Ruckelshaus INSTITUTE

A DIVISION OF THE
HAUB SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

REPORT

Greys River Forest Collaborative, Lincoln County, Wyoming 2017

Process and Recommendations

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Cover: Photo by Andrew Bennett

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Introduction

In 2016 Lincoln County initiated this forest collaborative process. Working in conjunction with the Star Valley Conservation District (SVCD), the County applied to the Wyoming State Forestry Division for funds under the Forest Collaboration Assistance Program to convene an inclusive process to tackle forest health issues in the area. The funds were awarded and the Conservation District reached out to the Ruckelshaus Institute at the University of Wyoming to facilitate the process.

In its original application for funding, the SVCD noted that the county had a number of forest health issues that needed to be addressed including insect infestations, aging stands, forest fire risks and associated forest fuels and hydrological concerns. In the application the Conservation District also noted a decreased timber industry capacity to help deal with forest health issues, and declining USFS budgets, court challenges, changing public values and other factors that affected active forest management. The application sought funding to facilitate a working group that would tackle these issues with diverse stakeholders and work with the USFS to enable active forest management in Lincoln County's Greys River watershed in particular.

In late 2016 the USFS Collaboration Cadre's Gary Severson and Gregg Walker hosted two workshops to allow interested parties to learn about collaborative processes. An important result from these workshops was a Draft Purpose Statement to guide the Greys River Forest Collaborative.

Draft Purpose Statement:

> "Create and maintain a dynamic collaborative process whereby all stakeholders are afforded opportunities to work with each other with the purpose of providing recommended courses of action to land management agencies which are implemented and/or benchmarked."

This purpose statement is reflected in the resulting final recommendations.

This report has two objectives:

1. Describe the process that was used in the course of this collaboration, and the results that came out of each phase. As is described later, the phases explore interests, issues/problems, options for solutions, and finally explore agreement regarding recommendations. The results of these discussions are on pages 5 through 10.

2. Outline the final recommendations that the group discussed. In this case, there are five consensus recommendations, there were no recommendations that had major reservations or did not receive consensus – pages 10 through 13.

The Charter

Following this the Ruckelshaus Institute drafted a Charter, which was reviewed by a subset of participants, and then submitted to the whole Collaborative for approval on February 16, 2017. It was agreed to on March 16 after deliberations by the Collaborative and changes agreed to by the Collaborative were made (see the Ruckelshaus Institute's Greys River Forest Collaborative webpage for the final Charter). The Charter was signed by all participating stakeholders.

The Participants

The SVCD and the BOCC had chosen a bounded process with a fixed set of seats at the table. The Forest Collaborative is representative of persons with interests in the conditions of the forests in the Greys River watershed. During the Collaboration Cadre's workshops, interest groups were identified that they felt should be invited to the Collaborative and members of those interest groups were invited. All invitees were asked to identify a primary and alternate member. Not all invited participants chose to work through the entire process, usually due to time constraints and/or beliefs that the Collaborative would not address their particular interests. Although it is recognized that Forest Collaborative members have multiple interests and may participate in discussions from various perspectives, the Forest Collaborative members broadly represent the following organizations and/or interest groups (primary members listed):

- United States Forest Service (3): Chad Hayward, Adrienne Holcomb and Derek Ibarguen
- Local Government (2): Jerry Harmon and Kent Connolly
- Grazing (1): Marc Clark
- Hunting NGO (1): Tim Haberberger
- Wildlife and/or Fisheries NGO (1): Dave Fogle
- Wyoming State Agencies (2): Gary Fralick (WGFD) and Brook Lee (Wyoming State Forestry Division)
- BLM (1): Ben Wiese
- Private/Timber Industry (2): Mel Shumway, Jeff Kilroy
- Summer Motorized Recreation NGO (1): Byron Baker
- Winter Motorized Recreation NGO (1): Don Goetz
- Non-motorized Recreation NGO (1): Jeremy Larson
- Conservation NGOs (1): Judy Reide (Wyoming Outdoor Council)
- Public at large (1): Dean Burnham

The Process and Results of Discussions

Final Process for the Greys River Forest Collaborative			
Meeting #	**1**	**2**	**3**
Main Subject	**Process, Interests, and Issues**	**Information Sharing re. Forest Health, Travel and Hydrology**	**Options and Recommendations**
Process	**February 16:** Identify interests and issues. Initiate Charter (including process and decision-making method). Identify Information needs for Forest Health.	**March 16** • Presentations regarding Forest Health and other issues by the USFS and WGFD. • Define objectives. • Complete Charter. **April 27:** 1. Learning and information sharing 2. Identify Project Areas **May 18:** 1. Learning and information sharing. 2. Options for Recommendations	**June 22:** 1. Review Draft Recommendations for the three themes, discuss and decide which ones to submit. 2. Determine Adaptive Management Process.

Procedural Tools:

1. The three themes around which to create a process and provide recommendations to the County, to public land agencies and others: Forest Health, Travel Management and Hydrology.
2. A clear understanding by the Collaborative of the decision context (scope of recommendations) and implementation mechanisms.
3. A decision making process that takes the Collaborative from problem identification to recommended actions for all three themes.
4. A consensus-based decision protocol that uses 'gradations of consensus'.
5. Collaborative deliberations and procedures that are guided by a charter that defines the "rules of the game" and is unanimously approved by the Collaborative at the outset.

Jessica Western (collaborative lead and facilitator, Ruckelshaus Institute) provided the Collaborative with a short training in the principles of collaboration and the process that would be used. Above is the process matrix that was used. It shows the meetings that were held and their objectives.

The Ruckelshaus Institute used a PRIOCT process (Problems, Interests, Options, Criteria, Trade-Offs) to enable the group to build consensus. The results of each step are listed:

1. Problem/Issue identification

Members identified the issues they wished to address within the contexts of forest health primarily, and associated recreation and hydrological issues in the Greys River watershed. Below is the result of issues listed on flipcharts and stars (*) indicate the Collaborative's priority items:

1. *Find ways to increase understanding and support for state and federal management programs in interactive ways that us multi-media that is clear and understandable
2. WSAs (Wilderness Study Areas) – convert to multiple use
3. Designated roadless – shrink to treat forests
4. Find a way to increase flexibility and capacity for active forest management – increase toolbox
5. ESA – would it stop us from doing treatments?
6. Abundance of conifer encroachment (e.g., in aspen, riparian and sagebrush areas)
7. Noxious weeds and annual invasive grasses
8. Wildland-urban interface and different needs for treatments to address (e.g., human safety)
9. Identify localities where we want treatment, their purpose(s) and outcomes (vegetation, wildlife, recreation, motorized, non-motorized, economic, access)
10. *More functional sustainable trails that don't encourage erosion (use partnerships to help maintain/repair trails)
11. *Decrease dead, bug-infested trees and increase live trees
12. *Find ways to engage the public in restoring forests
13. *Find ways to retain more water in the system
14. *Find ways to fund the USFS to increase capacity for multiple use projects (explore various ways to secure money to support programs)
15. Reduce fish passage issues (e.g., culverts)
16. Improved roads
17. Improved access for recreation
18. *Can anything be done about insects and disease?
19. Comprehensive roads and trails program
20. Consider wildlife and wildlife disturbance/contact
21. *Address lack of public education and outreach and awareness (efficient use of existing information outlets)
22. Instill a sense of pubic stewardship
23. Improved signage
24. *Support volunteerism

25. *Take advantage of social media for information sharing
26. *Hazard trees
27. *Wildland-urban interface (fuel reduction) – Community Wildfire Protection Plan
28. *Long-term forest resiliency
29. Balancing commercial operations, wildlife, and outdoor recreation
30. How to balance increased tourism and its associated impacts
31. Logging versus forest health
32. Interactions with NGOs?
33. Decisions being tied up in litigation
34. *Funding
35. Adverse potential impacts of roads and logging on wildlife
36. Manage for a mixed-species forest
37. Access versus impact on wildlife (i.e., seasonal considerations)
38. *Maintenance of riparian areas
39. Enforcement of use guidelines
40. *Lack of looped trails and trail connectivity
41. *Trail maintenance (trail degradation, downed timber)
42. Increased traffic and people driving too fast
43. *Maintaining water quality and fish passage through forest health and road maintenance (runoff and silt impacts on trout)
44. Influx of visitors from Jackson
45. Waste management (litter, trash, human waste from dispersed camping)
46. Traffic from logging trucks
47. Amount of use on Greys River Road

2. Interest identification

Members deliberated the reasons why forest health in Greys River watershed was important to them and agreed on the following interest statements:

Interest Statements. A Healthy Forest in the Greys River:
1. Has healthy vegetative, wildlife and hydrological communities, and is resilient and resistant to disturbance.
2. Provides a variety of jobs and economies.
3. Needs to be understood by the public and supported through governance and active management.
4. Provides multiple uses.
5. Is safe for all visitors including recreationists and USFS employees.
6. Provides many social benefits including quality of life, aesthetics and sense of place now and in the future.

3. Option generation

Participants identified options for recommendations to address the above problems/issues. Below is the list of options for recommendations generated based on identified geographical areas. The options outline the geographical area to be addressed, the objectives the Collaborative recommends achieving and methods suggested to achieve the objectives.

1. Tri-Basin Divide
    a. Objectives
        i. Timber
        ii. Wildlife
        iii. Fisheries
        iv. Remove dead trees to increase forest health and resilience
        v. Improve roads (East Fork Loop)
        vi. Create diverse age classes
        vii. Remove fuels to reduce risk of catastrophic fire
        viii. Increase safety of environment
    b. Methods - CE
        i. Commercial “sanitation” harvest (250 acres)
        ii. Remove encroaching conifer to encourage aspen regeneration
        iii. Examine/install culverts for fish (locations TBD)
        iv. Under a separate CE, “jack straw” stands for aspen regeneration
        v. Start with CE and start to plan EA
        vi. Timber harvesting
        vii. System road maintenance
        viii. Preferred cut in 2018
2. Grover Park
    a. Objectives
        i. Watershed restoration; watershed protection for municipality
        ii. Recreation; enhance for recreation opportunities
        iii. Wildlife; improve wildlife habitat
        iv. Reduce fuels for WUI
        v. Commercial timber
        vi. Stimulate aspen
        vii. Improve open routes
        viii. Plan motor vehicle travel
    b. Methods - EA
        i. Timber harvest; commercial timber sale
        ii. Prescribed burn; followed by prescribed burn to improve shrubs for wildlife and regenerate aspen

iii. Road maintenance and drainage improvement for all roads; improve existing roads
iv. Amend/supplement travel management plan through EA
v. Connect road system with motorized trails
vi. Create looped trails for non-motorized users
vii. Designate ORV-specific, looped trails
viii. Use EA to permit Annual Hill Climb on a 5- or 10-year basis instead of the current process of annual renewal
ix. Explore ways to mitigate the Annual Hill Climb (with specific reference to the displacement of ungulates during the event)
x. Prefer to start EA now for implementation in 2019

3. Bear Creek and Three Forks (timber salvage)
    a. Objectives
        i. Remove dead trees
        ii. Remove older stands
        iii. Diversify age classes
        iv. Improve road conditions
        v. Improve wildlife habitat
        vi. Decrease erosion into riparian areas
        vii. Healthy forests
    b. Methods - CE
        i. USFS to propose methods to the collaborative that achieve above purposes
        ii. Preferred award 2018 or 2019
        iii. Strategic timber harvest
        iv. Timber harvest or prescribed fire to promote aspen and mountain shrubs
        v. Selective cutting or thinning of dead/decadent aspen and conifers in encroached areas to promote aspen resprouting
4. Lower Greys/Murphy-White Creek
    a. Objectives
        i. Commercial timber sales
        ii. Diversify age classes
        iii. Travel management to reflect legal motorized routes on Lower Greys and map it; travel management
        iv. Improve existing roads
        v. Improve wildlife habitat by increasing forbs, shrubs, and aspen; important wildlife area
        vi. Enhance recreation opportunities
        vii. User safety
    b. Methods - EA
        i. Commercial harvest; timber sales to improve safety for trail users
        ii. Prescribed burning; prescribed fire to improve wildlife (elk/mule deer) habitat for calving (elk) and winter range (moose/mule deer)
        iii. Update travel plan with user groups and counties

iv. Need motorized and non-motorized trails; designate trails for specific uses (especially mountain bikers)

4. Criteria

Stakeholder interests were used as criteria against which to measure the strength of the options for recommendations (see above).

5. Trade-Offs

Members deliberated the final options to resolve problems and meet as many interests as possible. This lead to crafting of final recommendations, and exploration of levels of agreement for each recommendation (see below).

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Consensus Recommendations

The following are recommendations to the management of the Bridger-Teton National Forest in Wyoming. These recommendations received full consensus agreement from the Greys River Forest Collaborative on June 22, 2017. The language of these recommendations is specific and was crafted and agreed to by all present.

Recommendation 1: We propose the following treatments on the Tri-Basin Divide to enhance forest resilience and reduce fuels.

Objectives: This project will produce timber while enhancing wildlife and fisheries habitats and improve forest resilience. Specific objectives to address are:

1. Remove dead, dying, or diseased trees to increase forest health and resilience and remove fuels to reduce the potential for and intensity of catastrophic fire and to create diverse age classes;
2. Improve wildlife habitat;
3. Improve fisheries through sediment mitigation;
4. Improve existing roads.

Proposed strategies and tactics:

- Start with categorical exclusions (CE) and start to plan an environmental assessment (EA);
- Implement a commercial harvest (maximum of 250 acres) in 2018;
- Treat vegetation to encourage aspen regeneration;
- Work with partners to examine and install culverts for fish passage;
- Maintain system roads.

Recommendation 2: Improve forest resilience by diversifying age classes and stand types and improving riparian areas in the Bear Creek and Three Forks.

Objectives: to diversify age classes by removing dead and older trees in mixed conifer and aspen stands and to decrease erosion into riparian areas through road improvement. Specific objectives to address are:

1. Remove dead, dying, or diseased trees to increase forest health and resilience and remove fuels to reduce the potential for and intensity of catastrophic fire and to create diverse age classes;
2. Improve wildlife habitat;
3. Decrease erosion into riparian areas;
4. Improve road conditions.

Proposed strategies and tactics: The Collaborative invites the USFS to propose methods that address the above objectives, and asks that they take the below suggestions into consideration:

- Preferred award 2018 or 2019;
- Strategic timber harvest;
- Use timber harvest or prescribed fire to promote aspen and mountain shrubs;
- Improve and promote aspen regeneration;
- Improve road conditions and construct culverts to reduce sedimentation in riparian areas.

Recommendation 3: Diversify age classes while enhancing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities on Lower Greys/Murphy-White Creek.

Objectives: Improve wildlife habitat by diversifying age classes in conifer, improving aspen, forbs and shrubs, and enhancing recreation opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users.

1. Remove dead, dying, or diseased trees to increase forest health and resilience and remove fuels to reduce the potential for and intensity of catastrophic fire and to create diverse age classes;
2. Decrease erosion into riparian areas;
3. Improve road conditions;
4. Update the travel management plan to reflect legal motorized routes on the Lower Greys and map it;
5. Improve habitat in this important wildlife area by increasing forbs, shrubs, and aspen;
6. Enhance recreation opportunities;
7. Improve public safety.

Proposed strategies and tactics: Create an Environmental Assessment to include timber sales and prescribed fire to improve wildlife habitat and update travel plan with user groups and counties.

- Use strategic commercial harvest;
- Conduct prescribed burns to improve wildlife (elk/mule deer) habitat for calving (elk) and winter range (moose/mule deer);
- Evaluate the designation of the current trail system and look at opportunities for new trails;
- Use timber harvest or prescribed fire to promote aspen, mountain shrubs, and forbs;
- Improve road conditions to reduce sedimentation in riparian areas;
- Replace culverts to improve fish passage;
- Conduct an inventory of dispersed camp sites and use this to inform management;
- Preferred award in 2018 or 2019.

Recommendation 4: Restore and protect the watershed, improve recreational opportunities, and enhance wildlife habitat in Grover Park.

Objectives: Take measures to protect and enhance the municipal watershed while enhancing recreation opportunities, stimulating aspen, and planning motorized and non-motorized travel.

1. Protect and restore the municipal watershed; (through encouraging the growth of healthy vegetation communities and properly maintaining road systems)
2. Enhance existing recreation opportunities while actively managing and mitigating their impacts;
3. Improve wildlife habitat;

4. Reduce fuels within the wildland-urban interface (WUI);
5. Improve open routes.

Proposed strategies and tactics: Create an Environmental Assessment to achieve the above that includes commercial timber harvest, prescribed burns, road and drainage improvements, and travel management planning. Other considerations:

- Implement commercial timber harvest;
- Conduct prescribed burns to improve shrubs and regenerate aspen for wildlife;
- Maintain existing roads and improve road drainage;
- Analyze the current routes and amend or supplement the travel management plan as needed;
- Be sure to involve the public in decision-making regarding trails;
- Connect the road system with motorized trails;
- Create looped trails for non-motorized users;
- Designate looped trails for off-road vehicles (ORV);
- Conduct an inventory of dispersed camp sites and use this to inform management;
- Use an EA to permit the Annual Hill Climb on a 10-year basis instead of the current process of annual renewal;
- Prefer to start the EA now for implementation in 2019.

Recommendation 5: All entities will pursue funding to mitigate dust on the Greys River Road.

CONCENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS WITH MAJOR RESERVATIONS

There were no Recommendations that received either Consensus with Major Reservations.

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT RECEIVED NO CONSENSUS

There were no recommendations that received No Consensus.

NEXT STEPS

- Field trip: Wednesday July 12 to Tri Basin and Three Forks
    - Meet at 8 am corrals at Alpine
- Next meeting: Thursday November 9th @ 9 am in Afton, Civic Center

Possible next subjects for the Collaborative to address:

- Greys River District needs a master recreation plan
- Travel management plan update for the district
- Create a 5-year plan to apply for grants to rehabilitate existing trails (Wyoming State Trails, RTP)
- Grazing