

Payette Forest Coalition

Meeting: August 5, 2009
McCall, Idaho

SUMMARY NOTES

1. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (Garry Moore), the convening agency for the Payette Forest Coalition, provided welcome and introductions.
 - a. "Oversight Committee" members
 - i. Dave Torell, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 - ii. Morris Huffman, Woody Biomass Utilization Partnership
 - iii. Bob Giles, Payette National Forest
 - iv. Bob Swandby, Idaho Dept. of Commerce
 - v. Jim Doran, Community Forestry Resources (coordinator)
 - vi. Delta James, Sage Community Resources (facilitator)
 - b. Participants provided self-introductions.
2. Jim Doran, Coordinator, reviewed what "project collaboration" means in the context of the management of public lands:
 - a. Initial guidelines
 - i. We are not talking about harvesting old growth, rather in creating more old growth for wildlife values. We may discuss "thinning from below" for fuels reduction in old growth where appropriate.
 - ii. We are talking about the thousands of acres of already logged and already roaded public forest.
 - iii. We are not promoting expansive new roads systems and may even support taking some old dysfunctional roads out.
 - iv. We are talking about the right prescription on the particular site for the benefit of the forest.
 - v. There is a lot of restoration and thinning and fuels reduction work to be done on acres that are in need of deferred maintenance.
 - vi. The needs of the forest are first and any biomass feed stock or other forest products will come as the "by-products" of the forest restoration, forest health and fuels reduction work. This can be pre-commercial thinning, fuels reduction and commercial harvest.
 - b. Rules of conduct
 - i. Basic civility is expected
 - ii. This is not an opportunity for people to climb on their soapboxes – not a position oriented effort
 - iii. We will focus on what we CAN do, not what can't be done
 - iv. Collaboration is about working together with trust.
 - c. Comments related to FACA
 - i. This collaboration is not formally sanctioned by the forest service in that it is not a PNF-driven effort. The coalition will make recommendations to PNF. The PNF has stewardship project ideas, but they are not exclusive.

- ii. Project is not pre-defined, this group will be establishing what the project opportunities are and prioritizing those.
- 3. Project Ideas and Project Selection – Payette National Forest (Bob Giles and staff):
 - a. Review of highlights from last meeting:
 - i. We have two goals to achieve as a group – improve wildlife habitat for species in decline because habitat is in decline and contribute to local economies through biomass (primarily small wood, but may include saw logs too).
 - ii. (see PNF map – fire regimes) Opportunities to rehab are located primarily in western roaded areas of the Payette National Forest. Management prescriptions may vary in urban-wildland interface areas. Fire suppression has made fuels reduction important.
 - iii. We are short on large tree stands. We have too many dense forests with a lot of canopy.
 - iv. We need to try to restore and build old growth /large diameter (over 20 inch) trees stands.
 - v. Second growth / plantation stands offer an opportunity for restoration but are disbursed across (primarily) western portion of PNF.
 - vi. We have a lot of older age class forests that, if we were to take the right approach / prescriptions, we could get to adequate habitat fairly quickly (5-10 years) by removing undergrowth.
 - vii. Aquatic resources (fish) also should be considered in determining restoration efforts (i.e. road removal, culvert replacement, etc.).
 - b. Wildlife considerations (Anna (PNF)):
 - i. If we maintain the habitat to within a historic range, then we are providing habitat for a specific species.
 - ii. High risk species exist – at risk due to lack of habitat (i.e. whiteheaded woodpecker, northern Idaho grown squirrel). We need a wildlife conservation strategy that focuses on the species most at risk.
 - iii. Other species, that like dense forests, are also at risk. (i.e. Pileated Woodpecker).
 - iv. In the process of identifying a wildlife conservation strategy, the PNF is looking at watersheds in the forest and identifying where are the areas that have the most opportunity for restoration. – effort is ongoing – will go out for public review as an amendment to forest plan.
 - v. We have mid-age stands that, if addressed now, could become appropriate habitat within a relatively short time (5-10 years).
 - vi. Mill Creek / Council Mountain section – approx. 100,000 acres - is identified as a high priority treatment need.
 - c. Why is Mill Creek / Council Mountain area a priority for treatment?
 - i. This area seemed to have the most opportunity – more acres, in habitat range, good data & stand exams, have not started NEPA process yet.
 - ii. East side of the PNF has some active projects now, but opportunities are not as evident related to intervention, coordination, biomass. East side has less “tools” available to use (i.e. fire, mechanical thinning, road access, etc.)
- 4. Discussion re: economic development
 - a. People that work in the forest come from all over the area, not just the nearest town.

- b. Adams County has conducted a feasibility study for a co-gen plant which determined that the project was feasible IF a reliable source of biomass could be found.
- c. Entrepreneurs will come “out of the woodwork” once the supply issue has been addressed.

[lunch]

5. Introduction to the PFC On line forum (Dennis Murphy – Spatial Interest) – a way to keep in touch between meetings and collect the paper trail. See <http://sitekreator.com/sptlintrst/PayetteForward.html>
6. PNF (Bob Giles) provided a synopsis of projects that are in the works on the east side of the Payette National Forest.
7. More details RE: Council Mountain / Big Creek project
 - a. NEPA has not yet begun
 - b. Approximately 100,000 acres in area
 - c. Advantages include;
 - i. Ponderosa Pine task force stands have been identified
 - ii. Stand exam data has been collected
 - iii. Local ranger and staff are willing to work with coalition for timeline and NEPA
 - iv. Aquatic conservation strategy indicates areas of high priority
 - v. Opportunity for impact in the short term (5 to 10 yrs) for habitat improvement
 - vi. Includes about 11,000 acres of plantations (some may be on Potlatch property)
 - vii. 15,000 acres of drier type wooded areas PBG2&5
 - viii. 18,000 acres PBG6 (moister wooded areas)
 - ix. Not roadless area
 - x. Mix of commercial and non-commercial project – would be a stewardship contract with medium size timber coming out – those funds would be used to offset costs for other restoration activities in the area.
 - xi. Large size of project scale can make an impact
 - xii. Includes aspen and other habitat for deer, elk
 - xiii. Does not include some wildlife (i.e. big horn sheep) that are more difficult to address
 - xiv. Close to access points (highway 95)
 - xv. Roads exist for harvest access
8. Round table: Should we begin with Council Mt / Mill Creek project or is there another?

Responses:

 - a. Location is convenient
 - b. Area really needs attention
 - c. Switch from plantation to watershed approach is good
 - d. Seems like a logical place to start
 - e. We just need to get started somewhere – let’s start there
 - f. (Mike) what size of trees will be cut? I need the next project step – where from here?

Ensure it’s not in a roadless area.
 - g. Has potential to indeed be wildlife restoration, biomass will be secondary byproduct
 - h. People will see this project – will show visible action
 - i. A great opportunity to take the next step forward

- j. We want to get something done on the ground, so let's start here, but what is next?
- k. Seems like the groundwork has been done so can get to implementation quickly
- l. This is an area that has not had ongoing or ready to go NEPA – don't screw up the WUI on the Weiser watershed
- m. This area has a chance to show the difference between how FS is managing land and how private land (Potlatch) is being managed.
- n. Perfect spot to start – near WUI activity – will help protect populated areas.
- o. Literally right out our back door.
- p. From a business standpoint, this gives some opportunities to think about and participate in.

DECISION POINT: The group unanimously agreed to focus on the Mill Creek / Council Mountain area for the PFC's first project.

- 9. Final comments
 - a. (Jim D.) Success with initial project will lead to the next. A natural progression to follow the first success will be a next project.
- 10. Next meeting: Field trip to tour project area - Tuesday, Sept. 1 – meet at Council ranger station – 8:00 am. – bring your own lunch and comfortable shoes.