

NBFC Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 26, 2020

Location: online

Approved: Approved April 23, 2020

In Attendance:

NBFC Members and Guests: Paul Anderes (Union County Commissioner), Mike Billman (ODF), Nils Christoffersen (WR), Willy Crippen (Cohesive Wildfire Strategy), Alyssa Cudmore (WR), Brian Dill (U of Illinois), Pam Hardy (WELC), Doug Heiken (OW), Brian Kelly (GHCC), Kerry Kemp (TNC), Rob Klavins (OW), Todd Nash (Wallowa County Commissioner), Katy Nesbitt (Wallowa County NRAC), Jon Paustian (ODFW), Susan Roberts (Wallowa County Commissioner), Veronica Warnock (GHCC),

Forest Service: Lizzy Berkley, Maia Enzer, Bill Gamble, Barbara Garcia, Richie Gardner, Lucas Glick, Brian Goff, Bob Hassmiller, Steve Hawkins, Amber Ingolia (Mahoney), Audrey Maclennan, Allen Miller, Laura Navarrete, Emily Platt, Nathan Poage, Katie Richardson, Carrie Spradlin, Andrew Stinchfield, Upekala Wijayratne, Mary Young

Staff: Jeff Costello (Facilitator)

Action Items:

- **Pam:** Redraft Operating Principles based on today's feedback

Open Questions:

- Rob expressed concerns about the collaborative involvement in the CFLRP application.

Open Questions remaining from past meetings

- How climate change might affect our region.
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Minutes Key

- Meeting minutes do not represent collaborative agreements, unless they specifically say so. They are meant to record three basic things only: 1) the issue discussed, 2) the major points or questions raised in the conversation, and 3) the resolution, if there was one. Unless specifically stated, resolutions are only the resolutions of the people present at the meeting.
 - Common Abbreviations:
 - Q: Question
 - A: Answer
 - Cmt: Comment
 - Tx: Treatment
 - Rx Fire: Prescribed Fire
 - Highlighted Items are typically those that require follow-up. (Usually suggestions for future agendas)
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Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Introductions
Zoom logistics
Review of the Agenda
- Additions to the Agenda? – none proposed

Announcements

- We are not changing any of the dates.
Still hoping for field trips over the summer.
- Sheep Creek ID Team had an Open meeting scheduled for March 30 – that will happen online.
Goal: to review the public comments rec'd during scoping
If you are interested in sitting in on that meeting, send a note to Brianna Carollo
Using Microsoft Teams Platform.
- Umatilla NF is bringing on **two new District Rangers**
Aaron Gagon will replace Mike Rassbach, on the Walla Walla District
Susan Piper will replace Monte Fujishin, on the Pomeroy District
Both starting at the end of April

BIC Updates

- What is the BIC? Blues Intergovernmental Council
When the Blue Mtn forest Plan was withdrawn, a group of governmental organizations including
 - counties
 - reg. agencies
 - tribes
 - FSgot together to work out better solutions.
The BIC is entirely composed of governmental organizations, at this point.
- They had a number of science presentations scheduled, which are now on hold.
They are moving fwd on socio-economic study
- Subcommittees:
Wildfire Salvage
The habitat, access & Wilderness
Grazing, fisheries & hydrology
Timber harvest & forest health
Socio-economic
- Guiding Principles for Final Condition.
7 points of interest from E. Oregon Counties
Umatilla Tribes First Foods & River Conditions
- Cmt: Although it is technically open, some stakeholders were not invited to the BIC meetings
Concern: that the FS is going to rely on flawed science from previous Plan
Concern: Some don't feel fully represented by our local commissioners
Expectation of the FS: that there will be a robust public process where all are invited.

- Q: Are BIC meetings open to the public
A: Yes. There is a brief comment period for audience members at every meeting
- Q: Will any of the upcoming presentations be available virtually?
A: We don't know yet. We're simply on hold for the immediate future.

Flood Update

- See map of road & resource damage on the Umatilla NF.

Covid-19 Local Resources

- Jeff provided a resource sheet
- Union & Wallowa Counties are working together
They have an incident management team

Approval of February Minutes

- Kerry: Q: Additional funding from the State: did we actually get this?
A: Steve Hawkins: Yes – we are one of 3 areas that were selected for add'l funding.
In part due to our excellent CFLRP application.
However, it hasn't been allocated yet, so things could change.
It's only for continued implementation of ongoing projects.
- Rob: Expressed concerns about
 - collaborative involvement with CFLRP
 - the possibility of discussing whether climate change/Starkey is real. (Feels we should be beyond that)
- Concern: the Andrew Merschel review was so long after his actual presentation, many people likely forgot.
Resp: All agree. This was a new process for reviewing newly-presented science and research that was developed by the Steering Committee...and that same group decided to "beta test" the process by revisiting Andrew Merschel's presentation, first. In the future, it is expected that this process will take place immediately after a science/research presentation (possibly as early as the very next day), and will include other members of the NBFC, besides the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee does represent a broad spectrum of the full collaborative membership, but not a complete cross-section of membership.
- Request: Please note in the minutes that this was a later recall of just a small subset of members
Resp: That's in the pre-amble to all notes.
- Brian abstains from voting (he was not present at last month's meeting)
- No actual changes
- Minutes of the February meeting were approved unanimously

FS Updates (10:52)

- Covid-19: We're using tele-work as much as possible, and pushing forward as much as possible.
We're meeting with permittees virtually
We're meeting with timber sale operators virtually
We're starting field surveys next week.
We'll prepare for several aquatics restoration contracts
(all local contracts...so, safer and not bringing in outside virus)
- Q: Rumor that some NF's are closing down recreation ...
but not logging or grazing ... any truth to that?

A: Lots of conversation around recreation
In order to be consistent with state orders ... hiking is not essential travel.
We should probably close sites that could create concentrations of people.
It's not that we'll be writing tickets ... more education.
Can't be taking people to jails.
Need to put Covid-19 as a #1 priority.

- Region 6 will not be lighting any Rx fire this spring.
- Whitman District Updates from Bob Hassmiller
 - see handout –
 - Patrick project: will be out in April, not March
 - Reason: retirements & transitions.
Willy Crippen retired – been replaced
NEPA planner retired – been replaced
Adrienne is the District NEPA planner
They've moved a bunch of district folks up to the SO.
Roy Cusick, District Silviculturist, is now at the SO.

Umatilla NF Landscape Restoration Prioritization

- Andrew Stinchfield is lead. He shared a ppt.
Presentation by Richie Gardner & Andrew
- Alan Ager's work "Scenario Planning: A Tool for Conservation in an Uncertain World"
Is the underlying science/planning paradigm informing the project.
It's a classic paper in the field.
- Today's presentation is not about a finished, polished product.
The point of presenting now is that people will be able to offer suggestions before things are set in stone.
- Goal: landscape level planning. What to do first, second, third etc.
First time we've done this with ecosystem resiliency as the primary purpose.
This is not a NEPA process. It's about identifying areas that we should do NEPA on next.
The point is to use data, rather than bias, to choose where to treat next.
- Purpose: get a clear view of priorities & tradeoffs
 - schedule priorities (not prioritize schedule)
 - better choice of priorities
 - create a systematic, repeatable method that can continue to be used.
- Key Values being addressed
 - ecological departure
 - wildfire hazard
 - wildfire transmission to urban & private lands
 - insect & disease risk
 - economic feasibility (cost, revenue etc.)
- Key Process: look at many layers of values

Data

- Split the forest into 12th field HUC
~ 15,000 – 70,000 acres each

- All plots are sampled by satellite.
Then, certain plots are ground-truthed.
Then, those are extrapolated to other similar looking plots.
- Uses FVS data set
Watershed Condition analyses
Wildlife suitability modeling
- Two key kinds of stands:
 - dry groups – post Tx Broadcast rx fire
 - moist/cold forests – post Tx – pile burned
- Alan Ager actually looked at the Blue Mtns in his original paper.
Asks: what do the outcomes look like under different priorities?
EG: if we prioritize WUI Tx, what does it cost? what does it do to wildlife?
- Ember Reduction Zones – highly valued resources & assets
 - private inholdings
 - campgrounds
 - summer homes etc.
- Developing PODs
Able to look at what the highest risk PODs are.
- How to maximize treatment longevity?
How do you blend that with resiliency?

Questions (1:36)

- Q: How have you incorporated the Regional Quantitative Wildfire Risk Analysis?
A: It was originally it's own objective, but they took such a broad-scale look that they didn't really capture as many of the assets as the FS included. Trying to incorporate that data.
- Q: Are you incorporating conditions & values on all lands?
A: We only have FS data right now. We could incorporate other lands if we got the data.
- Q: How did the 21" limit impact post-Tx stand density & objectives?
A: In some cases, it "severely" limited our ability to get into recommended stand densities.
The RO 21" Rule Team looked at our data.
- Q: were you realistic about what you could actually treat?
A: We did our best to remove Wilderness, IRAs, riparian areas etc.
- Q: Did you look at how to achieve various wildlife objectives - such as dry forest guilds, forage for big game distribution and mule deer habitat?
A: We used structure as a proxy for wildlife: OFMS & OFSS specifically.
We are looking at species habitat as a value at risk, and setting it up so we could even prioritize it as the highest value. We think that once we prioritize the landscape, we're expecting the NEPA team to achieve the wildlife objectives.
- Cmt: Landscape level planning is good, especially when informed by science. BUT I still see biased assumptions that we may not all share such as "the forest is unhealthy" "Fire, bugs and natural disturbances are bad" and that we need to restore it. There are 38 species that are limited by snags. Then it goes straight to economic value.
Q: What is HRV? 1492? 1850? 1920? What's it departed from? Structure doesn't include wildlife that have been extirpated, or amphibians. What about the HRV for roads? We only look for the departure for stand densities. The economics don't look beyond extraction? What about recreation? Carbon

sequestration? and others. WUIs concern me because they're so big. What about social license for road closures & road building?

A: There are so many details, feedback from the public, recreation ... we simply can't get it all in to the model. That stuff has to be addressed at the implementation level. **We didn't use SDI as a measure of HRV or departure.** We're just trying to manage stands that are way outside the management zone. We don't think that insects & disease are "bad" it's just about how much of them we have.

- Cmt: The decisions I saw made in here I think were made based on assumptions that I don't think we all share. It's really how do we go log the forest? Concern: We're seeing increased efforts to get around NEPA with CEs. Given these risk models I could see a lot of this going through that which would cut out public review.
- Cmt: I am supportive of sending volume to the local mills when there is an ecological benefit to the forest. The focus on reducing wildfire risk to WUIs is good. The graphs that maximized economic output ... that didn't overlap with the WUI benefit. Would you consider the possibility that increasing economic output could increase the risk of wildfire? For example, clear cuts are quite flammable. Appreciation that time since treatment influences effectiveness. SDI is a great tool, when you've decided that a particular stand is appropriate for Tx. There are other values that probably indicate that stands should not be treated at all, even if they are "overstocked".

RO Presentation on the 21" Rule. (2:00)

- Emily Platt & team presented on the RO effort
 - Barbara Garcia, Regional Wildlife Ecologist (replaced Kim Mellon-McLain)
 - Maia Enzer, Communications & Engagement lead
 - Audrey MacLennan, Project Assistant, modeling & analysis
 - Andrea Dolbear, Planning Specialist (not present)
 - Summer Kemp Jennings, ecologist (not present)
 - Carrie Spradlin, Silviculturist (present)
- Team has only been in place for about 10 days.
- Goal: Amend Mgmt Plans for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, Malheur, Ochoco, and Deschutes National Forests.
- Narrow focus on the 21" standard.
- Intent: to be better able to manage for forests that area better able to recover from wildfire and other disturbances.
- Key values
 - durable ecological, social & political solution
 - efficient process
 - science based approach
- One NEPA document for all six forests, one decision.
- Talking with many people inside the FS.
- Public Engagement
 - Originally planned a lot of in-person meetings.
 - Will now need to be more virtual
- Instead of traditional scoping more "technical workshops" aimed at groups like the collaborative that are filled with people who understand what's going on.
 - hoping to have these in May, dates not set.
 - There will also be general public meetings.

- There will be a formal comment period on the draft EIS.

Comments

- Q: Will there be an opportunity for formal, written scoping comments?
A: We thought we could have more productive conversations with people through technical workshops.
- Cmt: for the conservation community the 21" screen is important.
Large structure is important to wildlife.
This should be done holistically.
We've seen too many times when we give an inch, and a mile is taken.
- Q: How are you thinking about HRV & the 21" thing when late & old forest is lacking ...
How are you going to wrestle with this given HRV goals in the current plans?
A: It's not that we need to remove lots of larger trees. It's a species composition issue. We think we can create a landscape that's more resistant and resilient. We're still working on the analysis.
- Cmt: What specifically about the 21" Rule has worked well, and what had changed since then? There's no dispute that we still need old forest. Its about setting up processes for the future.
- Q: Goal of the technical workshops – what is it?
- Sharing your science?
- asking about other thoughts that might be out there?
A: It's about both – presentation, and listening.
- Cmt: 21" Rule works OK.
Been a defender of the grand fir ... we probably have more than we should
Big ones are important for wildlife, heart rot provides space for cavity nesters.
- Q: If the problem being solved is species composition, can't you make a lot of progress to address that issue by removing trees smaller than 21" dbh?
A: Not going to get into a science debate right now.
This is the heart of a deeper conversation that we will be having.
- Cmt: Will also need to address
- snag habitat
- carbon sequestration
- Cmt: Age & size are not a substitute for each other.
This was supposed to be temporary.
- Cmt: it was supposed to be temporary until there was a holistic Eastside Forest Plan
This is not a holistic process.
- Cmt: ICEBMP was supposed to be the holistic solution, but it never came through.
Hope you will look at that old research.
Resp: PNW Research is doing a review of all the relevant science.
Hopefully we'll have someone from PNW at the technical workshops.
- Cmt: The screens were not arbitrary. There was good science at the time.
Q: How are we going to determine the existing condition.
We know there is a deficit of old & large structure, how do we determine it?
A: Don't have a set approach yet. Do you have any suggestions?
- Cmt: There's no dispute that we should continue to protect old trees. We're hoping to create something even better than the rule that we have now.

Jeff posed the question:

How does the collaborative want to prepare ourselves to be an active participant?

- No responses
- Emily: we'd like you to engage in technical workshops
- Request: please make these available to people who don't live locally.

Contact Information for "Team 21"

- Emily Platt: emily.platt@usda.gov 360-216-5183
- Maia Enzer: maia.enzer@usda.gov 503-312-8863

Revised Operating Principles (2:47)

What do you like the most, what concerns you?

- Rob: previous Mission & Vision was not much more than 5 lines.
Please shorten & wordsmith.
There are some red flags

We don't incorporate all interested voices
- strive to?

We don't agree on
- what resilience & restoration actually mean.

NFs are not just for locals
- Rob re: Forest Principles
- can't support non-native plants
- or pesticides & herbicides
- Kerry: Group word-smithing is not efficient
How do we do that efficiently?
If this is not the time, what is?
- Brian Kelly -
The original process was way too much group word-smithing.
But those original principles were developed via that process.
Please use that verbatim as much as possible.

The ground rules for behavior ... include that in the Operating Principles.
It's one of the most important parts ... about how we behave with each other.
Jeff: that will be brought back in.

The "Forest Stewardship Principles" section feels a lot like a ZOA; and perhaps should be separated out, as a stand-alone document to be discussed and reviewed.
Question how much we want in this document.
This should be about how we operate together.

Please don't look to project-level documents, as those were just for the project.
- Nils -
The original language doesn't provide an adequate framework for a collaborative to be successful. If we don't know what we're trying to achieve ... then maybe this isn't the right structure to move forward. We want to move forward building agreement, and that's going to require a new way of doing business.

- Brian: Mutual understanding is important, but concerns
- Rob: Original change from old to new:
 - previous consensus decision was a failure
 - Current: simply learning from each other & helping FS understand us is important.
 Also want language to the effect of getting stuff done.

Stuff: getting a project done
 Agreeing on ZOAs, or project specific comments.
 More than just mutual understanding.
- Pam: The whole point of change from original to new is changing
 - from consensus documents
 - to mutual understanding & highlighting perspectives for the FS
 because we've been getting high centered on the last 5% (wordsmithing the documents), which is not the most important. On Sheep Creek, we'd finished the most important work, and then spent three more months on wordsmithing.
 Agree that we want to "get stuff done", but not going to get hung up on details.
- Brian: How's the newer vision on the Sheep Creek vision working?
- Bill G: The conversation heard on Sheep Creek was very helpful.
 We're committed to making sure folks feel heard.
 But not everyone is going to get everything that they want.
 Just want to make sure everyone is approaching it genuinely.
 Value is to have a diverse spectrum that engage together.
- Pam: There are opportunities for synergy if we're really informed by each other's opinions.
 (Rather than just working in a silo)
- Brian: I see that actually happening.
- Mike: We may not have shared goals.
 There probably are some places that we don't have agreement.
- Bill: I think that mostly people just want to know that if they come to the table, they're going to be listened to and respected...
 that we're going to listen & provide feedback objectively.
- Rob: liked the operating protocols in the back half better.
- Kerry: If we want to get "stuff" done, we need some mechanisms for "how"
 so that we're not just going round and round.
- Pam: any other substantive concerns that haven't been said yet?
- Br Goff: observation: participation has waned significantly.
 We haven't had the diversity of thought recently ... that's really helpful to hear.
 With CFLRP, people came to the table BIG time... stuff got done.

Adjourn: 3:10