

**PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY NOTES**  
**Hams Fork Vegetation Restoration Project**  
**August 4, 2011**

**ATTENDEES** (13 non-FS and 7 FS): Mike Hunzie, WWF; Rebekah Fitzgerald, Governor's Office; Ben Wise, WGF; Mark Zornes, WGF; Brook Lee and Dana Stone, Wyoming State Forestry; Jonathan Teichert, Lincoln County Planning; Randy Williams, Teton Conservation District/Biomass Group; Jonathan Ratner, Western Watersheds Project; Jessica Clement, Colorado State University; Jermy Wight and Gordon Tueller, Lander Trail Foundation; Phillip Lockwood, BLM; USFS – Bridger-Teton NF: Tracy Hollingshead, Anita DeLong, Kirk Strom, Ben Banister, Eric Winthers, Aimee Cameron and José Castro; and Facilitator Dave Thom, Western Wyoming RC&D.

**WELCOME/REVIEW PROCESS:** Tracy Hollingshead opened the meeting and thanked participants for attending this important last step in the collaboration process. Facilitator Dave Thom reviewed collaboration process to date. The purpose of this meeting is to seek agreement on a framework for a proposed action.

**PRESENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE PROPOSAL AND DISCUSSION:**

Tracy Hollingshead presented the proposed treatments as agreed at the July 13 meeting. Proposal included Table 1 (3 pp.), Table 2 (3 pp.), Table 3 (1 pp.) and Hams Fork Vegetation Treatment Summary table, and map packet (7 pp.) all dated 8/4/2011. Tracey pointed out that the proposed treatments were developed using the 7/13/2011 public meeting notes and map. The FS planning team reviewed all the comments in preparing the proposal. Prescribed burning areas were reduced from the previous map to better reflect vegetation and habitat conditions. Mechanical vegetation treatment was reduced for travel corridors. Approximately 2,700 acres are yet to be surveyed for lynx habitat. Field crews are working to complete surveys this season.

Questions and points of discussion:

**How long is NEPA decision in effect?** Response: Often is assumed to be 5-10 years for implementation, but actually the decision remains in effect as long as conditions do not change. Decisions are reviewed periodically for currency.

**Prescribed burn implementation?** It is desired to burn most of the acres in a short period of time to avoid an "ice cream" effect of animals being concentrated on small areas of re-sprouting post-burn vegetation. Important to burn quickly before aspen suckering starts after conifer removal. Fire is useful in putting vegetation patches back on the landscape.

**Hazard tree removal?** Preliminary proposal is for hazard tree removal along an estimated 30 miles of roads including acreage in mechanical treatment units. Group desired to retain flexibility to treat more miles if needed while retaining public firewood gathering and biomass options. There is also a Forest-wide hazard tree analysis occurring that will be considered as this project analysis proceeds.

**Firewood?** There are various perspectives on firewood cutter habits. Desire closest, easiest access uphill from roads and often have favorite areas. Logging decks are convenient. No

shortage of firewood across the district (due to beetles). Wood cutters often leave partially felled trees standing that can endanger other forest users. Free-use areas may provide an incentive to clean up specific areas. Do remove biomass, yet leave some decks for firewood.

**Biomass availability?** Group desired to make biomass available where practicable. While doing so consider leaving adequate conifer slash in aspen stands to facilitate proper burning and rapid suckering. Although some reported that successful suckering varies by on site condition.

**Canada lynx?** The group discussed lynx habitat parameters and on-going surveys. The group asked if the total proposed treatment acres would exceed the maximum permissible disturbance under lynx habitat standards. The Forest Service will review this issue.

**Economics?** Group asked about economic feasibility of the proposal. Treatment units will be reviewed further as the analysis proceeds and with additional ground-truthing. The treatments will be packaged to be most cost-effective.

**Whitebark pine?** The whitebark pine in the southeast portion was dropped because of poor access and regeneration progressing in the burned areas.

#### **Inventoried roadless area and road management?**

- ✓ The proposal does not change the existing unroaded character on the eastside of the project area. The west side of the inventoried roadless area is actually roaded and has previous timber harvest areas.
- ✓ Proposed treatments would use existing roads and would create some temporary roads that would be closed by the contractor after vegetation treatments are completed. The public will not be able to use temporary roads. Temporary roads would generally be located on gentle terrain and would be returned to grade.
- ✓ The group discussed the myriad terms applied to road management and agreed to use the term “reclaim” when closing roads.
- ✓ There may be some existing non-system, user developed roads that are causing resource damage that could be reclaimed in this project. State and county representatives wanted to ensure that such proposals be included in NEPA scoping so that the public has an opportunity to comment. It was pointed out that this project is not to be confused with and complicated by a broader Forest-wide travel planning process.
- ✓ Does the existing road density exceed road density provisions in the Forest Plan? The Forest Service will review that question.
- ✓ Need a good inventory of the roads in the project area.

#### **Collaborative Agreement on Framework for Proposed Action**

Dave presented a draft collaborative agreement (dated 8/4/11) based on previously identified values and common themes and the notes from the 7/13/11 meeting. Discussion of the draft agreement follows by item:

- 1) Vegetation treatment. There was a desire that the wording in the agreement state that sufficient conifer slash be retained to facilitate prescribed burning and aspen suckering. Wildlife objectives and aspen management should be higher priority than commercial biomass removal. There was philosophical dissent about the need for and economic viability of many of these treatments.

- 2) Hazard trees. Wording in the agreement should provide maximum flexibility to remove hazard trees along roads without any mileage length limitation. Do provide for public firewood and commercial biomass removal. Resource needs for soils, wildlife and steep slopes would still be considered. The 300' distance either side of roads was questioned, and perhaps should be only a tree length or so that is really the hazardous zone. Response was that 300' was picked to be consistent with dispersed camping provision of the Travel Management Plan. Hazard tree removal will not necessarily be done on a wide scale basis to 300', but will vary by slope, route and recreation site. Group agreed with the adjusted draft wording.
- 3) White bark pine. Wording should indicate that this whitebark pine project would be a "demonstration" of successful techniques applicable to the Kemmerer and other areas.
- 4) Aspen restoration. Group agreed with draft wording.
- 5) Dispersed recreation. Group agreed with draft wording.
- 6) Inventoried roadless area. Group agreed to change wording of road "closure" to "reclaim" and to clarify timing under the contract. A point of dissent was that just because an area has been previously logged does not mean that there would be no effect on roadless character from additional logging.

The group affirmed the draft agreement as noted in discussion above. Group asked that a draft agreement be available for review by all participants. The facilitator will make the wording changes and team leader will distribute the revised draft to all previous participants for review. Comments will be due in one week.

### **Social Science Research – Bridger-Teton National Forest**

Dr. Jessica Clement, Colorado State University, Department of Forest, Range and Watershed Stewardship, presented the results of a survey of values, attitudes and preferences of users on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Presentation and discussion was thought provoking and will be useful in national forest planning and management. The results of her work will be available at: [www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/) Click on [Land and Resources Management](#) and then [Planning](#).

### **Wrap-up and Appreciation**

The process was summarized:

1. 4 meetings and 1 field trip
2. ~36 individuals; 314 person hours
3. New contacts...relationships!
4. Addressed resource needs and social expectations
5. Accomplished a collaboratively developed "proposed action"
6. Forest Service begins "NEPA" process with the proposed action

Tracy thanked the group for their participation throughout the collaborative process. Their contribution of time and knowledge provide substantial support as the process moves forward.

**Recorded by:** Anita DeLong, Team Leader

**Prepared by:** Dave Thom, Facilitator, Western Wyoming Resource Conservation and Development Council