

Wyoming Governor's Task Force on Forests
Meeting Summary
March 19-21, 2014
Location, Lander, WY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Draft for Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved
<p>Task Force Members Present:</p> <p>Aaron Bannon, National Outdoor Leadership School Joel Bousman, Sublette County Board of County Commissioners Jacque Buchanan, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forestry Division Jessica Crowder, Wyoming Governor's Office Sen. Ogden Driskill, Wyoming State Senate Jason Fearneyhough, Wyoming Department of Agriculture Buddy Green, BLM Wyoming Steve Kilpatrick, Wyoming Wildlife Federation Mark Konishi, Wyoming Game and Fish Department Harry LaBonde, Wyoming Water Development Office Carl Larson, Larson Livestock, Inc. Jim Magagna, Wyoming Stock Growers Association Lisa McGee, Wyoming Outdoor Council Jim Neiman, Neiman Enterprises, Inc. Rep. Jerry Paxton, Wyoming House of Representatives Reg Phillips, Dubois-Crowheart Conservation District Dan Tinker, University of Wyoming, Dept. of Botany David Whittekiend, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest</p>	<p><i>Alternates:</i></p> <p>Chris Wichmann, Department of Agriculture Ron McKinney, Wyoming State Trails Program Manager (Alternate for Jeff Moberg)</p> <p><i>Facilitators:</i></p> <p>Steve Smutko, UW Ruckelshaus Institute Jessica Clement, UW Ruckelshaus Institute Courtney Amerine, UW Ruckelshaus Institute Richard Stem, Advisor Governor's Office</p>
<p>Agenda:</p> <p>Day 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome 2. Review of actions since the last meeting and the process going forward 3. Legislative Update and Insect and Disease Designation Areas 4. Charter Discussion 5. Wildfires and fire at the Wildland-urban interface (WUI) discussion <p>Day 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fire at the Wildland-Urban Interface 2. Invasive Species Discussion 3. Resiliency and Climate Variability Discussion 4. Public Comment <p>Day 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budgeting and Funding Discussion 2. Public Comment 	<p>Handouts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agenda 2. Proposed changes to the Charter 3. Utah Catastrophic Wildfire Reduction Report 4. Colorado Wildfire Insurance and Forest Health Task Force Report 5. Updated Contact List 6. A Framework for Ecological Restoration and Resiliency in the Rocky Mountain Region 7. Interest Statements 8. Outline of Administrative Tools from Richard Stem 9. Task Force on Forests Process for Developing Recommendations

Action Items Completed:

1. Reviewed actions taken since the last meeting.
2. Reviewed the charter and recommendations for charter revision.
3. Clarified specific issue(s) to be addressed and resolved.
4. Drafted proposed recommendations.

Action Items Pending:

1. The facilitators will edit the proposed recommendations and provide the changes to the task force.
2. Joel Bousman will contact Diane Shober with the Wyoming Office of Tourism about having her give a presentation to the task force on the importance of Wyoming's forests to Wyoming's economy.
3. Representative Paxton will contact the Saratoga Mill about a possible mill tour for the next meeting
4. The Executive Committee will meet to finalize the agenda and technical information that will be posted to the website.
5. Jessica Crowder will research the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, discuss the act with the Governor, and report back to the Task Force at the next meeting.

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome & Announcements

- A. Co-chairs Lisa McGee and Jim Neiman welcomed the Task Force to Lander. The co-chairs went on to encourage the task force members to recognize the importance of the collaborative process, the broad base of constituents that each task force member represents, and the importance of looking at the issues from all sides. The co-chairs further encouraged the task force members to separate the people from the issues and focus on the issues put forth to the task force, not the people.

II. Four Stages of Collaboration

- A. Steve Smutko gave a short presentation to the task force on the four stages of collaboration. Steve also explained where the task force is in the process and where they are headed. The task force has gone through step one of the process, learning together, by exploring the technical information that is posted on the website together. Steve went on to describe how during the meeting the task force will hopefully go through step two, changing together. The task force members will learn from each other and perhaps reorient their thoughts to get what they need from each other. Third, the task force will create together by creating by draft recommendations at this meeting. Finally, the task force will stand behind the final recommendations that they provide to the Governor after the final meeting in June.
- B. Jessica Clement reminded the task force that each member has a stake in the process and contributes a unique perspective, and knowledge. Jessica went on that while there are differences between each of the task force members with difference comes opportunity to create new options and ideas. Clement encouraged the task force members to continue to ask each other why they hold particular opinions and not make assumptions, which may create an area of agreement.

III. Agenda and Updates

- A. Steve Smutko briefly went over the agenda, as well as the handouts that each task force member received including: an updated list of contacts, a document outlining the process for developing recommendations, a list of interests statements generated by the task force in the previous meeting, proposed changes to the charter, two reports the Utah Catastrophic Wildfire Reduction Act Report and the Colorado Wildfire Insurance and Forest Health Task Force Report, and an outline of administrative tools drafted by Richard Stem.
- B. Steve reminded the task force of the process that the task force will be using for drafting and finalizing recommendations. The task force will first and foremost develop and refine the problem and review the relevant scientific data for each of the broad issues identified by the task force. The task force will meet and break into small groups where they will generate or refine recommendations, present those recommendations to the group as a whole, and then at the final meeting test for consensus.
- C. Steve provided a brief update of actions that had been taken since the last task force meeting, including two steering committee meetings. During these interim meetings the steering committee identified three principles to guide the task force. The principles are: the task force should focus its recommendations toward the achievement of resilient, sustainable forests; the task force should identify resource management and administrative tools that can be brought to bear to achieve resiliency and sustainability; and finally the task force should make recommendations that remove barriers and direct resources to enable the effective application of these tools, and empower, local, collaborative management to work toward resilient, sustainable forests in Wyoming. The steering committee also worked with the Ruckelshaus Institute to provide research to the task force as a whole.
- D. Bill Crapser and Jessica Crowder gave a brief legislative update. Within the state legislature the Bark Beetle Mitigation Funds was provided \$4 million for the biennium to work on bark beetle mitigation across Wyoming. The legislature also provided for State forestry to contract with the Rawlins BLM to fund an at-will employee position for a contract forester.
- E. At a federal level the Farm Bill was passed with several impacts on forestry. The Farm Bill now allows for the reimbursement of fire funds through the Forest Service, provides the Forest Service permanent stewardship contracting authority, funding was provided for several good neighbor authority pilot programs in Colorado and Utah, and finally a provision in the bill allows for governors to nominate areas on National Forest land for Insect Disease Treatment Areas.
- F. To qualify as an Insect Disease Treatment Area the land must be experiencing a decline in forest health based on annual forest health surveys, or be at risk based on the National Insect and Disease Risk map, or trees in the area pose an imminent risk to public safety, health, or infrastructure. The turnaround in which the governors must nominate an area is very tight and Wyoming State Forestry is working to provide areas for nomination to the Governor Mead, which he can then chose to nominate as an Insect Disease Treatment Area, or not. States are treating the nomination period differently.
- G. Bill went on to describe the factors that Wyoming Forestry is using to justify the eight

areas that State Forestry will be nominating to the Governor. State Forestry used GIS layers for the six level watersheds fall; roadless or wilderness areas; layers that went in to developing the State Forest Action Plan; the insect and disease assessment layer; and the forest plan allocations. The Meeteetse Conservation District is also in the process of nominating a ninth area.

- H. The task force engaged in a discussion of the process the state used for nominating area. Both Jessica Crowder and Bill Crapser were looking for an endorsement of the process that was used to nominate the areas and any other information the task force members would suggest that the Governor consider. The task force elected to endorse the process that the state used for nominating areas and task force members were offered the opportunity to provide individual feedback to Jessica and Bill about any other information they hoped the Governor would consider.
- I. Richard Stem continued the discussion about the Farm Bill. Richard highlighted the changes in the requirements for Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act. Under the changes, the Forest Service will be allowed to move forward with Categorical Exclusions if appropriate, but no longer required to offer an accompanying comment period, draft, or objections. Rather the Forest Service will still offer a scoping period to seek public input, but that is where the public comment will end.
- J. The task force engaged in a brief discussion about proposed changes to the language of the charter. The task force decided to wait until later in the meeting to take action on the proposed changes.

IV. Representation on the Task Force

- A. The co-chairs led a discussion about concerns raised in a recent op-ed that ran in the Casper Star Tribune about the lack of diverse representation on the task force. The co-chairs voiced their concerns that the group is quite far into the process to be considering changes in the structure of the task force and that without restricting and adding members they encourage the task force members to be thoughtful and consider others during the decision making process. The co-chairs went on to say that they hope to hear presentations from those who may have different opinions that may not be represented, namely a representative from the tourism industry and the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone.
- B. Joel Bousman voiced his commitment as an elected official to represent all users of the forests. Joel was joined by many of the other task force members in voicing the importance of tourism and recreation on our forests. Representative Paxton, as a member of the Select Committee of Tribal Affairs, offered to act as a liaison with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone.
- C. Jim Magagna and Buddy Green reiterated that the governor's office chose a diverse group of stakeholders by design and that his wishes on the structure of the Task Force should be respected.
- D. The co-chairs summarized the conversation by reminding the task force that each person on the task force has many people behind them and that each has a responsibility to bring those voices forward and to keep an open door policy. The co-chairs will work to bring in presentations from those perhaps not represented.

V. Fire at the Wildland-Urban Interface Discussion

- A. Jessica Clement led a group discussion on the Wildfires and fire at the wildland-urban interface (WUI) discussion. The group as a whole engaged in a general explorative discussion about the issue. The discussion focused on the two issues that the task force identified at the last meeting: first that wildfires are becoming larger and more difficult to manage and second that fire management within the WUI has become more complex.
- B. The group as a whole engaged in a discussion about the issue. Jacque Buchanan and David Whittekiend explained that the Forest Service considers WUI to be forest service land interfaced with development or infrastructure. Generally, the group engaged in a discussion about incentives and disincentives to guide management in the WUI and the possibility of adding the county fire warden to discussions of county building permits.
- C. The task force then broke into three working groups. Each working group drafted their own recommendations and presented those recommendations to the group.

VI. Invasive Species Discussion

- A. Jessica Clement led a group discussion on the issues identified by the task force to frame the discussion on invasive species, namely that there is a lack of funding to deal with invasive species, including after forest disturbances and that there is a need to improve responsiveness to and management of invasive species. The group as a whole engaged in the discussion and that the issues is a large one and effects many different areas. The group highlighted the lack of funding for monitoring.
- B. The task force once again broke into three small groups to continue their discussion about invasive species and developed proposed recommendations within their small groups.

VII. Resiliency and Climate Variability

- A. Task Force members engaged in a discussion about the issues identified surrounding resiliency and climate variability: that there is a need to plan for a respond to climate variability and related impacts; there is a need to manage for resiliency of ecosystem processes; and there is a lack of understanding regarding the ecological effects of disturbance and natural processes.
- B. Jacque Buchanan provided a handout from the forest Service regarding resiliency. Jacque went on to describe that the document contained the Rocky Mountain Region's strategy for managing for resiliency.
- C. The task force once again broke into three small groups to continue their discussion about resiliency and climate variability and developed proposed recommendations within their small groups.

VIII. Budgeting and Funding

- A. Jessica Clement led a discussion on the issues identified by the task force at the previous meeting regarding the budget and funding. Specifically the issues identified were that lack of appropriate funding allocation for fire suppression is impacting our

ability to manage all of our forested lands; the need to address budget funding and allocation; and the lack of funding to deal with invasive species, including after forest disturbances.

- B. The group discussion emphasized the difference between federal and state funding. Richard Stem informed the task force that there are ongoing discussions to replicate a FEMA-like funding mechanism to support fire suppression and post-fire restoration.
- C. The task force once again broke into three small groups to continue their discussion about budgeting and financing and developed proposed recommendations within their small groups.

IX. Draft Recommendations

- A. Steve Smutko outlined how the draft recommendations will be used moving forward. A list of all the recommendations created in the small groups was provided to each task force member. Steve reiterated that the task force is not trying to seek consensus today, because there are too many questions to get answered today. There will need to be work done between meetings and adoption of recommendations will be made at the final meeting.
- B. The Ruckelshaus Institute will combine those recommendations that overlap, begin to make grammatical corrections, and begin checking the recommendations to ensure that they are both factually and legally sound. Task Force members will be able to access the original recommendations document during the editing to ensure that the task force members agree with all of the edits made.
- C. Several task force members supported a format that would give a general statement followed by specific action items. Jessica Crowder reiterated that the Governor wants really solid recommendations in a format that the governor can use.

X. Wyoming Forest Action Plan

- A. The task force engaged in a discussion about the possibility of endorsing the Wyoming Forest Action Plan. The Task Force decided to use the report as a reference to guide the discussion of the issues identified by the Task Force.

XI. Charter

- A. The Task Force engaged in a discussion about the proposed changes to the charter. Many of the task force members encouraged each other to not go into their individual corners and consider multiple uses on our forests and that the charter should reflect those multiple uses.
- B. Steve Smutko offered that the Ruckelshaus Institute will re-draft the language of the charter and send out for review and comment.

XII. Legislation

- A. The task force engaged in a discussion about their concerns about the seriousness of the Forest Service budget problems and proposed legislation, the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, S. 1875 and HR 3992, that if passed may improve budget issues. The task

force ultimately decided that they do not know enough about the proposed legislation to take action to endorse it. Jessica Crowder offered to look into the details of the proposed legislation and discuss the details of the legislation with the Governor. She will report back to the task force at the next meeting and the task force may take action at that time.

XIII. Public Comment

- A. Dave Hohl, a concerned citizen, addressed the task force about his concerns over the lack of representation of someone from the tourism industry and a citizen. Dave went on that he recognizes that each person at the table is multi dimensional, but that it is important to consider those who are not here to represent themselves. He would like the task force to consider how it would feel if the tables were reversed; for instance if there was no one on the task force to speak directly for grazing and instead grazing was represented only through others. Dave went on that while we are all general citizens, general citizens get a lot done. For instance the Wyoming Range Legacy Act and the PXP project were citizen led initiatives. Dave said that he appreciates the strong recognition that has been expressed by everyone on the task force representing these issues. He also thanked the task force for the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Next Meeting –

Date: April 8-10

Time: April 8th from 1:00-5:00, April 9th from 8-5:00, and April 10th from 8-noon.

Location: Saratoga – Platte Valley Community Center

Draft Agenda