

SWCC Monitoring Committee

Meeting Notes

May 19, 2011

Present: Andy Kies, Ashley Grant, Amber Kamps, Keith Stockmann, Jim Burchfield, Jon Haufler, Gary Burnett, Cara Nelson, Beth Gardner, Bruce Rieman, Joe Kerkvliet, Megan Birzell, Dick Hutto, Travis Belote

Action Items:

- **Keith** will send the current decision pathways/schematic slides out to the group.
- **Everyone** will review the decision pathways/schematic slides and provide additional suggestions and input by Friday, May 27th.
- **Keith, Amber, and Anne C.** will refine these pathways based on committee input and send out new versions before our next meeting.
- **Amber** will ask the other line officers about their expectations for how FY 2011 monitoring money will be spent and will report back to the group.
- **Working Group Chairs** will take the lead in developing monitoring proposals for 2012 (FY 2011 funds) for their resource and will present these proposals (15 minutes max) for approval and refinement at the next meeting.
- **Travis** will follow up with Bo to see if we already have maps of fuels treatment history.
- **Everyone** will review the monitoring narrative and provide comments and suggestions to Jim by June 1st.

I. Welcome/Introductions/Updates

a. Review/approve notes from April 21st meeting

- i. Megan and Travis suggested a revision to the "Vote" paragraph on page 3 of the notes in order to clarify what we voted on. Their suggested revision reads:

1. "The group discussed the strengths of a monitoring program which takes advantage of a broadly applied experimental design. This design would stratify treatments by some ecologically meaningful sites (e.g., habitat types) and replicate treatments within and among sites and include untreated controls. Our inference as to impacts of treatments will be greatly strengthened using this design. The committee voted unanimously to focus monitoring on a smaller set of treatments included in this design, and not spread our resources too thin trying to monitor every project."

- ii. The group was in favor of this edit but decided to table approval of the notes until we can be sure that the entirety of the notes is clear and can't be misunderstood.

- II. Update on development of decision pathways (schematic) for SWCC projects and monitoring responsibilities
 - a. Keith presented a series of slides that identify communication pathways for the development of CFLR projects and for the development of the monitoring framework. Keith, Amber, and Anne C. developed these slides over the past month in response to a recognized need to integrate the work of the Monitoring Committee with other subcommittees and partner groups.
 - b. *(Note: Slides are being sent electronically to all monitoring committee members and are available upon request.)*
 - c. Discussion of the slides raised the following suggestions:
 - i. We need a record-keeping mechanism to document our progress through these pathways.
 - ii. Add “the public” into monitoring framework schematic.
 - iii. There needs to be an input to the Monitoring Committee in the monitoring framework schematic. The Monitoring Committee needs to have information about what monitoring is already ongoing within the FS as well as quantifiable objectives in order to begin developing a framework.
 - iv. We should highlight the coordinator’s role in this process.
 - v. We should take a hypothetical issue through these pathways to see how they might actually work.
 - vi. With regard to the monitoring framework, we should add dates to the pathway in order to keep us moving forward.
 - d. **ACTION ITEMS:**
 - i. **Keith** will send these slides out to the group.
 - ii. **Everyone** will review them and provide additional suggestions and input by May 27th.
 - iii. **Keith, Amber, and Anne C.** will refine these pathways and send out new versions before our next meeting.
 - e. The question was raised of whether these processes and the SWCC’s prioritization should go through programmatic NEPA. While the group agreed that this is an interesting question, we also decided that it is a question best left to our leadership and the FS Forest and Regional Offices.
- III. Update on development of experimental framework for CFLR projects in the SW Crown
 - a. The Monitoring Committee has agreed that incorporating an experimental framework into the development of CFLR restoration projects could maximize opportunities for learning about the landscape-level effects of treatments. A subcommittee was identified at the last meeting to talk more about what this might look like. This group met last

week but wasn't able to provide a formal update to the group on their progress. However, there was discussion of the need for an experimental framework by the full group.

- b. The group has agreed that additional inputs in the form of quantifiable restoration objectives are necessary in order to begin discussing how an experimental framework might be integrated into CFLR projects in order to maximize learning.
 - i. Some noted that the Monitoring Committee hasn't explored alternative approaches to monitoring that may allow us to learn more at a faster pace and that are also effective and meaningful.
 - ii. Dick believes we need to look more carefully at one specific monitoring approach—a chronosequence approach to learning. There is a gold mine of information on the landscape right now, and we can learn about the effects of various land-use practices most rapidly by visiting existing independent treatments of various ages following treatment. The experimental BACI approach that we are currently highlighting is great for learning about the effects of one or two treatment events in a given year, but it is generally poor at getting a feeling for the “average” response across a real series of many independently applied treatments until data from many years are in hand. Instead of waiting for 20 years to amass a sample size that can tell us something about “average” effects, Dick proposes that we think more seriously about supplementing (not replacing, but supplementing) our current emphasis on monitoring future treatments with a comparative approach that can tell us most of what we want to know within a matter of a few years.
- c. The SWCC Prioritization Committee is in the process of developing recommendations to the full SWCC for 10-year terrestrial and aquatic restoration objectives consistent with the existing Forest Plans. However, these objectives will likely not be finalized until the fall, thus stalling that discussion.
- d. In the meantime, the Monitoring Committee can focus on determining variables of interest and how to measure them for fire/fuels, vegetation, wildlife, fish/aquatics, and socioeconomics. This has been discussed in terms of developing a “super FIA” plot that would include measures for fire/fuels, vegetation and wildlife.
- e. The difficulty of identifying simple measures for assessing project and ecological effects on aquatic resources was noted. Monitoring fish/aquatics will likely require a long-term approach. However, we need to have some measures in place for next summer to address aquatic issues.
- f. It was also noted that socioeconomics and biomass utilization monitoring are not included in the work the Prioritization Committee is doing, and so

the Monitoring Committee and appropriate working groups can move forward to develop long-term monitoring plans for those two pieces of our CFLR project.

- g. It was suggested that the experimental framework should be identified and agreed upon by the full SWCC by November 1st so that we can note this progress in the SWCC's Annual Report to the RAC.

IV. Discussion of short-term monitoring plans for 2011 (FY 2010 funds) and 2012 (FY 2011 funds)

a. 2012 (FY 2011 funds)

- i. The SWCC is expecting between \$3.4 and \$3.8 million for FY 2011 to be dispensed to the Forests within the month. This means that between \$340,000 and \$380,000 will be available for monitoring from the CFLR Fund alone and would require a 1:1 match. The FS is unlikely to obligate this money for monitoring until the Monitoring Committee provides a monitoring plan and budget for how that money will be spent.
- ii. The Monitoring Committee should have a goal of putting together a monitoring plan for 2012 (FY 2011 funds) by the end of August 2011.
- iii. The group recognized the need to determine how the monitoring money will be allocated among the five working groups/resources of interest before we can determine the best way to use that money.
 - 1. A suggestion was made to have each working group present a proposal (15 minutes max) for monitoring their assigned resource at the next meeting. The Committee will then decide together, using our established decision rules, how to allocate the money.
 - a. The group agreed generally to this approach.
 - 2. Another suggestion was made to focus this summer on developing our "super FIA" plot, including the cost of each plot, and to then commit to establishing X number of plots (the number of plots will depend on how much they cost and how much money is available) next summer. We won't know where to put these plots by August, but we may be able to identify appropriate sites this fall or winter.

iv. **ACTION ITEMS:**

- 1. **Amber** will ask the other line officers about their expectations for how this FY 2011 monitoring money will be spent and will report back to the group.
- 2. **Working Group Chairs** will take the lead in developing monitoring proposals for 2012 (FY 2011 funds) for their

resource and will present these proposals (15 minutes max) for approval and refinement at the next meeting.

b. 2011 (FY 2010 funds)

i. Herbicide treatments

1. The Vegetation Working Group decided last September to focus their portion of 2011 monitoring on weeds because there are many weed treatments planned for this year through the CFLR program. Weeds were also seen as low-hanging fruit.
2. In November, the working group met with FS herbicide staff and developed and circulated their monitoring objectives. They received feedback on these objectives and refined them before submitting them to the SWCC Executive Committee and the full SWCC.
3. In March, the Monitoring Committee decided to move forward with these plans. UM hired a coordinator (Ashley Grant) and 6-person crews.
4. In April, the working group met again with FS weed staff to discuss logistics and is now in the second phase of conversations with FS staff to determine where weed treatments are planned for this summer.
5. CONCERNS: There have recently been some concerns from FS staff who weren't initially involved in November. Their concerns stemmed from a misunderstanding about how this weed monitoring fits into the larger monitoring plan for CFLR. Some also expressed frustration about the diversion of funds out of other program areas and into CFLR.

a. **Suggestions going forward:**

- i. The Monitoring Committee and FS line officers will help ensure that FS staff understand what CFLR is and are on board.
 - ii. When working with FS staff, Monitoring Committee members will frame all discussions in the context of CFLR and the overall monitoring effort.
 - iii. There needs to be at least one FS representative actively participating in each working group. FS line officers will be making these assignments tomorrow.
6. Cara passed out the most recent draft of the Herbicide Treatment Monitoring Plan (*available upon request*). This draft was developed after conversations with the Lolo and

Flathead NFs. The Weed Working Group is hoping to meet with the Helena NF next week.

7. There was a question about where the data will be stored. As of today, that has not been determined. There is an expectation that the Monitoring Coordinator will set up databases to hold the data and that these databases will be compatible with FS databases.

c. Socioeconomic monitoring

- i. There was not time for a verbal update on the Socioeconomic Working Group. Megan Birzell provided the following written update after the meeting:
- ii. *The Working Group received approval from the full SWCC to spend \$7500 this summer to conduct interviews with CFLR contractors in order to refine the TREAT economic model that is used to predict the economic impacts of restoration treatments. The SWCC uses TREAT to report the economic impacts, including jobs created, of CFLR projects, and this monitoring will improve the accuracy of TREAT.*

d. Fuels monitoring

- i. The Fire/Fuels Working Group is holding a conference call tomorrow to discuss monitoring plans for this summer. They will be relying on simple metrics collected by FS plots and are working to ensure that we have monumented plots.
- ii. There was discussion about looking at past fuels treatments to figure out what treatments have been applied and where throughout this landscape. A map of treatment histories would be useful.
- iii. **ACTION ITEM:**
 1. **Travis** will follow up with Bo to see if we already have maps of fuels treatment history.

V. Discussion/review of monitoring “narrative”

- a. There was not time for this discussion. However, Jim reported that he has received several comments and is in the process of incorporating them into a new version of the draft.
- b. **ACTION ITEM:**
 - i. **Everyone** should review the monitoring narrative and provide comments and suggestions to Jim by June 1st.

VI. Next Meeting

- a. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 23rd, from 1 – 4pm at Lubrecht.

