LaVA Cooperating Agency Meeting
September 13, 2017
0930 - 1530
Laramie, WY – 2468 Jackson Street
Upstairs Conference Room

Attendees: Paula Guenther (FS), Melissa Martin (FS), Martin Curry (Laramie Rivers Conservation District), Tony Hoch (Laramie Rivers Conservation District), Ryan Anderson (WGFD), Sandy Henning (FS - Capitol City Coordinator), Carson Engelskirger (WY State Forestry), Mark Westfall (FS), Mark Conrad (WGFD), Leanne Correll (SERCD), Tim Douville (FS), Michael Salazar (FS), Amelia Rothleutner (FS), Jessica Crowder (Governor's Office), Mike Alpe (FS), Frank Romero (FS), Liz D'Arcy (FS)

Conference Call: Lisa Solberg-Schwab (FWS)

ACTION ITEMS:

- **Decide on October 11th field trip agenda** – BCH staff and Melissa coordinated about the field trip on Monday, September 18, 2017. Field trip stop ideas include: WUI areas; projects in or adjacent to inventoried roadless areas; aspen regeneration; wildlife habitat improvements; percent canopy change – <50% mortality v. 30 – 49% mortality; and active v. obliterated temporary roads. ***Cooperators have until Wednesday, September 20th to send in additional ideas.***
- **Invite EPA to October 11th field trip. Invite them to be a Cooperating Agency for the LaVA Project.** Melissa left voice mails for Philip Strobel and Matt Hubner on September 18, 2017.
- **Determine if a second action alternative is warranted**, based on agency and internal concerns. The LaVA Steering Group will discuss this topic at their next meeting (either Sept. 20 or Sept. 25).
- **Decide on new name for Accounting Units** – Melissa is suggesting 'Restoration Units (RUs).' Thoughts??
- **Incorporate 'vegetative planting' into EIS.** The FS is reviewing this suggestion to determine if 'planting' needs to be captured and defined as part of the Proposed Action.
- **Determine length of time temporary roads will be open.** This could either be a design criterion or we could incorporate language from standard timber contracts.
- **Determine implementation schedule.** We will be asking for Cooperating Agency participation for this task, when the time is ripe.
- **Incorporate suggested changes to Implementation checklist**. Some examples include: adding an additional field to capture multiple project benefits; adding a y/n field for if a project is in roadless; adding a y/n field to capture if the project is affecting mapped and inventoried old growth, and so on.
- **Create a project update 'bulletin' that is published on a regular basis**. Melissa and Aaron Voos will work on this the week of September 18th.

MEETING DECISIONS:

- **Discuss holding an additional public meeting prior to the release of the draft environmental impact statement.** This could either be another 'open house' style meeting in line with other

scoping efforts OR it could be a 'pre-release DEIS' meeting wherein we could provide analysis highlights and answer questions about the process. *This topic will be discussed with the FS's Steering Group on Sept. 20th or 25th.*

- **The Proposed Action has been modified to remove System road construction**. Road reconstruction will be authorized only if reconstruction activities do not increase the road's RMO (road management objective).

INTRODUCTION/ OPEN HOUSE MEETING-AFTER ACTION REVIEW

Open House Meetings:

- Timing of meetings could be improved to increase attendance. Summer meetings may have lower attendance because people have other priorities. Winter may be a better time to address the public and get feedback. We are expecting a summary of the petition that is currently circulating around the project. We will be discussing ways to augment our public outreach efforts before release of the DEIS. Primary public concerns are the level of temporary roads, the amount of roadless acreage in treatment areas, and the lack of site-specificity (i.e., the scope and scale of the project would lead one to believe that a programmatic EIS v. a site-specific EIS is being prepared).

Improving future public engagement efforts:

- Pay for advertisements in the newspaper three weeks in advance and again one week before the meeting. Advertise the project objectives online. Wyoming Outdoor Council has agreed to provide a link to Forest Service Website on their website along with a brief introduction (pre-approved by Forest Service) to the project. Wyoming State Forestry and SERCD mentioned that this could be an option on their websites as well.
- *More public education on the objectives of the project is needed*. Maps for the public could be improved by adding more landmarks and inset maps for orienting public. Clarified messaging about how total treatable acreages is very different from the actual number of acres that will be treated. Restructure meetings to discuss what each project would look like, and how they achieve objectives and illustrate what our priorities are. Additional outreach opportunities include posting project updates and using targeted releases of information to both clarify project goals and correct the misinformation that is currently circulating.

Future public meetings:

- There will be additional public meetings for the release of the EIS; we should focus our energy on improving public outreach efforts as we move forward, not on moving backwards.
- A project update bulletin should be created and published bi-monthly. Need to keep public informed and educated about the project objectives to counter the negative press about the project. Information presented should be scientifically sound for a forest wide project.

Scoping Overview:

We received 58 comment letters during the scoping process. We mailed 1,200 postcards and published an NOI in the federal register. Scoping open house meetings were also advertised on twitter and

through periodic news releases. Other information about the scoping process was publically available online on our project web page.

LaVA Scoping Content Analysis Synopsis:

WildEarth Guardians commented that the LaVA project must evaluate Subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule due to the inclusion of system roads. Response: We have removed construction of system roads and road reconstruction that would elevate the road's RMO from the Proposed Action. This modification does not completely remove the option of a system road. New system roads can be covered with a more site-specific, future EA if improvements to system roads are deemed necessary. Establish a standardized toolbox of effective road decommissioning strategies. Examine what temporary roads will look like in the future.

Several people commented about the programmatic nature of the project. Response: More site specificity will be accomplished by using existing accounting units (but renaming them to have a more appropriate neutral terminology). Additional specific details for each project will be accomplished with the Project Implementation Checklist.

Others commented that we need to develop an Implementation Plan and an Adaptive Management Framework: Response: We recognize the importance of these documents and will be working to prepare them. We need to determine how the public and out stakeholders will be involved during implementation; we also need to take a closer look at our cooperating agency priorities.

Still others made suggestions for additional action alternatives. Suggestions included: using the existing road system where possible to reduce temporary roads and not entering roadless or unroaded areas..

Other suggestions included adding more specificity to the Proposed Action; identifying holes in our analysis team; and suggestions for addressing air quality and climate change.

ACCOUNTING UNITS:

Need to come up with a different name for the accounting units that will be used to subdivide the project. Need to keep phrasing so that it does not sound restrictive and also use a neutral terminology. We also need to be clear that the accounting units are only for analysis and description and do not confine the boundaries of individual treatments. Breaking up the project will help the public focus on specific areas of concern and get a feel for what implementation will actually be like. The accounting unit divisions will be done to give the public our best estimate of what potential activities will be done.

Potential name options discussed:

- Geographic subunit
- Analysis subunit
- Restrictive Management Unit
- Restoration Unit (RU)

Each 'unit' will get its own section within the EIS that will include a map and a fact sheet that will include a summary of special management areas and designated roadless areas along with other basic statistics on where treatment opportunities are and how potential projects address collaborator interests. Total treatment areas for each accounting unit subdivision may have a range of acreage.

PROPOSED ACTION DEFINITIONS:

There will be an annual cap on acres of treatment for the life of the project. In WUI areas, fuels objectives take priority over silvicultural objectives. Treatment activities are weighted for disturbance index i.e. clear cuts have a high impact index whereas pre-commercial thinning has a limited impact index.

A living ledger will be kept for the number of acres of treatment area. As projects are implemented the remaining number of treatable area will change. Other areas can become hydrologically recovered and then would be eligible for treatments, which would increase the total number of treatable acres during implementation. This could be added to the implementation checklist.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST:

Michael presented a first attempt at generating an 'implementation checklist.'

Suggestions for improvements include:

- Leave available acres blank and fill it in as a current running available acres
- Space for project objective should have space for multiple objectives
    - Up to three program objectives needed. Could be either a drop down box or space for a list.
    - Having multiple objectives will help multiple programs to benefit from each project and will contribute to their targets
- Rename project description to project description/management objective
- Remove wilderness from special management areas
- Include dropdown boxes for projects in roadless and projects that could affect mapped and inventoried roadless areas.

Design Criteria Crosswalk Suggestions:

- Some programs could have their design criteria be more specific i.e. WUI project
- Keep language generic in the design criteria, we can more specific later once we see the field conditions for individual treatments.
- Are there other uses for temporary roads besides timber harvest? Could they be reused for fire or reentry for noxious weed control?

The design criteria control the verbiage in timber sale contracts. Partnership projects may help with less economically feasible projects.

We have not addressed planting with the exception of 5 year stocking requirement under NFMA. Planting of non-tree species has not been discussed but should be incorporated so that it may be implemented later if needed.

QUESTIONS FOR FRANK:

Where might LaVA implementation take us first? Response: There are some high priority areas on the forest such as Graham, and Chimney Park, which both have high beetle mortality and heavy mistletoe

infestation. Fallen Pines is another area of interest because timber sales have not been completed in this area for many years.

Will GNA be available for the life of the project: Response: One GNA is expiring in 2018; other authorities should remain in place.

How many alternatives will be analyzed? Response: That will be dictated by public and agency issues and concerns. We are aware that the HFRA allows for a narrower range of alternatives.

OCTOBER 11TH FIELD TRIP:

Priority Stops for field trip (3-4 stops, preferably close in proximity):

- Temporary roads examples (possibly in active timber sale)
- Cooperating agency proposals- are there specific areas that would be worthwhile to look at?
- Look at high canopy cover changes vs intermediate canopy changes to demonstrate the variability
- Look at the areas where different treatments would be implemented to compare and contrast the different types
- Identify a boundary area roadless vs non-roadless area
- Look at an area bordering state land

Give Melissa your top three priorities by next Wednesday (9/20)

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Where are we?

- Scoping and content analysis are complete; now we are working to align proposed action with our purpose and need. Would like to have a well-rounded proposed action. Identified that there may be value in analyzing a second alternative. This will be discussed during the next LaVA steering group meeting.

What are we working on?

- New contract with enterprise for a writer editor. Developing small groups for adaptive management, monitoring framework and implementation schedule. Contracting with other Enterprise members to help with hydrology and soils and working with our Regional Office for Air Quality and Climate Change support.

Other scheduling:

- Prerelease public meeting in the first part of January
- Release DEIS towards end of January
- Response to public comment period in March.
- Release Final EIS and draft Record of Decision in June
- Sign ROD in September.

Meeting adjourned.