

**Beaverhead County Collaborative
Notes
December 19 2024**

Attending: Jeff Wellborn, SD 36; Tom Welch, HD 72; Zach Owen, Beaverhead Conservation District; Byron Martinez, landowner; Jeff Lukas, Trout Unlimited; Ryan Chapin, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partners; Barb Cestero, The Wilderness Society; Aubrey Bertram, Wild Montana; Craig Blubaugh, Sun Mountain Lumber; Parke Scott, motorized recreation; Jack Kirkley, quiet recreation; Jack Atcheson, Jr.; Jim Berkey, The Nature Conservancy

Advisors: Steve Kimball, Montana Forest Collaboration Network

Members of the Public: Kathryn Ehlund, TWS; Marti Laknap, BCD; Alan Conover, Tony Tezak, SD 35; Travis Hansen, Walt Zobell, Frances Strodman-Roger, Shannon Maness, HD 70; Arden Holden, Roy Cornell, Larry Anderson, Rick Smith, Bill Allen, Mike Todd, Patty Todd, Bruce Wawyer, Tyler Reichle, Jess Fields, BCD

Notes and Facilitation: Karen Filipovich

Proxies: Byron Martinell for Jeff Johnson, Parke Scott for Gene Loder.

Notes

November Notes:

- Zach Owen moved to accept the November notes. Tom Welch seconded. All accepted the November 21 meeting notes.

Budget: Zach Owen reported that BCC is out of funds at the end of the year (2024). BCC needs to look for the next grant cycle for MFCN in 2025.

Zach asked if the group was comfortable staying in Dillon at the UM Western site. If so, he would cancel the Borden's rental in Whitehall. The group affirmed this.

Zach Owen is also taking another position, but Jess Fields and the Beaverhead Conservation District can wrap up funds, replace Zach, and continue to be fiscal sponsors.

Announcements:

Steve: Kimball - MFCN will have a round of grants - RFP will be at the end of next week, due Feb. 10, Will be amounts up to \$8,000 for the year. Will be awarded by March 1, trying to get a full-year all allocations.

Two webinars Are available on the MFCN website on timber management and prescribed burns. The fall conference proceedings and the speakers and forest industry will also be up soon. And in April, there will be on on NEPA

Grant funding for Forest Management Forest Montana Action Plan - lot of forest act includes forest and range land funding. Craig Blubaugh has a lot of expertise on this and encouraged anyone interested to talk to him about these 250K to 500K grants with the Montana Forest Action Plan. Jim Berkeley said TNC did this grant with the sagebrush action plan and it was great for prescribed burn, conifer encroachment plan. This is an area where we can use grant funding for precommercial thinning.

Communications Discussion

The BCC members tasked with working on communications had met. They worked on the map as well as talked through the needs for internal and external communications about the Southwest Montana package and the BCC.

There was an identified need for clarifications, as well as areas for further discussion:

Scope:

- Need to clarify the package and what the decisions and recommendations are
- Need to clearly state the status quo, the compromises everyone made and the recommended management for each area. This was suggested to be accomplished through maps, succinct side by side descriptions.
- Need maps that show the current status and recommended changes clearly
- Need to better describe what is being done for each user group that currently has a stake in the landscape.
- Need materials that support community understanding.

Internal:

- Identified need to build on the draft FAQ so that every member can feel confident in describing each management piece and how it affects each user and stakeholder group
- Want an outreach plan so that everyone can clearly talk about this and know how to take back questions or comments to BCC. This goes for newsletters, talks, one on one discussions with neighbors.

Further Work:

- Want to figure out more on how to support the initial aim - that all the WSA and recommended wilderness areas would be addressed in Beaverhead County. There was always a sense that new stakeholders would be brought in, given the scope. It was thought this would be a big enough package to bring to Congress, but that might be revisited as the group brings it out to the larger community.
- Questions with when to go to the County Commission
- Ongoing discussions with Congressional delegation staff

The discussion was about making sure that BCC could clearly explain its thinking. There was discussion about taking comments and how any further comments might be incorporated. The

communications group was asked to think about explaining the package first and making a plan. The group as a whole could come back to overall scope as it heard from more people.

Communications Tasks:

- Focus communications on this area
 - What are they present management and proposed changes - make that clear
 - Have specialists for each stakeholder.
 - Internal information so each expert can explain what is here
- Work on an outreach plan specific to this package
 - Need a marketing plan for the package

Task:

- Communications - present and explain the package and the history/ what the problem is and how BCC proposes to change it.
- Outreach and engagement: Bringing in broader public
 - Public meetings
 - Engagement
- 1) Develop simple outreach materials - maps, brochures - columns and clarity - change
- 2) As we develop the materials - develop an outreach plan and who do we need to talk to, community meetings

The BCC will review materials and discuss in January.

Communications group had further volunteers. It is now Jack Atcheson, Jr., Jeff Lukas, Jeff Johnson, Ryan Chapin, Barb Cestero, Aubrey Bertram, and Jack Kirkley.

Zach has started a communications file and was moving the material into it for the group.

Transitions:

- Are we meeting in Dillon from now on? Group agreed that they would meet in Dillon, with a virtual option as needed.
- Zach - last meeting, new representative. The BCC members accepted Jess Fields as the new representative for the Beaverhead Conservation District.
- Leadership Team: This is the process group for the BCC. They work on the agenda and get actions done. Ryan Chapin, Jack Atcheson, Jr. and Byron Martinell all volunteered to join the leadership team.
- Jack Kirkley motioned to accept all three to the leadership team. Jim Berkey seconded. All three were accepted to join the team unanimously.

BCC Membership

The BCC work is taking longer than originally envisioned, so there have been several transitions as people changed jobs or interests shifted.

Ex-members in good standing: There have been several people who have changed jobs, and thus are not full BCC members, but have institutional memory and a continued interest in the work. Their perspectives are valuable, but there is no mechanism to have them recognized as anything other than a member of the public.

Proposal: Ex officio member. Any ex-BCC member in good standing would become an ex officio member.

Several functions were discussed. It would be useful to have an ex officio member weigh in on issues as they come up, like an advisor. It was discussed whether an ex officio member could vote on substantive charter changes, as another does, or whether they should be counted toward a quorum. The group decided they would prefer that ex officio members act as advisors and are included in seeing materials and commenting at any time.

Motion: Change the charger to include, "Past voting members who left as members in good standing may become non-voting advisory members."

Jack Kirkely motioned to accept. Jeff Lukas seconded. All voted affirmatively and the change to the charter was made.

BCC Membership seats. The original charter had three legislative seats. Two members are leaving the legislature.

Why rethink this?

- Legislative seats were originally there because they carried the resolutions related to WSA areas.

Discussion was that the most important characteristics for members are:

- Collaborative spirit
- Related skills and local knowledge
- Represent community

Proposed idea:

- Replace "legislators:" with "Members at large." Would not preclude elected officials, former members, or local citizens/elected officials. It would not presume that a legislator had the time to focus on this group as well, and would open seats to a broader range of representatives.

Discussion:

- Do we need a process of vetting and training new members? The group thought it would be helpful to have a more detailed process for helping new members join the BCC.

Two options were discussed: Make legislative seats any elected official to ensure representation OR make it a member at large. BCC members liked the idea of changing those seats to “member at large,” with some prioritization.

Motion: Change legislative seats to “Member at Large (3): Prioritize elected officials (legislative first, any elected official, then ex-legislative, then citizen), but open to local citizens if no elected official steps up.”

Byron Martinell motioned to accept the motion. Jack Kirkley seconded. All BCC members affirmed this change. This is added to the charter and replaces the previous three legislative seats.

Budget Issues:

- The Beaverhead Conservation District will continue to act as the fiscal sponsor.
- New procurement rules look like some kind of facilitation bid will be needed. Jess Fields at the Conservation District will look into the requirements.
- The group will have a gap in outside facilitation, due to a budget gap before the next grant.
- The group will need to apply for the next MFCN grant.

Public Comments:

Mike Todd: Against the Wilderness Idea. Read court cases and have not heard any justification of the Wilderness Ideas or in seeing more. He was interested in grazing in wilderness, fire suppression, and roadless, logging, and mining and opportunities. We don’t need Hidden Pasture.

Tyler Richler: Taking over the Beaverhead Outdoor Association leadership. Against Wilderness. When something goes to Wilderness it is not multi-use. Seen it be poorly managed, but also this needs to be brought to the public. Everyone in the county should have a say.

Travis Hansen: Q: Are these packages done and pushing them through? A: There seems to be some openness to some changes and some tweaks. TH: Want more public input in this package.

The Meeting was adjourned at 3:30pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2025.