

Beaverhead Collaborative meeting 12/22/2021 Notes

Meeting purpose

Management Roundtable

The **purpose** of the meeting today is to build understanding and fill two information needs to support problem solving and consensus building

- 1) current resource priorities in this area that have been identified by resource management agencies, NGOs, private interests and public partners (include map of resource concerns / restoration priorities / important habitat / populations)
- 2) different tools available for resource management - this includes agreements, MOUs, state or federal designations, cultural management, management planning, restoration planning, and similar tools that define and direct activities in a specific management area.

Attendees

Colin Cooney, Jeff Johnson, Sen. Jeff Welborn, Tom Rice, Zach Owen, Alec Underwood, Rep. Walsh, Jim Berkey, Scott Laird, Barb Cestero, Jack Kirkley, Sean Steinbach, Parke Scott, Jay Bodner, Jim Magee, Alex Dunn, Cindy Purdue-Dolan.

Decisions

- Jack Kirkley moved to adopt the charter, Colin seconded, passed 100% - Charter adopted.
 - Share with those not present to confirm their support.
- Sean consider joining the collaborative, how to engage when there isn't a lot of direct timber management.
- Parke Scott officially joined to represent motorized recreation. *Jeff Welborn moved, Jack Kirkley seconded and passed unanimously.*
 - Develop a list of additional recreation groups and contacts to have broad input for summer, winter, motorized and non-motorized to get input on draft plans.
- Jim Berkey officially joined to represent Land Trusts. *Jeff Welborn moved, Jack Kirkley seconded and passed unanimously.*
- Schedule BLM to share management tools and resource priorities at next meeting.

Resources

Big Sheep watershed assessment

https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/nepa/55763/66700/72542/Big_Sheep_Creek_Watershed_Assessment_Report_Master_508.pdf

Dillon BLM RMP- <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/126556#page/5/mode/1up>

Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest plan-

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/bdnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5052938>

Sage Grouse Initiative

<https://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/partnering-to-conserve-a-sagebrush-landscape/>

Montana Natural Heritage Program - <https://mtnhp.org/>
http://nrис.mt.gov/gis/gisdatalib/downloads/100Kpub_DILLON.pdf

Meeting Notes

Charter

Adopted 12/22/21

Membership

Jim Berkey – represents land trusts

Parke Scott – represents motorized recreation

Sean Steinbach – considering representing forestry

USFS – Alex Dunn

There are inherent challenges managing across boundaries but we manage grazing allotments with BLM and have the same standards for utilization.

The MT WSA act directs the management and areas that are contiguous to Hidden Pasture are designated FS non-motorized.

The Medicine Lodge Tendoy areas are managed semi/mostly primitive with the uses of livestock grazing, dispersed recreation and wildlife habitat. There are no key watersheds identified for fisheries work.

29% is summer non-motorized, 49% is backcountry recreation, 21% is road-based

See the FOREST PLAN to find management priorities and the official framework.

Current authorization to explore gas development in the road-based White Pine Ridge, awaiting BLM subsurface authorization.

Permittee – Jeff, I can get water to the FS allotment it just takes time.

Plan revisions were last made in 2009. Updates are made every 10-15 years and are probably due in 2025 starting with assessment of existing conditions. There are three national bio-teams that lead the region in updates and specialty teams that provide more detail, this system is set to try and expedite the planning process. There are regional travel management teams as well. It is intended to be adaptive rather than starting from scratch each time.

The travel plans do not have a sunset and prohibitions and orders are standing – you stay on the roads and do not do cross country travel.

Most of the wildlife habitat management is sage grouse and focused on late brood habitat.

Largest management issue is motorized use in the Tendos during hunting season.

The ACEC (Area Critical Ecological Concern) is designated for cultural reasons.

In the Wilderness Act is different than the MT Wilderness Study Act – the MT WSA applies only to FS lands. BLM WSA designations must be done through congress and only congress can lift a designation. In the resource management plan for BLM in appendix Q it spells out what would happen if the designation is lifted.

USFWS – Jim Magee

Working on a project to use LWCF funds for private, voluntary conservation easements in the High Divide. Currently the focus areas are in four geographies and this effort would focus on private, working lands that fulfill critical wildlife and corridor values. Bringing additional funds will be helpful but we will still not meet demand.

Working on a map that is biologically justified with a steering committee (county commissions, watershed groups etc.). The process is bottom up and we are getting input from many locals and leaders and landowners. We can present a draft map in about 6 months.

The Nature Conservancy is also seeing a lot of interest in easements. We are balancing community and resource / biological needs. Making sure communities can grow.

Once the area is designated there will be a prioritization process that is informed by threats and biological needs.

There are some existing easements in Big Sheep Creek and Medicine Lodge and we are building additional relationships with landowners in this area. Most of our contacts are word of mouth and based on relationships.

Species of concern in the area are: fluvial Arctic grayling, sage grouse and sagebrush habitat, big game, grizzly bear, migratory corridors.

Biological maps – thunderstorm plots to identify critical areas and community needs (grass banking, drought etc.).

TNC has identified Big Sheep Creek as important for late season flows for drought resiliency and climate planning.

Updates and conversations

- Colin gave an update to the B-D working group on the collaborative
- Jamie from FS provide an update on resource concerns in the watershed
- Colin gave a general overview of the collaborative to the High Divide Collaborative
- Conversation with U MT to secure new facilitator
- Follow up on TRCP donation to support the group

Assignments and next steps

Doodle Poll for regular meeting date

Develop a list of additional recreation groups and contacts to have broad input for summer, winter, motorized and non-motorized to get input on draft plans.

Schedule BLM to share management tools and resource priorities at next meeting.

Review maps and resource plans – links provided.

<u>Organization/Interest</u>	<u>Number of Seats & Representation</u>	<u>December 22, 2021</u>
County Commission	1	Tom Rice
Local legislators	3	Senator Welborn, Rep Welch, Rep Walsh
Citizen at-large	1	Jack Kirkley
Conservation District	1	Zach Owen (Beaverhead Wtrsd Com)
Agriculture	1	Jay Bodner MT Stockgrowers or Raylee Honeycutt
Landowners	2	Byron Martinell, Jeff Johnson
Sportsmen NGO	3	Colin Cooney (TU), Alec Underwood (MT Wildlife Federation), Scott Laird (TRCP)
Conservation NGO	2	Barb Cestero (The Wilderness Society) Emily Cleveland (MT Wild)
Land Trust	1	Jim Berkey (The Nature Conservancy)
Wood products	1	Sean Steinebach TBC (Outreach Forester for Sun Mountain Lumber)
Recreation	1	Parke Scott
Tribal		Consultation role as sovereign nation

*Recreation may have 2 representatives, if a motorized representative and quiet recreation representative can both be identified to provide balance.

Technical Advisors agency and organization representatives to advise and share information.

Steering Committee

Jeff Johnson
 Colin Cooney
 Zach Owen
 Jeff Welborn – or other local representative as available