

Beaverhead Collaborative meeting 11/18/2021

Notes

Meeting purpose

Review and adopt the charter document. Fill representative seats. Establish steering committee. Begin defining top concerns to address.

Attendees

Colin Cooney, Jeff Johnson, Sen. Jeff Welborn, Tom Rice, Rep. Ken Walsh, Chris Edgington, Zach Owen, Alec Underwood, Rep. Tom Welch, Emily Cleveland, Byron Martinell, Scott Laird, Barb Cestero, Jack Kirkley, Sean Steinbach, Dan Johnson, Parke Scott.

Decisions

- Send Sean and Parke charter document for consideration.
- Distribute draft letter to tribes for review and then send.
- Barb reach out to Jim Berkey to represent Land Trusts.
- MT TU move to technical advisor. Add Land Trust to representative seats.

Meeting Notes

Charter document discussion and friendly amendments.

Our meetings do not fall under open meeting law.

Add language regarding observers if public are in attendance.

Update Sportsmen NGO (-1) and Land Trust seats (+1).

Jennifer distribute and add approval to December agenda.

Outreach and other conversations

Sean introduced himself and in his role as outreach forester will consider joining.

Parke introduced himself and will consider joining as a local motorized recreation representative.

Colin worked with BLM to identify tribal contacts. A draft letter will be distributed for review. Discussion identified that consultation role is most appropriate for tribal engagement. Barb will contact her tribal liaison at TWS.

Colin shared recent conversation with Both Senators regarding the work being done and found there to be support and reiterated the value of the collaborative approach.

Steering Committee

Jeff Johnson

Colin Cooney

Zach Owen

Jeff Welborn – or other local representative as available

Defining Issues to be addressed

We will start with the Big Sheep Creek watershed and the federal designations it includes. This would be the Garfield Mountain and Italian Peaks Recommended Wilderness Areas and the Hidden Pastures and the Bell/Limekiln Canyon Wilderness Study Areas.

Issues / Concerns

Difficulty in conducting management operations

Bell-Limekiln and Hidden Pastures not “W” appropriate.

Maintaining access for fire fighting, management and watershed treatments.

Maintain wildlife connectivity and landscape connectivity through an unfragmented condition.

Cultural resource protection.

Maintaining access for quiet and motorized recreation.

Maintain areas providing cold clean water for climate resilience.

Opportunities for water connectivity – Big Sheep Creek to Red Rock?

Boundary adjustments separated from infrastructure and roads so maintenance and management are possible and workable. Can boundary adjustments happen without federal designations? Possibly through documenting existing rights of way. The existing rights of way may be just an administrative process (not congressional).

Changing designations? Look to change to ACEC or National Recreation Area – these designations may offer protections for the resource concerns present (cultural etc.) and eliminate the restrictions that are creating conflicts. These may already exist for portions of the WSAs. ACECs are updated every 15 years and offer recreation access but protect cultural values.

Considerations

Are there administrative changes that could improve habitat and management?

Watersheds are inter-connected and actions carry downstream.

Some of the protections now are important to continue to maintain the wild character and connectivity (like oil and gas development) – how can we maintain these protections?

Need to maintain some flexibility for future conditions that are unknown and maintain our ability to adapt and be flexible in management.

As we address the issues and concerns – can we overlay important restoration opportunities and priorities? Expand native fisheries? Conifer encroachment work (DNRC grant).

Can we just focus on Hidden pastures? Too small?

Keep traditional agriculture viable to preserve open space and functions, need to have the ag operations in mind as solutions are crafted.

Any federal action for lifting a designation or doing a boundary realignment needs to be significant and get as much done as possible (they won't bother with a 15,000 acre unit).

Assignments and next steps

Doodle Poll for week of December 13th

Invite agency partners and others for next meeting providing a summary on 1) resource priorities in the Big Sheep Watershed and 2) the tools and designation categories you have available in your management toolbox 3) a map of resource concerns / restoration priorities / important habitat / populations.

<u>Organization/Interest</u>	<u>Number of Seats & Representation November 18, 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 TBC
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.