

NOTES

Monitoring Committee
Southwestern Crown of the Continent Collaborative
January 27, 2010
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Lubrecht Experimental Forest

Present: Jim Burchfield, Dick Hutto, Anne Carlson, Jon Haufler, Joe Kerkvliet, Andrew Larson, Gary Burnett, Andy Keyes, Megan Birzell, Travis Belote, Keith Stockmann, Amber Kamps, Scott Tomson, Tom Bansak, Bruce Rieman, Cara Nelson

- I. Review/approval of the December 17 meeting notes.
 - a. The notes were approved unanimously.

- II. Search Committee Update
 - a. The Search Committee consists of Travis, Gary, Cara, Megan, Jon, and Tim.
 - b. The Monitoring Coordinator position was posted on January 17th. The soft deadline for applications is February 7th. Due to budget constraints, we are not paying to advertise the position and are instead targeting the listservs of universities and professional societies. Monitoring Committee members are encouraged to circulate the position description broadly.
 - c. As of the 27th, 10 applications have been received. Cara has received five requests for meetings and/or phone calls to talk about the position. The Monitoring Committee agreed that it is fine for Cara, as the primary point of contact, to discuss the position with applicants in order to provide clarifying information. She will not provide applicants with the names or contact information of the other members of the Search Committee.

- III. Update from DC
 - a. Jim met with Rob Harper (FS WO) while he was in Missoula earlier this week to discuss the SW Crown Monitoring Program and monitoring CFLR projects more generally.
 - b. Rob is interested in developing a national framework for monitoring CFLR projects. The benefit of a national framework would be having consistent information to share with lawmakers when asked to justify the CFLR budget expenditure. It could also provide evidential support for collaboration. He recognizes that monitoring of CFLR projects should not be managed from the top down because it would stymie the creativity within each collaborative's monitoring groups. However, while each CFLR site is unique, there are some common things all groups must monitor, such as fuels reduction and jobs created, that could benefit from a consistent national approach.
 - i. In order to develop a national framework, Rob is interested in convening a national workshop to bring a monitoring

representative from all the CFLR projects to talk about how they're doing monitoring and build off of each group's good ideas.

- ii. Our Monitoring Committee agreed that, if such a workshop occurs, Jim should represent us.

IV. Update on restoration objectives and indicators from each working group

a. Wildlife Group

- i. This group has agreed to begin with habitat models and sampling that is focused on listed and other focal species. They will try to use consistent models that work across the SW Crown landscape to evaluate expected change from treatments. They will rely on vegetation plots that include additional wildlife variables (i.e., snags, downed woody debris, measures of horizontal cover, etc.) and will ensure that this method is only applied to appropriate treatments. Because it will be impossible to sample everything, they need to figure out how to stratify the plots. They will also need some level of validation of the models chosen. They need to design a system and prioritize the models to know which are the most important ones to validate and which ones are the most feasible to use.

b. Socioeconomic Group

- i. This group has decided on the themes they want to investigate. These themes were discussed at the last meeting and can be found in the notes from that meeting (December 17th). They are taking an empirical approach to monitoring as opposed to a modeling approach.

1. Joe is currently working on fitting the chosen themes into the template that Ilana created.

- ii. The group is facing two main issues/questions:

1. How do we get contractors to cooperate in telling us what they do, how they do it, where they spend their money, what they spend it on, how do they hire their workers, and where do their workers come from?

- a. One suggestion is to contractually mandate the sharing of this information in percentage form. The group is unsure whether this is feasible, and there are concerns that it may infringe on proprietary information. There is also concern that a contractual mandate to share information may scare away potential bidders.

- b. Another suggestion is to just ask contractors for this information instead of contractually mandating it. It would be important to make sure they understand why this information is being asked of them. Trusted local citizens could gather this information through interviews. Jim has a graduate student (Jim

McKay) who is a former Smurfit employee and could be a great person to head up this effort. In order to make sure that we capture all the information we need, we could provide the contractors with information up front so that they can be tracking it as the contract progresses.

- c. The group would like to start monitoring contractor investments this year to inform the 2011 Annual Report.
 - d. Gary will mention it at the NWC contractors' workshop and see what the reaction is. He'll report back to the group at the next meeting.
2. How do we measure people's attitudes toward things like fire, the way money is shuffled around, etc.? If we find that people think we should be doing something different, would the SWCC even use that information? How long do we wait for people's attitudes to change before we decide that they're just not going to change and that we should be doing something different?
- a. While knowing people's attitudes may not change what action the FS decides to take, it can help them figure out how best to approach the project in terms of public education.
 - b. The group agreed that gathering information about residents' attitudes is important. Attitudinal surveys are good at measuring changes over time. Drawing information just from EA comment letters is not sufficient because it doesn't provide us with a representative sample. EA comments can be considered a response variable in our study of people's attitudes.
 - c. Jim will bring up this question in his Monitoring Committee Report at the full SWCC meeting on 2/8.
- c. Fish/Aquatics Group
- i. This group has filled out Ilana's template with a justification of the suggested monitoring. They recognize that they are currently asking for more than what is feasible and are in the process of whittling the list down to something more realistic.
 - ii. They looked at two major categories of monitoring:
 - 1. PIBO (PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion): Because we don't yet know what treatments are going to happen when and where, PIBO may be a good approach. It monitors riparian and aquatic systems but is not tied to specific treatments. It is a statistical model based on field characteristic. It measures long-term changes and may not

provide meaningful information in the 10-year CFLR program timeframe. To use this approach, we would need highly trained crews. It would make sense to use the existing FS system because we can't create a new monitoring framework in the timeframe that we have. Bruce and Tom have shopped the idea around to some FS and PIBO specialists, and there is concern that the resolution wouldn't be fine enough to be meaningful. It would cost about \$50,000/year to do PIBO.

2. AREMP (Aquatic and Riparian Effectiveness Monitoring Plan): This is a top-down approach to characterizing the ecological condition of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. There needs to be a validation component to this approach. Their initial thought was that PIBO could help us get that validation.

d. Fuels Group

- i. This group has also filled out Ilana's spreadsheet and is planning to establish plots to conduct measurements.

e. Vegetation Group

- i. This group did not have enough time to present today.

f. Overarching Issues

- i. While each group can come up with plans to do the small-scale stuff, everyone is more interested in the bigger picture of the areas that we're studying. We need to step back and estimate the costs of all the monitoring we want to do and then start being realistic about what is feasible. This will help us figure out the right combination of project-level monitoring with larger picture modeling and broader questions.

1. Financially speaking, we shouldn't limit ourselves to the monitoring budget identified in the CFLR fund. We should think about independently bringing our own funds to the table to answer the questions we're interested in.
2. We can build a richer story if we can tie ecological and economic monitoring together on one project.
3. We should take advantage of doing multiple types of work on the same sites on the landscape.

- ii. Overall, the group envisions using a small group of people to conduct multiple types of measurements. This is more cost-effective, can make citizen participation easier, and would allow for teams of monitors.

1. We need to make sure we get citizen scientists engaged in some way. This is part of the Act.

- iii. Our monitoring data will be applicable to the FS beyond just CFLR reporting. It can help with litigation issues.

1. It may be good to reach out to potential litigators to find out what their questions are and incorporate them into the monitoring of that specific project.
2. Most litigation relates to wildlife habitat.

g. FS Permanent Plots

- i. The FS already has lots of permanent plots (FIA), installed 2-4 years ago, in this area. They were re-measured after the beetles hit. There are also old-growth monitoring plots associated with the Meadow Smith project northeast of Seeley. Unfortunately, we can't send citizen scientists to the FIA plots because they're secret. There's a bit more flexibility with the intensified plots. Collecting the data needed for these plots requires highly trained field crews.
- ii. Basic stand exams of these plots give you canopy cover and basal area, which can be extrapolated to trees/acre. They don't measure more specific things like horizontal cover for wildlife.
 1. There are data collection standards. If data are collected by a contractor, the FS will often go back through to check their quality. They also check sometimes even when work is done in-house.
- iii. Data are stored in enterprise databases that are modifiable to some extent.

h. Action Items:

- i. Each working group will send Megan their additions to Ilana's template by February 7th.
 1. Jim will add a budget column to the template where people can list the amount of money they would need to do that specific type of work.
 2. Megan will figure out how to make the spreadsheet printable.

V. Future Agenda Items

- a. A budget for in-person interviews for the monitoring coordinator position.

VI. The next meeting will be held on the week of February 21st. Megan will schedule the meeting.