MONTANA FOREST RESTORATION COUNCIL
LINCOLN RESTORATION COMMITTEE
PO BOX 907
LINCOLN, MONTANA 59639

December 10, 2009

Ms. Amber Kamps, District Ranger
Lincoln Ranger District
Helena National Forest
1569 Highway 200
Lincoln, Montana 59639

Dear Ms. Kamps:

As you know, the Lincoln Restoration Committee (LRC) is a group of private citizens reflecting diverse community interests. We formed in the fall of 2008 with the purpose of developing recommendations for restoration projects on the Lincoln District of the Helena National Forest. The work of our group is supported by the Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC), which in 2007 adopted 13 restoration principles for on-the-ground use. The LRC's monthly meetings have been devoted to assessing where and how these principles might be applied in ways that are beneficial to the Lincoln community, the broader public, and the health of the land.

Enclosed as an attachment is an overview of our second consensus-based project recommendation for your consideration. The focus is on the Beaver Creek to Stonewall Creek area, site of significant past activities such as mining, logging, and fire suppression. As you know, this area also has a direct interface with the Wildland Urban Interface surrounding the community of Lincoln and other private residences in the area.

In our view the Beaver Creek to Stonewall Creek area shown on the attached map offers significant opportunities for restoration work impacting Ponderosa pine, aspen, various water courses, as well as, and separately, fuels thinning in the Wildland Urban Interface. We also strongly encourage the Forest Service to incorporate fish and wildlife habitat restoration as well as aquatic restoration in the project to further enhance the restoration benefits.

The Lincoln Restoration Committee requests that you advance a forest restoration project in the Beaver Creek to Stonewall Creek with the goal of achieving all of the following objectives, consistent with the Montana Forest Restoration Principles:

- Restore functioning ecosystems by enhancing ecological processes;
- Apply an adaptive management approach;
- Use the appropriate scale of integrated analysis to prioritize and design

restoration activities;
- Monitor restoration outcomes;
- Reestablish fire as a natural process on the landscape;
- Consider social constraints and seek public support for reintroducing fire on the landscape;
- Engage community and interested parties in the restoration process;
- Improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat and connectivity;
- Emphasize ecosystem goods & services and sustainable land management;
- Integrate restoration with socioeconomic well-being;
- Enhance education and recreation activities to build support for restoration;
- Protect and improve overall watershed health, including stream health, soil quality and function and riparian function; and
- Establish and maintain a safe road and trail system that is ecologically sustainable.

We accordingly request that you review our project summary in relation to the Montana Forest Restoration Principles and all legal and regulatory requirements including the National Environmental Policy Act and National Forest Management Act. If the Project meets NEPA and NFMA standards, we request you solicit public comment concerning our recommended Project.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for the technical support you and your staff have provided during our efforts in developing this Project.

Sincerely,
LRC Co-chairs

KD Feeback

Paul Roos

c: LRC members, MFRC Steering Committee

Attachment

December 10, 2009

LINCOLN RESTORATION COMMITTEE

PROJECT 2 SUMMARY

Introduction

This memo references the attached Forest Service map of the Beaver Creek to Stonewall Creek sites visited during the November 2009 field trip and is based on information verbally communicated during and after that field trip.

Background

At the October 8, 2009 meeting, Scott Brennan presented The Wilderness Society's recommended approach for moving forward with additional projects, based on criteria previously endorsed by the LRC and using information provided by the Forest Service. The LRC endorsed the concept and agreed to conduct a field trip at the recommended Park Creek site to assess conditions and potential restoration prescriptions.

A field trip was scheduled, then postponed. At the regularly-scheduled November 12 meeting LRC members, in addition the TWS forest ecologist (non-voting), visited the site and discussed conditions and prescriptions for Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir restoration. On return from the field trip, the members present reviewed a Forest Service map of the areas visited, and voted that the following areas be designated as Project 2: blue shaded areas marked 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 72 and 75 (shown on the StoneDry Working DRAFT Map dated November 10, 2009 attached hereto).

Project Recommendations

Restoration goals and site-specific prescriptions were discussed in the field, with the agreed-on overall restoration goals being to restore Ponderosa pine forests with a multi-age/story vegetation condition allowing for pockets of open areas to regenerate Ponderosa pine and areas of dense pockets featuring ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. This would restore the site back to historic structures and include applying prescribed fire. In addition there are areas within these blue shaded areas that are 30 year old ponderosa pine plantations where the group agreed there is a need for pre-commercial thinning followed by a low intensity prescribed fire.

For Area 46 (which was the first stop on the field trip), the group felt that restoration of Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir was appropriate as described for the areas above (this specific site may not have been included in The Wilderness Society's presentation). Area 46 has a higher percentage of ponderosa pine component and larger diameter Ponderosa pine than areas 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 72 and 75. It also has a large diameter Douglas-fir component which all agreed should be enhanced/featured with the restoration treatments/goals.

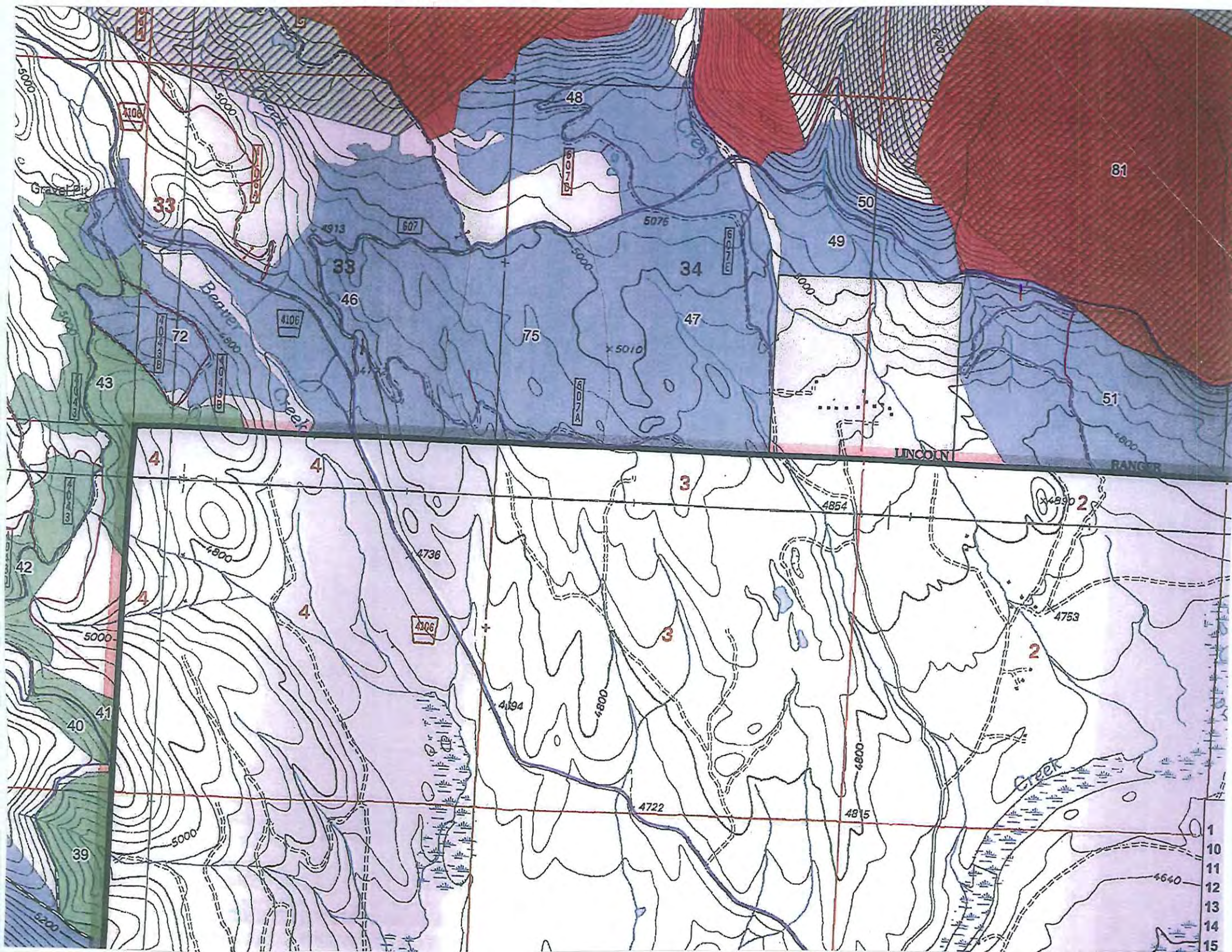
The Forest Service recommends, and the LRC agrees, that the Project One language for Site A, slightly modified, is appropriate for all areas listed above: "Habitat types vary throughout, with the drier sites on west and southern aspects supporting or historically supporting ponderosa pine and in some cases, more open park-like structures and grassy understories. There are more moist sites still within the low intensity fire regime where Douglas-fir and Lodgepole pine are present along with the Ponderosa pine which would also be restored. The treatment would include the reintroduction of fire through prescribed fire. Treatments would be applied as an approach to treat the landscape; restore the natural condition; and place the ecosystem on a more natural trajectory by developing a diverse mix of vegetative composition, structure, form and function."

After the group's decision regarding the above sites, it was proposed to include the green-shaded area 43. This area has a higher component of Lodgepole pine, yet still a low severity fire regime with habitat types supporting or historically supporting Ponderosa pine. It was suggested that it, too, was similar to Site A in Project One, in condition and proposed prescription.

The LRC respectfully requests that the Forest Service includes the green site #43 be included in the project area. The Forest Service feels, and the LRC agrees, that the Project One Site A language is appropriate to this area: "Habitat types vary lending it to a more moist site and habitat type where Douglas-fir and Lodgepole pine are present, however with Ponderosa pine and aspen to be featured and restored. During treatment design and development of silvicultural prescriptions, site-specific habitat typing would determine where fuels reduction would be done and where restoration would be applied. Both would include the reintroduction of fire through prescribed fire. Together this integration of goals and treatments would be applied as an approach to treat the landscape; restore the natural condition; and place the ecosystem on a more natural trajectory by developing a diverse mix of vegetative composition, structure, form and function."

Project Monitoring

The LRC also requests that the Forest Service and LRC jointly develop and implement pre and post-treatment monitoring protocols to ensure we are able to measure the success and efficacy of the proposed treatments. It is the committee's view that pre- and post-treatment monitoring are not only important to quantify success, but that they present opportunities to learn how ecosystems respond to various treatments and whether these responses depend upon gradients of moisture, species composition, pre-treatment structure, etc. This approach to monitoring is consistent with the application of adaptive management outlined in the 13 MRFC principles (Principle Number 2 on page 2 in "Restoring Montana's National Forest Lands").



Gravel Pit
Beaver Creek
Creek
LINCOLN
RANGER
33
34
4
3
2
48
50
49
51
81
46
47
75
72
43
42
41
40
39
4106
607
607A
607B
607E
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