Draft Meeting Record - KVRI Forestry Subcommittee
Hybrid Subcommittee Meeting, Boundary County Annex Building
March 14, 2024 10:00 a.m.

Attendance:
Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher
Brandon Glaza, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Kevin Knauth, USFS
Carmelita Angeles, USFS
Norm Merz, Idaho Department of Fish & G (IDFG)
Cindy Lewis, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Mick Atkins, Citizen
Shelby Therrian, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Ed Atkins, Corp. Ag/Landowner
Kierstin Cox, KTOI
Theresa Wheat, KTOI
George Gehrig, Xerces Society Ambassador
Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office
Diosa Bahe, KTOI
William Barquin, KTOI
Ed Koberstein, USFS
Todd Higens, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Bill Lillibridge, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation
Debra Henderson, Citizen
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League
Chuck Roady, Landowner/Industry
John Alport, Inland Forest Management
Jonathan Luhnow, Idaho Department of Lands
Doug Nishek, USFS

Introductions and welcome at 10:00 a.m.

- **Meeting Purpose:** To discuss the upcoming forestry KatKee Fuels project, its scope and review comments.
- **Project Scoping:** Completion of the scoping period was announced, and the team is reviewing comments and adjusting the project accordingly. The aim is to reduce fuels adjacent to private properties and improve infrastructure protection through collaborative efforts.
- **Landowner Participation:** Emphasized as critical for project success, especially since the project will benefit from the involvement of adjacent landowners.
- About 1,000 acres of BLM land will be included to avoid leaving untreated areas within the project.
- **Field Trip Planning:** Scheduled for May 16, focusing on project areas and allowing for input on specific concerns from landowners and participants. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Forest Service office and it usually goes until 2:00 p.m. There will be carpooling among participants, and KVRI will provide water and a snack, while there is a stop made and discussion.
- **Project Updates:** The initial scoping period received 23-24 letters, with a majority neutral to favorable. Discussions included concerns about logging, climate impact, NEPA compliance, old growth treatment, road access, vegetation management, wildlife considerations, and community feedback.

Comments Summary:

- **Logging and Fuels Treatments:** Concerns were raised about the potential for over-harvesting, which could lead to open canopies and increased sediment in streams. However, about three-quarters of the letters were neutral to favorable regarding the project.
- **Climate and Carbon Management:** The need for a climate report to acknowledge longer fire seasons and the impact on carbon was emphasized, with suggestions to consider the carbon storage potential of forest products.

- **NEPA Compliance and Old Growth:** Some claims suggested the project might violate NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) requirements. Specific attention was given to two old growth stands, which are proposed to be treated as fuel breaks without removing harvested material, ensuring they remain as old growth.
- **Road Access and Fire Response:** Suggestions included thinning alongside roads to improve fire response capabilities, balancing the need for road access with wildlife security and habitat considerations.
- **Vegetation Management:** Feedback highlighted the overstocked conditions of forests and the importance of carefully implemented burns. The suggestion of shelterwood cuts and comments supporting old growth treatment in specific areas were noted.
- **Wildlife Considerations:** The majority of comments focused on wildlife, particularly grizzly bear security, wolverine impacts, and habitat considerations for species like lynx and white bark pine. The challenge is to balance open roads for fire management without adversely impacting these species.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Emphasized the project's potential to be improved through the participation of adjacent landowners and stakeholders, especially for reducing fuels near private properties and infrastructure.
- **Aspen Communities and Recreational Opportunities:** Mentioned in the context of potential project areas, highlighting opportunities for enhancing local recreation alongside project objectives.

Response and Next Steps:

- The team acknowledged the comments and indicated that they would be incorporated into the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) process. They are considering all feedback to potentially adjust the project's scope and methods.
- There was a commitment to transparency, with plans to post all comments on the project's public website for review.
- The project's timeline anticipates a draft EA release in late April or May, followed by another public comment period and adjustments based on feedback.

In conclusion, the meeting underscored the collaborative effort required to manage forest landscapes effectively, emphasizing the need for ongoing dialogue between the Forest Service, the Kootenai Tribe, stakeholders, and the community to achieve the dual goals of wildfire risk reduction and ecosystem preservation.

Meeting was called at 11:12 a.m.

Meeting Record Prepared by Kierstin Cox