

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY NOTES
HAMS FORK VEGETATION RESTORATION PROJECT
June 23, 2011

ATTENDEES: Kevin Spence, WGFD; Mike Hunzie, Wyoming Wildlife Federation; Jonathan Teichert, Lincoln County Planning; Dan Oles, BLM; Rebekah Fitzgerald, Governor's Office; Wes Miller; Rick Schuler, USFS, Evanston; Brock Lee, Wyo State Forestry; Floyd Roadifer, WGFD; Mark Zornes, WGFD; Ed Boe; Jonathan Ratner, Western Watersheds Project; Kent Connelly, Lincoln County Commission; Randy Williams, Biomass Utilization Group, Teton CD, and Forest Service planning team members.

WELCOME/OPENING REMARKS/REVIEW:

Tracy Hollingshead opened the meeting and thanked participants for their continued involvement. Dave Thom briefly reviewed the HFRA, principles of collaboration, agency decision authority, and the June 1st meeting.

RESOURCES OVERVIEW: Seven of the Hams Fork planning team members presented information on their respective resource areas including possible treatment options. Two (recreation and heritage/visuals) did not speak due to limited time. All presentations are available at: www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf and then click on "Land and Resources Management" then click on "Planning".

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: The 14 participants were divided into 3 small groups that were asked three questions. Their discussion was recorded on flip charts and maps as follows:

Group 1 – Kevin Spence, Mike Hunzie, Dan Oles, Rebekah Fitzgerald, Kent Connally, Mary Cernicek (facilitator), and Kirk Strom/Ben Banister (note keepers).

Question 1 – Issues, values and goals you believe are important?

- Little Indian Creek – Colorado cutthroat and rainbow trout populations present.
- Geology limits the continuity of streams, e.g. Devils Hole Creek and main Hams Fork
- Upper Indian Ridge has important roadless characteristics.
- Look at option to utilize hazard trees.
- Look at continuing aspen regeneration with fire, mechanical or both.
- Look at treating subalpine fir/spruce communities.
- What has caused the tall forb communities to decline?
- Continue to introduce fire – the group specifically asked for stand age data to help them decide where to put Rx burns. The interest was in creating mosaic patterns much like the map shown of the Mexico fire data.
- Make sure hazard tree timber is utilized.

Question 2 – Specific locations or situations that need management action?

- Restoration of tall forb communities for mule deer and protect those areas of the drainage that already have such communities.

- Develop dispersed camp sites (map note specific to Hams Fork/Poison Hollow areas along main road).
- Look at feasibility of heli-logging on east side of Commissary Ridge in the upper end of lodgepole pine stands to limit road building.
- Look at burning white bark pine (map note to do on Commissary Ridge)
- Look at past (1990's era) aspen treatments to see which worked best (Rock and Indian Creeks and West Fork Hams).
- Create a buffer along roads by removing hazard trees (map note specific to Shingle Mill and Sawmill Creek vicinity).

Question 3 – Sensitive locations/ resources

- DFC 2A is located in a good area and was the right decision in the Forest Plan. Don't touch.
- Devils Hole Creek and above the main Hams Fork – genetically pure cutthroat (Colorado)

Group 2 – Floyd Roadifer, Jonathan Teichert, Randy Williams, Ed Boe, Samuel Ainsley (facilitator), and Trevi Robertson (recorder).

Question 1 – Issues, values and goals you believe are important?

- Proactive management to achieve a healthy forest...leads to many other things. Use the right tool in the right place; use all the tools in the toolbox. Mechanical treatment is very manageable.
- Value recreation, wildlife, fisheries and clean water. Concerned about over-grazing. Want to start from the bottom up, i.e. start with treatments at the lower elevations and progress to higher elevations as needed. Maybe consider resting some areas.
- Watersheds and effect on culture and communities. Water supply and quality. Grazing and wildlife. Economic cost of wildfire is a negative impact. Fire is important but use in a smaller scale.
- Vegetation health is the key. Provides for healthy watersheds. Aspen, riparian and tall forb communities are valued and best indicators for overall health. Helps to hold the system together.

Question 2 – Specific locations or situations that need management action?

- Consider resting allotments or taking turns with the BLM (look at area outside of Kemmerer)
- Potential for opening opportunities for forage areas through prescribed burning.
- Monitoring for vegetation? Would this help identify areas we can have projects?
 - Could maybe include this with HFRA
 - Seek grant opportunities.
- Consider forage reserves for vegetation management.
- Look at opportunities to utilize biomass (soil restoration maybe?). Biomass can be done through stewardship contracts...compost can be sold to energy companys.
- Firewood opportunities

- Cord wood has economic value on large scale, but
- Don't want to lose that source for local use.
- Road proliferation...will this happen with these projects?
 - Concern for wildlife, especially open road density. Need to reduce density.
 - Would also add to back country aesthetics.
 - Use existing roads instead of creating new roads.
 - Close roads as finish project.
 - Look at cost/benefit tied to roads, i.e. impacts to recreation uses, fisheries, etc.
- Manage areas where ATV's are used.
 - Currently no ATV trails on the Kemmerer RD. Use the roads that are already there.
 - Would like to see a trail system to connect communities.
- Need an aspen community analysis...use this to help guide treatment plans. Look at highest risk stands. Aspen are a beautiful visual feature that could benefit the economy.
- Intensify the tall forb monitoring/inventory.
- Look at alternatives that use equipment with less impact.
- Provide flexibility in timber contract particularly time of access and over-snow equipment. Look at operating season and timeline.
- Contract out planting white bark pine.
- Consider using funds from stewardship timber contracts to pay for watershed resource projects such as planting.
- Could use Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) as an option for helping to accomplish projects.
- Look at treatments along 300 feet from existing roads.
- Thin merchantable trees on the west side of project area to pay for restoration work.
- Give the roaded areas (west side) to the road hunters.
- Look at road decommissioning on the east side.

Question 3 – Sensitive locations/ resources

- Concerned about fuel build up due to dead trees.
 - Once lose needles fire danger goes down
 - If use right equipment...can be light on the land, re mechanical removal.
- Look at least impact areas...land suitability
- Avoid mechanical treatment in Lake Alice and Commissary Ridge area (has no roads). Prescribed fire would be beneficial in these areas.
- Be sure to address post-burn visual aesthetics.

Group 3 – Mark Zornes, Wes Miller, Brock Lee, Jonathan Rattner, Anita DeLong (facilitator), and Aimee Cameron (recorder).

Question 1 – Issues, values and goals you believe are important? And, specific situations that need to be addressed?

- Hunting/fishing
- Clean water
- Not having big wildfires
- Salvage what we can

- Fire to open up the heavily forested areas, get rid of downed woody debris
- Proper ecosystem function
- Avoid erosion to creeks...need something to deal with erosion. What is FS proposal for soil and water maintenance or improvement, e.g. improving road drainage, closing unused roads? Problem areas: the limestone and Wasatch formations.
- Look at effectiveness of the erosion control work (seeding and gully work) done in the Twin Creek/Red Park/Green Knoll areas as applicable to the Hams Fork area.
- Avoid lots of manipulation.
- Bring ecosystem, economic, social concerns together to be sustainable.
- Need ways to bring disturbance back into the ecosystem both natural (pine beetle, wildfire) and unnatural (prescribed fire and forest management). Current situation caused by fire suppression and climate change. How do we maintain sustainable management?
- Maintain a variety of front and back-country recreation. (80% of people do front country)
- Mimic natural disturbance cycles to restore ecosystem functioning.
- Road system:
 - No new open roads.
 - Security habitat is a function of road density.
 - Need temporary access for fire, etc., but not necessarily roads.
- A common theme is ecosystem functionality and how to get there. We have not been mimicking or allowing natural disturbance.

Specific locations or actions?

1. Dead timber within 100 feet of road (i.e. firewood cutting but don't charge or require a tag; cut and stack the wood and make available for public collection; use stewardship contracting – stack and FS sell)
2. What projects can we do to reduce soil erosion on Limestone and Wasatch formations?
3. Unroaded country should stay unroaded (okay to do project work but keep unroaded, investigate temporary roads). See map for areas of no new roads (Devils Hole Lakes, Commissary Ridge...). This point is important to the entire group.
4. Need fire through Hams Fork.
5. How do we stop the beetle if we clean it up, i.e. what happens to bark beetle after this project addresses the current situation?
6. Treat aspen by mechanical or burning to remove conifers and for successional diversity.
 - Mechanically treat the encroaching conifers
 - Burn aspen to regenerate.
 - Information needed?
 - i. How much conifer in the aspen is dead? If it's already dead then no need for treatment?
 - ii. What is the level of mortality in the lodgepole pine stands?
7. Is there funding for the project?

COMMON THEMES: The groups presented the results of their discussion and identified their main points of agreement. Lack of time limited thorough discussion, so facilitator agreed to compile notes and with the team leader outline some preliminary themes common to the three groups. They are subject to group review and discussion. These notes and the preliminary themes

will be used by the planning team in preparing for the field trip on July 7. Preliminary common themes are:

- A. **Restore ecosystem function** by introducing disturbance to the vegetative communities in Hams Fork.
 - a. Use prescribed fire to stimulate aspen and shrubs and reduce fire hazard in conifers.
 - b. Use mechanical treatments to salvage dead lodgepole pine, thin or regenerate live lodgepole trees and remove conifers from aspen stands.
 - c. Regenerate white bark pine.
 - d. Seek methods to enhance tall forb communities.
- B. **Provide for wildlife diversity** by aspen treatment, creating more forested age class and species diversity, and regenerating white bark pine.
- C. **Consider public safety** by removing hazard trees within road corridors and heavy public use areas.
- D. **Retain unroaded character** of the east side of the project area. In the rest of the project area retain relatively remote recreation setting by decommissioning unneeded roads and using closures on system roads.
- E. **Provide for economic values** by utilizing merchantable timber, providing firewood, investigating biomass, and through more recreation opportunities (aspen enhancement and dispersed and backcountry camping, hiking and hunting)
- F. **Provide for water quality and quantity** by restoring healthy upland vegetative communities, protecting riparian, using best management practices, and repairing soil erosion.

WRAP-UP, NEXT STEPS, SEND-OFF: Tracy thanked participants for their involvement and looks forward to continued collaborative work on the project.

Future meetings:

Thursday, July 7. 9:00am-4:00pm. Field trip to Ham's Fork. Depart from Kemmerer Ranger District office. Review resources and sites of interest, and review initial treatment options. Forest Service staff will be monitoring snow conditions. An invitation letter will be sent.

Wednesday, July 13, 6:00pm at the SLTEC – Treatment options, discussion, feedback, work towards proposed action.

Thursday, August 4, 6:00pm at the SLTEC – Proposal, discussion, finalize the proposed action.

Respectfully submitted:

Dave Thom, Facilitator

(Sponsored by: Western Wyoming Resource Conservation and Development Council)