

Southwestern Crown Collaborative

Meeting Notes

March 15, 2011

(Approved April 12, 2011)

Present: Rob Ethridge*, Ken Barber*, Amber Kamps*, Chris Bryant*, Craig Rawlings*, Gary Burnett*, Debbie Austin*, Scott Brennan*, Kevin Riordan*, Tim Love*, Rich Kehr*, Mo Bookwalter*, Megan Birzell*, Sarah Canepa*, Jim Burchfield*, Joe Kerkvliet*, Erin Zwiener, Angela Farr, Dale Kerkvliet*

*(*Indicates voting member.)*

Action Items:

- The **ExComm** will draft a letter to RMEF urging them to make the Auggie Mountain Project a priority for implementation this year and circulate to members. Members will have seven days to provide comments on the letter before voting (by email) to approve it and gather signatures.
 - **Gary, Jim, and Jared** will provide a short written report for their respective subcommittees that highlights key questions to Megan by Friday, April 1st.
 - **Megan** will distribute subcommittee reports to the SWCC by Monday, April 4th.
 - **Joe** will send Jim a budget for the socioeconomic group's 2011 activities this week.
 - **Megan, Joe, and Mo** will work with Gabe Furshong at MWA to coordinate our efforts and ensure we avoid "over-surveying" people in the Swan.
 - **Jim** will talk to Rob Harper to bounce some ideas off him before writing a narrative of the development and progress of our monitoring protocols.
 - **Megan** will continue to work with the rangers to ensure that we have the most accurate information concerning substance and timing of upcoming projects and that this information is shared with the SWCC Communications Committee on a regular basis.
 - **Megan** will circulate the draft due diligence statement to the full group for comments.
 - **Debbie** will try to find out whether the Wyden Amendment can be invoked to count work off NFS lands as match for CFLR funds. (CFLR does not prohibit using funds off NFS lands using the Wyden Authority. However, work funded off NFS lands using the Wyden authority does not contribute to matching requirements.)
 - **Megan** will make sure the contractor workshop is coordinated with the Communications Committee.
- I. Updates/New Information/Progress since last meeting
- a. Scott and Megan met with multiple agency, delegation, and hill staff on their recent trip to DC.

- i. To increase the likelihood of the success of the CFLR program and to capture lessons learned, we need to highlight work being done on the ground this summer with CFLR funds.
 - ii. Many see CFLR as a bridge to the future with respect to the way the FS does business.
 - b. The WO is leading a monitoring workshop in early June with a number of representatives from the currently funded collaboratives. The purposes are to share lessons learned/best practices and to develop national standards to ensure consistency between projects for purposes of reporting to Congress. The purpose is *not* to stymie creativity in each monitoring program or to create a “one size fits all” approach for monitoring.
 - c. There is still no more concrete information concerning FY 2011 funding. The government is currently operating under a series of short-term CRs.
 - d. Given the prolonged uncertainty about funding, we should focus on things we can control, i.e. implementation, communications, and monitoring.
 - e. IRR (Integrated Resource Restoration) is the new proposed FS budget line item that lumps a lot of current line items together to fund restoration projects.
 - f. The new FS planning rule is currently out for public comment in draft form. The goal is to have a final version out by 11/11/11.
 - g. The vacancy announcement for the SWCC FS Coordinator closed last Friday. That hiring process is being handled by the Flathead NF.
 - h. The RO recently allocated \$690,000 (which was the full ask) to the Lincoln and Seeley districts for planning for FY 2011 CLFR projects. Update on planning money for Lincoln and Seeley (and hiring status for NEPA support staff). The Lincoln and Seeley districts are currently determining how to distribute those funds.
 - i. The Lincoln and Seeley districts have asked for \$1.3 million/year for FY 2012 and 2013 for planning for CFLR projects but aren’t sure of the status of that request.
 - ii. Having no planning money beyond FY 2011 is right now the biggest threat to our success.
 - i. Debbie has an upcoming conference call with the RO and Wildlife Habitat Council to discuss possibilities for a model to do work on public lands using non-federal resources.

II. Executive Committee Report

- a. The ExComm recommended the following terms for co-chairs and ExComm members:
 - i. Co-Chair terms:
 - 1. Member 1: Present time – 9/30/12 (Debbie)
 - 2. Member 2: Present time – 9/30/13 (Scott)

- ii. Executive Cmte:
 - 1. Member 1: Present time – 9/30/2013 (Gary)
 - 2. Member 2: Present time – 9/30/ 2012 (Amber)
 - 3. Member 3: Present time – 9/30/2012 (Mo)
- iii. **VOTE:** The SWCC voted unanimously to approve the recommended terms for the co-chairs and executive committee. (A quorum of 13 was exceeded.)
- b. In light of the recent flurry of requests for letters of support (mostly for grant proposals) from the SWCC, the ExComm recommends a seven-day mandatory turnaround time for letter of support requests.
 - i. **VOTE:** The SWCC voted unanimously to require at least seven days' notice for all letter requests.
- c. Implementation of the Auggie Mountain Restoration Project, a CFLR project and the first project to be developed by consensus through the Lolo Restoration Committee, has previously been delayed for two years due to reasons beyond our control. We expected implementation to proceed this coming summer. However, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), which holds the stewardship agreement that would implement significant portions of the project (road work, weed work, and harvesting), said last week that they have been unable to meet the 20% matching requirement due to other organizational priorities. Thus, the project won't be implemented this year.
 - i. The ExComm recommends drafting a letter to the appropriate RMEF representative (with a cc to other interested parties) explaining why the Auggie Mountain Project is a priority for the SWCC and urging them to reconsider their priorities to ensure that implementation proceeds this summer. Pending SWCC approval consistent with our charter, this letter would be sent on SWCC letterhead, hopefully with signatures from all voting members.
 - 1. **VOTE:** The SWCC voted unanimously in support of drafting a letter to RMEF urging them to make the Auggie Mountain Project a priority for implementation this year.
 - a. **ACTION ITEM:** The ExComm will draft a letter and circulate to members. Members will have seven days to provide comments on the letter before voting (by email) to approve it and gather signatures.
- d. *****Member Dale Kerkvliet provided the following supplemental information concerning the Auggie Mountain Project after our meeting:**
 - i. *The Auggie Creek Restoration and Fuels Stewardship Project "road package" has been awarded to Ureco, INC. of Columbia Falls.*
 - 1. *Work plan is to begin the June 5th, 2011 and conclude the last week of September.*

2. Ureco, INC. intends to work from east to west (Mountain Creek to Auggie Cr.) in order to accommodate the Goshawk Post Fledgling Area (GPFA) no disturbance restrictions dates of 4/15 to 8/15.
- ii. Also around the first week in June, RMEF will advertise the harvest portion of the Project along with the balance of the Schedule of Items—lop and scatter mastication, etc.
1. It is anticipated that the award will not be made until mid-July.
 2. As per RMEF's Stewardship Agreement, harvest cannot commence until the "road package" is completed. Also, give the GPFA restriction, logging restrictions of soil and snow requirements, and market conditions, I would not be surprised if the logging contractor postpones logging until the winter of 2011/2012. There is a possibility that some logging could occur in the fall of 2011, however.
- iii. The current financial forecast is as follows:
1. The "road package" was about \$6,000 more than budgeted
 2. Current forecasting, including known cost of the "road package," estimates of timber values as well as costs to complete the Schedule of items, is a shortfall of \$18,300.
 3. Current forecasting of RMEF's Cost Share obligation is \$13,000.
 4. I am not alarmed by this 5% variance from the total project forecast due to the number of variables and their inherent variance.
- iv. Funding progress:
1. RMEF's Cost Share obligation is, in part, being met by an estimated value of \$22,200 of Project Administration donated by the Blackfoot Challenge as well as the U of M's donation of their pre-monitor work valued at \$5,842.
 2. RMEF applied for and was awarded a Missoula Co. RAC grant totaling \$25,000 for the "road package." However, at the time of application it was not clear to all parties that in order to accept the award a 20% Cost Share from a non-federal source would be required. Since that determination, RMEF has not accepted the award. The \$25,000 is available until April 14th. RMEF has been unsuccessful in finding a financial partner for the \$5,000. However, The Wilderness Society has indicated they may be able to broker assistance.
 3. The Seeley Lake RD applied for a RMEF \$20,000 PAC grant for the veg work in Mountain Creek. The PAC met in

January and denied the application based on their evaluation (as I understood it) that:

- a. The affected herd was relatively small.*
- b. The project was not in a migration zone*
- c. The project was not located within indentified crucial winter or summer elk range.*
- d. The request was seen as a subsidy of silvicultural work not germane to significant wildlife habitat enhancement*

III. Discussion of key questions arising out of subcommittees

- a. In an effort to better focus our SWCC meetings, the ExComm has asked the subcommittee chairs to provide a short written report before each SWCC meeting that provides an update on activities and highlights key questions they would like to bring to the SWCC for discussion. For this meeting, the ExComm was unable to send out these committee reports to the full SWCC before today's meeting. Thus, the reports are pasted below in these notes. For future meetings, members will have one week to review subcommittee reports prior to SWCC meetings.

- i. **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Gary, Jim, and Jared will provide a short written report for their respective subcommittees that highlights key questions to Megan by Friday, April 1st.
 2. Megan will distribute subcommittee reports to the SWCC by Monday, April 4th.

- b. Monitoring Committee

- i. The search for a Monitoring Coordinator (to be housed at UM) for the Monitoring Committee has made rapid progress. Over 40 applications were received. Phone interviews were conducted with seven applicants. Of this group, four have been invited to Missoula for in-person interviews to be held March 22nd and 24th. The anticipated start-date for the Monitoring Coordinator will be May 1, 2011. Jim Burchfield will supervise the successful candidate for this position.
 - ii. Plans for the vegetation/weeds monitoring have been finalized. Students in Cara's class will be conducting field exercises in April to quantify measurement reliability of citizen volunteers who will assist with pre- and post-treatment measurements for fuel treatments. A budget for the vegetation/weeds portion of the 2011 monitoring program was approved at \$39,000 (includes the partial contribution of the new monitoring coordinator).
 - iii. Socioeconomic monitoring work will also be conducted in the summer of 2011 to gain baseline information on economic attributes and social attitudes regarding restoration projects,

although the precise budget has yet to be submitted from the working group. Costs are anticipated to be in the \$15,000 range.

1. Jim McKay (UM grad student) will be the field person helping with this. Jim Burchfield will introduce Jim McKay to Mo and Joe.
 2. MWA is planning to do some public opinion surveys in the Swan Valley. We need to make sure that all these interviews are coordinated so we don't over-survey people.
 3. **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - a. Joe will send Jim a budget for the socioeconomic group's 2011 activities this week.
 - b. Megan, Joe, and Mo will work with Gabe Furshong at MWA to coordinate our efforts and avoid "over-surveying" people.
 - iv. Fuels monitoring activities will also occur within 2011, coordinated with vegetation monitoring crews as well as ongoing fuels measurements of Forest Service field staff (perhaps even firefighting crews when not on fires).
 - v. Fish/aquatics efforts aren't as far along as the other working groups. (Soils is nested within this working group.)
 - vi. Jim agreed to produce a narrative summary report of the development and progress of monitoring protocols within the SW Crown to communicate to others in the SW Crown as well as other CFLR projects the rationale and tradeoffs in monitoring decisions.
 1. **ACTION ITEM:** Jim will talk to Rob Harper to bounce some ideas off him before writing a narrative of the development and progress of our monitoring protocols.
- c. Prioritization
- i. Planning is intimately tied to implementation, and the FS is currently exploring all options to get planning money for future years so we'll have projects ready for implementation.
 - ii. There was discussion about how much leeway the district rangers have in making decisions that commit resources to planning and implementation for projects in short timeframes (particularly year-end money).
 1. There is a high level of trust in the rangers to choose to commit and/or move resources in accordance with the SWCC's priorities.
 2. Everyone agreed that, ideally, any variation from previously agreed to projects would be discussed with the SWCC before a decision is made. A discussion with the ExComm would be sufficient given a short timeframe. We

also recognize that there will be some cases where managers have to make decisions without the time to discuss it with the SWCC. In those cases, these decisions should be discussed, even after the fact, with the full SWCC so we can be aware of them and understand the rationale behind the decision.

3. Given that the “year-end” timeframe begins in July, it was suggested that we set aside time at our July SWCC meeting to discuss the status of our projects and any projected shifts as we near the end of the fiscal year.

iii. RFP update

1. The RFP for a baseline analysis for fuels mitigation and aquatic and forest restoration was sent to four interested parties: Ecosystem Research Group, EMRI, Northwest Management, and Watershed Consulting. Two proposals were received from EMRI and Northwest Management
2. The proposal review committee (Travis, Amber, Andrew Larson, Gary) evaluated the two proposals and recommends to the SWCC that the contract be awarded to EMRI. A detailed evaluation of the two proposals was passed around for the group to review. The main reasons for this recommendation are:
 - a. Northwest Management’s work would not have given us the fine-scale information we need in order to prioritize our restoration efforts.
 - b. Northwest Management didn’t meet match requirements (19%, not 20%), and EMRI exceeded the match requirement.
 - c. **VOTE:** The SWCC voted unanimously to endorse the recommendation of Review Committee to award the contract to EMRI.
 - d. Gary will take this recommendation to the Blackfoot Challenge board tomorrow.

d. Communications

i. Social Communications:

1. The website is on schedule to be live by end of the month. Site architecture is up and content is currently being created and edited by the communications team.
2. Following completion of the website, a Facebook page will also be created. Megan and Jared will be responsible for updates to website and Facebook page once live.
3. **ACTION ITEM:** Megan will continue to work with the rangers to ensure that we have the most accurate

information concerning substance and timing of upcoming projects.

- ii. Earned Media:
 - 1. A media advisory to be sent once we know funding levels for FY 2011. The timing is still unknown, but we expect this to happen soon after FY 11 budget is eventually wrapped up – late March tentative.
 - 2. Once the website is live, we plan to release a list of upcoming CFLR projects to highlight promise of upcoming field season (target is the first week of April). This will be followed by an op-ed. There was some discussion on whether to do this announcement via a teleconference with project partners. They would need buy-in from the SWCC in order to do something like that, but it may increase the news urgency.
 - 3. Members of Comm Cmte are currently searching out additional and diverse partners and contractors who could be called on to serve as credible spokespeople for the SWCC when time is appropriate.
- iii. Misc:
 - 1. The logo and brand have been finalized, and we now have versions for both print and media which should be used on future SWCC material.
- iv. We need to be strategic about what and how we communicate.
 - 1. We recommend that, if you want to send out SWCC materials (other than what's on our website) to people who ask, please check with the ExComm to ensure consistency.

IV. FS Contracting Mechanisms

- a. Review draft of due diligence statement
 - i. Jim passed out a draft statement.
 - ii. **ACTION ITEM:** Megan will circulate the draft due diligence statement to the full group for comments.
 - iii. We will discuss further at the April meeting.
- b. Summary of existing agreements
 - i. Lincoln and Seeley RDs have a joint participating agreement with the Blackfoot Challenge.
 - ii. The Lincoln RD has agreements with: Blackfoot Challenge, Ponderosa Snow Warriors, Montana Backcountry Horsemen, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, and Continental Divide Trail Alliance.
 - iii. The Seeley RD has agreements with: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Blackfoot

Challenge, Clearwater Resource Council, and Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation.

- iv. The Swan RC has agreements with Swan Ecosystem Center and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. They also hold other agreements with other groups that are not pertinent to the SW Crown's work.
- c. Presentation/discussion of various FS contracting mechanisms
 - i. Debbie and her staff provided two white papers (attached) describing the various contracts and agreements used for implementing work on the NFS lands.
 - ii. Concerning contracts, the following points were raised:
 - 1. It is possible to transfer retained receipts between Lolo, Helena, and Flathead in association with CFLR, but this needs to be done on a project-by-project basis.
 - 2. "Local" (best value criteria) can be defined differently depending on the project.
 - 3. All service requests must be part of the original solicitation of proposals. In other words, you can't add deliverables to an RFP after it's been advertised.
 - 4. There may be opportunities for collaborative members to participate in the development and review of best value criteria and weights of each criteria when developing contracting RFPs.
 - 5. Integrated Resource Timber Contracts (IRTC) are used when the value of goods can pay for restoration activities.
 - 6. Integrated Resource Service Contracts (IRSC) are used when the cost of restoration is greater than value of goods coming off the project.
 - iii. Agreements
 - 1. There was a question about the possibility to use work done off NFS land as match through the Wyden Amendment.
 - 2. **ACTION ITEM:** Debbie will try to find out whether the Wyden Amendment can be invoked to count work off NFS lands as match for CFLR funds.
- d. Discussion of upcoming contractor workshop
 - i. CRC, NWC, and BC are planning to host a contractors' workshop focused on the SW Crown in April. (Projected dates are the 19th and 20th.) This workshop will provide an overview of CFLR in general and a few specific projects. The 2nd day of the workshop is planned to be MLA's steward contracting workshop.
 - ii. The planning committee is meeting this Thursday. All are invited to participate.
 - iii. **ACTION ITEM:** Megan will make sure the contractor workshop is coordinated with the Communications Committee.

- V. Other Items
 - a. Suggested agenda items for next meeting:
 - i. Presentations from others (i.e. FWS) about restoration work happening in our landscape on other ownerships that we should know about and that could count as leverage.

- VI. Next meetings: April 12, May 17, June 7, July 12, August 9