

SWCC Prioritization Committee

Meeting Notes

July 7, 2011

Present: Sandy Mack, Jon Haufler, Gary Burnett, Cory Davis, Megan Birzell, Rich Kehr, Tim Love, Amber Kamps, Rob Ethridge

- I. Approve June 14th meeting notes
 1. Approved unanimously.

- II. Update from EMRI on baseline analysis project
 1. All the necessary layers for the Blackfoot have been pulled together. Have met with Seeley and Lincoln districts. They are now trying to more specifically articulate fuels management and restoration goals (especially in the mixed-severity fire regime). They intend to circle back with the Districts to get more feedback.
 1. They are also working to understand what each District already has in the works so that can be incorporated into the overall plan.
 2. Next they will begin identifying and quantifying what is possible to treat in the next 10 years, at which point they will work with the Districts to see if that's compatible with their plans. Next they'll try to figure out what is feasible, propose that to the SWCC and the Restoration Committees (RCs) as a 10-year program of work, and seek feedback from these collaborative groups.
 2. EMRI has an initial meeting with the Swan District on July 26th. They will be seeking feedback about any additional information that should be incorporated into their analysis. They will then run a historical terrestrial analysis (SIMPPLER). They will likely meet with the Swan District for a second time on September 27th.
 3. EMRI anticipates bringing their recommendations to the SWCC in October and subsequently to the RCs.
 4. Remaining Needs:
 1. A few more layers from the Seeley District – i.e. treatment unit boundaries.
 2. Stonewall layers from Lincoln and any information about the West Flescher to Stemple NFMA area (maybe not critical); also need a digital copy (GIS) of the Forest Plan units for Lincoln.
 3. New scheduled meetings with both Seeley (August 23rd) and Lincoln districts (August 10th or 11th) in early to mid-August.
 4. Digital copy of GIS information of the Flathead Forest Plan relative to the Swan District.

- III. Update on FY 2011 projects

1. The new Seeley list has more monitoring money in it, and so they are tweaking and shifting money around to account for that. Projects that lose money will be pushed into FY12.
 1. Megan will get the updated Seeley project list from Kalee. It is mostly finalized.
 2. Lincoln will likely have their mostly final project list in a week.
 3. Swan provided a printed project spreadsheet. They are currently slightly over-requesting funds.
 4. There is roughly \$600,000 currently allocated to the Colt Summit Project. The Lolo NF is moving forward under the presumption that implementation will occur. However, they could be prevented from beginning implementation due to pending litigation. In this case, that \$600,000 would be made available to other projects. Given how late we are in the fiscal year, that money would likely be moved over to ready-to-go projects that will happen under task orders under current contracts (not seeking new contracts).
 1. Also, a lot of the planned FY11 burn work hasn't happened due to weather and small burn windows. A lot of those have been moved to FY12 but could potentially move back up if conditions permit.
 5. We need to start thinking about FY2011 annual report as well as budget estimates for 2012 – 2014.
- IV. Update on FY 2012 projects and overlap with Monitoring proposals
1. We need to do more research to determine whether we requested less than full funding for FY12 and FY13.
- V. Future Projects
1. Swan District
 1. Glacier Loon and Cold Jim are the major projects slated for 2012 – 2014. The District has provisional treatment polygons for Glacier Loon and is close to having polygons identified for Cold Jim.
 2. There is a forest-wide Plum Creek Timber acquisition planning effort underway that would allow pre-commercial thinning.
 3. Looking further out, the major projects for 2014 – 2016 are in the Piper Creek drainage and the Beaver Creek area.
- VI. Review of coordination between monitoring and prioritization
1. Rich explained that he has two monitoring efforts that he is not including in the “pool” of monitoring funds because he intends to fund these anyway. (Cutthroat monitoring and fire history monitoring.)
 1. Amber recommended that he not list these projects separately but have them move through the same process that all other SWCC monitoring proposals are going through so that they can be considered as part of the collaborative process.

2. Regarding the fire history work, Amber recently learned that some in the FS have concerns about Steve Barrett's methods for examining fire history. There is concern that his methods are outdated, and this may negatively impact funding for this work.
3. Rich will fund fire history stuff out of project money if it doesn't come out of monitoring money.
4. Justification: it's baseline information that will be a benchmark against which to evaluate effects of CFLR projects.
2. Defining Baseline Monitoring - There was discussion about what can be considered "baseline" monitoring.
 1. Some expressed a view that "baseline" implies that we'll go back and look at the same questions and data post-treatment. There is a difference between "baseline data" and "baseline monitoring." If we're not doing to use the data to inform our prioritization, then it's not really baseline monitoring.
 2. Others held a more broad view of baseline monitoring that includes any baseline data collected.
3. Defining Monitoring - There was also discussion about how broad we can be when calling something "monitoring." For example, is fire history work really monitoring?
 1. No clear decision or agreement was reached, and Amber agreed to take this question to Debbie next week.
4. Prioritization Workshop – Cory raised a suggestion of having EMRI put on a workshop – open to anyone who wants to attend as well as targeting the Prioritization and Monitoring Committees – that will explain the methods they are using in their baseline analysis. This workshop could also help identify gaps in EMRI's work and potential sources of information to fill those gaps.
 1. The group was supportive of this idea and agreed that we should set a timeframe for this workshop sooner rather than later.

VII. Watershed Condition Framework

1. There hasn't been a consistent framework applied across forests in determining watershed condition.
2. The July 15th deadline for providing input to the identification of priority watersheds is too soon for the SWCC to be able to meaningfully engage.
3. One of the Lolo NF's top five priority watersheds will be in the SW Crown.
4. One of the Flathead NF's top five priority watersheds may be selected in the SW Crown.
5. It is unlikely that any Helena NF priority watersheds will be in the SW Crown given the numerous municipal watersheds on the Forest that are higher priorities.

VIII. New items

1. We need to come to some agreement about a process from moving from taking NEPA-ready projects off the shelf to collaboratively developing projects.

1. **Megan & Gary** will bring up with the Executive Committee.

IX. Next meeting

1. August 4th