

National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) Meeting
June 18, 2007 – 1:00 p.m.
Forest Service Center, 8221 South Highway 16, Rapid City, SD

Members Present:

Tom Blair, Chair; Jim Heinert, Vice Chair; Terry Mayes, Bob Paulson, Aaron Everett, Becci Jo Rowe, Nels Smith, Pat McElgunn, Doug Hofer, Everett Hoyt, Mac McCracken, Hugh Thompson, and Matt Hoobler

Forest Service Representatives:

Craig Bobzien, Frank Carroll, Bob Thompson, Steve Kozel, Mike Lloyd, Rhonda O'Byrne, Todd Pechota, Dave Thom, Craig Kjar, Twila Morris, Recorder.

Others:

Approximately 15 members of the public, congressional representatives, and media were in attendance.

Members Absent:

Bob Kloss, Jim Scherrer, Ron Johnsen, and Donovan Sprague

Welcome and Roll Call:

Chair Blair: Quorum present, called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Comments to the Chair:

Carroll: None at this time.

Approve Minutes:

Chair Blair: Are there any changes to the May minutes?

Motion made to approve the minutes as reported, motion seconded.

Blair: Motion carried, the May minutes stand as reported.

Approve Agenda:

Chair Blair: Are there any changes to the agenda?

Carroll: We would like to do the "Fire in the Hills" piece first, and the Forest Monitoring Report following.

Motion made by Paulson to approve the agenda as revised, motion seconded by Thompson.

Blair: Motion carried, the agenda stands as revised.

Housekeeping:

Carroll: Reviewed the layout of the building.

Meeting Protocols - Issues:

Chairman Blair: Please turn off your cell phone.

Hot Topics

Carroll: Martin Luschei, an author who was born in Nebraska, and grew up in Oelrichs South Dakota, has written a comprehensive history about the Black Hills, including the history of the Forest Service, in the book *The Black Hills and the Indians*. Frank presented a copy of the book to each Board member and alternate.

Blair: Mac, Colin, Craig and I traveled to Pierre for the monthly OHV Task Force meeting. We are nearing a consensus on the legislation. We'll be sending it on to the Legislative Research Council (LRC) in the fall. Topics we discussed included:

- Defining OHV's.
- Right-of-ways; both on hard surfaces, as well as ditches.
- Counties that have passed rules about where the infringement of the right-of-way is taking place.
- Necessary equipment.
- Age of OHV operators.
- Our recommendation regarding the use of OHV's on hard surface roads.
- What is an intersection?
- What is appropriate signing?

The industry is moving faster than we or anyone else is moving. New vehicles are coming on board, and there is no longer just one traditional ATV. There are gators, multi-wheel vehicles, even vehicles being brought in from Europe that are so different, but can't be categorized as anything else but an ATV.

We moved ahead on cooperating with local jurisdiction, whether it be the township boards, counties, city officials, etc., and leaving the authority with those people.

Bobzien: We are going forward with the main framework for operations of use, such as funding mechanisms, and administration of funds.

McCracken: We are going to approach the LRC to produce a rough draft of where we started and where we're at with rules, regulations, etc. It will take a tremendous effort to sell this to the State.

Blair: We talked at length about the fact that there will be a public process to this also. When we have something of substance to offer to the public, we'll go across the State and have public meetings, and get comments. We know there will be some disagreements, and there will be fights we won't win. Colin Paterson was there, and had some input. Colin, would you like to add anything?

Patterson: No, but I do have a question, what is the status of the minutes of the meeting, are they available to the public?

Blair: Mac, are Task Force minutes public domain?

McCracken: As far as I know they are. Colin I will check and get back to you.

Paulson: Did I understand you correctly to say that ATV's would not be running on pavement?

Blair: That is one of the things we are talking about.

Mayes: You would have to have a legislative change.

Blair: That is right; an ATV is not made to run on pavement. We talked extensively about exemptions and in some of the legislation today, there is the AG exemption. We looked at that and how it did and did not fit. Kevin from DOT had the quote of the day “We are still taking baby steps”. But we are really focusing on legislation changes, funding mechanisms, and those things going forward in the 08 legislative sessions. The industry is important, but in our part of the country, tourism will be very important. Up north and in the eastern part of the state ATV’s are work horses, here they are toys.

Rowe: 5% of our tourism is motorized, 95% is non-motorized. Did you discuss noise decimals, and how that affects the non-motorized tourism? ATV users seem to travel in groups, the manufacturer lists the noise decimals, but that is for just one ATV, not the group.

Blair: Yes we did, two of the categories we are still discussing, are 1) cased guns, and 2) noise decimals.

Rowe: For clarification, the 5% of motorized tourism, is the type of activity done while in the Black Hills. 95% of the activity done by tourists is non-motorized.

Hoyt: So you are suggesting that OHV’s would not be on asphalt.

Blair: That is our recommendation. Today they are legal, it wouldn’t be an immediate thing, as the license expires, it would not be renewed.

Hoyt: What is the rational in distinguishing an ATV from a motorcycle, as far as use on asphalt?

Blair: Speed and controllability mainly. ATVs are difficult to control at 45 mph.

Mayes: Most manufacturers make the recommendation to not use the ATV on pavement.

Blair: Scott Carbonneau gave the fatalities statistics. This year there have been 27 fatalities, many asphalt related.

Smith: I really believe that the Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board went over the line when it got involved with decisions regarding highway use. What goes on, on the highway is the South Dakota Department of Transportation’s business.

Blair: The board is a Governor’s Task Force, appointed by the Governor, for the whole State of South Dakota. We did not make those recommendations on behalf of the National Forest Advisory Board.

McCracken: We also have representatives on the Governor’s Task Force from the SD DOT.

Smith: My error.

Hofer: I apologize for being late. I believe that the OHV Task Force is making good progress. There are a lot of public safety issues related to highway use and road use. But the BH NFAB is the heart and soul of a lot of discussions that go on with the task force. It involves a lot more than managing OHV trails on the Black Hills National Forest. When a set of recommendations are developed, embodied in them will be the recommendations that the National Forest Advisory Board has made to the Forest Service. We’ve had four meetings, it’s a big subject, and there are so many different elements. Between the growth, and the use, it has never been looked at comprehensively. There’s a lot of work to do.

Blair: 11,000 OHV’s were registered to run on the highway last year.

Hofer: 65,000 are titled; registered for highway use, there were 3,000 four years ago, 6,000 two years ago, and 11,000 last year. Despite the fact that the manufacturer says they are not safe to operate on the highway.

Blair: Are there any more questions?

REGULAR AGENDA

“Fire in the Hills!” ~ Craig Bobzien, Dave Thom, Todd Pechota, Joe Lowe, Bill Crapser, and Bill Kohlbrand

An overview of what you’ve been hearing in the news about climate change, escalating fire costs, increasingly large and destructive fires, and how we as interagency partners align with what you are hearing. What are the factors affecting fire conditions? What can we do about it?

Fire preparedness in the Black Hills, States of South Dakota and Wyoming and U.S. Forest Service. Status of fire forces, expectations for the coming season, challenges and opportunities.

Bobzien: I would like to recognize some special guests in our audience today; Bill Harlan from the Rapid City Journal; Jeff Vonk, Secretary of Game Fish & Parks; Lesley Kanderas from Congresswoman Herseth-Sandlin’s office; Chris Blair from Senator Johnson’s office; and Mark Haugan from Senator Thune’s office.

Our next topic is timely as the fire season is upon us. We have several of our interagency partners represented here today; State of South Dakota, Joe Lowe; State Forester from Wyoming, Bill Crapser; District Forester, Bill Kohlbrand; Renewable Resources Staff Officer from the Black Hills National Forest, Dave Thom; Black Hills National Forest Fire Management Officer, Todd Pechota.

Fire has no boundaries; it’s our job to corral it. These folks consider everything from how we prescribe it to how we manage it. We’ll have time for questions after the session.

Thom: We’ll be giving an overview of fire fuels on the Black Hills including; fire history, effects on fire setting, what is being done, preparations for 2007, and leadership perspective on policy and budget.

As Dave shared his PowerPoint presentation, the following questions were asked:

Smith: What do you mean by raising the lower limit of ponderosa pine?

Thom: As you start at the top, such as on top of Harney Peak, trees are dense. By the time you get down to the lower elevations, you have fewer trees per acre. If we were in a high mountain range and the temperatures warmed, I would expect the upper elevational limit, i.e. “timber line” to rise.

Hoyt: How many of the statistics in your presentation are affected by the Jasper Fire numbers?

Thom: The numbers are skewed heavily by 2000, 2001 & 2002. Fires are episodic, because of climatic conditions, so yes Jasper is a large acreage in these numbers.

Carroll: Note the picture of a house painted with retardant. Todd, how much did that load of retardant cost?

Pechota: Between \$5,700.00 & \$6,000.00 per load.

Thom: It’s tough to clean retardant off a building, but tougher to rebuild.

Blair: We re-sided the house.

Mayes: Are the pine beetle trees taken into consideration?

Thom: It does cause an increase in fire danger, and when they fall down, they do build up and cause additional fire dangers.

Mayes: We seem to continue to move the beetles through the forest, cleaning them up in one area, then seeing them in another area.

Thom: They were originally all located in the Northern Hills, now they are spread throughout the Hills.

McCracken: The house that was painted red with retardant, does a homeowners insurance policy cover that clean-up or residing?

Thom: That would be a question for an insurance agent. The Forest Service (or other fire agencies) do not pay for it.

Paulson: Of the 55,000 acres, how many acres are prescribed burned?

Thom: About 6,000 to 7,000 acres are prescribed burning (including broadcast and pile burns) out of the 55,000; the rest is mechanical.

Paulson: How much of the 200,000 green tons of woody biomass is being used?

Thom: Not very much. Aaron do you remember how much Merillat uses?

Everett: I can't tell you right off the top of my head, but the majority of it is burned in the woods.

Thom: The pilot project in Upton may use two trucks a day. Pope and Talbot has a plant that makes pellets from mill waste.

Mayes: What is being done to minimize the fire danger caused by the bark beetle?

Thom: You can't salvage many trees, because they lose value, so we are trying to get ahead of the beetles and thin out the trees to make them more resistant. A healthy forest is the answer.

Mayes: By the time the trees are red then, it's too late?

Thom: Yes, it is too late by then.

Mayes: So the Forest Service is not harvesting the red trees?

Thom: The trees have no marketable value, and it costs a lot to take them down.

Mayes: So unless there's a direct threat, the red trees are left.

Thom: In certain situations, when the red trees are next to communities, or houses, we use some appropriated dollars remove the hazard.

Bob Thompson: The real key is to get out in front of the beetles, so in areas with a high density of fuels, we are trying to isolate the beetles. Once you have the timber coming down, there is so much fuel, you don't want to put fire to it.

Thom: We do roughly 20,000 acres of commercial timber sales. Our purchasers have been very flexible. If there are beetle issues, the purchasers will move to those areas whenever possible.

Pechota: Thanks for the opportunity to be here today. I would like to talk about what suppression resources are available for this fire season.

Low: Mr. Chairman and members of the board, thank you for the time on the agenda for me to talk about our program.

Todd & Joe shared a PowerPoint presentation which generated the following questions:

McCracken: Could you comment on the Dispatch Center location, and the controversy of a month ago?

Low: It was tough to get an eviction notice from FFA at the beginning of the fire season. The first issue was, we can't just pick up and move, the system was designed by Motorola to operate in that particular facility. The second part of it was, we have rules and regulations that should apply to all Dispatch Centers. There are 32 other Dispatch Centers in the US that are on airport runways. If the FFA truly uniformly applies the laws, then we can't be single out.

The Governor's office is working right now with the airport and FAA to come to a favorable solution. South Dakota taxpayers have paid 1.8 million dollars for a three year lease. We are able to stay in this location till 2010. The Dispatch Center dispatches for both the Black Hills & Nebraska National Forest's, and supplies initial attack, plus aid to the States of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Currently at the airport, they are starting to build two hangers for private pilots, which are taking part of the parking lot. We'll end up having to bus people out to the Dispatch center when we have training sessions, etc., because of the lack of parking. After 2010 the Governor will reach an agreement, or we'll address the FFA about the other 31 Dispatch Centers located on airport runways.

Bill Kohlbrand: Wyoming State Forestry out of Newcastle Wyoming. We have 50 people across the whole State, and fire is not necessarily our main priority, we use Counties and volunteers.

Blair: Joe, please explain the red card system in the State of South Dakota.

Low: When I mention local resources, I'm talking about volunteers and City resources. Geographically, the VFD might be closer than anyone else, so they'll be there. We've seen a general trend toward everyone becoming red carded. We have well trained fire fighters and they are a very viable and important resource for us.

To increase capacity for the state of South Dakota, we are going to offer two Regional fire schools with participation from the Forest Service to help teach the classes. U.S. Fish and Wildlife will be a partner as well.

We have a really good relationship with the State of Wyoming. We get great resources out of Weston, Crook and even Campbell Counties. There is a sense of community in those counties. People rise to the occasion and pitch in to help in any way they can.

Pechota: The common theme is; no one Agency can do this alone. We don't have the budget, equipment, or personnel, we have to work together.

Smith: The control and management you need has to do with two things this Board is involved in, 1) The OHV transportation plan, and 2) the loss of open spaces issue. What has come up time and again is that where there are structures there are people, and if you're trying to get the firefighters in, while you're getting the occupants out, you have to have the road system to do it. With the current Forest Service policy regarding in-holdings with only one road, and the State of Wyoming having the worst variety of road standards and accountability system, we have to look seriously at the road system and open space.

Pechota: It's remarkable to me, around the State, you see a two track road across a bridge that you wouldn't take an ATV across, and at the end there is a subdivision.

Low: After spending time in California, I know that our back yard is no different than anywhere else. Fire planning ahead of time contributes to the success of fire fighting. If a community has those conditions, where we have a narrow road way in, then you address it in the community fire plan. The communities have to be proactive.

Paulson: "Fire use" in the Hills, is that done at all, and if not, why?

Pechota: Currently no, there is not an operational plan in place to do so.

Low: There's such a heavy interface intrusion in the Hills, in most areas, it is full suppression mode. There might be some areas that would be limited suppression mode, and none where full fire use mode is used.

Crapser: Regarding the biomass discussion, we always talk about electrical generation, and that is all good, but we do have a vibrant biomass industry in the Black Hills already. The sawmills in Spearfish, Hill City, Hulett, and other small mills in the Hills are leading the way in biomass use. The Forest Service has a completely different arm called State & Private Forestry that works with private land owners across the Country. The work that is done on the Forest, interface and work on the communities, a lot of the protection, defensible space work, etc., have been funded through special programs to do this work. The Forest Service and all Federal Agencies are having funding issues, so one thing we'll see in the future is a lot more pressure being put on States and Counties to provide fire fighting resources, education on private lands, etc.

The way we have our system set up in Wyoming, the local VFD's are really the backbone of our firefighting capabilities. Over 50% of our engines are the Federal excess property engines.

Low: We had eight wet years prior to the current drought, so the program was cut drastically, and then it takes a long time to get in to an overhead position to manage a fire. So there is a necessity to have the insurance and level of protection we have today. Also, it is a process of cooperation with prevention, fuels, etc., because the dollars go further. I believe in these partnerships, Boxelder Job Corps, National Guard, Custer State Park, and the State of Wyoming to mention a few.

Bobzien: We had a briefing on the fire weather and the short of it is, they are calling for a La Nina with high pressure which will delay the monsoons, and for us here the forecast is for a dry July and August. Some places are really dry, but others are wet, we are trying to look at connecting everything together. Whether it is climate change or our past forest conditions, we want to manage for a healthy forest.

We have an industry that helps us with that. We also want to bring fire back into the role of the Forest, because it's good for the Forest. Referring back to the question from Bob Paulson about our fire use plan, we have the provision to use it in the Black Elk Wilderness, and we are interested in doing that, but we have to address the conditions on the perimeters. Fire is part of nature, and we want to work closely with fire first before implementing a fire use plan.

In terms of the issue of fire fighting cost, the money is all tax dollars, so we have a common interest in doing the best we can and work together.

Heinert: Do we have any data on fires in the Black Hills that tells what percent of fires are human caused and the percent that are started by natural causes?

Pechota: About 75% are lightning caused.

Heinert: The balance then would be human caused, or accidental?

Pechota: Almost all of the large fires, and a large majority that escape initial attack are human caused. Most lightning strikes are at the top of the ridge, human caused fires are started at the bottom, which is the difference in the way the fires move.

Low: Human caused can also be accidental, such as fires started by trains, etc., but they are lumped in with the non-accidentally started fire statistics.

Crapser: Most of the human caused fires tend to be on the shoulder season, burning trash, etc.

Hoyt: 5-10 years ago we read or heard about the difficulties in the ability to work with other Agencies because of the various radio systems, etc.

Low: We're now able to talk with one another, but we still have complications. The State has digital systems, and the Forest Service has analog systems. Mutual aid channels are available. Technology is coming along, and we're still working on a device that allows you to plug in both the analog and digital.

In a fire organization, when it's wet and we are not fighting fire, the resources become available nationally as assistance for hire. This helps our budget and the tax payers because our resources are paid by other states. Our hand crew has been to nine other states, on hurricanes, shuttle recovery, etc.

Blair: Questions from the audience?

Patterson: Are there any jurisdiction conflicts or problems? It has been said that the first responders on the scene of the Ricco Fire, and perhaps others, did not attack it quickly, are there concerns with that?

Low: That is a common theme after a fire. Everyone says, if we would have done this or that, there would have been a better outcome. Record heat, record drought, dry lightning were all at play during those fires. The first arriving resources become overwhelmed because of the number of houses being threatened, and a very rapidly escalating situation. Everyone looks at homes lost, but look at homes saved. There were 500 homes threatened, and seven lost (East Ridge Fire).

Pechota: Couple that with the safe evacuation of people and cattle.

Patterson: Are their jurisdiction rules about who can do what?

Low: No, whoever shows up takes command, and takes action.

Pechota: We are using a "closest forces" concept, where the fire fighters and engines nearest a reported fire are dispatch initially.

Bob Thompson: For example, the East Ridge Fire, the State was on another fire so the Forest Service took control first.

Crapser: Our first priority is public and firefighter safety regardless of what is being threatened. An assessment is made, and you have to make sure you can do your work safely. There's not a house out there that is worth losing a life over.

Bobzien: I would like to recognize Joe Lowe for his service as a past alternate member of the National Forest Advisory Board.

Smith: I would like to make a quick comment on the importance of interagency prescribed burning. Regardless of how a fire starts, we have such a mixed land status, private, etc., we have to be doing the prescribed burning.

Blair: Take a break, back by 3:05

Black Hills National Forest Monitoring Report ~ Frank Carroll and Dave Thom

Carroll: The Black Hills National Forest issued its Monitoring Report earlier this summer as part of our Forest Planning. Once a year we do this report on all resources. Dave Thom will take us through some highlights.

Thom: 120 page document passed out, lots of information, and I'll show you a five slide condensed introduction of the document.

Dave shared some slides from the Monitoring Report which generated the following questions:

Hugh Thompson: We know how to regenerate aspen because we know you have to disturb it. Do we know how to re-establish aspen once we lose it?

Thom: We don't want to lose it, but there is a process to restore it such as in a nursery, and then to protect it from critters once you re-plant.

Thompson: On a large scale, I don't know that we can re-establish it economically.

Smith: The density of the black-backed woodpecker goes down; could that be because they are dispersing over more areas?

Thom: We don't know the true population, but we do know the density. As the habitat goes down, the population density goes down, but with the next burn area, there will be a re-entry.

Rowe: Did you monitor the American dippers in riparian areas at all, because they are sensitive.

Thom: Page 96, American Dipper section.

Paulson: Regarding weed treatment, what are the total acres of infestation?

Thom: Ultimately, success is reducing the total weed population. But as written in 1997 the treatment level is lower than what we actually treat currently.

Paulson: That is not monitoring, we are not monitoring the weed species.

Thom: The intent in today's discussion is to show how the monitoring report works, and we have a separate guide that tells us how to monitor the invasives.

Rowe: Included in monitoring, would there be a step beyond that, that would focus on prevention of spreading?

Thom: Yes, we do have a plan, and we have a priority of how we treat the different species.

Rowe: On page 120, recreational opportunities, object 407, this shows thousands of acres, roaded and natural. What are the actual numbers, this is our objective, but where are we at right now?

Thom: You've asked a question I can't answer. I just wanted to make you aware of the document, and we hope it is useful.

Rowe: It is a phenomenal resource, thank you.

Hoyt: Frank e-mailed this to us previously. Could we devote some time at a future meeting for some more discussion of this document?

Blair: That would be appropriate.

Open Space Sub-Committee Update ~ Craig Kjar

Kjar: The Sub-Committee worked on a definition of open space and the definition is:

- ❖ Open Space is an area that provides for natural processes, wildlife, forestry, agriculture, recreation, and other public and private benefits. Open space includes parks, stream and water corridors, and other natural areas. Open space lands may be protected or unprotected, public or private.

The Sub-Committee has discussed new legislative authority which would provide opportunity to sell forest Service land that is adjacent to cities or developed areas and use the proceeds of those sales to purchase in-holdings of private land from willing sellers.

The Sub-Committee is considering this action because the existing process is not working. Land exchanges are complex and processing time has been too long to be effective. Land purchase from existing programs is not being funded at adequate levels.

The next Sub-Committee meeting will include the staff of the congressional delegations of South Dakota and Wyoming to discuss this proposal on July 10, 2007.

Hugh Thompson: As you put this legislation together, you say you would put your money in a separate account, and use it to buy other land. I would like to see no overhead charges being charged to the money. I would also like to see it be in an interest bearing account. KV funds are assessed overhead charges, etc. If the Agency makes it a priority to do non-simultaneous land exchanges, and can tell the public that the money we collect will be spent on actual purchases, it would do a lot to enhance the program.

Paulson: We were thinking of doing just the opposite, the lands budget has been gutted on this Forest. We envisioned this to be a self supporting program.

Thompson: The agency has to make it a priority to do it with out all the overhead costs.

Paulson: Is that an option?

Bobzien: It could cause a problem we couldn't deliver on. It is a trade off, because there would be no guarantee that all lands work would be accomplished without sufficient funding. The other part would be the notion of an oversight group, a Board that would monitor the program.

Thompson: You would have to look at your priorities, maybe taking some positions from elsewhere to do the work required here.

Bobzien: If the interest is in accountability, I think there are mechanisms in place that would allow that to be done. I will go forward with the best package that we can have, that's where we have to start. If it takes certain things to advance the legislation, or if we build in specific components, whatever it takes, because the current system isn't working for us. The subcommittee is working on the details, if that's an option we want in there, then we should put it in there. If the interest is that we just want 100% of the money to be available for land acquisitions, then the delivery of that is that it will be in competition with everything else in the mix.

Thompson: I might be out of sync with the group, but my constituents would want to be assured that the money you collect when you sell some land, every dollar would be spent to purchase land.

Bobzien: There is a cost of acquisition, surveys, fees, etc., to broker the deal, these are just a given costs.

Paulson: We are together on the concept; I'm just talking about the funding.

Thompson: I agree with the concept, but I know how overhead is charged and am concerned that those charges could use the majority of the receipts.

Hofer: Some of the cost of administering the sales and the purchases that would go as part of this program, are prescribed in law, such as NEPA, etc. Are there any of those steps that will bog this down cost wise, that could be avoided, if the legislation specifically exempted it, and are there any exemptions under NEPA for any of the acquisition steps at a smaller scale?

Bobzien: There are exchanges that occur with the "sufficiency language" that does waive the NEPA, but it is very controversial and the legislation for these identifies specific parcels of land.

Kjar: The highest cost in selling Forest Service land is in the NEPA studies. To purchase land, it is fairly low in costs because there are just a few reports involved, primarily hazardous materials surveys.

Paulson: In the monitoring report, page 127, could someone explain to me the “Land Acquired Through Acquisition” and “Lands Being Acquired Through Acquisitions” tables? This makes it sound like you are monitoring it. The article in Saturdays Rapid City Journal, by Bill Harlen, had real good support of the open space issue.

Kjar: The chart on page 127 is the land we acquired each year, I think the chart on page 128 “Lands Being Acquired Through Acquisitions” is a total for all cases that are in progress that year.

Paulson: The chart on page 128 isn’t really monitoring. I would like further explanation. The next meeting is July 10, 2007 from 1:00 to 3:00 here at the Forest Service Center. Our intent is to submit potential legislation to this Board.

Hofer: The Sub-Committee discussion is that the law should cap, at the very least, the amount of money that can be used on overhead. If there’s not a cap on it, then what Hugh suggests leads to some real major issues.

Paulson: We talked about setting it up in a manner that would see that the Forest Service performed, and if they did not, the idea would die.

Thompson: In the current exchange program, it’s a problem of getting it together all at one time. I’m talking about value for value, without a large drain on the money for overhead. A cap would be better than nothing, but to get the legislation through, if the Agency would agree to not spend the money on salary, it would fly much easier. If you get a chance to purchase a piece, you still have appraisals, documents, etc., but it will be simpler if you have a bank account ready to write a check.

Paulson: Other partner groups would be ready to step in to that plan too.

Paulson: Hugh, would you be willing to work with Pat on language to address your concern?

Thompson: Yes.

Bobzien: I appreciate the participation, and momentum of the Sub-Committee in trying to bring forward this first piece, to use Nels’ term, non-simultaneous land exchanges. I would like the Sub-Committee to consider the interests and options. In terms of time line, I would like them to send the notes of the July meeting. I want to propose that we do not have a July meeting. And have the August 15th meeting as a means of looking at some of these things. I want to keep the momentum going and we can.

Paulson: Why no July meeting?

Bobzien: Because everyone is so busy, and everyone’s time is valuable, we don’t have enough topics for a full agenda. This would give the Sub-Committee time to work. For the September regular meeting then, I would ask that we would have a proposal that the parent board could make a recommendation on.

Blair: Field trip thoughts?

Bobzien: For the field trip, we would look at starting in Rapid City, going south to look at biomass, and open space, and finish with travel management.

Hoyt: At our last meeting our guest from another Forest said they were working on similar legislation, are we duplicating their effort?

Kjar: There's a lot of specific legislation out there, and there has been some movement to do these things, but what we are pioneering is a more general legislation that would let us choose pieces of land for the exchanges. The North Carolina forests are looking at legislation that has identifies specific pieces of land.

Hofer: If the cost of selling land is staff, NEPA, and manpower intensive, is any of that saved if in addition to the general authority, which I think is needed, there were specific parcels that were identified. Would it be possible to save some money by shortening up the process? Anything we can do to cut down on the costs and manpower, the better it will be for everyone. If it was a combination of the specified and the general, it wouldn't take away from the initiative.

Paulson: There have been two cuts of that already.

Bobzien: There was no NEPA done on the areas that came out in the schools area. The areas we have identified do not have NEPA done on them.

Everett: It's really the lesser of two evils, by virtue of identifying parcels ahead of time, the process is more transparent, but you also give the land owners time to comment. There are political advantages and disadvantages.

Hofer: My issue is just the overriding cost.

Blair: Every time you deviate from the norm that has gone on for years, you open yourself up wide for a challenge from groups.

Heinert: This issue Hugh raised, does this mean that if we don't have some type of safeguards the Government could use the money acquired by selling land for some completely different purpose?

Hugh: Not for different purposes, but just the overhead assessment, in other words, what it takes to run the Agency. You could sell a parcel, and then spend all the money on NEPA. I believe that the Agency, in good faith, and if they get the authority, should eat the overhead, and not pull it out of the receipts from selling land. It can be written into the law, and it would necessitate some adjustment in staffing. I think it would be more efficient if we didn't have to make it all come together at the same time. You can't rob from the one parcel to pay off the other parcel.

Heinert: I would concur with that, because at a National scenario, we need to make an effort, that the proceeds from the property would be used to purchase other property. If there is some idea that the Agency could eat up a portion of the money, it would be a tougher row to hoe. So if there's a way to protect the proceeds, I would be in favor of that.

Paulson: I've been told that there is no money available for land exchanges within the Forest Service.

Everett: I would suggest we wait till after the fiscal bill passes, because the Land and Water will look different at that time.

Smith: I think we should wait on this rather than put Craig on the spot right now. We have to sell this to the Congressionals. I agree with Hugh that it will be in the front of our constituent's minds.

Blair: Maybe you do write it in the legislation, that the cost of administration can not exceed X dollar amount or a percent so that the overhead can't eat up the money. You can write all this stuff in, but when they have no money to do the project, they are caught in the quandary of whose budget will they take from to pay for the costs; because it has to come out of someone's budget. I agree with Hugh's issue, but maybe you just have to put a cap on the amount

Smith: There's validity to the issue. The credibility of this will come from getting a winner on the board early on.

Hoyt: For the general edification of the group, I read a book, by Norman Maclean, called *Young Men and Fire*. This was a very instructive piece on fire, the activities, etc., and especially instructive in terms of fire analysis.

Carroll: His son, John Maclean, has written two more books on Storm King and the 30-Mile fires.

Public Comments:

Chair Blair: If anyone from the public wishes to address the Board, please do so.

Patty Brown: Has there been any further on the legislation push to get fire out of the Forest Service budget, or just catastrophic wildfires?

Bobzien: I don't know of any legislation to separate it out of the Forest Service budget.

Everett: The issue of cost containment just subsides now that the fire season is here, you won't hear about it again till it starts snowing.

Blair: No parent board meeting in July. Set aside the August date for the field trip. We have not traveled to the southern hills yet on a field trip, and there is a lot to see and discuss.

Paulson: That is an all day trip.

Blair: Yes, we plan to start in Rapid City by 8:00 a.m. and return around 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment:

Chair Blair: If there is no other business to come before the Board, I will ask for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made Everett and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

Next Meeting:

The next NFAB meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 15, 2007. This meeting will be an all day field trip, more information to follow.

Future Meeting Dates:

- September 19, 2007
- October 17, 2007
- November 21, 2007
- December – No Meeting