

Southwestern Crown Collaborative
Meeting Notes
May 17, 2011

Present: Megan Birzell*, Mo Bookwalter*, Debbie Austin*, Gabe Furshong, Jaesen Sheppard, Chris Bryant*, Tim Love*, Rob Ethridge*, Gary Burnett*, Amber Kamps*, Jon Haufler*, Joe Kerkvliet*, Jim Burchfield*, Rich Kehr*, Rusty Wilder, Sarah Canepa*, Travis Belote*, Kevin Riordan*, Keith Stockmann*
(* Indicates voting member.)

Action Items:

- **Scott** will take the lead for the Executive Committee in drafting a thank-you letter to Bob Harrington regarding the Auggie Creek Project. The letter will be sent to the SWCC for review.
- **Rich and Debbie** will check to see whether the advanced acquisition plan already in place for the FS could help consolidate contracting opportunity information for CFLR projects.
- **Megan** will email the new draft due diligence paragraph to the voting membership for review.
- **Megan** will ensure that the Communications Committee discusses the Colt Summit appeal at their next meeting.
- **Scott** will set up a meeting between the SWCC Executive Committee and the MFRC Steering Committee to discuss the Colt Summit appeal.
- **Megan and Mo** will raise the issue with the CFLR Coalition and ask for their input and advice regarding the appeal of a CFLR project.

A quorum of 14 is present.

- I. Welcome/Introductions
 - a. The notes from the April 12th meeting were approved unanimously.
- II. Updates/New Information/Progress since last meeting
 - a. Review action items from last meeting
 - i. The Executive Committee has not yet drafted a letter to Bob Harrington (for approval by the voting membership) thanking him for his help in ensuring the implementation of the Auggie Creek Restoration Project.
 1. **ACTION ITEM:** Scott will take the lead in drafting this letter for SWCC review.
 - b. The Regional Office has received FY 2011 funds, including CFLR funds. The money has not yet been allocated to the individual forests, but that is expected to happen very soon. The SWCC anticipates receiving approximately \$3.5 million for implementation that will need to be matched. This money will need to be obligated by September 30th. Once

the final amount is known, the Executive Committee will meet to finalize FY 2011 project recommendations to the FS. Monitoring deliverables will need to be identified before that money is obligated.

- c. The FS is currently reviewing applicants for the SW Crown coordinator position. An offer will be made by June 2nd, but the start date has not been determined.
- d. The Contractor Workshop on April 19th and 20th was a huge success. There were 73 attendees the first day. Some key questions and issues that arose include:
 - i. What do we mean by “local” when using best value criteria? Can there be a graduated use of the term?
 - ii. We need to strategize about how to make information about upcoming bid opportunities available to local contractors as soon and as easily as possible.
 - 1. **ACTION ITEM:** Rich and Debbie will check to see whether the advanced acquisition plan already in place for the FS could help with this.

III. Project Appeals

- a. The Colt Summit Restoration Project, a CFLR project and Lolo Restoration Committee project on the Seeley Lake District, has received three appeals. There are four organizations represented in the appeals: Friends of the Wild Swan, Montana Ecosystem Defense Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, and Native Ecosystems Council. The appeals specifically address the SWCC and the CFLR Program and say that Colt Summit shouldn't be tiered to our CFLR proposal because CFLR didn't go through NEPA.
- b. The appeal period lasts 45 days. Within 15 days, the FS will extend an invitation and hold an appeal resolution meeting with the appellants. If no agreement is reached and the appeal continues, the Regional Office will task an Appeal Review Panel with reviewing the appeal and recommending to the Regional Forester that the Decision Notice either be upheld or remanded. If the Decision Notice is upheld, the project can move forward to implementation 15 days later, and the appellants have standing to litigate the project. If the Decision Notice is remanded, the FS will re-analyze the project.
- c. The Executive Committee has suggested that, beyond exploring what our role might be within the SWCC, we should reach out to the MFRC and the CFLR Coalition to see if there are opportunities to work together in responding to this appeal.
 - i. **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - 1. **Megan** will ensure that the Communications Committee discusses this issue at their next meeting.

2. **Scott** will set up a meeting between the SWCC Executive Committee and the MFRC Steering Committee.
3. **Megan and Mo** will raise the issue with the CFLR Coalition and ask for their input and advice.

IV. Subcommittee Reports and Key Questions

a. Executive

- i. Joe described to the Executive Committee the Socioeconomic Working Group's monitoring proposal to conduct interviews with CFLR contractors in order to "smarten" the TREAT tool. TREAT is a modification of an economic impact analysis tool called IMPLAN. The SWCC (and other CFLR projects) has been using it to report the economic impacts of CFLR in the SW Crown. Currently, TREAT has poor information regarding restoration sectors. The Socioeconomic Working Group proposes to smarten it by obtaining as much accurate information as possible on restoration activities that occur in SW Crown. This work would be focused specifically in SW Crown, but the results could also be useful more broadly.
- ii. The Executive Committee unanimously recommends approval of this proposal.
- iii. **VOTE:** To approve the Socioeconomic Working Group's proposal to spend \$7500 this summer to conduct contractor interviews to smarten the TREAT tool.

1. The SWCC unanimously approved this proposal.

b. Communications

- i. The Contractor Workshop received positive TV and radio coverage.
- ii. The Committee has drafted a press release to accompany an announcement of FY 2011 funding for the CFLR program.
- iii. The Committee is working to organize two over flights over the SW Crown this summer for public education purposes.
- iv. The committee is making initial plans to organize visits to all major editorial boards in the state this summer to educate them regarding SWCC efforts.

(Chris and Debbie left the meeting. Debbie gave Tim her proxy. Chris gave Megan his proxy.)

a. Prioritization and Monitoring

- v. There is recognition of the need for more coordination between the Prioritization and Monitoring Committees in order to move forward.

- vi. The Monitoring Committee has requested quantifiable project/treatment objectives for the CFLR program in the SW Crown over the next 10 years.
- vii. Recommended process:
 - 1. The Prioritization Committee, through a participating agreement with EMRI, is in the process of identifying historical and existing conditions across the SW Crown (work in the Blackfoot is mostly done, but not in the Swan). The Prioritization Committee will use this information as a starting place to collaboratively identify quantifiable restoration objectives consistent with the existing Forest Plans.
 - 2. Once the SWCC has approved these objectives, identified where on the landscape restoration opportunities exist (likely this fall), and made recommendations to the Forest Service, the Monitoring Committee and Prioritization Committee can work together to identify a framework for the development of restoration projects that will maximize opportunities for learning.
 - 3. While they are waiting for objectives to be identified, the Monitoring Committee can focus on fully identifying and describing the variables of interest (and how they will be measured) for all identified resources of interest (wildlife, fish/aquatics, vegetation, fire/fuels, socioeconomics). This has been referred to as developing a “super FIA” plot.
- viii. There was extensive discussion about whether this recommended process rises to the level of decision-making that would require NEPA. Ultimately, the group agreed that this question needs to be addressed by the appropriate FS staff, and we were unable to approve the recommended process as a result. This process has been tabled until we receive further guidance from the appropriate agency NEPA experts.
- ix. The Monitoring Committee will talk about detailed plans for this year’s monitoring program at their meeting on Thursday.

V. Discussion items

- a. There was not enough time to review and approve the draft due diligence statement that Megan and Mo revised after the last meeting. We will revisit this at the next meeting.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM: Megan** will email the new draft due diligence paragraph to the voting membership for review.

VI. Next meetings: June 7, July 12, August 9