

Beaverhead County Collaborative
Notes
December 15, 2022
1:00pm- 3:30pm
Borden's in Whitehall and Zoom

BCC Voting Members Attending: Tom Rice, Beaverhead County Commissioner; Sen. Jeff Welborn, SD 36; Rep. Ken Walsh, HD 71; Gene Loder, Citizen; Zach Owen, Beaverhead Conservation District; Jeff Johnson, Landowner; Byron Martinell, Landowner, Colin Cooney, Trout Unlimited, Scott Laird, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Jim Berkey, The Nature Conservancy; Aubrey Bertram, Wild Montana; Parke Scott, Motorized Recreation; Jack Kirkley, Quiet Recreation.

BCC Advisory and Consultation Attendees: Chris Edginton, Montana Trout Unlimited

Guests: Cindy Perdue-Dolan, Staff for Sen. Daines; Troy Smith, Landowner; Kerry White, Citizens for Balanced Use; Kathryn Ecklund, The Wilderness Society

Notes

Review and Updates

- Notes from October 20, 2022 meeting

Notes were accepted.

- Budget Update

The budget update was reviewed. Colin Cooney reported that the grant application to the Northern Forest Foundation was approved and the group will receive \$5,000 to continue to support the effort.

- Facilitation contract extension - vote

Members voted on continuing the contract for Karen Filipovich to continue facilitation for the group in 2023. The vote passed unanimously.

1:20: Discussion: Hidden Pasture

Recap of Agreements

- Participants looked at the agreements to date. These were voted on individually over the last several meetings. Now, the group was looking at what needed to be clarified so that the group can close the agreements for Hidden Pasture. It has been agreed that all the areas in the Big Sheep watershed area will be worked on together, then will take a final look at the set.
- Issues for further clarification:
 - **Roads.** The two existing numbered roads need to remain open and maintained as accessible. These roads are 1831 and 1857. Muddy Creek and Big Sheep Creek roads are removed from the Backcountry Conservation Area (BCA)

boundary. Agricultural access roads are to be maintained for motorized access by those with leases.

- **Boundaries:** Muddy Creek and Big Sheep Creek roads are removed from the Backcountry Conservation Area (BCA) boundary. The Johnson property private road needs to be named (Quarter Circle Road) and removed from the BCA boundary, along with the ditch that predated the Wilderness Study Area designation. The BLM sees setbacks of X feet from a given midpoint of a road as legally defensible, so proposed setbacks will need to be set. On Sheep Creek Road, the setback needs to allow for space for road maintenance, internet and power lines. The quarry also needs to be outside the BCA. Smaller setbacks need to be set for Muddy Creek and Quarter Circle roads and the ditch located near Quarter Circle road. The boundary set to the west of the ditch needs to be wide enough for access and meet Montana standards of right of way. This clarification was voted on. It was 13 ayes and one neutral. **Action:** Commissioner Tom Rice agreed to work with county GIS to develop maps that reflect this agreement.
- The other agreements were not discussed in detail, but participants discussed how to make the language more in the style of BLM management language and legal language. It was agreed that the clarifications discussed needed to be incorporated and the language tightened up. Action: Jeff Johnson, Aubrey Bertram, Jack Kirkley, Colin Cooney, Byron Martinell, and Barb Cestero volunteered to work on this. They were charged with cleaning up the language and making it more consistent with management language, but were not making any substantive changes. The updated agreement list will be reviewed at the January meeting
- The package of agreements were voted on. The vote was 12 ayes, one neutral and one opposed. The opposed member cited lack of clarity around roads.

Discussion in the Big Sheep Creek Watershed: Next Area

- There are four areas in the greater Big Sheep Creek Watershed area. Hidden Pasture and Bell Lime-Kiln are both BLM land. Italian Peaks and Garfield Peaks are both managed by the Forest Service.
- Participants discussed which made most sense to tackle next. The group was split between focusing on Bell Lime Kiln and Italian Peaks.
- Factors in favor Bell Lime Kiln were that it is has some similarities to Hidden Pasture. It is managed by BLM and is another Wilderness Study Area. It is a working landscape with agricultural access and similar terrain. Participants thought it would be easier to work through this area because of this. Jeff Johnson had a landowner contact who had interest in both Bell Lime-Kiln and the Italian Peaks. He thought it would be easier for the landowner to get to know the process with Bell Lime-Kiln. The group could also keep the same constituents as Bell Lime Kiln. Participants also thought that it would be easier to make recommended management decisions on this one during the legislative session.

- Factors in favor of Italian Peaks were focused on tackling a harder one now and ensuring that the process would get to a bundle of areas that would have a good chance of making it through the Congressional process. There are also more trees, which might help the timber representation become more actively involved. There would need to be a change in the local participants on the board, which was seen as a potential minus.
- The vote was unanimous to focus on Bell Lime-Kiln first. There was also a request to make a list of the rest of the areas within Beaverhead County in order to help move through the rest of the areas more quickly.
- **Action:** All bring in what they know and what questions need to be answered for Bell Lime-Kiln to the January 19 meeting. The group looks at factors that affect agriculture, cultural resources, fisheries, recreation and wildlife.

There was a request to continue to try to get perspectives from mining and timber in order to ensure the group is looking at all factors that affect the five values for the land.

Meetings During Session

- Several BCC members will be in the legislative session from January through April. Because the elected officials have both floor sessions and meetings that take extensive time, the group wanted to make sure that their perspectives and those who need to spend time on bills are incorporated.
- The group will continue to meet in person and via zoom from 1-3:30 on the third Thursday of the month in Whitehall and online
- Proxies will continue to be used
- Karen Filipovich is tasked with producing a short summary of the meeting on video as well as completing the notes for each meeting during the session.

Questions, Concerns and any Public Comment

No public comment or further questions or concerns were brought up.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30.

Next Meeting: January 19, 1-3:30