

Clark Fork Working Group

Summary for 4/15/04 Meeting (Final)

Attendees: Jim Chancla, Les & Jackie Dean, Robert Flansass, Jack Floyd, Greg Gagnelius, Doug Grupenhoff (USFS), Bruce Haflich (USFS), Kari Harker, John Harris, John Head (USFS), Hannah Hernandez, Susan Hillstrom (USFS), Dan Howell, Judy Hutchins, Carolyn Hidy, Steve Johnson (USFS), Lon LaBelle, Debbie Lyman, Jim Mari, Howard Morkert, Jim Morkert, Joe Penny, Erich Pfalzer, Bob Springer, Don Thompson and Mike Miller. (6:30 pm -8:30 pm)

There were no revisions to the draft summary for the 4/1/04 meeting.

Mike explained that this would be the last meeting before the final recommendations are submitted at the end of April. Again, for those of you who may not have received earlier meeting summaries, the purpose of the Clark Fork Working Group is to provide local input to the FS on how we would like to see the National Forest managed. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires each National Forest to write a long range management plan, and this plan is to be revised every 15 years or when conditions significantly change. The Forest Plans for the Kootenai National Forest and Idaho Panhandle National Forest were approved in 1987 and now must be revised. Seven revision topics have been identified: 1) Vegetation, 2) Fire Risk, 3) Timber Production, 4) Wildlife, 5) Watersheds & Aquatic Species, 6) Inventoried Roadless Areas & Proposed Wilderness Areas, and 7) Access & Recreation. There are 13 or 14 working groups in the Kootenai and Panhandle similar to this one, meeting to develop recommendations for the Forest Plan revision.

The recommendations that this Working Group have developed have been the result of numerous meetings over the past five months, during which attendees have come to consensus agreement on desired condition statements and priority areas for the seven revision topics. All of the recommendations listed in the Desired Condition Statement Summary, dated 4/18/04, have been agreed upon by consensus. These recommendations, along with meeting summaries, have been distributed after every meeting and every reasonable attempt has been made to obtain input from any member of the public who is interested. Recommendations that were not agreed upon are discussed in the meeting summaries. Also, recently proposed recommendations by a group regarding issues on which consensus could not be reached, are also attached (Recommendations Submitted by Cabinet Ridge Riders and Others). Although not received to date, other recommendations on wilderness areas, etc., are expected, and will be attached to the final submission.

The Desired Condition Statement Summary, including the two attachments and all the meeting summaries, will be submitted to Brian Avery, Ranger for the Cabinet District before the end of April 2004. If you have additional comments, they can also be submitted to Mr. Avery. It is the understanding of this working group that comments received by the end of April will be considered by the revision team in development of the Draft Forest Plan. (It is my understanding that over the next several months, the revision team will be working on the draft plan, then in the fall, working group meetings will reconvene in some form to show participants how the recommendations were used).

Discussions at the 4/15/04 meeting are briefly summarized below.

Access

Detailed information on gated roads that people would like to see opened for various activities were discussed and the following recommendations were agreed upon. Please note however, that there was

concern expressed by some parties that all proposed road openings be carefully analyzed for potential adverse impacts, e.g., impacts on elk summer range, etc.).

- a. Open FS #2278 (Lost Girl) and #2289 (Snake Creek Pass) for berry picking and firewood gathering in August and September.
- b. Spur roads on Fatman for firewood gathering.
- c. FS #2735 and 215 - Grays Gulch year around for various uses. This drainage has homes in the area and if the road was opened all year around it would provide an exit if there is a fire.
- d. FS #2257/2222 – Sex Peak loop road from April through October, then opened for snowmobiling during winter months.
- e. Elk Lake (Vermilion) open to ATV use and Cabinet Ridge Riders would agree to maintain the trail and area around Elk Lake.
- f. Canyon Creek (Vermilion) left open to ATV travel.
- g. Open FS #2744 (West Fork Pilgrim) for seasonal firewood gathering.
- h. Open FS #2220 (Swamp Creek power line road) for seasonal firewood gathering.
- i. Temporarily open all logging units for firewood gathering after the logging project is completed.

Susan Hillstrom proposed two specific areas in the Bull river drainage for cross country skiing including, Dry Creek Road FS #1118 and Dubronski Lane (mile marker 15). Signage designating the areas for cross country skiing should be provided and a parking area should be plowed out. See Desired Condition Statement #2 in the Access topic, page 7.

The discussion on the use of volunteer school groups for trail maintenance was continued from the last meeting. Forest Service representatives explained that training and liability were the biggest stumbling blocks. All agreed that the Cabinet District needs to investigate this further, especially since several persons reported that use of volunteer groups for trail clearing is common practice in the Lolo and Lewis & Clark National Forests, and in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. See Desired Condition Statement #5 in the Access topic, page 7.

A number of attendees proposed that the FS should permit/provide usable access along Highway 56 for recreational boating on the Bull River (possibly at mile markers 3, 4 & 5). Several floaters related experiences of being harassed by property owners while floating and/or taking out. The suggestion was made that a floaters group should start a dialog with the Bull River watershed Council. Jackie Dean pointed out that there are Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks grants available to develop fishing and floating access areas.

Special Forest Products

There was additional discussion on rock picking/mineral withdrawal permits. Bruce Haflich explained that the Cabinet District does not have any large scale rock or mining operations currently occurring. The group agreed that the desired condition statement previously agreed upon does not need revised. See Desired Condition Statement #5 in the Access topic, page 6.

There was a brief update from the subcommittee working on wilderness issues. Both parties agreed to keep a dialog open and hope to meet in the future to continue discussions.

Susan Hillstrom proposed that a number of lookout structures and the Bull River Guard Station be preserved. See Desired Condition Statement in the Other Forest Wide Goal/Objectives topic, page 9.

There are no meetings scheduled at this time. If there is a need for a meeting in the future all members will be notified.