

Beaverhead County Collaborative
Notes
March 16, 2023
1:00pm- 3:30pm
Borden's in Whitehall and [Zoom](#)

BCC Members Attending: Zach Owen, Jack Kirkley, Jeff Johnson, Barb Cestero, Aubrey Betram, Byron Martinell, Scott Laird, Park, Gene Loder, Colin Cooney, Parke Scott, Senator Wellborn

BCC Advisors: Tim Love, MFCN

Guests and Public Attending: Cindy Perdue Dolan, Senator Daines' Office; Darryl Scott, Kerry White, Center for Balanced Use; Jim Broom, Bill Hodge, The Wilderness Society; Steve Kimball, DNRC

Notes and Facilitation: Karen Filipovich, MT Stockgrowers,

Proxies: Jeff Johnson: Tom Rice, Sen. Wellborn, Ken Walsh, MT Stockgrowers, and Tom Welsh.
Scott Laird: Colin Cooney, after 3pm.

Notes

Announcements:

Looking for a new location starting in June. Action: Karen Filipovich will make some calls and see what else is available in Whitehall

Cindy Perdue-Dolan - Sen. Daines: New Lands conservation policy advisor, Katy Devlin, comes from Western Caucus on the House side. Cindy will email contact information. Deadline for the Cottonwood Decision and fix with USFS on March 23rd. Senator is trying to get it into mark-up by the end of the month. Concern is that the E&R hearing. 100 Forest Plans will have to do reconsultation if this expires. Will see what happens after March 23rd.

1:10: Review and Updates

- Notes from February 16, 2023 meeting

Corrections: Amanda James instead of Amanda Lacey. Jack's discussion - Mountain mahogany, rather than Montana Mahogany. The spelling is Bill Hodge. With these changes, Jeff Johnson motioned, Barb Cestero seconded and to notes were accepted with changes unanimously.

- Budget Update: No new funding received yet from the grant.. Zach Owen had \$296 in expenses for his attendance at the conference. Colin Cooney will check on grant status before the next meeting

- Report: Montana Forest Collaboration Network Conference - Zach Owen

Take-aways: Conference was for the Montana Forest Collaborative Network. The Beaverhead County Collaborative is the only one looking at Wilderness Study areas and Recommended Wilderness Areas.

- Most of the groups had conflict, some with split rooms, and this is part of the process
- Idea of the best alternative to agreement. If this group changes, nothing happens or we get told what to do. This seemed important for BCC, since the areas will remain in limbo if agreement can't be reached
- Consensus is defined differently for different groups, but it is the basis for the work
- Read the code of conduct and charter for members of the public. We need to be careful to talk about the group with the public consistently.
- 4 Ps: Purpose, people, process, product: Based on the definitions in the conference, Zach Owen thinks BCC has a purpose, the people is still a little bit of work in progress with active representation, need to look at the process a bit, and the product needs a little bit of clarity. T
- It will be useful to clarify whether group is making recommendations or will hand in the final bundle with legislative language at the end. This could use some discussion.
- Every group feels they are missing an interest that they want to share. Mining seems to be the most common, but a lot were missing fire, forest, fishing or agriculture. But they talked about the best alternative when a group can't fill a seat.
- Interest is also based on the potential for the area compared to other priorities
- Steve Kimball: There is a lot of interest in this group from the other groups. This is a groundbreaking effort and there is a lot of frustration about these study areas around the state. BCC is the first and is hopefully a model for how to resolve the study status. MFCN will continue to support BCC. In the Payette Forest and are ahead of us with the same purpose in SW Idaho. Steve Kimball will send their information to Karen Filipovich who can share it with the group.
- Tim Love: There were 26 leaders from collaborative groups representing 17-18 groups and they are really diverse around the state. The feedback was positive.
- Barb Cestero says there are other collaborative efforts that do work on wilderness status that can be looked at for successful models. The Rocky Mountain Front coalition did for the wilderness and public land bill in 2014. Part of the reason for the perception for stuckness on wilderness areas is getting Congress to move, even with agreement. This is a common frustration.
- Cindy Purdue-Dolan has brought up Senator Daines efforts to get things done. Consensus and coming up with a solution is of help to move things through Congress.. Senator Daines did write a letter.
- Tester did bring a bill as well and promotes efforts to resolve wilderness status.
- State legislature in 2021 had a resolution to put forward to address these areas

Communications:

- Duncan Adams - Mt Standard outreach on what this group is doing and progress. Colin Cooney is following up with him.

Hidden Pasture Update

Historic Ditch: Name: No one has the official name for the ditch on maps. Peterson and Tanner are the names. Johnson family owns the "Peterson Ditch" - could go to the Land and Title office. Martinell Ditch is the "Tanner Ditch." These should be identified in the language

Action: Parke Scott will find road numbers in BLM.

Muddy Creek: This appears to be a BLM question, but the group is concerned about flooding and ensuring that road maintenance can be continued, even future flooding or erosion require slight moves to the road. They want the road to remain open and outside the BCA on BLM land.

Need to consult with BLM on the exact language. BLM is willing to look at these and see if they have any thoughts on suggestions - do we want that now? The group would like to show language to the BLM to see if they have comments. The group would like that review, if BLM is willing. The group agrees on intent, but is unsure of exactly how to state this language for establishing the boundary of the BCA.

Senator Wellborn requested that the group button this up so that focus can be on other areas.

Action: Ask BLM for thoughts and ask specific questions when they visit the group in April.

Action: Ask for finalizing draft language groups that can be set aside until the entire bundle is put together with any additional legislative language. BCC members are asked to review this.

Bell Lime Kiln Discussion

Jesse Newby - FWP Wildlife Manager

- This talk focused on wildlife values in Bell-Lime Kiln and highlights on resources
- Bell Lime Kiln provides some important habitat, but intensity depends on time of year. It is winter elk range, but there are elk year round. Survey is conducted every winter and other sources including radio collared data in the Tendoy Elk Management Unit. In conducting the monitoring for brucellosis.
 - If you look at the collared elk, we tend to see some use year round, but tend to move west of it in the summer. Move back in during the fall hunting season and the movement peaks during rifle season. Hunting district 302 is a pretty high pressure unit (hunter days increased 70% in the last ten years). Most of it is near a road, so elk may be seeking cover in the Bell-Lime Kiln area. There is motorized use in this area, but not as much, probably because the access and roads don't go through. This may keep them from moving into private lands. During the winter is when they really come in, both from the Tendoy herd and other herds based on winter severity and drought in other areas.

- Take-home: Area acts a buffer for other elk herds plus the Tendoy heard
- Elk - above elk objectives and are 200-400 above for the elk hunt district. 1,250 is the winter range. As hunting season goes on, animals are in the area.
- Are there more elk numbers? Consistently more at that end, more at that end up at McKnight and then down toward Hidden Pasture. Right now, the elk are on the Clark Canyon reservoir
- Mule deer - no collared studies. Do survey opportunistically and have mule deer use within it. Steeper, rougher country, but has mule deer habitat. Appears to have both resident and migratory populations of deer.
 - Parke Scott noted that the deer population has dropped off in last 20 years. Jesse says declines in mule deer all across the west.
 - Do elk outcompete the mule deer? Anecdotal, it seems to depend on particular years. In the Southern Tendoy's has a survey, so the goal is to classify the mule deer. The area south with mahogany stands is usually at over 100 mule deer, but this year, the elk are there and the mule deer are scarce - no food for the deer seems to be going on. Mule deer are more limited in the diet and range than elk..
- Antelope surveys: North Tendoy - in the summer, can be an attractive place for antelope habitat. Thought is that it hangs onto high nutrition forage in summer for longer than surrounding areas.
- Bighorn Sheep: Blake Lowery, et al. did a habitat quality for the Tendoy mountains and the whole area is high quality habitat. There is historic data on Big Sheep and in 2021 the 26 reintroduced sheep were released in the Muddy Creek. Ewes have stayed in Hidden Pasture area, but the rams have used the Bell Lime Kiln
- Sage Grouse: Used by sage grouse and some core habitat, but looks like a lot of the use is in the summer, probably due to higher quality forage in the high country later in the summer. No sage grouse leks known in WSA
- Species of concern: Sage Thrasher, Brewer Sparrow - some good habitat and documentation of use, along with the pygmy rabbit and other species of concern. Silver haired bat present, and rock looks likely for spotted bat
- Moose Presence: There was a question on moose, since Jack Kirkey saw moose sign. Answer: For moose, the shrubs are important. Mountain mahogany is a big use.
- Seems attractive to game species in the summer and elk in winter due to higher elevation and stays wetter in summer.
- Mountain lions - there is harvest out of the area and it is an attractive place to be a mule deer. Maybe one harvested a year. It has been unlimited for mountain lions for the last seven years and hasn't hit quota in 12 years. It's fairly poor cat habitat for Western Montana. Not meeting quota is probably a combo of habitat, chasing and access. Did have 4 cats killed in snares and traps that were set for wolf.
- Poison Lake and some springs in the area (deer canyon - is that in WSA?). Poison Lake was stock historically.
- Black bear use and wolf use. Grizzlies are not documented
- Are there any habitat threats? The hunting district as a whole is a low security district, but because it is not a through road in the Bell Lime Kiln area, it seems to be more secure for animals. There are motorized use, but it is harder to get to and it is dead end road.

John Breen, Mining: interest in the group. He has 20 mining experience in the US and retired in Dillon. He is chair of the board chair for the Dillon museum and has looked at old mining districts in the Dillon area. 1862-1910 and knows a lot of the geology north of the areas we're looking at. Not affiliated with a mining group right now and has worked in 1981-1995. Invites all to the museum and has a lot of history including rail through Armstead.

Darryl Scott, History of Bell- Lime Kiln Area: His family ended up in Bell Canyon in 1880s and the place he is on there is still in the family. There are a lot of neat places that are there, but how do we preserve and keep these places? Concern about access from changes in ownership around the area. Grandkids and great grandkids won't see the game.

- Inholding: Holmes now. Great-uncle ran sheep and cows. Another great uncle had a place where Dr. Hunt is now.
- Access: When Great-uncle had a place, but then they sold it and McVeigh got it, they shut stuff off through many lands. Now only two ways to get on top. Used to be able to go to Bell Canyon, but can't now. Now, in winter you can't, due to access.
- There was a sign there for hiking. Feels a shame that everything is closed off
- Closing is private land choices. In the early 60s, people used to go through McKnight, but closed after oil exploration..
- Used to be Trail of Sheep, went over Bell-Lime Kiln and used to stay over at Darryl Peterson's place each year. There was old access across private land in the area in the 20s and 30s. The three uncles all didn't have children, so the Peterson family name is gone.
- Access question. The area is too steep to reroute around the private land closure. If the McVeigh property can't have access, there are terrain issues for putting in an alternate road. Closures further down, because Roger Peters closed that.
- Parke Scott: Great-grandparents had a stage stop in Red Rock in 1882.
- One of the Briggs folks logged all on the draws. Is there timber potential there in those draws? Darryl lives in a house from wood harvested there. There was a request to find out if the timber in the area is still of commercial interest.
- Springs - very few. Water and little water and water in Poison lake and some watering tanks. There is also a spring somewhere up there, based on cattle behavior, but he has not been able to find it.

The BLM is visiting the group in April. BCC members were asked to identify questions for them:

- What is the timber potential and any logging in the past? This was also a question for Sean Steinberg.
- Road access and roads open - travel plan information and road numbers
- Access information into the area through public or private property. This is outside the purview of this group, but since several changes have taken place in the last couple of decades on private land, having information on the BLM easements and right of way access into the area would be helpful.
- Any information on the three classes of mining potential in the area

- Information on oil/gas leases in the greater area. Group has heard something about White Pine area, and would like to know if there are any leases or history within Bell-Lime Kiln
- Watershed assessments and connections to the larger area. What values is this area supporting?
- Permittee information. Think there are three permittees who practice grazing, but want to confirm that and any other agricultural information
- Any cultural information (inventories or other information)
- What are the management alternatives that would be available for this area?

Other

- Mike Curglo - CSKT and cultural resource. Barb will reach out
- Aubrey Betram - Share information on minerals
- John Breen - Minerals, will see if Tech/ USGS and MBMG has done potential - may or may not have done potential. Will look and see if there is something there, since there are limestone kilns.

Questions, Concerns and any Public Comment

Tim Love: MFCN. Workshop for leaders and give us an annual workshop is Nov. 2-3 at the Hilton Garden Inn. Early reminder of annual reports at the end of July - please share with the groups. We awarded 9 grants this time. All the work supports the collaborative groups in Montana..

Steve Kimball - DNRC grant opportunity - Local Govt. Forestry Assistance - support local govts. With cross-boundary or Fed. Land management. Up to 8K, due March 31. This grant source helps with local/federal. Do it every year for this grant and give 5-6 grants a year. It sounds like a good project and encourage the group to think about applying

Cindy Perdue-Dolan: Learned a lot, think collaboratives are really great. Would like to emphasize thinking What is the alternative to deciding status? If you don't decide it, someone else will.

Kerry White: Met Brad Collin at BLM and have been directed to complete their road and trail inventory in the next 2-3 years. Might be working on some of the roads and numbers.

Some mineral inventory is outdated and Tech and private industry might have more recent information. Someone at the Butte School of mines mapping would be useful. Maybe Sean has a good idea of the timber inventory. Robin McCo

Next Meeting: April 20, 1-3:30, Borden's in Whitehall and on Zoom