

Elkhorn Working Group Minutes

September 5, 2013

MACO Building

Members Present:

Dave Brown, Jeff Pallister, Jim Crichton, Ron Marcoux, Brud Smith, Carolyn Lewis, Denise Pengeroth, Josh Pallister, Dave Baum, Jeff Pallister, Tom Williams, Dave Kirsch

Agency Personnel:

Tanya Thrift, BLM; Dave Sabo, B-D NF, Kelly Proffitt, Howard Burt, Justin Gude, MTFWP; Andy Burgoyne, MTDNRC

Guests:

Grant Bronk, PPLT and potential new member EWG; Eric LaPrice, acting district ranger, Townsend Ranger District; Joe Cohenour, potential new member, EWG

1. Introductions:

The above noted guests were introduced. Joe Cohenour gave us a very nicely prepared "Statement of Interest" describing his interest in membership in the EWG.

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the July meeting were reviewed and approved.

3. Financial Report, David Brown:

We have \$746 in the FS Administrative Services Account, \$12,035 in the Forest Foundation Account. \$ 465 was spent on the August field trip.

4. New Business/Guests:

A. Kelly Proffitt and Justin Gude gave the Committee a nice discussion of their views of the "Proposed Elk Study." Justin says that there is considerable support in MTFWP for the project. He suggests that FWP and the other agencies could each supply about 40% of the money for the project and he tentatively offered that on behalf of MTFWP. Justin talked about changes in conifer cover, beetle kill, road access. The collar study could also help to understand apparent changes in elk numbers and locations, and the effect of B licenses. Kelly pointed out that discoveries made would be applicable to other areas.

Denise alluded to the fact that B-D NF, after initially supporting the project, withdrew on the basis that elk can be managed by regulating harvest through access management and types and numbers of elk permits. Of course, the EWG and Monitoring Committee think that the study has a much deeper purpose, that is, to learn more about how habitat changes, including beetle kill, affect herd size and location.

The National Guard has some money that we might be able to use to purchase collars if we can commit more fully to the project within just a few weeks.

Dave Brown discussed the need for the Monitoring Committee to meet soon to start to develop a spread sheet/budget for the project.

B. Josh Pallister created a preliminary Facebook page that we can develop into an information source for the EWG. We can start by putting some of the past newsletters on. The members agreed to ask Josh to go ahead with developing the page.

C. The August Field trip was recounted.

D. Denise mentioned that there is a new 2014 Program of Work for the HNF.

5. Committee Reports:

A. Elkhorn Restoration Committee, Tom Williams: there hadn't been a meeting, so there was nothing new to report.

B. Weed report: there has been some inundate bug releases that look encouraging. Aerial spraying was 800 acres. We saw some nice results of the helicopter spraying near Horse Gulch on the August field trip. Another one hundred acres is to be sprayed.

C. Newsletter; Denise passed out a preliminary newsletter with some tentative writing assignments.

D. Structure Committee; David Brown Several people have shown interest in joining the EWG. We will discuss and vote on new members shortly.

6. Old Business:

A. There is a management hunt under way in the Boulder Valley. Quite a few elk have been taken.

B. Meetings will be every other month; first Thursday. The next meeting is November 7th.

7. Agency Reports:

A. Tanya Thrift, BLM: Iron Mask scoping comments have been received. It is not known when the EA will be released. Tanya was optimistic that BLM would contribute to the proposed elk study.

B. There is nothing new or final on the Limestone Hills Withdrawal.

C. Denise passed out the Decision Memo entitled 1988 Elkhorn Habitat Improvement Project. The 22-page document shows maps, methods, expected results of a treatment plan that would improve habitat over an area of 15,800 acres in the northern portion of the Elkhorn Mountains.

Recorded and written by Jim Crichton

