

# BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST NATIONAL FOREST ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY OF MEETING

May 21, 2025

The Black Hills National Forest (BKNF) National Forest Advisory Board was convened at 1:00 P.M. on May 21, 2025, at the Mystic Ranger District, Rapid City, South Dakota. Shawn Cochran, BKNF Forest Supervisor, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) presided.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public from 1:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

## Board members present:

Sarah Anderson  
Travis Bies  
Debra Black  
Ty Brown  
Wayne Bunge  
Jeremy Dedic

Michael Golliher  
Scott Guffey  
Brian Mueller  
Marcus Warnke  
Rachel Nelson

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Board members absent themselves from the discussion and vote when the Board discusses applications from their respective institutions or in which a conflict of interest may occur. Members are asked to sign a statement to this effect. This does not apply to "en bloc" actions.

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## Staff of the USDA, Forest Service and the Black Hills NF present:

Shawn Cochran, Forest Supervisor \*  
Ralph Adam, Physical Resources Staff Officer  
Matt Daily, Natural Resources Staff Officer  
Jason Virtue, Fire Staff Officer  
Todd Butler, Hell Canyon District Ranger  
Patrick Champa, Bearlodge District Ranger  
James Gubbels, Mystic District Ranger  
Lou Conroy, Forest Plan Revision Lead  
Brad Block, Recreation Program Manager  
Jeff Burdine, OHV Program Manager

Joanna Wilson, FS WO Rec Program Manager  
Sam Snider, FS WO Rec Program Specialist  
Allison Remley, FS WO Rec Fee Program Manager  
Todd Harbin, FS WO Assistant Rec Fee Program Manager  
Nicole Hill, R2 Recreation Planner  
Elysia Retzlaff, R2 Environmental Coordinator  
Toby Aberle, North Zone Engineering  
Krista Landreneau, Executive Assistant \*\*

\* Designated Forest Officer (DFO)

\*\* Acting Committee Coordinator

**Congressional Staff present:**

Kylie Anderson (Senator John Barrasso – R, Wyoming)  
Rosalee Swiger (Senator John Barrasso – R, Wyoming)  
Ally Garner (Senator Cynthia Lummis – R, Wyoming)

**Others present for all, or a portion of the meeting:**

Darren Clabo, State Fire Meteorologist	Colin Paterson
Jay Wickham, SD State Fire	Mary Zimmermann (Norbeck Society)
David Hague	Michelle Thompson (BH & Badlands)
Patty Brown	Jim & Alice Allen (BHBCCHA)
Sam Griner	Gary Schmidt
Donald McLerner	Jay Wickham
Mitch Iverson	Kendal Custer
Ben Wudtke (BHFPA)	Beth Burkhart
Dan Bailey	

**Welcome; Review and Approve Agenda; Review/Certify Previous Meeting Summary; Housekeeping; Comments from the Chair; Meeting Protocols**

Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Shawn Cochran called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m. He gave a brief welcome to the members of the Board. Quorum was established with 11 of 15 Board members present.

Vice-Chairperson Travis Bies asked the Board if they had any updates/corrections to the minutes from last month. None presented and will certify the Summary of Meeting

Vice-Chairperson Travis Bies presented overview of the agenda.

Vice-Chairperson Travis Bies presented general housekeeping information and protocols.

**Hot Topics**

Legislative Updates – Federal

Ally Garner,

- Co-signed letter to GAO to determine Buffalo Resource Mgmt rule (overturning)
- Signed onto Sen Danes Grizzly Letter (review population data and confirm recovery to de-list)
- Introduced Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Protection Act – clarifying Fed Water Pollution Act does not require obtaining a permit for aerial retardant discharge

Kylie Anderson

- Would like to introduce the new staff member, Rosalee Swiger
- She took over for Brianna Kelly and will represent Crook County, WY.

### Legislative Updates – State

#### SD - Marcus Warnke:

- Not much going on with Forestry currently.
- Keeping SD Congressional delegation up to date.
- Recent passing and feedback of Explore Act and Fix Our Forests Act.

#### WY - Jeremy Dedic:

- Legislators' meeting in committee and conducting evaluation of the GNA program and the Roadless Issues.
- Passed funding for the wildland firefighting.

### Forest Service Hot Topics – DFO Shawn Cochran

#### DFO Shawn Cochran covered Hot Topics.

- GNA Programs for states SD and WY:
  - SD agreement has been amended to allow for state timber sales – 2-3 sales are in preparation for FY25.
  - WY side - WY taking on more active role prepping timber sales.
- LIDAR:
  - Very close to the release of Phase 2 deliverables (at the Regional Office and being converted to raster file format).
    - Hope to get dates soon.
  - Phase 3 will take longer (10TB database that needs to be processed).
    - Currently looking at Nov-Dec timeframe.
    - Surface feature data will potentially be redacted to protect tribal heritage concerns.
- Timber Update:
  - 10-year interim timber strategy across the Black Hills.
    - Strike Team working with internal and external participants (purchasers, State Foresters, NGOs).
  - In FY 2025, ~70K CCF available that does not depend upon additional funding.
    - FWS consultations complete and putting together contracts.
  - Another 20K-25K CCF associated with steep slopes – only a small percentage of funding is available.
  - Most sales in SD are stewardship; WY is both sales and stewardship.
- Forest Staff Updates:
  - Delayed Resignation Program (DRP) – tomorrow is last day for the employees to finalize resignations.
  - Critical positions are the priorities – we will try to fill with lateral reassignments if given the opportunity.
  - Agency is restructuring so there will be changes.

## REGULAR AGENDA

### Recreation Fee Proposal (Bradley Block):

< [2024 Recreation Fee Proposal Recap Presentation](#) >

#### Discussion occurred covering the following topics:

- Concerns expressed about rental companies not paying into the system (OHV non-profit events are charged a 2% fee; the \$10 daily OHV fee is passed onto the renters). There is no guarantee the ATVs are being used on the Forest Service Trails – this is determined by the renter, not the company.
- Concerns expressed about where the permit fees are being applied and perception of a lack of transparency. The amount of revenue generated from the fees is not enough to cover the costs associated with the program (equipment and staffing). Volunteers are often sought for projects – the fee increase will allow training for sawyers (both crosscut and chain saw), First Aid/CPR, and other training for volunteers. Program maintenance backlogs exist, and the additional fees would help offset them.
- The permit price helps pay the salaries of motorized trail staff (all staff time whether in the field or office) in the State of South Dakota. When staff go to WY and work on those projects, they use the WY grant funding to pay for salaries.
- The current FRM stickers are not valid during the shoulder season (prior to mid-May or after September 30<sup>th</sup>). For all sites during the shoulder season: If there are not **all** the required amenities, there will not be a fee charged. As a transition, any day use fees would not be implemented until 2026.
- Concerns expressed that this is a local use tax which will drive down usage and crowd the sides of the roads rather than vehicles in the parking areas. Clarified that the Interagency Pass will work at all Day Use and Developed Rec areas in the off season. Reiterated that this may impact local people disproportionately than tourists (only here for a couple days).
- The implementation would be different than state fees. State fees are supplemented through gas taxes – federal fees cannot legally do it that way. Other federal permit systems and how they were implemented were used as a template for this proposal. As this is Federal land, we cannot differentiate between where someone lives (public land is owned by all) to determine the rate. If they are state permits (like WY), this could be regulated. There is potential in the future, but no mechanism yet at the federal level.
- Concessionaire selection will not occur until after the application period closes in September 2025. Any negotiations pertaining to a single pass (honored by both the concessionaire and the FS in the off season) cannot start until we know who is awarded the contract.

- The Forest does not see any of the funds associated with the current FRM pass. This day use request would bring the funds back to the Forest to help offset the maintenance costs associated during the times Forest Service staff are responsible for maintaining the areas. Under this permit system, approximately 80% of the funding would come back to the Forest with the remaining going to the Washington and Regional offices.
- Concerns expressed regarding the forest's reduction in capacity (limited staff). Many sites are used in the off season (toilet paper, pumping, etc.). The revenue would support this maintenance, so services can be provided. This is a proactive step allowing for future ability to implement these fees (once all the amenities are in place). This gives us the option to implement in the future without starting the process from scratch.
- If the Forest Service creates their own pass at this juncture, the concessionaire is not required to honor it thus we did not go down the path of the forest pass. There may be another proposal in 2026 (with another public comment period) that would have a Forest Pass serving like the FRM Pass, but that will not be known until there is a concessionaire that can be negotiated with.
- Projected revenue breakouts included in the packets. All incoming funds go into a collective pot for the Recreation Program.
- The current mechanism to pay the fees is an envelope to collect cash or check. Rec.gov is working to develop QR codes to pay (download app and payment will go through once back in cell range).
- Procedural process for the Board Recommendation explained. The Board can vote to accept the entire proposal as presented (with all associated fee adjustments), deny the entire proposal as presented, or can break out and approve/object/recommend items individually. This is the final step to implement therefore a recommendation is needed at this meeting. If the proposal as a whole, or parts, are not approved, the process is halted and would need to start from scratch.

Ty Brown made the motion to support the increase of the \$50 Trail Permit Fees; seconded by Marcus Warnke.

Ty Brown amended the motion to support the full proposal, except for the day use fees; seconded by Marcus Warnke.

Motion Discussion:

- Centered on the one-day OHV permit aspect: Anyone, not just the rental companies, can purchase the one-day permit. The rental companies act as a

vendor and then sell them to the people renting the OHV (there is no process to pass the charges onto the vendors). Oversight is conducted by the Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs), Forest Protection Officers (FPOs), and Trail Rangers. The FS trail crew is currently at six Trail Rangers; the crew has never been at full capacity. Each rental company is a vendor; the FS follows up with the company after they sign it to enforce the program. If someone is found abusing the system, the vendor contract will be terminated, and they will not be able to use the trail system.

- With the increasing focus on recreation, we need to understand that usage may increase dramatically, and we need to recognize that we need to be fiscally sound and make sure the funding is available to maintain these sites and the recreation program.

Travis Bies called a vote on the motion to accept package with the exception of the day use fees. Motion carried unanimously

### **2025 Fire Season Outlook (Darren Clabo, Jay Wickam, Jason Virtue):**

Darren Clabo (South Dakota Fire Meteorologist):

- Moisture in May helps set things back four weeks. Sunday-Monday expecting another 1-3 inches of precipitation.
- Looking at a hotter and drier than average summer across the nation.
  - Impacts local resource availability.
  - Continues out to October or beyond.
- Last year was one of the busiest seasons ever – expecting similar this year.
- Jul and August – when did we receive precipitation (every 1-2 weeks good; longer between events bad.)
- Coming out of La Nina (similar to 2006/2017). 2006 one of the busiest in SD, 2017 Legion Lake.
- Good shape right now and resources on site with solid leadership.

Jay Wickam (State of South Dakota):

- Resources available.
  - Staffing Monday-Friday – moving to seven-day staffing.
  - 20-person handcrew in Rapid City and 15-person module.
  - Drones (with ignitions capability) moving into a module once certified.
  - Air Tankers usually brought in second week of June (in Hot Springs with space in Spearfish and Pierre)
  - 2 engines and 6 people provided to Counties for no fee (dozers type 2 and type 4 will come with a fee).

Jason Virtue (BKNF):

< [2025 Fire Season Preparedness](#) >

- Tools:
  - Local crews in Minnesota.
  - 10-person module.

- Hot Shot crews go where they are needed (PL4 and PL5).
- Qualified Air Attack uses state resources as needed and the SD ANG.
- Great Plains Dispatch – the control piece that we are fortunate to have as a resource.
- Must have a safe and effective initial attack.
- Expecting to get busy with how quickly the Black Hills dries out.
- Aviation resources are obligated through the end of September, but there is the option to extend the resources. The resources will be kept as long as they are needed.

Jeremy Dedic (State of WY):

- WY came off its biggest fire year in history.
- Legislature has fully funded in WY with 4 SEATs and 2 helicopters coming on in June.
- Type 2 smoke buster crew (25 people) in Newcastle (fully staffed since COVID).
- Seeking trainers for fire response (Title 4 position) – interviews starting soon.
- Working with Rural Firefighter Association on EFSA rules for suppression account.
- Master COOP update kicking off tomorrow.
- Type 4 dozer in Newcastle.
- Hope it keeps raining.

### **BKNF Forest Plan Revision Update (Lou Conroy):**

Shifting around capacity and incorporating additional products. Here to provide update as to where FPR stands before moving forward.

- Recreation Opportunities Spectrum (zoning plan for recreation on the forest).
- Natural Range of Variation modeling (projection of how conditions have changed throughout history).
- Wilderness Evaluation Process.
  - Getting to point of putting together working groups with cooperators.
- Identifying areas suitable or not suitable for timber production.
- Working to not get ahead of the LiDAR information that will be released towards the end of the year.
- Front loading as much as we can prior to publishing the Notice of Intent (NOI) – once it is published, the 2-year clock starts.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The following members of the public submitted requests to make public comments:

Patty Brown: The Off Road Riders are in favor of increasing OHV annual fees. There has been no reason shown that this needs to be done. Still not sure where the money has been spent and the raising of the fees will not solve a single complaint (dust, over

usage, etc.). The complaints are road problems, not trail problems – the trail riders want the big mud puddles fixed on the trails. How is this coming back to the trail riders having to pay for? Where is a report on what is being done with the funds? The trail riders don't believe all these fees should be going into the same pot as the campgrounds, etc. – this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and there should be a way to separate them out. The fees on the OHVs keep everyone coming back to these meetings. Requesting that the Forest Service do better on transparency, public service, and public outreach.

Vice-Chairperson Travis Bies thanked Patty Brown for her comments. He requested the board to consider and put forward any topics they would like addressed on the agenda. Members of the public were told to get with their interest group representative to pass ideas up. Items initially suggested were:

- What is the direction of the forest program with our logging greatly reduced, how are we going to manage the amount of timber in the hills – will we be doing more thinning?
- There has not been an analysis of the grasses for permittees in a long time – would like to see that done not only for grazing, but for wildlife.
- Have the forest and partners give an update on the forest and timber – with the decrease in the timber harvest, how to take care of the fuels on the ground? What collaborative efforts are being made?
- Requesting if the Forest Service would consider using a special use permits with the State of South Dakota to take over managing Camp Bob Marshall and Bismarck Lake if the State has the ability, resources, and interest to take over the facility and manage it.

Regarding the Federal Register notice, the agenda sent in is a list of the main topics included on the regular agenda. Please submit any ideas for our next meeting.

This Forest is unique with the NFAB, it is the only one in the Forest Service across the entire country. Most other Forests have collaborative groups (formal or informal) that have discussions similar to what we have today. These provide good feedback on all programs on all issues arising.

**DISCUSSION OF NEXT MEETING**

Next NFAB Board Meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2025, at the Mystic Ranger District office in Rapid City, SD.

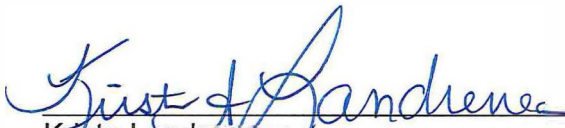
Vice-Chairperson Travis Bies requested a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn made by Scott Guffey; Seconded by Jeremy Dedic. Unanimous consent to adjourn.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:16 P.M.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

 \_\_\_\_\_ July 14, 2025  
Krista Landreneau  
Executive Assistant  
Black Hills National Forest

 \_\_\_\_\_ July 14, 2025  
Rachel Nelson  
Chairperson  
Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board

These minutes will be formally considered by the Board at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.