

## Summary Notes from Forestry/Fuels JMLA Implementation Meeting 6 PM, Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at the Central Montana Community Center

---

### **Clive Rooney, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)**

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Lewistown Regional Office manages 2.1 million acres of school trust lands. These lands include some timberland, but mostly include rangeland managed for grazing. Timber harvest in the Judiths over the past several years has produced 1,100,000 MBF. Current sales should conclude this spring. DNRC plans a smaller sale in Iron Gulch in the North Moccasins

Q: What kind of cut is proposed?

Ans: The site is in the foothills of the North Moccasins. Thinning will be heavier near residences to reduce fire danger, leaving the best seed stock for natural regeneration. Two small clearcuts are planned in diseased, old lodgepole stands on the ridge.

Q: How will you gain access?

Ans: There is no public access. Access has been granted by the private landowner Peterson. Roads will be put to bed upon project completion. Certain state logging roads will have walk in access.

Q: How does the favorable pulpwood market affect management?

Ans:

The sale has produced 500 tons of pulp. As a result of the favorable pulp market, the operation is smaller and landings are smaller.

Ans: A favorable pulp market is a good benefit that results in more small diameter wood being hauled off site. All sales, however, will have a pulp component

Q: Jerry Hanley: Is the hospital going to take any biomass?

Ans: The hospital currently analyzing the feasibility of developing a biomass plant. If they proceed, all slash will be available to them.

Dan Stillson Fergus Conservation District

BLM grant money has been used to treat fuels at home sites, in areas of ingress and egress. Trees have been either removed or burnt. The FCD received 52 applications for grant money and 48 were signed. The agency distributed \$133,380. No new contracts will be accepted unless FCD acquires more money. The program is a good one.

### **Bruce Reid, BLM Forester**

- Working with the interested key players is important
- Communication was not stressed in the old days
- Collaboration is a new buzzword
- Now that the Judith Moccasin Landscape Analysis has been approved, the goal of this collaboration process is to sit down and work with existing groups and landowners to design and implement projects within sideboards of the Judith Moccasin Landscape Analysis (JMLA) and other existing plans, regulations, and laws.
- Working together may also help to address some questions people ask about forestry:

Bruce asked the audience: “Why do we cut trees? Why do we actively manage the forest?”

Community response:

- Stewardship
- Fire, and
- Bugs

Bruce lists other reasons for cutting trees:

- Good forest management thins density to promote forest health
- Revenue from sale of harvested saw logs helps pay for treatments
- Common goals of forest health treatments are to reduce fuels and improve wildlife habitat

Additional Items:

- The area included in the Environmental Analysis (EA) is logically broken into several compartments. These main areas include the North and South Moccasin Mountains and compartments of the Judith Mountains
- Don't get wrapped up in details tonight. Subjects that we will not cover tonight include:
  - Silvicultural details
  - The Judith Moccasin Travel Plan (JMTP) and other existing resource management plans

**Brad Eckert, BLM Forester**

- Sign in sheets will be passed around later. There are spaces to provide your home address, email address, and phone number.
- In some ways, this meeting is really a meeting to set up more meetings. We hope there is a core group that wants to meet regularly.

How many think you know what collaboration is all about?

- Sharing of responsibility
- Working together for a common goal
- Sharing ideas
- Agreeing to disagree
- Pooling resources
- All of those things to benefit the resources

What are potential benefits of collaborating?

- Projects that provide economic benefit to the community
- Development of good ideas and results
- Common understanding
- Increased productivity on the ground
- Efficiency
- Wildlife benefit

What might be some risks associated with collaborating?

- The introduction of weeds, foreign plants and animals, and exotic species
- Too much time talking and not enough action
- Water pollution and erosion
- An individual or small minority holds up the process
- Boundary issues may complicate management and working together
- Rights of ways may complicate working together

How do we intend to respond when suggestions are not useful?

- Talk the issue over more
- Respect each other
- Self-facilitate
- Help each other out until there is complete understanding

How will we know when we have agreement?

- We will have a signed contract
- All participants will express thumbs up or thumbs sideways, no participants will express a thumbs down, and we will have the feeling that the majority of participants think that we are moving in the right direction.

Miscellaneous questions/comments by participants:

Citizen: What happens when personnel change? What happens when you don't know who is in charge? The BLM should make sure that everyone is informed, especially adjacent landowners and permittees.

Brad Eckert: Investment will be made by BLM personnel in the projects. We will want to work with landowners and others to ensure that projects are successful.

Steve Knox: This collaboration process could help improve communications between the BLM and landowners.

Citizen: If you're going to involve the public, there must be more flexibility to do what we develop together or the BLM will lose credibility

Citizen: The BLM is unable to make decisions because of bureaucracy. Someone has to be at meetings to make decisions.

Jennifer Walker: Now we have the Judith Moccasin Landscape Analysis (JMLA) document to guide us. The BLM should be more efficient, because they are now able to implement projects (that fall within sideboards identified in this document) without much more analysis.

Citizen: If the group makes a decision to implement a prescribed fire and the fire burns down a house, who is responsible? Where does the buck stop? Where does it stop in the BLM?

Brad Eckert: The BLM is still responsible. Collaborating does not change who is ultimately responsible. Within the agency, the buck stops at June Bailey, the Field Office Manager.

Steve Knox: Extensive burn plans are developed for prescribed fire. Once June Bailey signs a prescribed burn plan, she assumes responsibility for associated damage. Criminal charges may even be filed for negligence.

Gary Kirpach: There is reason to implement fuel treatments soon before wildfires occur.

Citizen: What will happen in 2007?

Brad: The Park Place Timber Sale could easily be implemented this year.

Bruce: The JMLA document has taken 5 years. The public would be frustrated right now if they were involved from the beginning. The only thing preventing project implementation now is collaboration. We have a number of projects that vary in size that we could be implemented this year.

Citizen: Do we ship our timber somewhere else?

Bruce: We look for local markets, but depending on the product, the closest market may be several hours or more away.

Citizen: Does timber revenue money stay here?

Bruce Reid: Stewardship contracting money stays in the MT/Dakotas organization. Also, forest health has remained a national priority so getting money for local projects has been a little easier.

### **Bruce Reid, BLM Forester**

There are existing rules, regulations, and management plans that we must abide by. For example, sideboards restricting our flexibility are defined by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), the Judith Moccasin Landscape Analysis (JMLA), MT Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) Law, and by the MT Best Management Practices (BMPs) Act.

Citizen: Is this collaboration effort due to the emergency act? Do you have more freedom? What caused this change?

Bruce Reid: Momentum behind collaboration has been building. There is no legal reason why we have to manage resources in a vacuum. We're so good at asking for comments, struggling to balance conflicting interests, and then filing the cards away. Learning from one another and spending time together to reach consensus would be much more meaningful. Collaboration doesn't stop when the contract is signed. The public needs to be involved....

Gary Kirpach: Even if you collaborate, you're not tuning a piano; there will be imperfections. Collaboration will, however, get rid of the problems Stephanie and Allen Shammel concerning lack of communication and failures to inform landowners and permittees of pending BLM actions.

### **Jennifer Walker, BLM Fire Ecologist**

- Please sign the attendance sheet we are passing around. Provide your home address, email address, and phone number so we can contact you.
- Logistics of planning meetings takes a lot of time. We could use help with organizing future meetings, taking notes at meetings, finding locations to meet, developing a phone change to contact participants, etc.

- How will we set a date for the next meeting?  
Members of the public suggested:
  - run an ad in the paper and on the radio
  - Schedule meetings monthly: second Tues of every month?
  - Absentee owners can be the hardest to deal with. They often are not able to make it to these meetings and they typically do not understand how forest ecosystems function

Bruce Reid: How much outreach should we do for the next few meetings?

Suggestions from the public:

- Let 3 or 4 members of the public at this meeting contact absentee owners
- Mailing out letters is not necessary every time
- Mail everyone at the meeting a letter
- Make sure that adjacent landowners receive a letter
- Nothing is wrong with mailing 300+ letters for the first few meetings
- Be sure that absentee landowners are included

Citizen comments/suggestions:

- Let the public know what is happening by sending out e-mail announcements list, have a web page and a calendar of events, based on my exp, we have a certain attrition rate, and then a small group of people at every meeting.
- Biggest complaint is that we don't communicate well through time.
- Second biggest concern may be that we talk more than we do. We should not waste any more time before implementing projects.
- Let the public know what will be discussed at the next meeting and what geographic area will be discussed. Individuals may want to attend just the meetings that are most relevant to their neighborhood.
- Gary: don't mix up maiden canyon and warm springs canyon
- Shonnie: Have a list of projects and then let us prioritize them

### **Steve Knox, Fuels and Fire Manager**

Steve Knox: What do you think?

Citizen: We might lose interest if projects are not soon implemented on the ground

Steve Knox: Projects will be prioritized and we will move forward as quickly as possible.

Brad Eckert: This collaboration group will be working closely with the Resource Advisory Council (RAC). There are protocols for working together to which we are legally bound. Members of the RAC may call the next meeting, so don't be surprised if you hear from one of them instead of from one of us.

Citizen: Take a shot at projects and priorities. Then ask people what they think. Don't just try to plow through the JMLA doc.

Bruce Reid: The danger is that somehow it looks like we've already made up our minds.

Citizen: Please summarize the JMLA for us so we don't have to read the entire document.