

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Working Group (CGWG)

Meeting MINUTES - Wednesday, Aug. 9, 2017

Park County Courthouse

414 East Calendar St. ,Livingston, Montana

Time	Topic	Lead	Outcomes
1:00 PM	Opening and introductions; Agenda discussion, Meeting materials:	Prinkki / Atwood	Welcome, introductions, agenda reviewed
1:05	Consent Agenda: Minutes, Financial report/disbursements	Prinkki / Atwood	Vote on consent agenda items
1:10	Membership seats/applications; Guides; Mike Colpo; Motorized recreation alternate	Prinkki / Atwood	Review and vote on membership applications;
1:15	North Bridger(Bridge Bangtail) Farm Bill Smith-Shield Project post decision strategy;	Prinkki David , Bozeman District Ranger	Bridger Bangtail project kickoff; CGWG subcommittee Smith Shields; CGWG file Declaration in conjunction with DNRC/AG's Office
2:00	Pryor Mountains Subcommittee	Penfold	Report
2:20	Custer Gallatin National Forest; Forest Plan Revision	Virginia Kelly and Mariah Lueschen	FPR status report: Wilderness recommendations and W&SR recommendations
2:40	Custer Gallatin National Forest; North Bridger silviculturist Budget, staffing and target trends	Mary Erickson	Update on North Hebgen project and response to questions regarding budget, staff levels and target trends
2:45	Custer Gallatin Forest Service Plan Revision Outreach	Prinkki / All	Further Work on CGWG Community Outreach events
3:00	DNRC	Matt Arno	State activities report
3:30	Resilient Forest Act;	Prinkki	Consensus on acceptable federal legislation
4:30	September meeting plan	Prinkki	Agenda, location, homework
4:45	Close, if not sooner		

Attending:

John Prinkki	Mary Erickson
Kerry White	Johanna Nosal
Bill Wallace	Gunnar Carnwath
Mike Christianson	Nancy Taylor
Ian Jones	Marna Daley
Margo Magnant	Matt Arno
Hilary Eisen	Don Bachman
Barb Cestero	
Jackie Musgrove	
Steve Caldwell	
Jim Hart	
Earl Atwood	

Chairman John Prinkki opened the meeting at 1:00, and invited all present to introduce themselves.

Consent agenda and membership applications were put on the table for consideration, however several members had not arrived yet, so action was deferred until quorum was present.

North Bridger (FKA Bridger Bangtails) Project – Custer Gallatin Forest Supervisor introduce Johanna Nosal, Silviculturist for Custer Gallatin to provide a detailed report on the status of the project. Using a powerpoint presentation Ms. Nosal reviewed the project boundaries and described the cover types and landscape to explain forest health concerns and proposed treatments for the area. Main health issue for the project area is bark beetle threats to Douglas Fir populations, the predominant species in the project zone, and Western Spruce Budworm, plus root-rot. Potential treatments in those zones include clear-cut or group selections and plants, or thinning and sanitation to retain old growth character in the more mature stands. Aspen is patchy and sporadic on the landscape, and is being encroached upon by conifers and heavily browsed by wildlife. Removal of encroaching conifers, plus root stimulation (logging or prescribed burns) are being considered to restore the health of existing Aspen clones. The project would be conducted under Categorical Exclusion authority in the Farm Bill. Timeframes for the project include a public meeting at the end of August; interdisciplinary team work continues through the fall and early winter with NEPA compliance, and a Decision by March or April of 2018.

John Prinkki asked for a review of the members who had previously volunteered to work on a CGWG subcommittee focusing on the North Bridger Forest Health Project. Those members were Jerry Furtney, Margo Magnant, Hilary Eisen, Mike Christianson, Darcy Warden, and Ian Jones. Chairman Prinkki confirmed the appointment of these members to the subcommittee with Hilary Eisen designated to take the lead position.

A project area field trip is planned for later in August. Subcommittee was requested to coordinate with project team on promoting attendance, as well as engagement with area landowners to the project area as the project goes forward. Updates to be provided at September meeting.

Smith Shields Project – post-decision strategy. Chairman Prinkki noted that although CGWG does not have standing sufficient to independently intervene in litigation, we should do have the ability to make a declaration of support, and requested authorization from the members for him to work with the State Attorney General's office to file a declaration explaining how the litigation adversely affect the efforts of the Custer Gallatin Working Group. Barb Cestero (Wilderness Society) asked that her organization be given the opportunity to offer language used in other similar instances that make it clear that the declaration is not a formal statement of position for their national organization. **Kerry White made a motion that CGWG make the declaration to be developed by Chairman Prinkki, seconded by Steve Caldwell. CARRIED**

At this time, additional members had joined the meeting and quorum was present. Chairman Prinkki returned discussion to the **consent agenda and membership applications.**

Steve Caldwell moved approval of the consent agenda, seconded by Bill Wallace. CARRIED

Regarding membership application, it was determined to defer action until such time as the applicants were present at a future meeting.

Mary Erickson gave a report on the Wilderness Inventory and feedback process on the Wild and Scenic River Eligibility portions of the Forest Plan Revision. She reminded the group that the Forest Service web site has an interactive portal to provide access to the information and feedback that is being gathered. The proposed action is not due out until later this fall. Next round of meetings will be coming up in September, with announcements released in local papers and on the web site: Ashland 6th - Camp Crook 7th - W Yellowstone 11th - Gardiner 12th - Bozeman 13th (just after next CGWG meeting) - Red Lodge 18th - Columbus 19th - Livingston 20th.

Earl Atwood put up pictures from the North Hebgen field trip, taken by Darcie Warden.

Mary Erickson shared information (goals summary) sent by Teri Smith related to the **North Hebgen** project. She also reported that a notice of intent to sue has been filed on the project under the Endangered Species Act related to alleged violations affecting Lynx habitat. Similar discussion ensued regarding whether CGWG might be in a position to file an amicus brief or other type of intervention. Member discussion reflected universal frustration with the prospect of litigation after much effort has gone into balanced review and collaborative input on the proposed project scope, however it was also agreed that the CGWG has limited capacity for legal involvement and should continue to focus its resources on pre-project evaluation and support and continued progress of the Forest Service with the Forest Plan revision.

Matt Arno, DNRC reported that the leadership of the Coalition of Forest Counties decided on August 7th to award funds to Park County and Marr County to support the Smith Shields project with an amicus brief. They also decided to support Lewis and Clark County with funds for amicus brief on the Stonewall project, and Powell County filing an amicus brief on the Telegraph project. These resources may also be available for other projects including North Hebgen. He also provided an update on recent Good Neighbor Authority activity.

Resilient Forest Act. John Prinkki renewed discussion on the topic of whether the CGWG should engage in taking an official position on this proposed federal legislation. Based on member discussion it appeared that although the dialog to date was very helpful by informing members of the collaborative on the various perspectives held, that prospect for wide consensus on this legislation within the collaborative was not strong. More generally, all comments included concern about respecting the capacity of the organization to do work, and to keep focus on issues where there is a large zone of agreement. Therefore no official comment from the CGWG will be developed in this case. It was suggested that a member be put in charge of monitoring key federal issues or initiative and make that a standing report to the CGWG at its monthly meeting. Barb Cestero was 'volunteered' for this role. Mike Christianson added a suggestion that the American Forest Foundation has a weekly briefing (dial-in) to cover what is going on federally in the area of forestry and offered to share a copy of the monthly report he develops for other organizations based on these briefings. Bill Wallace suggested the Coalition of Forest Counties as a resource for federal monitoring. Kerry White commented that although the CGWG is challenged to address a lot of issues concurrently, the group should strive to identify the zone of agreement on issues like the Resilient Forest Act, and to the extent it exists, communicate that to our Congressional delegation to encourage those parts we all support.

Kerry White distributed information on air quality hazard levels as defined by DEQ, and discussed some of the impacts from the severe fires this season. He also provided an update on recent meetings regarding identification of possible sites near Bozeman for a shooting range.

Next meeting in Bozeman, September 13th. Location to be announced.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.