

Idaho Panhandle RAC Meeting
September 16, 2011
0900-1045

Committee Attending: Jon Cantamessa, Jack Buell, Shawn Keough, Barbara Botsch, Terry Steiner, Jackie McAvoy, MaryBeth Lynch, Joe Peak, Ruth Watkins, Neil Smith, Joe Peak, Robin Stanley, Maggie Pittman, Joseph Peak, Robin Stanley, Bob McCoy, Michael Ripatti

Others Present: Sid Smith (Senator Risch), Kim Johnson (USFS), Erick Walker (USFS), Wade Sims (USFS), Glenn Klinger (USFS), Jay Kirchner (USFS), Dave O'Brien (USFS), Leslie Stanley, Mike Michalvich, Suzanne DeBaire.

Joe Peak opened the meeting with introductions and updates. **Patty Perry**-KVRI's 20-mile landscape approach has been moving forward with the meetings. The Kootenai Tribe has begun implementation of the Kootenai River restoration project. **Maggie Pittman**-new Forest Supervisor, Mary Farnsworth, will be starting October 11. There will be an open house at each Ranger station. RAC members are invited to attend. Jack Buell-hard times with large fuel bills. **Shawn Keough**-shared the article about Pat Hart and the RAC funded projects that Pat worked on. One of the Boundary County commissioners has been working with other commissioners for a proposal to replace the funding to the counties if Rural Schools is not reauthorized, it involves putting some federal land into trusts. Keeping an eye on the 9th Circuit court ruling requiring logging companies to obtain EPA permits. There's an appeal to the Supreme Court that is being with bipartisan sponsors in the House on that bill. **Jackie McAvoy**-also on the BLM RAC. Had a couple fieldtrips with the RAC. **MaryBeth**-Went up to Dickingsheet project that was funded. Backcountry horseman did that. **Jon Cantamessa** had sent out or written an article about the health benefits of clear cutting. **Terry Steiner**-Peewee project will be funded next week. Rocky Mountain Rider had a write-up about the project up Trail Creek out of Naples where \$10,000 worth of materials was collected. Terry will be working at PeeWee. There was a nice program about the centennial up at Priest Lake Experimental Forest. Upper Priest River will be featured on Idaho Public Television. **Barbara Botsch**-Have had several people inquire about BioMass as a fuel source. **Michael Ripatti**-A few years ago there was a discussion at RAC about using bugs for weed control. Mike has realized that the bugs released in Canada are migrated down to Copeland and are effectively reducing weeds at his house. **Joe Peak**-shared pictures of wildlife from a game camera placed at the north fork of Shoshone Pass. The rivers are seeing record high levels of use and there are cleanups being scheduled. Proposed that any leftover money be used for repairing the road at Settlers Grove of Ancient Cedars. The signage could have been better notifying people that the road was closed. A dump truck driver was injured yesterday, had to be life-flighted out. **Jon Cantamessa**-just had a call with the people working on the reauthorization of funding for Rural Schools.

The public forum will begin at 9:30.

New Project Proposals (2):

- I. **Project 12_24** \$602,050 has already been funded for other projects. **12_24 (\$188,000)** was earmarked for repairing damaged roads. Roads that were brought up for proposals are Settlers

Grove and Cemetery Ridge Road (also known as Mug cabin road) which just experienced a major failure this spring, takes off on the east side of Big Creek. Large drainage, popular huckleberry area, washed out almost 40 feet down to the creek. Estimated \$60,000 + to repair the road. The proposal includes taking the remainder of the FY12 RAC funds (\$87,958.00) and applying them to project **12_24**. RAC will meet again in early 2012 to advise on selection of road projects.

Project Review:

Dave O'Brien-Many roads on the forest experienced failures this spring. The priority for repairs was timber projects and those may have been funded over repairing roads. **Jon Cantamessa**-Winter 2012 is supposed to mirror last winter and more road damage can be anticipated in the future. **Robin Stanley**-Asked about the timeline for the release of funding allocated to roads. **Jon Cantamessa**-Funds will be dispersed in December 2011. Need to meet again early next year to decide how the money will split between projects. **Neil Smith**-Much of the road damage comes from roads not being maintained properly, encouraged dispersed activity, and few timbers sales-as road maintenance is often included. Unused, untraveled roads seem to experience most of the damage. **Maggie Pittman**-Many forests are experiencing backlogs of maintaining roads as a result of decreased funding that typically evolves from timber sales. **Jon Cantamessa**-Need to get back to reasonable harvests for forest health and funding. **Jack Buell**-Suggested those large property owners assist with the maintenance of roads. Need to have preventive maintenance rather than lose the roads. **Neil Smith**-When corporate timber lands are mingled with forest service roads there are avenues for cost-sharing maintenance and repairs mechanisms. The Benewah road, as an example, is primarily corporate and private timber land. The land owners currently pay taxes for access on county roads. If there are insufficient funds to maintain roads, perhaps there is an option to increase taxes or create a user-fee to access the road? **Jack Buell**-Taxes wouldn't cover the bare minimum of road maintenance costs. Raising taxes will not help anyone in today's economy. **Robin Stanley**-Regarding usage fee, Shoshone County has a usage fee that they put on the "Catters" to use for the groomers. Different groups are boycotting each other due to paying for grooming costs with purchasing a sticker that wouldn't even cover the cost of the sticker. Too many restrictions prevent equipment users from performing "charitable" road maintenance on their own roads. **Jon Cantamessa**-Priorities need to be established. Common-sense decisions are no longer acceptable. **Maggie Pittman**-Hard decisions are being made from a prioritized perspective across many forests. **Michael Ripatti**-Uses old roads to get salt blocks back to his cattle. Not allowed to take a tractor behind closed gates or cut brush. Asking permission is always turned down. **Joe Peak**-EPA's clean water act is going to complicate. **Patty Perry**-Asked if problematic BO would cover the work that needs to be accomplished for road maintenance. There is a problematic BA/Bo that would cover that but only might cover some roads and not all.

Terry Steiner made a motion to approve project 12_24. Jack Buell seconded the motion. RAC voted and motion passed unanimously. The actual amount funded is still unknown though the estimated amount is currently estimated at \$188,000. The purpose is to allocate whatever funding is left over, following the January 2012 final allocations, for Forest-wide road repairs. As the roads are recommended for repair, RAC will be involved to select which

road repairs will be funded. The decision was to leave the money in a bulk sum and allocate out to projects as needed once the final funding is available.

Leslie Stanley asked how much money is used to obliterate roads. **Jackie McAvoy** asked if anyone was following the use of insects to control weeds. **Leslie Stanley** answered that bugs cannot completely eradicate the weeds, however there is a roller coaster effect with the bugs decimating their food source and as the weeds die off the bugs do as well until the weeds come back. **Jackie McAvoy** suggested that the RAC follow the use of bugs to eradicate noxious weeds as much funding in the past has been used for such use. **Robin Stanley** brought up the amount of recreation use on the N. Fork of the St. Joe campground and the work the Forest Service has accomplished. They wish the bridge had been released. **Robin Stanley** asked about "Jack's" cabin. **Wade Sims** mentioned that the cabin is currently being assessed for handicap accessibility. **Michael Ripatti** expressed his frustration with getting permission to perform work.

II. Request to Carry-Over FY12 Funding-In order for the forest to have the carry over the funding that was not spent in FY11 available in FY12, the forest needs to have RAC's approval.

Project Review:

Robin Stanley was concerned that the Ambassador program has a significant amount of carryover (\$19, 900) and maybe it is overfunded. **Dave O'Brien**-The forest is intentionally carrying over the ambassador program money to use during hunting season. **Wade Sims**-late spring prevented the crews from getting out. RAC money has to be spent exactly the way it is approved for. **Ruth Watkins**-verified that the carryover money would be spent first before more funding was approved. **Robin Stanley** asked if carryover funding could be reallocated to other areas such as for road repairs? **Barb Botsch**-need to make sure that funding is used during hunting season. **Robin Stanley** would not support carrying over the funding currently allocated to the Ambassador program and would rather disperse a percentage of the carry-over funding to areas that are in need such as road repairs. **Jackie McAvoy**-curious about other areas where there was carryover for three consecutive years; where each year there was carryover but also additional funding that had been approved by RAC.

Barb Botsch made the motion to carry-over the funding. **Jack Buell** seconded the motion. RAC approved the motion to carryover the funding into FY12 unanimously with the caveat **Jon** needs more background documentation on how the money has evolved over the years with carryover and additional funding approved. **Terry Steiner** requested the status of projects that are appearing to be overfunded.

*RAC would like to revisit the carryover funding in either January or February 2012. Though carryover is approved, it will be revisited to take a look at how much of the carryover was spent in the fall of 2011.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45.

The committee will meet again in early 2012 to review carry-over and finalize funding recommendations.