

## Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition

### Meeting Notes

January 14, 2010

John Konzen opened the meeting by introducing two new attendees—Doug Miller, Mine Manager for Genesis and Darren Coldwell who is a candidate for County Commissioner for the Troy District.

Quinn Carver gave an update on the discussions about our MOU with the Forest Service. The current MOU is somewhat restrictive in that the Stakeholders focus principally would be in the WUI. There appears to be a need to expand the area of Stakeholders involvement to deal with landscape size projects. Also the Forest Service is beginning to establish the team for the forest plan effort. Quinn, in discussions with Supervisor Paul Bradford, suggested that a modification to the MOU to encourage Stakeholder involvement in the planning process would be a good thing. The MOU would specifically address Stakeholder involvement in developing alternatives to the forest plan.

Jeff Gruber brought up his concern with the Stakeholders being asked to develop “forest policy.” Jeff’s opinion is that the policy ought to be developed by the elected officials or those specifically charged with that responsibility. Quinn countered that he did not look at stakeholder involvement in the planning process to be developing policy but guidance to the Forest Service through the process. Quinn went on to encourage the Stakeholders to get involved in the forest plan. He thought that because of the diversity of the group, many of the issues that will be part of the forest plan would be aired and discussed and potentially offer an alternative through the Stakeholders consensus process.

Mike Petersen talked about the success the Colville group had in working with the Forest Service on the forest plan. The Forest Service desired a collaborative forest plan and Mike thought that substantial agreement was reached on some major topics and areas of the forest.

Quinn stated that with all the issues and new planning rules involved in developing a forest plan that a two year time frame has been placed on this process. There was general agreement that the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Executive Committee will take up the issue with the MOU.

### Three Rivers Project Team Update: Sparring Bulls Project (Sarah Canepa, Timory Peel and Mike Herrin)

Three Rivers Project team began working with the staff at the Three Rivers District in May 2009 to develop the purpose and need for the project area. Expect the DEIS for Sparring Bulls to be released in February 2010 with a 45 day comment period. Timory

and Sarah wanted to share details about the proposed action to prepare people for an **action vote on the project at the March meeting.**

The purpose of this project is to:

- Contribute to the supply of timber in the area by recovering economically valuable wood products
- Increase forage habitat for big-game and grizzly bears using timber harvest and prescribed fire, including maintaining huckleberry fields over time for wildlife forage and public use.
- Reduce sediment delivery and risk of road failures in the Lake Creek watershed.
- Reduce hazardous ladder fuels, surface fuels, and canopy densities in the vicinity of private property and associated access routes to provide for public and firefighter safety.

The harvest units in the project were identified based on:

- Potential for improving huckleberry production for bears.
- Opportunities to reduce hazardous fuels in close proximity to private lands and transportation routes.
- Improvement of stand health and stand dynamics in accordance with the historic range of variability.

The Hazardous Fuels prescriptions focus on the removal of non-commercial wood fiber to reduce fuel loading in areas of concern. The project looked for opportunities to improve forage for big game and bears through vegetation management and prescribed burning. The TRD has expressed a strong desire to allow natural burns to occur under appropriate circumstances to help manipulate vegetative conditions in IRAs and other areas of the forest.

Watershed Improvement work includes both road stabilization and road decommissioning:

- Camp Creek and Madge Creek Watershed: 6 miles of road stabilization
- Keeler Creek Watershed: 34 miles of road stabilization to remove failing water structures (photos will illustrate some of the historic log culverts that are threatening to fail)

Overall there will be approximately 4 miles of road decommissioning but no re-contouring is planned at this point.

IRA Concerns:

- Unit 13 is located in a designated IRA but is located directly adjacent to a residential area and Highway 56. After careful consideration the KFSC project team agrees that a fuels reduction treatment in this unit is appropriate in a manner consistent with the Roadless Area directive. It will be tractor logged and negotiations are underway with Stimson to locate a landing on their property adjacent to the unit to minimize disturbance within the unit.

Watershed work in Keeler Creek:

- The group is in agreement that the watershed work being proposed in Keeler Creek is important to reduce sediment delivery and improve bull trout habitat.
- The proposed watershed work has also prompted consultation with the USFWS to evaluate the impacts to both Bull Trout and Grizzly bears. Performing this watershed work in the limited timeframe to avoid adverse impacts to bull trout spawning activities, will temporarily reduce the amount of core habitat for grizzly bears.
- These impacts are prompting the TRD to move forward with a DEIS vs. the previously planned Environmental Impact Statement.

Three River Project Team has agreed on the following issues:

- Fuels reduction work in proximity to residences and transportation routes are important, including the unit located within an IRA.
- The watershed work proposed in Keeler Creek is important for bull trout and other wildlife species in the area.
- The use of planned and unplanned fire ignitions to improve foraging opportunities.
- Support the use of temporary roads to conduct harvest versus the creation of new system roads.

Issues that the Three Rivers Project team have not resolved:

- The appropriate level of access management in the project as it relates to the Draft Supplemental DEIS for Motorized Access Management for Grizzly Bears. The project currently exceeds the standards put forth in Alternative E modified– The preferred alternative for the USFS.

The Three Rivers Project Team will be meeting again to discuss the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and to prepare a team comment letter to the project.

Mike Petersen asked: There was another alternative for the Motorized Access Management plan, Alternative D, which would give the greatest habitat security to grizzly bears but would be the most restrictive of motorized access. What would that look like in this project area?

Timory: For the most part, meeting the full standards of that Alternative would require the District to close most roads that did not access private lands. Although some alterations could be made, this would likely affect access to some very popular recreational areas: Keeler Creek, Spar Lake Campground, Ross Creek Cedars. The district decided that because of the impacts to recreation resources in the project area, this was not a viable alternative to develop for analysis.

Additional project information can be found on the Forest website at :

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai/projects/projects/spar-lake/index.shtml>

If you would like to be on the mailing list to receive the Draft EIS please contact Mike Herrin, Timory Peel, or Kathy Mohar at the District office: 406-295-4693. If you know of

any issues the Three Rivers KNFSC Project Team has not addressed please contact Sarah Canepa at 406-295-9906 [sarahlcanepa@gmail.com](mailto:sarahlcanepa@gmail.com) or Ed Levert at 406-293-2847 [televert@kvis.net](mailto:televert@kvis.net)

Flower Creek Update: Ed Levert gave an update on this project. There were two unresolved issues with the Lands Council: The Lands Council questions why the Forest Service is even proposing this project. Ed's and the FS response is that the project is designed to improve the resistance of the stands to wild fire coming down Flower creek into the community of Libby and protecting the municipal water shed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> issue deals with Old Growth. The project meets current Forest Plan standards. However, the Lands Council would like to see a larger percentage of old growth enhancements and protection.

Malcolm Edwards gave a detailed overview of the project and would like the Stakeholders to vote on this project at the March Meeting.

Due to road conditions, the meeting was cut short so those traveling could get a start on their return

Nest meeting will be March 18<sup>th</sup>. Same time, same location.

Paul Rumelhart  
Secretary