

SWCC Monitoring Committee

February 24, 2011

Meeting Notes

(Approved April 21, 2011)

Attending: Andy Kies, Andrew Larson, Travis Belote, Adam Leiberg, Brian Fauver, Jim Van Ness, Gary Burnett, Keith Stockmann, Tom Parker, Jim Burchfield, Anne Carlson, Amber Camps, Tom Bansak

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jim Burchfield at 1:15 p.m. After an agenda review the group discussed the typical meeting frequency of the monitoring committee and agreed that a predictable schedule would be beneficial. In general, the SW Crown Monitoring Committee will attempt to meet in face-to-face fashion at Lubrecht Forest from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month for the next several months. It's likely that the group will host webinars in the future, as it is anticipated that the meeting/interaction needs of the group will change over time.

Cara Nelson reported on the progress of the search committee that is providing leadership to select the monitoring coordinator/data manager. There are 7 finalists and phone interviews will be held on February 25 and February 28 to narrow the list to a few candidates who would then come to Missoula for structured interviews. The in-person interviews will be held on March 22 for two candidates and March 24 for the final two candidates. The budget for the interviews will be roughly \$1600, to be covered by resources from UM as part of its matching funds.

The Committee discussed the possibility of having the new monitoring coordinator spend some time in the SW Crown landscape, perhaps in the Swan Valley or other location, to become familiar with the people and the landscape. It will be important to start making connections soon with some of the local school districts and science teachers so plans can be made for the upcoming 2011-12 academic year. Andrew Larson mentioned the interest of the Lincoln public schools in the UM Specter Program. Gary Burnett talked about another opportunity in the "Forests in Every Classroom" initiative that is sponsored by the Blackfoot Education Program. The group agreed it would be beneficial to make sure the new monitoring coordinator begins to meet residents as soon as possible.

Burchfield turned to the next agenda item on updates from the Working Groups, and he asked Tom Bansak to provide an update on the fish and water group. Bansak reported that the scheduled meeting in Seeley Lake had to be cancelled because of bad weather, but via conference call the group had made considerable progress in filling out the matrix of objectives, questions, and indicators. The water group's next big task is to determine the priorities and costs among objectives. Ann Carlson wondered if one of the watershed analysis objectives could be included as a component of the upcoming LCC grant – perhaps as a pilot project. There are two opportunities: (1) Do a power analysis of PIBO at the landscape level to see how many PIBO sites we really need on the ground, and (2) Link the road restoration projects within CFLRP to the existing aquatic monitoring conducted by the Forest Service. Bruce Rieman will check on the FS requirements and road analysis techniques that will be used by the FS Districts for the second opportunity, and then the fish/water group could analyze which opportunity offers the

best approach in the use of limited field time. It became clear, and the Committee asserted, that the water monitoring should be done right, and it will be 2012 before this gets rolling on the ground. Bansak suggested that it would be good to have a letter of support from the CFLRP for the LCC grant. Bansak will get language to Megan Birzell and/or Gary Burnett to get a letter of support going.

The next group to report was the weeds/vegetation working group. Cara Nelson passed out an overview of the herbicide monitoring plan and the vegetation spreadsheet. She mentioned that the Forest Service has little research on the effects of herbicides on native plants. The budget for the monitoring of weeds/vegetation for the summer of 2011 is roughly \$40,000 that will support both field crews and citizen monitors. In addition, part of the process will be to measure the efficacy of citizens as reliable monitors, conducted power analyses of the skills of different types of citizens to effectively conduct weed monitoring activities. Andy Kies was highly supportive of the overall vegetation/weeds monitoring plan, but was curious how the data could be incorporated into the long-term, corporate data bases of the Forest Service. There is the FS Veg corporate data base that is mostly tree based, although there is room within this database to do this. Andrew Larson suggested that the Monitoring Committee should decide which data base we should utilize. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that there must be some integration with the FS corporate data base. Perhaps it could be put into the FACTS (FS Activity Tracking) database. Kies will find out the opportunities to incorporate the data into long-term, accessible, but agency-relevant data bases. It would be useful to check with other CFLR projects to see how they are handling this dilemma.

Burchfield reported that the Fuels Working Group had completed their matrix of objectives and indicators, recognizing that much of the work could be done by existing Forest Service crews. However, much of fuels measurement dovetails with the vegetation measurement, and depending on available budget, there could even be opportunities to incorporate citizen science in the measurements of fuels. Adam Lieberg commented that Congress would likely wish to hear about fuels more than any other resource condition. Larson mentioned that there are few opportunities to involve citizens in on-the-ground measurements, and fuels seems like one of them. It should be possible to compare the professional fire crews' data on fuels measurements, such as from Brown's transects, with the data from citizens. Nelson said the highest priority for fuels would be to have access to new data. The new monitoring coordinator could link the data from typical Forest Service field crews with the vegetation plots and fuels plots conducted by citizen scientist. Nelson added that she had applied for a National Forest Foundation grant to examine the capabilities of citizen volunteers in collecting field data.

Belote suggested that what the monitoring committee needs to create is a more encompassing narrative of the progress of each working group and the monitoring effort in general. The principles he identified in an earlier communication to the monitoring group would be a start on this narrative. In addition, each matrix should have an accompanying narrative that describes the projected personnel needs, techniques, and budget to be able to conduct measurements from each indicator. There needs to be some level of synthesis so that we can understand our priorities and why we select the combination of measurements that are funded. This information would be on our web page and help greatly with transparency. Burchfield agreed and volunteered to create a narrative that would provide an overarching view of the monitoring committee's approach as

well as an outline that would serve as a template to accompany the matrix spreadsheets for each working group.

The group engaged in a discussion on the priorities for funding in 2011 with the available resources from FY 2010. Two priorities immediately emerged – the \$40,000 for weed/vegetation monitoring and roughly \$30,000 to pay for the salary and benefits of the Monitoring Coordinator for the period May 1 – October 1. There would still be roughly \$15,000 left over in the FY 2010 monies allocated to the monitoring effort, and the group agreed that the social-economic measurements would be the third priority. Amber Kamps reminded the group that these priorities should be brought to the larger collaborative group as recommendations.

The group briefly talked about creating maps and other communication products to allow people to know how the CFLRP project moved forward. Anne Carlson reminded the group that the White Mountain Stewardship Project in the southwest had produced excellent GIS maps for pre- and post-treatment, and this could be a nice model. Belote said that the White Mountain project could also be a helpful model for the creation of our own monitoring “narrative.” Additionally, the CRFLP communications committee was already working on products, including maps, to be available on the web page.

There was a reminder of the group to participate as much as possible in the March 22 and 24 interviews of the finalists for the Monitoring Coordinator position. These interviews will be held on the UM campus.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.