

SWCC Monitoring Committee
Meeting Notes
September 1, 2011

Present: Cory Davis*, Scott Tomson*, Keith Stockmann*, Beth Hahn*, Renate Bush*, Beth Gardner*, Jon Haufler*, John Ingebretson*, Gary Burnett*, Anne Carlson*, Travis Belote*, Adam Rissien, Adam Switalski, Sandy Mack*, Megan Birzell*, Scott Brennan*, Mary Manning, Amber Kamps*, Kathy Stewart, Jeff Stetz, Cara Nelson*
**Indicates voting member.*

Action Items:

- **Cory** will send out more information about the LC Map demo to members prior to Sept. 23rd.
- **Cory** will send out a draft data management timeline and ask for comments from Committee members.
- **Sandy** will look into the need for silvicultural support for fuels monitoring and will report back at next meeting.
- **All resource subcommittees** will review the FY 2011 funded monitoring projects for their resource area and report back at the next meeting about which activities are compatible with the Committee's long-term plan and thus should be seriously considered for funding in FY 2012. They will also identify those FY 2011 funded projects that are not compatible with the long-term plan and thus should not be prioritized for further funding in FY 2012.
- **Cory** will develop a draft outline/table of contents for our long-term monitoring plan and will work with Travis, Keith, Jon, and an aquatics representative to revise the plan for Monitoring Committee review by Sept. 29th.

I. Welcome/Introductions/Updates

a. New Co-chairs

- i. Travis Belote and Keith Stockmann were elected as the new co-chairs of the Monitoring Committee by an email vote after the last meeting. They will serve a one-year term ending July 31, 2012.
- ii. Keith asked all members to develop list of lessons learned through participation in past monitoring and research projects that may help this committee going forward.

b. Approve notes from July 21st meeting

- i. The notes from the July 21st Monitoring Committee meeting were approved unanimously.

c. Update from subcommittees

i. Data Management Subcommittee

1. This subcommittee has asked the FS line officers to identify a GIS specialist within each forest who can provide GIS coverages as needed.

2. The subcommittee is exploring the use of the LC Map (developed by the GNLCC) as the SWCC's data management portal. They will be doing a demo of this on Sept. 23rd.
 - a. ACTION ITEM: Cory will send out more information about the LC Map demo to members prior to Sept. 23rd.
 3. This group is developing a data management timeline to ensure there's enough time to do all necessary data management activities associated with the SWCC's monitoring activities. *(This is different than larger monitoring timeline for the coming year.)*
 - a. ACTION ITEM: Cory will send out a draft data management timeline and ask for comments from members.
 4. The subcommittee is discussing how to most efficiently disseminate data and keep track of what data has been shared. Thus far, they have agreed that requests from non-FS personnel will go through Cory. This includes requests for both past data (pre-CFLR) and new data collected through the SWCC's monitoring activities.
 5. The subcommittee is exploring making minor changes to the SWCC project area boundary to ensure that they follow the most up-to-date watershed and ownership boundaries.
- ii. Wildlife Subcommittee
 1. This subcommittee met this morning to discuss developing habitat models for wildlife monitoring of CFLR treatments.
 2. They will meet again on Wednesday, Sept. 29th, 9am – 12pm at the Seeley Lake RD.
 - iii. Socioeconomic Subcommittee
 1. The group met to review Jim's new socioeconomic proposal in late July. Jill Belsky agreed to serve as the principal investigator for that project. The proposal was approved by the SWCC Executive Committee, and a partnership agreement to implement the project is in the works.
- d. Update on FY2011 agreements
 - i. Michelle Wasienko-Holland is starting to work on SWCC monitoring partnerships right now. Principal investigators should expect to hear from the Grants & Agreements office soon. They are confident that all agreements will be approved by the end of this fiscal year on September 30th.
 - e. Update on 2011 field projects

- i. Socioeconomic interviews of contractors
 - 1. Seven interviews were conducted by Jim McKay this summer. The data has been summarized and will be transmitted to Keith shortly so he can use it to refine the TREAT model based on this finer-scale information.
- ii. Herbicide treatment monitoring
 - 1. This project is mostly done for the year, but they are still tying up loose ends. They established 20 monitoring sites (6 on the Swan Lake District, 10 on the Lincoln District, and 4 on the Seeley Lake District). This includes plots in both road and aerial herbicide treatment areas.
- iii. Fuels Monitoring
 - 1. This monitoring has not yet begun, but a plot regime has been finalized. Pre-treatment plots will be installed next week. We will likely be able to get post-treatment data from those plots this year, as well. Control areas have been identified. Plots will be done by a contractor. The treatment areas are in the Swan on projects that have already been through NEPA.
 - 2. We need silvicultural input to adequately address vegetative needs associated with fuels monitoring. The FS has identified this as a broader SWCC need as well.
 - a. ACTION ITEM: Sandy will look into the need for silvicultural support for fuels monitoring and will report back at next meeting.
 - 3. Jarel is not planning to do fuels monitoring in Lincoln this year. He is planning to support fuels work in Seeley and Swan.
- f. Auggie monitoring
 - i. This is the first SWCC project to be implemented. Road work is proceeding right now in preparation for vegetative work that will likely begin this winter and continue next summer.
 - ii. It was suggested that we develop a plan for monitoring this highly visible project.
 - iii. Fuels monitoring was suggested at a minimum. John indicated that they were planning to include this in this year's fuels monitoring but have had trouble finding appropriate control polygons.
 - iv. Renate has explored adding Auggie to the RO's old growth monitoring effort. However, when she was looking into this, there was no money available to support the work.
 - v. The group was unsure of whether any herbicide treatment plots are in the Auggie project area. Weed treatments associated with

specific Auggie units haven't happened yet, but that area has been treated for weeds on an ongoing basis.

- g. Update and input on goals of Prioritization/Monitoring Workshop
 - i. This workshop will be held on October 6th at the Seeley RD.

II. Comments and questions about 2011 proposal process

- a. Thoughts and suggestions included the following:
 - i. Involve metrics earlier in the process.
 - ii. Focus more on what needs to get done instead of who is going to do it.
 - iii. Improve and clarify how the Monitoring Committee will interact with the Executive Committee and SWCC with respect to proposals. This includes involving them earlier in the process.
 - iv. Ensure that Monitoring Committee ranking of proposals is incorporated in the Executive Committee and SWCC discussion.
 - v. The link between the proposals we fund and the monitoring requirements in FLRA need to be more clearly articulated.
 - vi. Discuss allocations to various resource subgroups before discussing specific proposals so that we ensure all resource areas are adequately monitored.
 - vii. All monitoring proposals should go through the appropriate resource subcommittee.
- b. The Executive Committee developed the following recommendations for the Monitoring Committee at their July 29th meeting:
 - i. Allow for a longer process (i.e. more time between advertisement of the RFP, proposal submission, and review) that takes into account the time needed to set up agreements.
 - ii. Make the RFP much more public.
 - 1. This would need to be framed as a partnership opportunity in order to fit the FS' agreement requirement of "mutual benefit."
 - iii. Potentially add a pre-proposal process.
 - iv. Avoid having a Monitoring Committee member vote down, in the SWCC meeting, a proposal that was recommended by the Monitoring Committee.
 - v. Start planning for the FY2012 process ASAP.
 - vi. Try to set it up so that FY2012 money can be spent in FY2012 (as opposed to FY2013) in order to enable more FS participation.
 - 1. There was discussion in the Monitoring Committee about the feasibility of this goal and ways to achieve it.
 - 2. It was suggested that we will make large strides toward this goal simply by planning early (i.e. not waiting for money to arrive before we start planning) and planning deeper than the amount of funding we expect to receive.

3. It was further suggested that we identify a “drop dead date” at which we acknowledge that there’s no way we can reasonably spend the money in the same fiscal year if we don’t receive CFLR funding by then.
4. The group acknowledged that much of these funding issues stem from Congress’ budgeting process and that we should focus on what we can control, which is being prepared and able to move quickly when money arrives.
- vii. Monitoring Committee should develop a work plan for the year, including a timeline of what will be completed by when, to help ensure that work is done in a timely manner.
- viii. Ensure as similar an evaluation and funding process as possible between FS-led and non-FS-led monitoring projects.

III. Develop a process and timeline for 2012 funding

- a. The group agreed that we need to plan for full funding instead of waiting for money to arrive before we start planning.
- b. Cory provided a draft timeline for the Monitoring Committee to award FY 2012 monitoring funds through an RFP process. This draft prompted a lengthy discussion that centered on the following questions:
 - i. Can we develop a long-term monitoring plan in a timely manner such that we can begin to implement it with FY 2012 CFLR funds? Can we develop a long-term plan and a 2012 plan concurrently?
 1. The group thinks it is reasonable to have a long-term monitoring plan finalized at the January 2012 Monitoring Committee meeting.
 2. Gary expressed the Executive Committee’s desire to see a monitoring plan over a set of monitoring proposals.
 3. For FY 2012, it was suggested that we pick short-term treatments to monitor that will fit in with our long-term framework. We don’t want to lose opportunities now while we wait for our long-term monitoring plan to be finalized.
 4. Sandy suggested the possibility of deferring monitoring funds for one year so that we can fully articulate our long-term plan this year and then focus on implementing it beginning with FY 2013 funds. However, others worried that it could lead to an indefinite deferral.
 - ii. Should CFLR funds be awarded to monitoring proposals through a competitive process, or should the Monitoring Committee members work together to collaboratively develop monitoring projects for each resource group?
 1. Many expressed a desire to not be going through an RFP process year after year. Instead, many think we should

collaboratively develop a monitoring plan and then work to implement that plan via a multi-party monitoring approach.

2. We need to recognize the likelihood of internal competition regarding who will lead which aspects of implementing our monitoring plan.
 3. The group recognizes a potential conflict between having a completely open proposal process versus a more coordinated approach where Committee members decide what will be monitored. Cara suggested that the “openness and transparency” part of our work comes in at the point of participating in the Committee, not just at the proposal process.
- iii. Should we use monitoring projects funded in FY 2011 as a starting place for developing our long-term monitoring plan and determining how to allocate funds in FY 2012?
1. VOTE/ACTION ITEM: All resource subcommittees will review the FY 2011 funded monitoring projects for their resource area and report back at the next meeting about which activities are compatible with the Committee’s long-term plan and thus should be seriously considered for funding in FY 2012. They will also identify those FY 2011 funded projects that are not compatible with the long-term plan and thus should not be prioritized for further funding in FY 2012.
 - a. Committee members voted unanimously in favor this task.
 - c. Ultimately, the group agreed to move forward in developing a long-term monitoring plan while simultaneously developing a plan for FY 2012 funds. We committed to having a long-term monitoring plan by January 2012 and to deciding where we will conduct monitoring in 2012 by January 2012. We also committed to voting on our long-term monitoring plan and on our plans for 2012 monitoring when those plans are more fleshed out.
 - i. ACTION ITEM: Cory will develop a draft outline/table of contents for our long-term monitoring plan and will work with Travis, Keith, Jon, and an aquatics representative to revise the plan for Monitoring Committee review by Sept. 29th.

- IV. Discussion of amendments to the SWCC Monitoring Committee Charter
- a. This item was tabled until the next meeting.

- V. Date, location, and goals for next meeting
- a. Next meetings: October 19th, November 9th, December 7th

- b. The October 19th meeting will be held at the Lolo NF Supervisor's Office in Missoula with VTC capabilities.