

Beaverhead County Collaborative

Notes

January 19, 2023

1:00pm- 3:30pm

Borden's in Whitehall and Zoom

BCC Voting Members Attending: Zach Owen, Beaverhead Conservation District; Scott Laird, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partners; Byron Martinell, Landowner; Barb Cestero, The Wilderness Society; Jeff Johnson, Landowner; Parke Scott, Motorized Recreation; Gene Loder, Citizen at Large; Aubrey Betram, Wild Montana; Jim Berkey, The Nature Conservancy; Colin Cooney, Trout Unlimited; Sean SteinBach, Sun Mountain Lumber

BCC Advisory Members Attending: None

Guests and Members of the Public Attending: Cindy Purdue-Dolan, Office of Senator Daines; Stephen Kimbell, DNRC and Northern Forestry Foundation; Luke Peters, Landowner

Notes from December: Notes were accepted unanimously from the December 15, 2022 meeting.

Announcements:

- Luke Peters is a local rancher and has permits on Bell Lime Kiln and the Italian Peaks
- The Northern Forestry Foundation has a conference for collaborative processes in Montana. It is asking the Beaverhead County Collaborative to send 1-2 leaders to its conference in Missoula on March 2-3. Expenses are reimbursed, but they need to know who could attend by February 9. Zach Owen may be able to be a representative of the group at that conference. **Action:** Register 1-2 people by February 9 and send in collaborative information
- Travel reimbursements for BCC members traveling on their own dime are still available and can be reimbursed at the 2023 Federal rate

Budget Update: The Northern Forestry Foundation granted the group another \$5,000 to support the efforts of the group. These funds are expected to help the group throughout 2023.

Collaboration:

Jeff Johnson asked the group to recenter on its goals and what they've done so far. He pointed out that everyone in the group has the best motives for the ground and have worked together to figure out how to identify the issues and use the tools that are available. The Hidden Pasture has been a success because the group worked with what they had. The Backcountry Conservation Area was a BLM tool that works there and for Mr. Johnson, the result checks a lot of boxes.

He hopes the group can continue to work with local landowners as they go forward and make a set of agreements that can be used to finalize the status of the areas. Mr. Peters is visiting today to share his

knowledge of the Bell Lime Kiln area and see what it is about and if joining as a landowner would be useful.

Discussion: Hidden Pasture Agreement:

The group had agreed in December to the agreements, but felt the language needed some more work to clarify it. A sub-group of BCC members volunteered to work on the language and bring it back to the group. Additionally, Commissioner Rice volunteered the GIS department to make two maps that would show the setbacks that the group requested be removed from the proposed BCA, but remain BLM land.

The group focused on areas that needed further work and identified what else was needed to put this area to rest until the final package of several areas in Beaverhead could be put together for the Congressional delegation to bring forward.

This discussion focused on areas that still needed more work.

- **Minor Boundary changes:** It was agreed that all would need legal descriptions to make the proposed changes as clear as possible.
 - **Big Sheep Creek:** This area has a road, power and internet lines as well as a rock quarry that all designated outside the BCA. A 60' setback from the furthest infrastructure would meet the need to conduct maintenance. For the quarry, the line is back from where the rock slope changes so it can be efficiently mined without chance of rock falls that would cross the line. A legal description of these two states were needed
 - **Muddy Creek Road:** A set-back would only apply on BLM land, not on the private land. The setback only needs to be designated on the current WSA side of the road, but there was a question as to whether the ACEC and cultural artifacts would impose additional administrative management requirements that this group would not affect. Colin Conney will question the BLM staff about those requirements. Because this is on BLM land, there is not a setback illustrated on the map yet. The group agreed that it needed to find out what other management issues are and then draw a setback. Several distances were mentioned to meet the needs of maintaining that road over time, up to 60' from the centerline of the road. A legal definition will be needed with the setback
 - **Quarter Circle Road Trail and pre existing ditch:** The map depicts a 30' setback from the road and ditch works, which would become the BCA boundary. The private road and ditch works and the land to the east of those would be outside the boundary, but would remain as BLM land.
 - **Boundary Change Language and Map Options:**
- **Mining in Quarry:** Group had previously agreed that the only feasible use of the quarry was for rock extraction and clarified that it was for that purpose, not sand or gravel.

Actions:

Subcommittee Action: Write legal descriptions for Big Sheep Creek Road and additional lines. Write legal description for setback from Quarter Circle Trail Road and pre-existing ditch, in line with description on maps provided by the County.

Action: Colin Cooney talks to BLM about ACEC and how it affects a setback for the Muddy Creek Road.

Subcommittee Action: Once information on setback within ACEC is set, clarifies setback with BCC membership and drafts a legal description.

Communications:

Since Hidden Pasture is agreed upon, the question on how to share that information was brought up. There was a concern that the message needs to both share the progress and point out the further work the group is doing in order to help ensure that these recommendations result in Congressional action.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to talk to the neighbors around Hidden Pasture to update them. Informal updates to stakeholder groups would also be helpful, emphasizing both the progress on Hidden Pasture and the continuing work. It also would be helpful to have specific messages that the group agrees on. Overall, there is interest in getting media coverage, but want to make sure the story is told well

Action: Leadership team needs to discuss messaging and bring suggestions back to the full group for discussion.

Action: BCC membership, especially landowners, informally talk to neighbors and interested stakeholders about the Hidden Pasture agreement and future work

Bell Lime Kiln Discussion:

The BCC evaluates each area in terms of agriculture, cultural resources, fishers, recreation and wildlife. They look at past and current practices, recommendations and existing information about other factors such as roads, habitat, access, forestry, and mining potential that need to be factored into the overall management priorities for the area. The group also focuses on using the management tools available.

Agriculture:

Luke Peters is a permittee on the Lime Kiln side of the Bill Lime Kiln Wilderness Study Area (WSA). He had several observations about the area, including:

- Operate cattle in April, and sometimes come back briefly, depending on the weather and potential range, within the scope of their permit
- Use stock tanks. Dry country, though there are some springs
- Current set-up works very well for their operation

- Extremely steep terrain. They can use trucks and side-by-sides in the lower reaches, but both road closures and the terrain make it so horses make the most sense for most of their operation in the area
- See few to no people during their time on the range
- Do see both cultural artifacts from Native Americans and from the early ranching and settlement period, including evidence from sheep ranching and old historical artifacts. Much of that is weathering
- Public access is from the bottom
- There are additional permit(s) for the Bell side

Hunting potential was discussed.

- Tough terrain
- Parke Scott reports wildlife has shifted over time
- Need for more information on wildlife and hunting in the area

Fisheries potential was not known, but lack of surface water streams in the area

Recreation:

- Potential for hiking. Biking/horseback riding for recreation was not discussed, but any data on this would be helpful
- Motorized recreation is used in some of it, but needs more information on use levels. Some changes in ownership around Bell Lime Kiln have resulted in less access. There was interest expressed in planning for a loop for motorized recreation that would start and end with public access
- Getting the BLM travel plan would be useful, as would any data on recreational use

Forestry:

- Extremely steep terrain seems to limit potential, but there is timber in parts of the area. Any information on potential would be useful
- Jack Kirkey reported large Douglas Firs in draws in area

Roads: Request for road numbers, and information about the status of roads, and the BLM travel plan for the area

Mining: Need to find potential, but thought to be similar to Hidden Pasture

- Request to follow up on a mining representative

[Note: Colin Cooney followed up with Matt Vincent, ED of the Montana Mining Association (MMA). He said that they could not join the group, but could come in the next couple of months to share information about mining potential and interest in the area(s).]

Management Options: Scott Laird was asked to bring information about management options to the group in February. The group thought that could be followed up by BLM staff as needed.

There was also interest expressed in a tour of the area in April, it was possible to get in. Later dates were discussed, but there is concern that summer would be too late.

Bell-Lime Kiln Actions:

- Byron Martinell, Colin Cooney, Parke Scott and any others with contacts will follow up with contacts that represent the mining industry and to see about expertise and interest in working in a collaborative process. Information about contact availability and collaborative experience will be brought to the February meeting.
- Colin Cooney asked to get information on official roads and travel plan, cultural information, hunting, permittee and other resources that the BLM has available
- Byron Martinell - History contact to find out more of history, mining
- Gene Loder and Parke Scott - any information they have on motorized use. Parke also brings any additional hunting and history information he has.
- Scott Laird: Bring in information about management options, their criteria and the ones that might fit so group can be informed and discuss at February meeting
- Mike Durglo (CSKT) and Shoshone Bannock Tribe information on cultural inventories for area
- Barb Cestero: Habitat information
- **All:** Any information you have on agriculture, cultural artifacts and history, fisheries, recreation, roads, wildlife, timber, habitat and mining for Bell Lime Kiln.

Questions, Concerns and any Public Comment:

There were no questions or public comments.

3:25: Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: February 16, 1-3:30