Meeting Draft Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
Forestry Committee
February 1, 2018, 9:00 a.m.
Kootenai Tribal Office

Attendance:

Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)-District Ranger
Doug Nishek, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)-Planning Forester
Kevin Greenleaf, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Environmental Director
Evan DeHamer, Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG)
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner& KVRI Co-chair
Ed Koberstein, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Timber Management
Tim Price, US Forest Service, NEPA Strike Team-Fisheries
A.J. Helgenberg, US Forest Service, NEPA Strike Team-Silviculture
Bob Blanford, KVRI, Business/Industry
Dan Gilfillan, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS)-Recreation
Linda Bernhardt, US Forest Service, NEPA Strike Team-Wildlife
Beth Bigelow, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS)- Archeology
Nate Millet, US Forest Service, NEPA Strike Team-Hydrology
Mike Sheppard, Landowner
Tom Daniels, Deer Park Water Association
Kat Sarensen, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's office
Steve Selser, US Forest Service (USFS)- NEPA Strike Team Leader
Steve Petesch, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Recreation Technician
Joe Heisel, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS)-Roads Manager
Jonathan Luhnow, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
Spencer Hanson, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
Eddie Spicer, Landowner
Tom Elliot, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS)-GIS/Cartography
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch's office
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Raul Labrador's office
Brett Lyndaker, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Biologist
Scott Soults, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group (IFG)
Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Sherrie Cossairt, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI

Opening:

Patty Perry opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Introductions followed.

Kevin Knauth, USFS, explained for the benefit of the new attendees that the NEPA Strike Team is composed of specialists hosted by the Idaho Panhandle National Forest to help accelerate the NEPA process and help them complete more projects.

He stated the items to be discussed will be the Camp Robin scoping notice and the comments received along with the issues that need to be addressed that include the ATV trail system within the Camp 9 area and Transportation Analysis (TAPS) in the project.

Deer Creek Project Update-Ed Koberstein, USFS

Ed Koberstein shared that the Deer Creek Stewardship Contract has been awarded to Foust Inc.

This sale included 600 acres, 12mmbf of harvest, road storage for BMU compliance, forest health insect and disease, White Pine pruning, Spring Creek AOP, fish passage improvements, Solomon Lake campground improvements, hazardous fuel slashing, noxious weed spraying, pre-commercial thinning, etc. It will include 1.2 million dollars' worth of service items and reforestation and 1.4 million dollars in bid value. Two more sales will be offered out of the Deer Creek Project this year and will include fixing a road that accesses the Moyie River ($75,000 project).

Part of the service work included in the Deer Stewardship Sale that was just awarded actually went to doing road maintenance and road reconstruction for the Deer Placer Timber Sale. Paying ourselves forward in a sense, offsetting the stumpage value, to pay for future road improvements on other sales allows us to capture more value on the next sales. It regenerate more receipts that way, allows us to take that value immediately and put it back into the ground instead of having to wait for appropriated dollars to do it. It saves in overhead costs all around.

Camp Robin Update-Doug Nishek, USFS

Doug began his presentation with a brief overview of the comment letter that was sent out in December. He reviewed the area of the project and reminded everyone that it began as two separate Categorical Exclusions (CEs) and was combined into one Environmental Assessment (EA) to accomplish more of the resource and recreational needs in the project.

Patty explained that when we refer to the NEPA documents it is the environmental work the Forest Service has to do on an area before we can move forward on a project. A Categorical Exclusion (CE) is a quick and easy document that says you go into an area and nothing is going to be disturbed that hasn't been already, nothing out of the normal. An Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses recreation issues that can't be done under a CE or quicker document.

Doug stated that items addressed in this project are: Lodgepole mature stands, fires/fuels, Purpose and Need much like other projects, improve wildlife habitat, bolster Aspen Stands, recreation (Comprehensive Plan) economics, prescribed burns, different harvest prescriptions would include ground based, skyline and helicopter systems. There is generally good access with this project, will be fixing roads where they go. Any temporary roads located in a BORZ (Bears Outside Recovery Zone) area, have to be considered regarding the estimated effects to Grizzly bear. Propose to improve and expand gravel pits in the area. Roads to be left open or closed for storage or decommissioning to be discussed at this meeting. With the aquatics and hydrology resources, there are no AOP's proposed. Recreation proposes to improve boat docks at Smith and Brush Lake.

Dan D. asked if the helicopter units can be separated. Ed K. stated that helicopter units can be an optional item in conventional sales. Doug then reviewed the comments received on this project. He stated that there was a lot of support and the concerns will be addressed and discussed at this meeting.

Patty also stated that the Forest Service held a Public Open House on Jan 4th on this project. The meeting did net some landowners that are here today.

Patty also wanted to clarify the difference between road storage and decommissioning. KVRI and this group has always proposed that roads be stored because they can be reopened for fire and access if needed ; they are stored for a period of 10 years and they remain on the Forest Service road system; if a road is decommissioned it goes away completely from the road inventory. Storage accomplishes the goals on the ground and the management goals we want to achieve but does not permanently give up the road itself.

Bob B. asked Doug if there is any data from a climate perspective that shows the reduction of the carbon footprint in the project as a result of the fuels reduction. Doug stated that they have a climate and carbon exchange report that reflects that data. Bob also added that another benefit to the economy is keeping the infrastructure in place for future projects. Doug agreed that observation would be an important addition to note in all of the projects.

Doug reviewed the comments of support and those comments that need to be addressed.

Items discussed were:

- Deer Park Water Association concerns
- Landowner concerns about buffer zones and streams to be careful around private property
- Concerns with ATV around the BORZ area and the amount of motorized trails proposed to increase
- Request for certain silvicultural/fuels prescriptions near private property lines
- Suggestions for temporary roads and fuels reduction
- Contractor access and trespassing issues
- Mountain Bike trail proposal
- Arndt Trail investment protection
- Meadow Creek Subdivision concerns about defensible space
- Round Prairie area prescription input and private bridge concern
- A request for alternative plan with no new road construction and another with recreation/prescribed burning but no logging or road construction, neither alternative request meets the Purpose and Need for the project

North end map

- Robinson Lake area
- Locations were noted of comment concerns
- Proposed parking lot improvement at Arndt Trail (mountain bike trail) discussed, may not be a lot of use but while they are in that area they fix what they can
- Comment concerns about dry site areas and protecting that habitat

South end map

- Brush Lake area
- Lynx area noted
- Proposed logging units
- Prescribed burn acres -350 acres

- Camp 9 Area- Proposed Comprehensive plan for ATV's and recreation traffic

Discussion about BORZ (Bears Outside of Recovery Zone) in this project included:

- The difference between BORZ (considerations and special protection) and BMU- Bear Management Unit (restrictions)
- The process used for expansion of a BORZ…credible bear sightings
- All proposed trails in the project are in the BORZ
- The consideration of no net increase in motorized trails in a BORZ
- Concern of credible sightings locations and timing, if occurrence has stopped does the area decrease
- Credible sightings include tracks, presence of collared animal or qualified person reporting

Brett Lyndaker gave a brief history of BORZ. In the 1970's when Grizzly Bear were originally listed they designated recovery zone areas considered essential for recovery of the species. Over the years the bears have shown up in places outside of those recovery zones. After discussion with Fish & Wildlife Services on how to address the issue, it was decided to add the areas called BORZ. Also part of the recovery plan states that you have to provide for connectivity between zones. As the bear populations expand and get closer to the recovery goals the use of these connecting areas will only be more not less. They really don't know how much they can expand motorized use in a BORZ area before there will be detrimental impact on Grizzly bear. So the standard became no increase in linear miles of roads in a BORZ. Therefore to stand up to scrutiny and survive a court challenge they do need to offset some of these trail miles by reducing roads. This is one of the few places on the District they actually have the flexibility to create an ATV trail system. A request for a map reflecting the BORZ areas was made by the group.

Bob B. asked about data of bear use in the wildlife underpasses and Patty asked Scott S. to track down that information to bring back to the group.

Doug reviewed the map of the proposed ATV Trail system with the group, and proposed storage miles to offset the 4 miles of trails. Discussion included existing routes and heritage resources in the area.

Beth Bigelow gave a brief overview of the heritage resources in the Camp 9 Logging District. The remains of activities documented in the 1970's include: logging camps and satellite camps, railroad, railroad turntables, sawmill areas from the 1900's to 1930's. When first documented they were more visible but they are now overgrown with timber and vegetation and because of the degradation of many of the sights not all will have educational or interpretive value as was once hoped. They will review each sight and some may be released back to the designation of the land management in the area. Those that remain will provide the educational and interpretive basis for the history in the area. They will use signs linked to the ATV trail system so that as people are recreating in that area they will be able to enjoy the history of it as well.

Bob B. and Steve P. discussed the location of the Pacific Northwest Trail within the project. The existing proposed trails follows all motorized trails and will not affect this project.

<u>ATV Trail System Proposal Discussion</u>

- Use old road beds with existing use and create a comprehensive plan in the area
- Stop degradation to the habitat
- Provide a valuable experience and ability for everyone to be there safely
- No construction except for mountain bike trail
- Signage for trails, heritage resources
- Discussed human/bear conflict possibilities
- ATV loop system, single track trails
- Trailheads and parking areas closest to the main road, expansion and trailer friendly access
- Public awareness, local stewardship, sharing this information with other groups will ensure a better opportunity of use of proposed trail system for everyone

Dan D. pointed out that Trail 23 is very steep and propose not using other than single track. All agreed.

Tom Daniels expressed concern of the Deer Park Water Association tanks, water system access, and shallow pipeline and how to best protect that area. Protection of the system and how to avoid resource damage was discussed. Tom also inquired about the current special use permit on the Deer Creek Water access, will this change as the project proceeds forward. Kevin K. said it could. The Forest Service will meet with Tom and the Association to further the discussion.

Bob Blanford asked about a mountain bike opportunity on the East side of Brush Lake; to expand the bike trail loop. Steve P. and Bob B. will visit some more about that idea.

Dan D. shared the concern of the new mountain bike trail and the timing issue of hunting season and trail use, the potential conflict of use and safety. Limiting use time with signs was a possible solution. He also asked if the trail construction would be funded from CFLR dollars and Ed K. stated it mostly like would not. Dan G. added that funding could possibly come from State Parks Grant if approved.

Stored Road discussion included:

- Storing 4 miles of roads
- Landowner likes the option of storing one section and opening another, opens a road that cuts his commute….the .6 mile of road stored is agreed upon but would like the option for emergency route. Forest Service believes there are options to help the landowner and they will discuss them further
- Discussed storing a section of road, not in project area but inside the BORZ as an option. Brett L. added that Forest Compliance is an ESA issue and this is a NEPA issue project area that has to be analyzed for a cumulative effects…from the wildlife standpoint
- Dan D. inquired about possible questions raised…storing roads that would close currently open roads and the trade down to ATV trails instead, Brett L. explained this area is the one place that can be provided as a ATV trail system
- Patty stated it would be storage not decommissioning, still has emergency access, still on the Forest Service system inventory, it is only a 10 year commitment and by storing more motorized space for ATV use is added.
- Dan D. questioned on other route 2491UAU road. Existing road, ½ mile in length, current unauthorized use, will add to system for ATV use only. May be a cultural mistake. Patty asked if it could be considered as shared use. Kevin K. stated they can certainly look at that possibility

- Patty asked the Forest Service to bring this Road Information to the next KVRI Board Meeting on Feb. 26

On a side note, Tim D. brought up other local issues of sledding on the Smith Creek area. Signs may be needed for safety as population increases and local use increases.

Patty thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and was pleased that the landowners also came to share their concerns which help in the process of shaping this project. Kevin K. stated also that if there are any more concerns to bring it to them sooner than later.

Patty also shared that the Starry Goat Project is moving ahead and Tim D. stated that the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders sent in their endorsement of support for the Starry Goat project as well.

The next Forestry meeting is Feb. 13, at 1:00 pm at the Kootenai Tribal Office.

The Maps used in the presentation are available on the KVRI website at Kootenai.org.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.
Sherrie Cossairt
KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant