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Idaho Roadless Commission Meeting  
Boise National Forest, Supervisors Office  
1249 S. Vinnell Way, Suite 200; Boise, ID 83709

May 15-16, 2014

## NOTES

### Thursday, May 15, 2014

**Attendees:** James Caswell, Dale Harris, Scott Stouder, Bill Higgins, Jonathan Oppenheimer, Patty Perry, Robert Cope, Alan Prouty, Rick Johnson, Dan Dinning

**Visitors:** Sam Eaton (Governor Office), Dave Schmid (Northern Region Deputy Regional Forester), Becky Nourse (Intermountain Region Acting Deputy Regional Forester), Fred Noack (Intermountain Region Regional Roadless Coordinator), Eric Call (Congressman Labrador's Office)

### Commission Business

#### Welcome and Introductions

There was a general discussion of member absences and visitors attending today.

We welcome Sam Eaton from the Governor's Office of Species Conservation and thank you for being involved in the meeting today.

## General Updates and Reminders since November Meeting

### Cost Share Agreement Update

We are in the end cycle of our Cost Share Agreement. We need all members to submit any past travel for above noted dates. If you did not file for travel reimbursement, please do so now before the Agreement expires.

Anne Davy, our regular Forest Service representative for Commission Meetings, took a Washington DC Farm Bill Detail and will return for our next meeting. The Commission thanks Fred Noack for his diligence during her absence. When Anne returns, she will begin working on the Cost Share Agreement renewal.

### New Executive Order Update

The old Executive Order expired December 31, 2013. Coincidentally, the Governor signed the Executive Order today. Every gubernatorial election the EO will be reviewed. We aren't sure if we will need to do a new EO next year. If it doesn't take effect this year, it will next year.

It is not difficult to perform an amendment to remove or replace or change members.

## Project Updates and New Projects

### Sawtooth National Forest

*Carol Brown, Environmental Coordinator; and Heidie Torrealday – Forest Geologist/Minerals Program Manager (BSM Barite); via VTC or conference call; Scott Vuono-Fisheries Biologist (Pole Cr Road);*

#### Status Update: Deer Creek Watershed Project

The Decision was issued last summer. Three weeks after, they experienced the Beaver Creek Fire (118,000 acres in 3 weeks) which was a very high intensity fire and the whole drainage experienced subsequent debris and water. This spring, additional rainfall moved more sediment and debris. At this point, no vegetative goals from the analysis will be addressed. The entire area is closed to the public and there will be significant work required to re-open the area this fall.

### Questions & Comments:

- *Must you re-do (since it's burned) this, or is it worth it?* No additional NEPA required. We had several goals including vegetation treatments, which have all been burned. We also had trails and campground goals which we are still attempting to complete. First priority is to clean the area, stabilize the soil.
- *Did structures remain through the fire?* Very few, although some remained intact. The debris flows in the fall took out some buildings, with continuing destruction this spring.

We are actually continuing from last fall, and we will continue. We will try to fit in campgrounds if possible.

### **Update: Salmon River Headwater Road 215 – Replace with a Trail**

Decision issued last September with a lot of supportive comments. Design and engineering is being completed and work will occur in the fall.

### **New Project: BSM Barite Exploration Drilling Project**

This was received August 2013, with a proposal for drill pads and drill holes at the head of Deep Gulch within Copper Creek Basin. This is within the Pioneer Mountain Roadless Area, with existing mining roads from the 1800's.

This includes additional 1,500 feet of two track extensions to accommodate drilling. EA is being performed, and as of last week the proponent pulled back the plan so it can be amended. They plan to return with a Modified Access Plan.

This project is on hold for us.

### **Questions & Comments:**

- *Does this fall under the 1872 Mining Law?* Yes, locatable mineral operations. The mining claims are administered by Dept. of Interior, but FS manages the surface estate and surface disturbance activities.

This is in the General Forest Category of the Idaho Roadless Rule.

- *Did they withdraw the Plan of Operation?* It has not been officially received yet, but we have a verbal notification from the Operator to propose a different access route. Existing roads cross private land and they are proposing access across private and onto BLM and from there on to National Forest. There have been conflicts regarding access, so this will change from them.

- *Would the proposal keep the project within General Forest?* We don't know for certain yet, but any road construction would have to occur within General Forest. We estimate ½ mile of new road construction.
- *The Rule doesn't cover activity under the Mining Law, but we would hope you keep us apprised.*

### **New Project: Pole Creek Road Realignment Project**

This road contributes a lot of sediment, and culvert replacement will assist with fish connectivity.

#### **Forest Plan Special Area**

Themes are all related to eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers. In this case, we have a segment eligible for Wild and Scenic River (W/S) and that is the special area theme. We performed a W/S River evaluation to ensure the river was in compliance. We analyzed what makes the river eligible, did an evaluation against the Roadless characteristics and our analysis shows that removing the road from the creek will improve the W/S qualities.

#### **Questions & Comments:**

- *The re-route is in purple and moves it out of the Special Area?* Moves it out of the creek and up into a drier area, but would then be in the Roadless Area.
- *Current road is a system road?* Yes, and it won't change our system (length) but changes the location. The 704-12 Road would be the only road, we will not leave the old road in place.
- *What is the theme?* Forest Plan Special Area, which is very unusual. The Special Area is the Wild/Scenic Area.
- Road 70190 would be decommissioned.
- *What is the dark area?* Non-Idaho Roadless area.
- *So part will be in Roadless and part in non-IRA?* Yes
- *You already have a system road above it; why does that not fulfill the need?* That 70142 road is not a high clearance road and it would take a lot to bring it up to regulation. Pole Creek is very well traveled road.

- *Can this be a Roadless Area if it contains System Roads?* There isn't a prohibition against roads, although contrary to the area.
- *Reading from the FEIS, it talks about special features in Boulder White Clouds and Trail creek and it says "these creeks are eligible for W/S designation" and it was set as a Special Management Area and I have to assume they lumped all the corridors together to create the area? Pole Creek is eligible for W/S designation.*
- *You mentioned moving it to protect the eligibility?* The primary goal is that this road contributes sediment into the creek and subsequently into the Salmon River. We analyzed the effect of the work.
- *Are there areas existing along the current road which the public uses?* Yes, several dispersed campgrounds in the area. We recently created a trail head and ATV route, and several spots have been closed in the last two years along with the restoration effort. Our moving the road will encourage people to camp away from the creek.
- *Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance – 294.28(f) defers to the Forest Plan and gets away from duplication of counting areas. For example, if you have a W/S in a Roadless, it's a ¼ mile from the creek is where the Roadless Boundary starts. You can do things in the quarter mile that you cannot do outside of it. It's a simplification process to help with counting acres, so they set it aside as a Special Management Area, and they are Roadless Areas with no specific designation. The Rule defers to the Forest Plan in this instance.*
- *The IRA to the north and south on this map, are they the same?* All Boulder White Clouds and the road was most likely cherry-stemmed.
- *Do you think the construction will detract from the W/S categorical proposal?* No, not as we understand it; it's designated as Scenic. The whole reconstruction is still within the W/S corridor, so won't have an effect.

We've completed Scoping and our 30 Day Comment Period, and are working under the Objection Process. We sent a Draft Decision, which was to approve the project, and we are in the 45 day objection period.

- *If this is Special management, those acres do not get counted in Roadless Acres, so the Rule does not apply, so we really don't have to worry about this?* Correct.
- *The EA for this project had no mention of either Roadless or Wild/Scenic, and we recommend you supplement the EA with a discussion of both those subjects. We meant to address that, and it was purely an oversight.*

It's very important to keep up with what's going on. Even though we may not have a real role in the project, it's important, so please continue to bring these projects forward.

## Caribou-Targhee National Forest

*Brent Larson, Forest Supervisor; Bill Stout, Geologist; Robert Mickelsen, Branch Chief; Diane Wheeler, Geologist; via VTC.*

### Update: Husky Mine (Dry Ridge)

We received letter from Governor's Office with approval of the project. General Forest, Rangeland is the theme for the area. The EIS is progressing reasonably, being slightly behind schedule, late 2016 for Draft and Final EA in 2017. Currently working on alternatives to minimize impacts and look at different access routes.

#### Questions & Comments:

- *Part of the issue is the pipeline?* Yes, correct, there is a mapping error associated with the pipeline along the Schmidt Creek Roadless Area. The pipeline previously thought to be outside the Roadless Area is *actually* within the RA. The Forest will conduct a boundary correction, and also change theme to Forest Plan Special Area and managed accordingly.

### Update: Dairy Syncline Mine and Reclamation Plan

The DEIS is scheduled to be released in June 2015 and the FEIS in June 2016, and ROD July 2016. The geochemical analysis process is slow and laborious. This is causing some delay and we don't believe they will be able to release a draft EIS any time soon.

### Update: Gibson Jack Trailhead Relocation

The Commission previously supported modifying the boundary line and moving the trailhead relocation into the Roadless Area. In order to perform the modification, it requires the Chief to publish a Federal Register Notice for a 45 day comment period. We've been working through the Washington Office (WO) to get on track, and Federal Register notice will be published in conjunction with NEPA (early June). This project is continuing to move forward.

#### Questions & Comments:

- *What kind of public response have you had?* Good, favorable response for the users and there have been some concerns expressed with concern to the Municipal Watershed and

moving it up the headwaters. We don't expect a challenge because of Roadless, but we can't guarantee a challenge due to water quality concerns.

### **Update: Smoky Canyon Mine Panel G Modification**

Two additional action alternatives have been added to the analysis, which would decrease the lease modification and disturbance areas slightly but they would remain within the same areas already described in briefings to the Commission, so no change to previous BP's.

The Notice of Availability for the Draft EIS is in the WO for review. This project was Scoped in June 2013, with a few comments suggesting we move the overburden disposal area to a different location. The Draft EIS addresses this.

### **New Project: Bilk Creek Placer Mining Operation**

This is within the Caribou Roadless Area, and like the Sawtooth, the project is within a Special Management Area of our Forest Plan for Historic Significance (old mining projects).

The Proponent would remove material with small excavator, with no new roads. They would excavate a total of 15 acres over a 10 year period. Any logging would be incidental to excavation. They would not be allowed to remove timber without a permit.

We are currently performing an EA, and Scoping Comments are being reviewed and a Decision is expected late this summer.

#### **Questions & Comments:**

- *How close is this to the stream?* Bilk Creek is a tributary from Iowa Creek, and the project area is about 200 feet from the stream. There is an intermittent stream located on the NW boundary of the project area and we are looking at special mitigation measures for operations.
- *What type of mitigation?* The aquatic influence zone for this area is not a fish bearing stream and we may allow operations during particular seasons. Bilk Creek is a fish bearing stream and the aquatic influence zone is 300 feet. There will be mitigation for sedimentation.
- *Has this been reviewed by Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)?* They did not comment when sent a copy of the Scoping Letter. That Scoping Letter also went to the Army Corps of Engineers.

## **New Project: Dry Ridge Exploration**

This is the second of two projects in this area, both phosphate mines.

### **Questions & Comments:**

- *When does your EA start?* The ID Team is being convened, and Field Trips are planned to start this month and wrap up in the late fall/winter. Construction and drilling would start in 2015.

There is a very small portion (100 feet) of road that is just outside the Leased Area, and if/when the project continues there will need to be a Special Permit to cross that area. The disturbance would be within the Roadless Area, General Forest theme.

## **Payette National Forest**

*Patricia Anderson Soucek, Planning Staff Officer; Lisa Klinger, District Ranger; Anthony Botello, District Ranger; Greg Lesch, District Ranger; Holly Hutchinson, Environmental Coordinator; via VTC and in person*

### **Update: Twentymile Trail Relocation**

The Decision Memo was signed on May 13, 2013 and the Decision was appealed. The Decision to implement the project was affirmed by the Appeal Deciding Officer. Implementation began in the fall of 2013. The appeal was specific to the Wilderness characteristics and possible future designation. The final portions of the trail will be moved this summer.

### **Update: Bear Pete Trail Relocation**

The Decision Memo was signed on Dec. 17, 2013 and the appeal period ended March 24, 2014 with no appeals received. The IRC has previously commented that the project is consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule. Implementation is planned for this year.

## **New Project: Jackson Creek Trail Reroute Project**

This project is about 20 miles north of McCall in the French Creek Roadless Area near the Bear Peak. This will move 8 sections of trail. Old sections of trail will be decommissioned. There



were 4 comments received during the Scoping Period and we have moved forward with a Decision Memo (in next couple of months) based on a Categorical Exclusion.

There are no changes to designation or affect to motorized use.

**Questions & Comments:**

- *The bridge that needs rebuilding, will it be addressed?* Jenkins Crossing is outside of the project area and outside the scope of this project. There are plans at the Region to work on that crossing.

**New Project: Cuddy Mountain Repeater Project**

This project would install a repeater and structure to improve communications in the Brownlee/Cuddy Mountain areas. There is currently a “dead zone” in radio communications in this area of the forest, which is a safety risk to Forest personnel who work in this area.

There is a solar panel for power.

This project will not require documentation in a decision memo according to the category.

**Questions & Comments:**

- *How large is the repeater?* Just covers the pad.

**New Project: ID Power Co. Big Bar-Silver King Mine Project**

There are no roads, no timber cutting for this project. This is an underground line, which is a small distribution line and does not require above ground maintenance.

**Questions & Comments:**

- *There is no new ground disturbance?* No, nothing changes; this is just a reissuance of a permit. If they had to change the location or move the line, then it would be different.

**New Project: Lost Creek-Boulder Creek Restoration Project**

This project was developed with Payette Forest Coalition. Rapid River IRA is included in the project. There are a suite of road treatments including decommissioning and storage.

## Questions & Comments:

- *How much public comment did you receive?* Quite a bit and working with the collaborative we received quite a bit. 30+ comments were received from the public, which is less than we expected.
- *You have two trails going from Point A to Point B and you're reducing to one?* Yes, on the recreation map there is a red dotted line, that is the decommissioning – the north side. There will be a new vault restroom proposed for that trailhead.
- *What does decommissioning look like?* It would be decided on the ground. It could be fully obliterated or there could be a gate put up, but either way it will be to reduce impact.
- *Any stored roads?* No, they would come off the system. There are other roads in the project that would be considered stored, but this particular piece will be decommissioned.

## New Project: Big Creek Restoration and Access Management Project

This is an introductory session, just a notice to the Commission, as the project isn't far along. Most miles of this trail will have a proposal. There are several IRA's with Primitive and Backcountry Restoration themes. The roads portion will be decided with the Travel Management Plan (TMP).

Brushing and cutting of trees may be needed in minor amounts to maintain the road over time.

## Questions & Comments:

- *What is the timing with moving ahead?* We are working on a proposal the Collaborative brought forward. 1-3 months depending on how things go.
- *Under the FS definition for what is or isn't road construction, can we clarify whether adding a non-system road to the system – whether that is considered road construction?* Great question - the CFR's don't give us a lot of clarity. This would not be considered construction or new construction under the new CFR.
- *Was this in place prior to the 2011 Rule?* Yes, they are very old and some may pre-date the Forest Service.

- *I think this could be researched a little further. Designation of system roads – we should be sensitive to that.*
- *If I'm reading your map right, the yellow areas are IRA and green is not? Correct. So the road, with all switchbacks, only has one small area that encroaches the Roadless Area? Yes, it was an example to see how it would play out. That scenario would play out over and over again in the area.*
- *For consistency purposes, look at a modification of the boundary to exclude that portion of the road instead of designating a road within the Roadless Area.*
- *Roads within the Roadless Area are not unheard of, but they are not the norm.*
- *What is the purpose of this road? On this particular route, this would be for recreation (trail, OHV) and also be a National Forest System Route for mineral resources on the ridge.*
- *Right now the road is illegal, and you're working to move it as a National Forest System Route if you receive the Plan of Operation? Yes.*

They weren't supposed to have system roads when they were designated, however some did have roads. This particular road has been in the inventory for many years.

- *This is a very steep terrain area, how will increased usage affect that? We are just north of the Idaho Batholith and the soils are more stable. But, yes, they are steep roads and most average 10-15% grade, and several go as high as 25%. In terms of usage, we have light usage in the area. But, any time we add something we need to consider whether we can support the maintenance.*
- *This is in Valley County? Most, but the very northern section is in Idaho County.*
- *Scoping will have multiple examples consistent with the Golden Cup Mine Road? Correct, and we would hope to perform inside the Roadless instead of adjusting the Boundary. We have these inconsistencies all over the Forest, but for now we are looking to manage within the scope of the Idaho Roadless Rule.*
- *If we don't make the boundary correction, can they add it to the system? We have to figure out a way to settle and solve the problem at some point.*

## Salmon-Challis National Forest

*Karryl Krieger, Land Management Planner; Ken Gebhardt, District Ranger; Maggie Seaberg, Timber Management Assistant; Ken Rodgers, Environmental Coordinator; Katie Wood, District Ranger; Piper Goessel, Geologist; and Allan Tschida, ID/WY Lands Zone Team Leader ; via VTC.*

### Update: Upper North Fork Project

We are in the Public Comment Period. Alternatives were developed according to public comments received, and have different road issues.

May 19<sup>th</sup> will conclude Public Comment. There has been a great deal of public interest on closing the roads and are starting to hear comments from conservation concerns and we expect to hear from fisheries groups.

There is support for temporary roads to deal with hazardous fuels accumulation. The Project Team will respond to comments and will publish the FEIS and draft decision in July. We will be in the 30-day Objection Period through and issuing a decision around July 15, 2014.

The Pierce Creek area needs road to prevent helicopter logging which would be prohibitively expensive.

### Update: Thompson Creek Mine Land Exchange

This project has come before the Commission previously. Thompson Creek Mining Co has proposed a land exchange for 2,800 acres surrounding their patented mining claims in exchange for parcels of private property for 526 acres. Most parcels are within Salmon Challis Boundaries and some is within the SNRA.

We are moving forward with discussions and will hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> party NEPA contractor to analyze the proposal.

### Questions & Comments:

- *This is all the same as the original proposal?* No changes in parcels for offer, and no other changes. Lemhi has been on board with asking for this for years.

The project hasn't changed; we anticipate signing the Agreement to Initiate (ATI) very shortly. It's in the Regional Office being reviewed by counsel. We expect it back the first part of June, moving into early appraisals to ensure we find a property needed for a

balanced exchange. Federal lands proposed are quite different than private lands. We want to ensure the right configuration before NEPA. Appraisals will start this summer.

There are a couple of other parcels on Panther Creek and others on Holly Creek and Corral Creek. The Livingston Mine property is there as well.

- *If Lemhi County has heard about this, why would we invest funding in appraisals? We have no authority to involve ourselves. We completed a Feasibility Analysis one year ago, and it appears the exchange met the potential for public interest in getting key riparian areas with fish species. The Agreement to Initiate is a non-binding agreement to proceed with investigations.*
- *Lemhi County continues to lose private ground in our County, and exchanges and purchases continue to reduce that amount and we hate to lose more.*
- *At the same time, there is the BLM piece? Yes, they have released their draft EIS and its out for public comment with comments due June 18<sup>th</sup>. They are completing an exchange (south of forest boundary) and their draft EIS is for land exchange and mine expansion. Broken Wing Ranch is one of the subject properties.*
- *The lack of ability to bond in perpetuity for the discharges coming from the mining site, my understanding is there may be creative opportunities to address the ability to hold the bond to ensure the water treatment occurs. What is the status of those discussions? BLM has worked with the State of Nevada to hold trusts for mining operations and their intent is to do the same thing in Idaho for Thompson Creek if necessary. We listed that as a potential issue as it's come up before and we are tracking it.*

#### **Side Note: East Boulder Placer Project**

For informational purposes, this project was appealed in part due to its impact on Roadless. It was a project occurring west of the town of North Fork.

This will potentially be a new project in the next Commission meeting.

## Boise National Forest

*Randall R. Hayman, Forest Planner/Tribal Liaison; Stephaney Church, Mountain Home District Ranger; and Mary Faurot, Cascade District Ranger; via in person.*

### Update: Big Creek Whitebark Pine Enhancement Project

The Decision was signed last year but it has not been implemented yet. Expect some work in 2014 with most work in 2015.

### Update: Stolle Priority Watershed Reforestation Project

This project is in response to impacts from the Cascade Fire Complex of 2007. We are not seeing the resilience we expected. We are removing incidental trees for helicopter pads for reforestation crews to fly in. Contractors chose to walk them in so we didn't have to do the helipad work. We are also finding the red areas (where we planted), we are starting to see natural regeneration. So rather than further spend funds, we will wait to see. This is very positive.

### Update: Oro Mountain Project

Most of the mechanical thinning is complete and we performed a lot of removal to promote Whitebark Pine by removing smaller diameter trees. From implementation, we are seeing some good results but the response will take time.

### Update: Cache Creek Project

Whitebark Pine Restoration project: small project in Lohman Ranger District. Unlike others, this included some pheromone and other treatments to fend off Bark Beetle. There is more mechanical work to be completed.

### Questions & Comments:

- *Was most reforestation Lodge Pole? Mixed species: pine, fir and I believe natural regeneration occurred with largely Lodge Pole in the upper elevations.*

- *Are there long term monitoring for Whitebark Pine?* Yes, and also we're trying to incorporate the restoration of Whitebark Pine into our Forest Plan which would mean incorporation into our Annual Reports.
- *Were there any activities in the Wildland Recreation area?* No, it was a mapping error.

### **New Project: GRAIP to WINE Project**

GRAIP = Geomorphic Roads Analysis Inventory Process

WINE = Watershed Improvement Network

The roads chosen are contributing the most to sediment into the creek. The GRAIP protocol quantifies, justifies and prioritizes areas for treatment. The GRAIP program looks at roads and drainage points to determine what is causing the most sediment.

#### **Questions & Comments:**

- *How much Rush Skeleton Weed, it loves disturbed ground?* We have it, but not in a blanketing stage, there are pockets of it. We have Spotted Knapweed much worse. Treatments include follow up to ensure weeds don't spread.
- *There is no biological application for Rush Skeleton.*
- *Is there any use of these roads by the public?* No, there is no appearance of use especially as you get further from the road.
- *Are those skid trails?* It's a combination of skid trails and tractor/jammer roads.
- *When people ask about the inventory of roads, you shouldn't include those.*
- *There will still be public access to the area?* Yes.
- *How much of that area will you actually work on?* Key features of concern are the focus, and through that things will get re-vegetated and re-contoured back to a normal hillside.

We lost all the vegetation that was stabilizing the hill (naturally) through the Cascade Complex Fire.

The funding through Nez Perce Tribe will be secured by end of June, with implementation during summer/fall and into next year if necessarily. It's performed through a Cost Share Agreement. The Forest Service donates the project design and engineering and contract administration.

This is Backcountry Restoration, and the Wild and Scenic River corridor is tied to cultural resources and fisheries.

### **New Project: South Fork Boise River Corridor Post-Fire Restoration Project**

We had the Trinity fires in 2012 and the Pony fire 2013, with total of 430+ acres burned. The project area falls within the Elk Fire and the Pony Fire is largely south of the river. All these areas have received emergency stabilization efforts, and there wasn't a lot of funding available to perform remediation. Areas with direct access were considered a public health and safety concern.

Other restoration needs not funded are being looked at now. This is the first of many in this area. The project area focuses on South Fork River and then back, with a 2 mile buffer. Areas chosen were picked for their contribution to wildlife or areas that experienced very high temperatures where no future growth is expected.

Riparian areas focused on Bull Trout habitat and the effort to return shade to creeks. Based on funding, this was our starting point.

Some of the Roadless Areas are Primitive; and they do have some trails in the area.

### **Questions & Comments:**

- *What about grass for competition with Cheatgrass?* Not the perennials we're hoping for. The annual grasses are coming back. The Trinity fire greened up quite well the summer following the fire, but this is different. We are still waiting to see what regenerates naturally.
- *Is there any partnership involvement?* Yes, it was designed around leveraging dollars to take advantage of volunteer efforts by Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and other individuals. This is a very popular fishing spot and we take advantage of the volunteer effort as it builds relationships and accomplishes the work.
- *Did we clean up the reference to Roadless precluding the treatment?* We attended a meeting with agencies, users and focus groups and we made an incorrect statement about not being able to use mechanized equipment in the Roadless Area. We did go back and clarify and follow up. We aren't using mechanized equipment in this area as it would be far too difficult due to terrain.





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## Idaho Roadless Commission Meeting

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## NOTES

Friday, May 16, 2014

**Attendees:** James Caswell, Dale Harris, Scott Stouder, Bill Higgins, Jonathan Oppenheimer, Patty Perry, Robert Cope, Alan Prouty, Rick Johnson, Dan Dinning

**Visitors:** Sam Eaton (Governor Office), Dave Schmid (Northern Region Deputy Regional Forester), Becky Nourse (Intermountain Region Acting Deputy Regional Forester), Fred Noack (Intermountain Region Regional Roadless Coordinator), Eric Call (Congressman Labrador's Office)

### Idaho Panhandle National Forest

*Nancy Kertis, Forest Planner; Karl Dekome, Environmental Coordinator; Lynette Myhre, Planning Staff; via VTC. Shannon DeComey, Wade Sims, District Ranger*

## Update: Simmons Landscape Fuels

A draft decision document is near completion. A final decision is expected in the spring of 2014. 89% of project area falls within Mallard Larkin and Sheep Mountain Roadless Areas, with Special Management Areas along the St. Joe River (Wild and Scenic Rivers). Majority of area burned in 1910 fires and up to 2006 we've suppressed fires.

### Questions & Comments:

- *The Special Management Area is recommended wilderness, will that have any impact?* This is the Wild and Scenic River corridor. The Wildland Recreation Area near Mallard Larkin is the recommended Wilderness. We don't think this will affect the decision.
- *Are there breaks in place, or does this have the potential to crown?* No thinning, yes there is potential for crown fires but that's the intent. Mixed severity will take out some trees and on south facing slopes it would crown out, but that's the intent. An adjacent project has been using this mixed severity fire regime and it is working very well to create a good mosaic across the landscape.
- *How much wildlife restoration has been introduced to this project?* We've rejuvenated the browse for wildlife as there aren't as many openings for wildlife as there were historically. In terms of restoration, that would be the main push.
- *What project was released due to safety concerns?* The Broad Axe Timber Sale.
- *If there will be a Decision shortly, will work occur this summer or fall?* They still have some work to complete on Heller Cascade and it will depend on the burning window. If conditions are good, they will proceed.

## Update: Forest Plan Revision

In Sept 2013 we released the FP and Final EIS, using the Pre-Decisional Review process (Objection Process) and at the end of November we received 22 Objections and 122 Requests to be Interested Person. The Objection Review is 90 days – to March 19. Jim Pena (Associate Deputy Chief of the Forest Service) has been designated as the Reviewing Officer. The review period has been extended due to the number of Objections received. On April 29 we held an Objection Review Meeting.

There were four topics:

1. County Coordination

2. Wild and Scenic Rivers
3. Recommended Wilderness
4. Management Indicator Species (MIS)

There will be a final written response to Objections at the end of May. We are awaiting instruction from the Deciding Officer.

**Questions & Comments:**

- *When will the Forest Plan Revision actually occur and will this address the MIS controversy?* In the Revised Forest Plan we will transition from the MIS to focal species and species of conservation concern and have a new monitoring plan.
- *Any objections with recommended Wilderness and did any areas dovetail with the Roadless Rule?* It was more the non-conforming uses in recommended Wilderness, when in fact some things would be allowed if designation occurred.
- *Will there be a Letter from the Chief's Office?* We are expecting that at the end of May.
- *We discussed how the Plan treated Mallard Larkin – did the northern section return to recommended Wilderness?* Yes, it did.
- *We appreciate the update, thank you.*

**Update:** Buckhorn Burning Project

The Draft Rule with the IPNF corrections and modifications was published in the Federal Register on April 19, 2013 with a 45 day comment period and two comments were received. The Final Rule has been drafted and is in the WO for review. When complete, the Final rule will be published in the Federal Register. The Federal Register notice for the Final Rule is in last stages of NFS clearance – from the Chief's office to the Dept. of Ag.

**Questions & Comments:**

- *This one of our CFLR Projects and we spent a lot of time talking with this Committee and with the Community when developing the project. From our perspective, it was nice to have a project in our area that didn't have any appeals or objections. It would be good for this Committee to hear more.*
- *Be careful with the Aspen trees, because as they set they turn into really good firewood and it can burn much hotter than expected. Thank you.*

## New Project: St. Joe Travel Management Project

Our Travel Management Plan (TMP) does not include winter use, summer only. There was a lot of public involvement to work on the Alternatives.

### Questions & Comments:

- *If this only addresses summer use, will there be a separate winter plan?* It was a management decision to defer a winter use decision until summer use was complete. We want to wrap up summer use and get a Decision issued, then move on to winter use.
- *Why is it hung up – what is the connection with Mallard Larkin?* The piece of the Mallard Larkin has the Copper Ridge Trail in Wildland Recreation and is a good beginner ATV use trail, but it is in Wild Land Recreation so no alternatives included that, but we are considering it. The people really wanted access to that trail. It is not in the Mallard Larkin Pioneer Area, but in the Roadless Area.
- *Is this trail in recommended Wilderness? You would be violating your own rules if you allowed that.* At the start of this, we were working under the 1987 Forest Plan, where motorized use is allowed in recommended Wilderness. The new FP would be recommended Wilderness with a non-conforming use.

Grandmother Mountain has a law attached and we have to follow that. This particular law does not apply to the Copper Ridge Trail.

- *Does the Arkansas Land Exchange give any discretion to the Land Managers, or is it binding?* Until Congress decides what they want to do, we are mandated to manage under the law. There is no discretion allowed to the Land Manager.
- *Is there a Special Management Area (not the Wild/Scenic River) in Alternative B – is any part of that here today? Shoshone and Benewah County Commissioners were concerned about the change of a Special Management Area.* That's the Mallard Larkin Pioneer Area, and this is outside of that area.

## Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

*Rachel Young, Fuels Planner; Timory Peel, Forest Planner; Joe Hudson, District Ranger; Mark Craig, Timber Contracting Officer; Dan Hollenkamp; Jeremy Harris, Recreation Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist; Lois Hill, NEPA Coordinator; Ralph Rau, Deputy Forest Supervisor;*

via in person. Carol Hennessey, Trails Program Leader; Joyce Thompson, Planning Staff Officer; Mike Ward, CFLRP Coordinator; Craig Trulock, District Ranger; via VTC. Rachel Young

### Update: Orogrande Fuels Project

We are still two analyses short to produce the EA and expect to be finished by the end of the month. Roadless Analysis is with the editor and will be returned shortly. We are treating 102 acres in Roadless and 2.4 miles of road will be built. This is right against a community. Roadless Area abuts the Gospel Hump and that was also analyzed.

The comment EA is expected to be released in August 2014. Crooked River Meanders project is within the project area which caused further analysis.

### Questions & Comments:

- *Is the project located entirely within the CPZ? Yes.*
- *When we have a CPZ project, it should be top priority – if the worst happens, we all need to answer to that.*
- Barry Ruklic will be taking over this project.
- *Perhaps we should suggest that the Forest Supervisor move these things along faster, this is a dangerous situation.*

### Action Item: Letter to Forest Service

*We can ask the Deputy Regional Forester to please take note.*

- *This is because there wasn't staff? There wasn't time, and it hadn't been prioritized in the work so the Region had to designate funds for us to go outside and obtain analysis.*

The Maguire Complex came within 1.5 miles and petered out. Rattlesnake came within a mile (2007) and we were lucky the weather changed.

### Update: Forest Plan Revision

Public collaboration has been concluded for now and we are preparing for Proposed Action. The 60 Day Scoping announcement should be out in June/July. The public collaboration will continue next fall for monitoring, alternatives and species. There are no proposed changes for the IRR. We are waiting on Spectrum Runs for expected yields.

## Questions & Comments:

- *There was a letter from the Region sent to Governor on June 18, 2012? Yes, this is an appendix to the IRR portion of the documents. It's very comprehensive and gives the Forest good direction on key points of contention that occurred with language and mapping, as the FPR progressed on the Panhandle. It's well done and helpful to ensure we don't end up in a convoluted conversation that we could have avoided had someone read the letter.*
- The comment period will be 60 days. We are a Wholesale Early Adopter. We will be in Missoula in a couple of weeks.
- *What about non-conforming uses in recommended Wilderness? There were some interested parties in the recommended Wilderness. In the 2006 Proposed Action, there was one proposal relative to Great Burn with no non-conforming uses. Since we re-initiated the public collaboration process, other interests spoke up and wanted over snow motorized use in the Great Burn. Through that process, we identified SMA's within the Great Burn to accommodate that use. However, that's one use and we must analyze several uses and our Proposed Action will identify those as an alternative. There would be three cherry-stems of winter motor use, over snow only. This isn't a preferred alternative or a recommendation, nor is it finalized yet.*
- *Have you consulted with Tribe? We are working on our second liaison with the Tribe and they are working to get their technical group involved. We haven't entered formal consultation yet. Before end of June we should have an ID Team session.*

Fish & Wildlife and NOAA have been involved and the Tribe has worked closely with the plan components. Idaho Fish & Game is also on our ID Team, and the State has sponsored this participation. We are getting letters on Cooperating Agency Status out.

- *I would recommend that you ensure you initiate and offer review with the Tribe before you release anything, as you will show good faith efforts in notifying them. You have a responsibility outside of collaboration to perform this. We were in informal consultation to ensure we met those obligations and ensure you have it on record.*
- *They are also developing a handbook for citizen involvement to help them understand where they can interface with the Forest Service and give input.*
- *In the 2006 Draft Plan Revision, there was a re-inventory of Roadless Areas that were incorporated, has there been any additional inventory (John's Creek and north of Gospel Hump)? We have not done additional inventory and might do so according to Scoping Comments. The basis now is for 2007 and not the interim Directive. If we get Scoping that drives us to review additional Roadless Areas, we will. We don't see anything that has changed to include them now. But, we still need to review comments.*

- *It may be of interest that East Meadow Creek may be recommended Wilderness with additional areas in Cayuse Creek – part of the potential options is Cayuse and West Meadow Creek have low motorized use. East Meadow is already recommended.*

We had conversation, and this area is pretty well aligned with 2006. We will continue to review differences and not until the ROD would we need to address boundary changes.

- *There are boundary variations on Mallard Larkin with various themes. There were recommendations to bring the Wilderness boundaries down to the road. We may see something a couple years down the line to review the boundaries.*
- *Please explain the modification process – prior to implementing new plan – how do they track? What we've said, if there is an Alternative selected that is different, before you can implement (and not implement the ROD or Plan) but before implementing that piece, we would go through Rule Making to align those differences. The Modification and Correction Process was discussed and we will talk more about this. It depends on how you read the rule. Some pieces out of the EIS, the Public Comment and then the Decision was in the Final Rule as to how complicated we need to make some of these corrections/modifications. What's happened is the WO has gone down the road of full-blown Rule Making on everything presented, which is a difficult process to say the least. When you add OMB into the process it becomes very difficult to take something so simple and turn it into a two year process. We're engaging in a conversation now about how to be more efficient or make it easier. There may be a situation where we need Rule Making but a lot of these adjustments and modification, the way the Rule reads is that the Chief can make the decision (through a process) and we don't have to perform full-blown rule making. It should be simple.*

The WO will run this through the Deputy Chief and OGC and perhaps we'll have a conversation that generates a letter from Commission and Governor. We've already set a precedent to run through the full process. For acres that came into Federal Ownership during land exchanges, we made a recommendation on how to process them, but it's been almost two years and we still don't have a final determination on those parcels as far as what they are attached to and it's because of the Rule Making Process.

- ***Action Item: Please send letter to everyone. Please also share the process diagram of the full-blown Review Process.***
- *Knowing when we talked of a project yesterday – what should the recommendation of this group be? We didn't discuss a simpler process. We're on track to have this discussion with the WO. The Chief will have a lot of input. There is only a finite amount of funding and NEPA would be stale and things go awry if you wait for two years to implement.*

## Update: Clear Creek EIS

This is a CFLR Project developed in collaboration with the Clearwater Basin Collaborative. This was presented in Coeur d'Alene last March. Draft EIS was issued in April with 26 comment letters received, and some having substantial input. We were on track to release final EIS in November 2013 and were furloughed. Subsequently, we were sent into consultation for the biological assessment. We have been struggling to get through consultation. NOAA has been asking for more data, which we've provided, but we haven't reached closure. Final EIS will be similar to Draft EIS. For Roadless, the Project Area (44,000 acres) includes Clear Creek RA (Backcountry Restoration) with prescribed burning to occur inside the IRA. No commercial timber harvest proposed and no permanent road building. The FEIS and Draft ROD will be available as soon as possible – hopefully July/August.

This is Level 1 Consultation. We had performed analysis for watershed and fisheries and a biological assessment which tied together. We took that into consultation and they were concerned; they want to be solid in their decision. They are doing NETMAP, which requires a little more work, and they wanted more data. The Tribe has a hatchery at the mouth of the creek which poses concerns. This is part of the consultation process. Most of this has to do with fish spawning habitat and sedimentation. We're performing a lot of road decommissioning, which is long term beneficial, but short term issue. Both Fish & Wildlife and NOAA were dealing with new representatives and new boundaries. We are conducting education along the way.

We've thought about moving to a Level 2, but they suggested that we try to bring them along instead.

This is not a HFRA project, and we have Interface Fuels which is adjacent to this area and it has already been completed.

The project area is 44,000 acres.

### Questions & Comments:

- *Did you receive any comments on the Roadless portion?* More comments about the Road System, which contributes to sediment issues. There weren't a lot of problems with burning in the Roadless. The people that live right next to the area are most concerned.
- *Can part of the issue be attributed to the lack of field data?* We did do a lot, but we focused on the treatment areas. Questions now are flatter reaches of stream outside treatment areas but in project area that we didn't survey. They are asking specifics about regions of streams. NETMAP is supposed to capture those and show where sediment will gather.



- The Objection Process is 45 days, once it's on the street. It is an option to have a Comment Period.

**Sideline question:** How can a forest get down to one biologist? It was just one "wildlife" biologist, there were plenty of fisheries biologists. This is occurring at all levels of the agency and we are working very hard to fill positions.

### **Update: Roadside Hazard Tree Removal**

This resulted from the 2012 fires, and we focused on hazard tree removal. With that we came to three project areas – Little Slate North was an RNA and we dropped that early in the analysis.

Two decisions for this project were issued on June 21, 2013. Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) appealed both decisions on various issues including that the FS failed to consider impacts to grizzly bear. Both decisions were affirmed on Sept. 5, 2013 by the Deputy Regional Forester. On Nov 6, 2013 FOC and Alliance for the Wild Rockies filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) to sue both the USDA-FS and US Fish & Wildlife for the Clearwater Hazard Tree Project (one of two decisions) for violations of the Endangered Species Act. The NOI focused on their interpretation that the agencies "failed to carry out their ESA duties pursuant to the Grizzly Bear."

On Nov 8, 2013 the Forest awarded the Black Sheep timber sale which implements the portion of the project which includes the Little Slate Creek North Roadless area. Harvest began within two weeks of award. Harvest in the Roadless portion is at 80% and should be fully completed by the end of July 2014. The overall sale is approximately 90% complete and is currently shutdown for spring breakup.

On Nov 22, 2013 the Forest awarded the Quagmire timber sale which implements the portion of the project that includes the Dixie Summit-Nut Hill and Gospel Hump/BCR and FPSA. Harvest began on March 15, 2014 and is less than 1% complete.

On March 3, 2014 the Forest awarded the Fern timber sale which implements the portion of the project that includes the North Fork Spruce-White Sands roadless area. No activity has been initiated at this time. This sale would be potentially impacted should a lawsuit be filed pursuant to the NOI.

Things that would cause us to reduce acres at this time would be landslide prone areas, or other areas that may be too wet or are ground-truthed differently.

## Update: Lolo Insect and Disease

Next Wednesday we will conduct a Field Trip to discuss the issues before we issue a Draft EIS so if need be, we can collect specific data. Fish & Game is involved, and we have a North Zone Biologist on a two year contract – he is performing the NEPA analysis with Forest Service knowledge and a wildlife background.

The proposed action includes 340 acres of commercial timber harvest within the IRA (5% of the IRA). Access to the IRA would remain unchanged and no construction, reconstruction or maintenance would occur within the IRA. Project activities are designed to maintain and restore ecosystem composition and function, and would maintain or improve roadless character by maintaining or improving the diversity of native plant and animal communities. This project was presented to Commission in March 2013 and a Field Review in August 2013. The proposed action was scoped in April 2013 and a DEIS is scheduled for release in August 2014. The timeline for Lolo Insect & Disease has been delayed due to additional fisheries consultation needed for the Clear Creek Integrated Restoration Project.

We will have an alternative that drops the IRA completely and drops the National Historic Trails completely, and we will analyze both. The Historic Trail is not overlaid on Roadless. There was good participation by the Commission and Region.

### Questions & Comments:

- *Is there a light at the end of the tunnel on consultations?* Our wildlife program manager spoke to the FLT earlier this week proposing to perform a programmatic biological assessment for species and if she can get the time she can move ahead the smaller projects.
- *It seems we lose a lot of historical knowledge during personnel transition – do you think they could ever overlap transitions so people can train?* That's a challenge. In terms of programmatic changes, I'm hoping to bring that to the Region. We were able to get programs in place and you still end up with inconsistencies, but it much more efficient. It takes a lot of front-end work. But we are working towards consistency.
- *Our problems are not usually with Forest Service, our problem is when NOAA gets involved. We have biologists that come up with incredible theories and then we must work to refute all this.*

## (New) Deadhorse Reroute Project

We have been out with the Nez Perce Tribe, and are conducting the work in house.

## Questions & Comments:

- *How much off-road use occurs here?* There are standard trail dimensions being used. There is a lot of use for hunting and recreation. We did look at hardening crossings, and we did discuss but with bullhead in the creek we don't like to harden off crossings. At the same time, when we have crossings without fish we do like to harden off. We've partnered with others to pay for the project.

## Open Public Forum

### Terminology Associated with Forest Service Roads

*Commission member circulated handout*

36 CFR 212.1 seems to refer to what qualifies and what does not qualify as road construction. We will get some input from legal counsel.

### Farm Bill Landscape Treatment Areas

The Governor submitted 1.75+ million acres of areas that have potential to meet the intent of Farm Bill. The Roadless Commission has been contacted regarding maps, and the Dept. of Lands did a lot of the GIS work while we were developing the Rule so they had a lot of background and information. We may end up with some projects that have work proposed in Back Country Restoration or CPZ areas that may overflow into IRA and would meet the intent of the Rule. We inform you so you will be ready to respond. If we can collect electronically we will, but maps will be distributed and will try to show where we may have projects that come up as a result.

The process by the Chief's Office is that they are very close to approving the recommendations. There will be a call next week with the Regions.

In Idaho, areas were submitted with collaborative input and that designation should be done in the next couple of weeks. Once areas are designated, the Forest can use CE's (under certain conditions) to expedite projects.

The Caribou Targhee had 800,000 acres submitted, which is quite large and overlaps with Roadless considerably. I think it's good that we be engaged early to help avoid overlap. The Panhandle convened a collaborative group to develop criteria first and then look across the forest to contribute to the Five Year Plan, which contributed to the Landscape Treatment Areas.

## **Other Comments and Questions**

There are 46 active projects involving IRA. We don't have any real jurisdiction over mining, etc. but it's amazing to see the activity levels.

Vacant seats will be worked on – we will coordinate with the Governor's Office. We have a vacancy that hasn't been filled and that's the only one that hasn't been filled. We will have another coming up shortly. We've never been able to come up with a wildlife representative.

There is a Field Trip planned for June 18<sup>th</sup> by the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, which touch on Roadless issues – Middle Fork Vegetation Treatment (dropped because of being below 5,000 acres) and the other trip is French Larch Project on July 14<sup>th</sup> adjacent to Big Horn Weitas which will discuss boundaries. Not directly IRA issues, but touch on them.

## **Commission Member Feedback and Critique**

## **ADJOURN**