to collect money into trusts that have been established to do post treatment management activities on the ground. It's really a vital tool in being able to afford to come back into a timber sale after we're done harvesting and make sure that the things that we've put into our NEPA and other project plans do get done. One that you'll hear frequently has to do with our brush disposal and is called BD.

- Brush Disposal (BD)
 - At the beginning of any project, we identify other activities that will occur along with harvest. BD is one of those and after a timber sale we have the opportunity to go out and do things like prescribed fire, construct fuel breaks, and reduce slash.
 - Fuels folks develop a plan and identify how much of this work will get done, and it becomes a part of the associated charges under the timber sale contract that we charge the purchasers to help us do our work. That money is focused on BD from machine piles, all the tops – so the rehab from that type of work is what the estimate is based off of.
 - You'll hear the term of BD when it comes to other types of fuels treatment in a planning area.

The other one that you'll hear often is KV which stands for Knutson Vandenberg.

- Knutson Vandenberg (KV):
 - Act passed in 1930, gave the Secretary the authority to collect funds for reforestation. They discovered as they were doing forest management activities that they may want to do tree planting, so they created tree nursery's like the one in Nebraska, the Bessey Nursery is one that came out of the KV Act.
 - We can spend this money in various ways so it's key to many of our management activities.
 - The Timber Sale Accounting shop watches that money as it comes in when the purchasers pay for timber. We have a base rate in a timber sale that is assigned to essential KV which is our stand surveys three and five years post timber sale. We

- go back out and make sure the stand is restocking and then decide if it needs to be stocked further. In the Black Hills it regenerates well, so we just monitor it.
- At the beginning at the sale process, or what we call the KV plan or sale area improvement plan, we prioritize by District and by Sale which project we'll get done based on the amount of money we'll collect over the life of the timber sale. Those can include post sale thinning, wildlife habitat restoration, community safety, facilitating fuel breaks, any variety of these types of projects. All that we collect through a portion of the timber sale is really vital to accomplishing work on the ground.

Krueger: These receipts are retained in an account for the Black Hills, they don't go to the treasury like a lot of the receipts we receive. Every timber sale we put up has a BD and a KV plan and we modify those plans as we move through those sales, and they're reviewed when that sale closes out. Once they've closed out, that account of KV and BD dollars becomes available to take the actions on the ground. For BD purposes, pile burning in the winter is the most visible activity. For KV funds – post sale surveys that are associated with regeneration that is required. One thing Jake didn't mention is post sale weed treatment. KV dollars would be used to treat the weeds. The other thing we'd spend these KV dollars on would be post sale thinning, which would be pre-commercial, TSI – to put post logging stand on a desired trajectory.

Josten: Is that a percentage of the timber sale receipts that go into these two funds?

Jackson: On every timber sale, the base rate is \$5.00 per ccf; there's 8.5 ccf on a long truck, so \$40.00 and some change comes to the Forest Service to do the essential KV work which is our stand exam surveys. The rest of the money that we take in to KV is the value of the stumpage above that base rate. So if a sale sells for \$30.00 a ccf, \$5.00 goes into essential and \$25.00 goes into the KV pot. At the end of the sale we see how much we generated over the course of the sale, so we do a final KV review at the end of the sale and determine if we can do our entire KV plan or if we have to eliminate some projects.

Josten: Do your BD funds have to come out of that?

Jackson: BD is a completely separate associated charge that is assessed. When the purchaser gets a bill they get a bill for the stumpage, and a bill for the associated charges, per ccf. That associated charge would be \$3.48 per ccf. Rock replacement is another example of an associated charge that there might be which would be to cover the impact on our surfaces, roads.

Anderson: The Rangers develop a KV plan for the sale, and will have a list of priorities. When the funds become available, we can do more activities. It depends on what we get for a bid.

Garman: Does this apply to the good neighbor sales too?

Johnson: Yes, it does.

Zimmerman: I've been hearing that some of these sales lately are producing 4.5 ccf per acre, so the essential, you'll get back \$5.00 per ccf which would be \$25.00 an acre. I'm also aware of the cost of prescribed burning costs being anywhere from \$200.00 to \$600.00 per acre. So the \$25.00 an acre in the essential part of the KV is just nothing. On the non-essential part, the other things you can do you're saying that is the remainder – 25% of the remainder?

Jackson: We base it in real numbers, it's not really a percentage.

Zimmerman: What's it end up being per acre, and how can we pay for thinning, burning or weed control. What percentage of the need are we meeting?

Krueger: Essential KV refers to post sale survey work, essential KV only takes into account one element, post-sale activity. Before we even have a sale the Ranger sits down and develops a draft KV plan, that takes into account all the activities they would like to see happen, and the ability to accomplish that work is based on what we actually collect from the sale. At the end, we take what we actually took in and line it up against the priority list that the Ranger has done and look at what we can fund on the list. We are funded separately for prescribed fire. The BD trust dollars are to dispose of the brush that occurs as a function of the timber sale.

Zimmerman: Stand exams are the essential and the other is the remaining part but you still need to answer the question of how much of the need is being met with the amount of money we collect?

Krueger: It varies every day, it depends on what it's sold for, and adjustments, and that ultimately determines how much we collect.

Zimmerman: Just give me a range of percentages.

Anderson: I don't really think we can give you a range of percentages.

Zimmerman: Is it 100%, is it 5%?

Krueger: So the question is, what percent of the needs are met. So I have a plan, and I want to pay for the plan; let's just say the plan costs \$50,000. You're asking what percent of that do we typically get to pay for and I would say it's well over half.

Zimmerman: So the thinning and the weeds for instance, you're meeting half of the need.

Krueger: Our big ticket items are after every sale are weeds and TSI and that is where the bulk of post-sale money goes.

Anderson: We do not meet a 100% of it, it's not just the units that we cut, it's the sale area boundary. We try to keep the sale area boundary within a quarter mile of the cutting area; you can do a variety of the KV activities; not tied to just the actual cutting units.

Zimmerman: We need to take care of the forest and ideally we would meet the entire list.

Johnson: Yes, and recognize that KV is one source of funding.

Gubbels: If you work in other parts of the country, the essential is the must do, and the non-essential is the nice to do. In Minnesota we never got into the non-essential; in other parts of the country you only have money to do the essential, we are blessed with natural regeneration here on the Black Hills.

Busse: Funds come in and they are evaluated as the project goes along; are they only allowed to be spent at the end of the sale?

Krueger: Yes we can spend them after the sale closes, and there is discretion to spend after a unit closes.

Busse: BD funds could be used for machine piles, does that include hand piles.

Krueger: If they were generated as a function of the timber sale then yes.

Brown: Pooling the dollars, you're not burning at the same time as you're cutting trees, so the money is not restricted to that project area is it, or can it be used elsewhere?

Krueger: All that money is accountable to a particular plan

Brown: Can either of these funds be invaded for something like the MPB. Do we replant, or do we decide to thin other areas so the MPB doesn't expand?

Krueger: KV yes.

Ortiz: Is the restoration of system trails something the KV funds can be used for?

Jackson: With roads, those areas are associated with the timber sale. With trails only if it's something we need to put back to its original condition.

Pierson: I work with Jake, the points are getting missed a little. There are lots of avenues of funding for the Forest Service, this is above and beyond having funding from the WO, so this process helps get more work on the ground than not having a timber sale. We could help by pressuring our legislatures to fund more stuff in the forest. I'm sure you have a bigger list that what you're getting done, trails might be outside the KV funds, but if there's a logging job going on, we're required to maintain the trails and leave them in good condition when we're done. We cover a ton of trails and roads that see maintenance that other forests have to pay for out of other funding pots of money.

Zimmerman: Does the Forest Service have an anticipated affect or know the amount of advanced regen across the forest in terms of acres and how do we see that playing out over the next decades? Advanced regen and weeds, what are we expecting the condition of the Forest to be because we can't get to all of it in the next decades?

Krueger: Advanced regen post sale, those surveys are done and logged and those become part of the database. In terms of forecasting regeneration, our Silviculturists have a clear understanding of affects following a timber to be able to forecast based on their experience the level of regeneration that we are going to get. In terms of forecasting weeds, because it's one of our biggest items related to KV dollars post sale, the weeds planning piece is done by those specialists at the District level. There has been a collaborative formed out of the MPB Working Group called the Invasive Plant Partnership. This group will help determine what we're going to spend money on.

Zimmerman: So what's the forecast?

Krueger: It varies by location based on the activity that is being done. I would suggest that we bring Marty Petersen back to update us on the Invasive Plant Partnership.

Wiebers: Thank you Jake for coming in and giving us a presentation.

Alvin Categorical Exclusion (CE) – Jim Gubbels

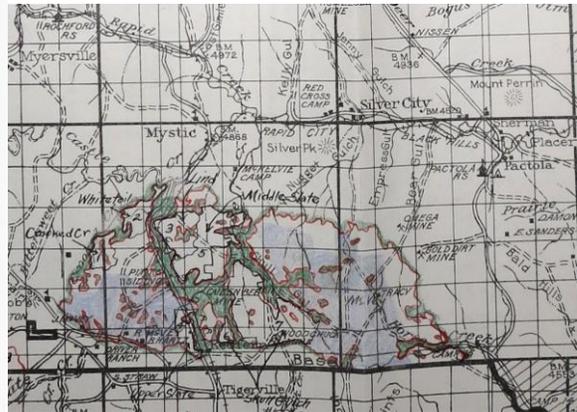
Wiebers: Next topic is Alvin Categorical Exclusion by Jim Gubbels, Mystic District Ranger

Gubbels: Alvin Restoration Project Presentation PowerPoint ~

1939 McVey Fire

- July 11, 1939 fire ran at a rate of 2,900 acres/hour
- Fire burned a total of 22,000 acres
- Controlled in 2 burning periods
- 36 miles of fire line were built from 8 pm July 11 to 9:15 AM July 12

Historic Planting in McVey Fire Scar



Purpose and Need

- Removal of off-site & poor-formed ponderosa pine stock
- The project also proposes vegetative management activities that would improve the growth, vigor and health of the residual pine that survived the fire.

Planted Trees in McVey Fire Scar – Trunk Deformities



Planted Trees in McVey Fire Scar – Short/Overcrowded



Proposed Action

Planted Areas

Mosaic pattern of vegetative treatments that may include, but are not limited to commercial thins, clear-cut with reserves, sanitation, hardwood release and restoration, meadow restoration, and establishment cuts where there is a native seed source.

Fuels treatments may include mastication, piling and/or burning of the slash.

Post-harvest activities will include planting with native Black Hills ponderosa pine stock to return the site to a productive and healthy state.

(~2,060 acres)

Non-Planted Areas

Vegetative treatments within these areas include commercial thinning from below. Other treatments within these areas may include restoration of hardwood and meadow sites, and noncommercial thinning to increase growth, vigor and health of the residual trees. (~749 acres)

NEPA

- Insect and Disease Farm Bill CE
 - HFRA, Sections 602(d) and 603(a)
- 60 public Scoping Period – Began Feb 6, 2020
 - Since vegetation management activities may result in openings larger than 40 acres, Regional Forester authorization as stated in the National Forest Management Act and the Black Hills National Forest Plan, as amended (Standard 2101) (36 CFR 219.11(d)(4)(i)) may be required.
- Anticipate Decision Memo Summer 2020.

Conclusion

- Goal is restoration
- Native Black Hills Ponderosa pine
- Enhancement of residual trees that survived through treatments

Tysdal: How many other areas in the Black Hills have these trees been planted?

Gubbels: I'm don't know the answer to that.

Krueger: There are many other areas across the Forest where trees have been planted. There is a stand by the Lodge in Deadwood, SD that was planted after the 1959 fire. They planted similar stock. There were no regulations and genetic seed sources were not necessarily from local sources. Today collection of seeds is from local sources. Local seeds are grown at the Bessey Nursery in Nebraska and some KV dollars were used to build a new greenhouse there.

Zimmerman: How many acres are in this project area and what are the soils showing?

Gubbels: The fire scare is about 22,000 acres. We are focusing on treating 3,000 acres and under to do thinning, replanting, harvesting and other treatments.

Zimmerman: What are the soils like that are formed under the trees or grasses?

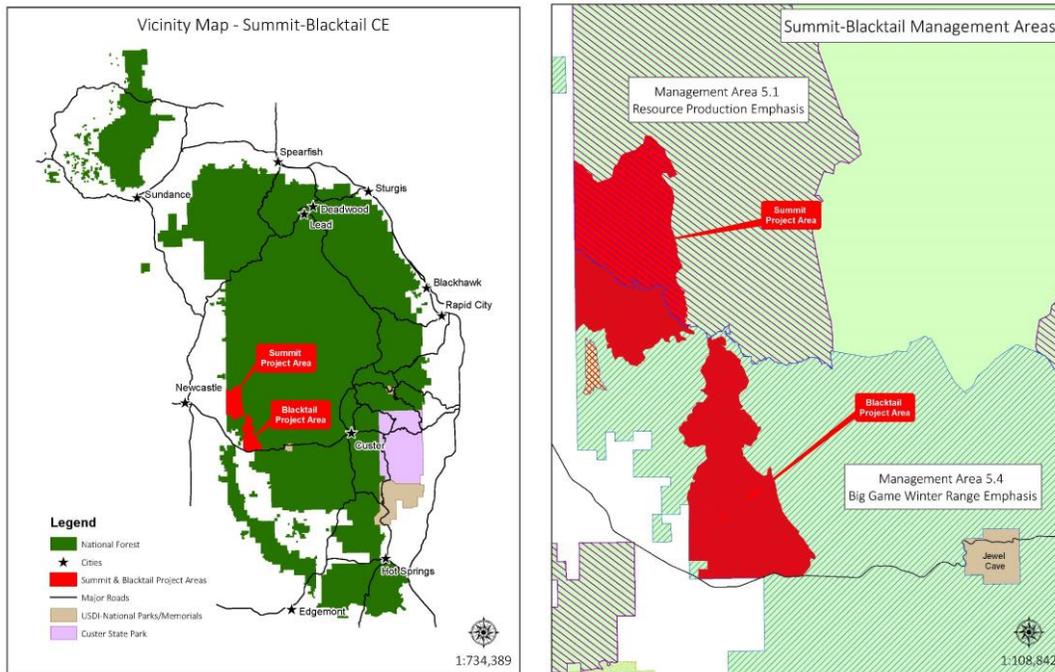
Gubbels: They are 80 feet tall with a base age of 100 and are well suited to native ponderosa.

Summit-Blacktail Categorical Exclusion (CE) – Tracy Anderson

Wiebers: The next item on the agenda is the Summit-Blacktail Categorical Exclusion presentation by Tracy Anderson, Hell Canyon District Ranger.

Anderson: Summit-Blacktail Categorical Exclusion Presentation PowerPoint ~

Summit-Blacktail Project



The purpose and need of this project

- To increase the wildfire resilience of the project area using commercial and non-commercial treatments in ponderosa pine stands.
- Proposed treatments would reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire by reducing the wildfire intensity, rate of spread, and crown fire potential.
- Additionally, the proposed treatments would complement the efforts being made by the BLM and the State of Wyoming in the reduction of fuels and fire intensity on their managed lands.
- Implementation of the proposed activities would provide the adjacent community of the Custer Highland Subdivision and private inholdings near the Wyoming state line a defensible space where fire suppression operations can be safely and effectively conducted in order to protect homes and communities from wildfire.

What needs to be done?

Proposing to commercially treat approximately 2,862 acres of ponderosa pine stands

- **Commercial Thinning (1,412 acres)** - The objective is to reduce stand density to improve health, tree vigor and growth, as well as reduce the risk of stand replacing wildfire.
- **Group Shelterwood (761 acres)** - Commercial treatment in ponderosa pine stands that are not homogenous, but rather have groups of trees of various age classes throughout.
- **Over story Removal (677 acres)** - The removal of mature and over-mature trees from the over story that have a regenerated and adequately stocked understory. In this project area, an adequately stocked understory is considered to be 450 seedlings or saplings per acre or more.
- **Shelterwood Seed cut (11 acres)** - An even-aged regeneration cutting in mature stands. The most desirable seed trees are retained at a basal area of 30-50 ft²/ac. Opening the canopy creates a favorable growing environment for pine regeneration.

What needs to be done? Continued

Non-Commercial Vegetation Treatments

- **Timber Stand Improvement** - Understory thinning of trees that are less than 6.9” diameter at breast height to reduce the site density, enhance residual tree vigor and growth and remove ladder fuels.
- **Products other than logs (POL)** - The objective is to reduce stand density to concentrate future growth on the most desirable trees. Cut material between 6.9 - 8.9 inches in diameter will be decked and sold.

Black Hills Resilient Landscape Project (BHRL)

- Variety of treatments proposed using this NEPA decision such as mechanical thinning, prescribed fire and fuel treatments, and meadow enhancements.

Deferred areas

- Represent of some of the identified protections or reserved areas of no treatment for specific resources such as wildlife habitat and botanical habitat.

Summit Project Area

Commercial Treatment	– 1,204 ac
Group Shelterwood	– 334 ac
Over story Removal	– 411 ac
Shelterwood Seed Cut	– <u>11 ac</u>
	1,960 ac
Deferred from all treatment	– 1,622 ac

BHRL Commercial Treatments

CT – 46 ac
OSR – 54 ac

Blacktail Project Area

Commercial Treatment	– 208 ac
Group Shelterwood	– 427 ac
Over story Removal	– <u>266 ac</u>
	901 ac
Deferred from all treatment	– 1,970 ac

BHRL Commercial Treatments

CT – 6 ac
OSR – 220 ac

Zimmerman: How are you doing on the structural stages objectives? In the project area are you meeting those objectives, moving towards or away from them? Is there structural stage 5 in that area?

Anderson: We didn't really have any in that area. We had a small amount in Tepee Canyon that we plan to set aside. We know where we are switching the structural stages but as far as tracking, that goes with the Forest Plan. On Tepee Canyon, we sent the information to our new Forest

Silviculturist and will be getting the anticipated changes to him once we write the decision and sign it. They get tracked forest wide and not project wide.

Zimmerman: It looks like you are at a deficit for 4B & 4C and I would assume for 5 also.

Anderson: Our structural stages are spread across the Forest, not to a small project area, which is why some of those areas are deferred for wildlife, botanical or other purposes. The gray areas on the map are deferred and there are a number of reasons why and we are purposely not going in there.

Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) – FIA Data Results and Upcoming Timber Sustainability Stakeholder Meeting – Andrew Johnson

Wiebers: The last topic on the agenda today is the Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA).

Johnson: As all of you know, the Forest has been engaged in a multi-year effort to collect extensive forest inventory data. That data has been published and is available as well as stored in cloud vault drive (Pinyon). It's a folder with analysis tables and similar to what has been shown in prior years. The current tables include all 3 years of FIA data collection. What is going on with the analysis? Right now, the Rocky Mountain Research Station, Mike Battaglia and Russ Graham, who have decades of Silviculture research/experience on the Black Hills, are working on a report to answer the 5th question that the working group comprised of state foresters and members of the timber industry posed to help us understand and make use of the inventory data. Those questions address standing inventory, gross growth of inventory and what that final questions is: what would it take to generate a sustained yield? We had planned a stakeholder meeting to discuss the data and what it tells about the standing inventory on the Forest and what it tells about what a future harvest levels look like for the Black Hills. That is a complicated conversation. Research needs time to analyze data and address the 5th question around sustainability. We are planning to have the stakeholder meeting early in April. The intent is that when that peer review report is published, there would be 2 weeks for stakeholders to review the data. One process that this board will participate in is a timber sustainability working group and we will discuss that at our March meeting. The stakeholder meeting is open to the public but there will be specific representatives at the tables. We welcome other stakeholders at the table to provide brief presentations. We will present and share the data. We are waiting for the report to come out and then we can have a good dialogue of what the future of timber harvest looks like.

Zimmerman: Why not longer than 10 years because sustainability speaks of something longer than a decade? Would they be looking at a longer period of time like 30 years?

Johnson: The data could be used to generate models that look beyond a decade.

Zimmerman: Will they do that for us?

Johnson: Yes

Krueger: When that question was developed, we had an existing Forest Plan with existing side boards and structural stages. There was consideration of not engaging in a sustainability action separate from the Forest Plan revision. Three years ago, the question was what would it take to

get us thru the next 10 years? There was the thought that the Forest Plan revision would be complete at that point. During Forest Plan revision, a full analysis is done and the researchers are doing that.

Brown: In essence, there will be a decision of some type that will say we plan to harvest an x number of trees out of the Black Hills National Forest based upon the criteria of sustainability and all the parties will be involved?

Johnson: Yes.

Brown: The results of that is applicable for what period of time?

Krueger: Whatever the plan is has to operate under the existing Forest Plan. I don't know when we will enter Forest Plan revision, but at some point it will occur. Once we have the Forest Plan revision, another analysis will go into that document and take place.

Brown: What would the role of the advisory group working task force be?

Johnson: That committee would provide advice to what sustainable harvest levels look like over time that we could use in our decision making process. Regarding the Forest Plan, Forest Plans have a set timeline and they don't always get revised at the end of that cycle. This is the kind of information that could potentially lead to revision of the Black Hills National Forest Plan. That's not a decision that's been made yet, but this conversation and data could help with crafting a good solid Forest Plan. The Black Hills is fortunate to have more forest inventory data than any other forest in the National Forest System which will help us make good informed decisions.

Yellow Thunder: If you talk about timber sales and various types of revenues that are generated through timber sales and where does that revenue go? For example for the timber sales that were mentioned early, and the BD and KV revenues, isn't there historical that some of that revenue goes to the local schools?

Johnson: Yes and no. There has been legislation called the secure rural schools act. The federal government could assist counties with large acreages of national forests within their boundaries. We don't pay state or local property taxes. It was a way to supplant that gap and help sustain local schools. The secure rural schools has expired, been re-authorized and I am not sure what the status of it is at this time. The source of funding is allocated by congress.

Yellow Thunder: So a certain amount fluctuates with the amount of the sale?

Krueger: For decades, there were portions of timber sale receipts reserved and provided to the counties for schools. There is a category of receipts called payment in lieu of taxes. In the 1990s there was a drop in the number of timber sales across the nation. That meant that those school funds evaporated. Congress recognized that and took initiative to create a new law called secure rural schools act. Each time they would fund the secure rural schools payment, there would be an expiration date. There was a calculation used that is part of the payment in lieu of taxes comes to every school district.

Johnson: Across the country, they vary by national forest and by county.

Yellow Thunder: Does any of that revenue go to tribal schools?

Krueger: It goes to counties that overlap with federal land.

Yellow Thunder: The Buffalo Gap National Grasslands is under Forest Service?

Johnson: Yes, that is managed by the Nebraska National Forest.

Yellow Thunder: Is there any revenue coming off of that? Grazing permits? Are cattle ranchers paying a fee to the Forest Service?

Johnson: Yes, that's correct. There is a piece of receipts for grazing authorizations that can be used for range improvements but a majority of those funds go to treasury.

Yellow Thunder: Most of the revenue generated by those goes back to congress?

Johnson: Correct, it goes to treasury and it's not a significant amount of money.

Yellow Thunder: Are there any other type of permitting that goes on within the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands such as gravel permitting, sand or any kind of land use?

Johnson: That would be a good question for the Nebraska National Forest who administers the Buffalo Gap National Forest. In theory, if there were certain permitted activities on that portion of land, depending upon what authority those permits were sold, for example an outfitter guide permit, we retain the receipts the outfitters pay us which is a portion of their gross receipt and we re-invest those into recreation management. Mineral fees generally go to treasury.

Yellow Thunder: How did the Nebraska National Forest come to be in charge of Buffalo Gap?

Johnson: State boundaries don't apply to the Forest Service. For example the Black Hills National Forest is in both WY and SD. The Nebraska National Forest manages lands in both NE and SD. The agency historically made administrative decisions for efficiency for proximity of offices and commonalities in the types of work. The Nebraska National Forest manages a lot of grasslands, we don't and it's logical that they manage the grasslands. Medicine Bow Route is another example.

Alan Johnson: Is FIA an attempt to fix a sustainability number that is static? I would suspect that sustainability varies year by year and decade by decade. Is it intended to be one static number or is there a mechanism within the sustainability number to allow for wet years and wet decades?

Johnson: This data tells us what is the standing inventory and what is the volume of trees out there on the landscape now, the growth, how fast are they growing, and dying. We can factor in mortality from wildfire, and removals from harvest and use that information to determine at what rate we are harvesting the Forest. Combine that with mortality, at a rate that is decreasing, maintaining, or increasing that inventory, figure out what are those rates and use that to find a balance at doing the harvest we need to do to improve health and resiliency, to reduce the risk of wildfire and have sustainable communities and infrastructure balanced with being able to do that in perpetuity. It's not a single/set number.

Alan Johnson: That number would change a lot in terms of mortality.

Johnson: The current condition of the forest is different than when the forest plan was written. Beetle activity and wildfires are significant in that calculation.

Public Comments:

Wiebers: If you would like to make a comment please identify yourself, and speak no more than three minutes.

Ben Schrieves: Wanted to comment, maybe more of an opinion, from what I understand, planting trees and replanting in grasslands, you're skipping natural ecological effects and it could have detrimental effects to nutrient cycling. In that regard I would be concerned more with short term goals to long term sustainability.

Nan Baron: We were talking about weeds that pop up after lumber is harvested and I was wondering specifically what these are and what function they serve in the environment as nature reclaims what we have taken from it?

David Miller: In 1897 in early November, Gifford Pinchot went to the Homestake offices and talked to the top officials, Tom Greer and Gideon Holdy. He made an agreement verbally that forest reserve and Homestake was going to accept it. No one would guess that we shift a forest from mining and timber, that we would be using a resource faster than we could replace it, but we turned a corner there. This has been a remarkable forest but what came out of that conversation is a mechanism that enabled the America National Forest System. The people doing the work (on the report), Russell Graham is one of the best scientist in the U.S. These are people we can rely on. It's been a great experience working with the Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Perry Jewett: Originally thought over-snow was on agenda. Have attended several events that allow fat biking on snowmobile trails and we were recently granted access to an additional 6 ½ miles on the snowmobile trail and wanted to thank the Forest Service and hopefully the over-snow group can make a decision on further access.

ADJOURN

Wiebers: Are there any more comments? If not, could I have a motion to adjourn? Motion to adjourn by Lauris Tysdal and seconded by Greg Josten. Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m. Next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020.