

**Southwestern Crown Collaborative**  
**Meeting Notes**  
January 10, 2012

**Present:** Scott Brennan\*, Gabriel Furshong\*, Ken Barber\*, Wade Muehlhof, Anne Dahl\*, Rob Ethridge\*, Shane Hendrickson, Tim Love\*, Gary Burnett\*, Amber Kamps\*, Rich Kehr\*, Dale Kerkvliet\*, Cory Davis\*, Chip Weber, Bev Yelczyn, Sandy Mack\*, Anne Carlson\*, Carolyn Mehl, Sarah Canepa\*, Megan Birzell\*, Robert Rasmussen, Kevin Riordan\*, Gunnar Carnwath, Roger Marshall, Cameron Thomas, Joe Kerkvliet\*, Craig Rawlings\*, Adam Rissien, Jim Burchfield\*, Rusty Wilder, Randy Gage, Travis Belote\*, Matt Arno, Todd Morgan, Colin Sorensen

*\*Indicates voting member.*

**Proxies:** Tim Love held Debbie Austin's\* proxy; Ken Barber held Jon Haufler's\* proxy.  
*A quorum is present.*

**Action Items:**

- **Scott** will send out the official FS Planning Rule RAC announcement to the SWCC listserv.
- **Cory** will provide an update at the next meeting on the Monitoring Committee's plans to monitor roads and road decommissioning.
- **The Prioritization Committee** will, at their next meeting, discuss how this roads information intersects with EMRI's landscape analysis and the SWCC's prioritization process.
- **Chip** will double check what is allowed and not allowed regarding building roads in CFLR landscapes.
- **The Communications Committee** will discuss the complex issue of partially and fully CFLR-consistent projects and provide their thoughts and input to the SWCC.
- **Everyone** should provide feedback to Joe or Cory about which of the proposed wood utilization monitoring questions you think is most relevant as well as any key questions that have been missed by January 19<sup>th</sup>.
- **Everyone** will provide comments on the Annual Update to Megan by Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.
- **Megan** will add a discussion item about the Blackfoot Challenge's request for input regarding their consideration of entering a stewardship agreement with the FS to the next meeting agenda.

I. Welcome/Introductions/Brief Updates

- a. The notes from the December 13<sup>th</sup> SWCC meeting were approved unanimously as edited.
  - i. There was a request to highlight any changes to the original draft notes in the future.
- b. Planning Rule FACA Committee

- i. A RAC is being formed to review the new, final FS planning rule. The RAC will consist of 20-30 people, representing diverse interests, who will work to figure out how to interpret and apply this new planning rule. The FS and Department of Agriculture are looking for strong, qualified nominees from multiple, diverse sectors. Participation in the RAC will be a significant time and energy sink.
  - ii. Jon Haufler is being nominated by The Wildlife Society to serve on this RAC.
  - iii. ACTION ITEM: Scott will send out the official FS Planning Rule RAC announcement to the SWCC listservs.
  
- II. EMRI Baseline Analysis Presentation by Carolyn Mehl and Discussion of Next Steps
  - a. *Following are notes from Carolyn's PowerPoint presentation. The presentation itself is available by request. To request a copy, contact Megan Birzell.*
  - b. The SWCC's CFLR Proposal includes treatment of 80% of the high-risk fuels in the WUI on NFS lands. Initial research showed that this corresponded to treating roughly 27,000 acres. EMRI's landscape assessment of the SW Crown showed that 80% of the high-risk fuels in the WUI on NFS lands actually corresponds to 29,616 acres.
  - c. In conducting the landscape assessment, EMRI used a coarse filter approach based on an historical reference and applied at a fine scale.
  - d. Terrestrial Forest Ecosystems
    - i. Terrestrial ecosystem diversity has two drivers: ecological sites and disturbance regimes
    - ii. Ecological Sites (functionally the same as FS habitat types)
      - 1. The SW Crown has nine ecological sites ranging from Hot-Dry to Cold-Moist.
      - 2. The Mod-Warm-Dry and Mod-Warm-Moist ecological sites only occur in the Swan River watershed.
      - 3. The Hot-Dry ecological site does not occur in the Swan.
    - iii. Disturbance Regimes
      - 1. Fire is dominant disturbance in the SW Crown.
      - 2. EMRI's historical reference incorporates historical Native American burning.
      - 3. 4 Fire Regimes:
        - a. Non-lethal: mean fire return interval (MFRI) of less than 25 years; frequent, low to moderate severity fires.
        - b. Mixed severity: complex mosaic of both low and high severity fire conditions interacting with ecological site conditions

- i. MS-A: MFRI of 25-50 years; 25-50% overstory canopy killed at a 50-acre scale
      - ii. MS-B: MFRI of 50-100 years; 50-75% overstory canopy killed at a 50-acre scale.
    - c. Lethal: MFRI of more than 100 years; infrequent, high severity fires.
  - iv. Disturbance states: Forest seral stages resulting from the interaction of ecological site and fire and described in terms of dominant vegetation species composition and structure.
    - 1. Grass/forb/shrub
    - 2. Sapling/seedling
    - 3. Early seral
    - 4. Mid seral
    - 5. Late seral
  - v. Historical reference conditions were developed for each ecological site to describe conditions resulting from the influence of low and high fire severity in terms of structure and species composition.
  - vi. EMRI identified existing forest conditions based on ecosystem compositions, structures, and patterns using the same disturbance states identified for the coarse-filter. Results were mapped in a GIS layer and overlaid with ecological sites to quantify today's ecosystem diversity.
  - vii. Comparison of the historical and existing conditions showed that the non-lethal and MS-A fire regimes have changed radically and that disturbance states have also changed radically, particularly in the late seral disturbance state.
  - viii. Ecological restoration targets allow you to move forward toward some appropriate level of representation of historical forest conditions.
    - 1. Scientists have discussed in depth the appropriate amount of historical representation necessary to conserve a landscape and have identified 10% as the threshold at which a totally converted landscape needs to be in order to avoid losing species. The SW Crown is not a totally converted landscape, and as such, a 10% target should be viewed as a starting place, not a goal at which we stop.
    - 2. A 10% historical representation by ecological site target fits best with the outputs the SWCC has already identified (46,000 acres of vegetative restoration treatments) and is feasible for the three ranger districts.
    - 3. Applying a 10% goal to the SW Crown based on EMRI's work would mean focusing treatments in late seral stands

with non-lethal and MS-A disturbance regimes and would total to 45,681 acres of treatment.

- e. Aquatics Restoration
  - i. Because the science necessary to develop a coarse filter approach to aquatic ecosystems has not yet been developed, a fine-filter approach was used that emphasizes the population status of westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout.
    - 1. One limit to this approach is that it does not provide historical references for restoration.
  - ii. A road disruption index was also developed as a way to define a relationship between roads and hydrologic function. It does not identify a threshold but rather indicates that the more roads you have in a 6<sup>th</sup> code HUC, the more likely you are to have a disrupted aquatic system. It takes into consideration total roads plus roads near streams plus number of road stream crossings.
  - iii. A Fish Values x Watershed Condition matrix (*see slide 64*) helps to identify where aquatic restoration activities should be prioritized.
    - 1. Maintain – highest value system; high fish and watershed value; highest potential for integrated restoration (forest and aquatic); more treatment constraints, so higher cost and time input; typically occurs in less-roaded areas; hardest to do restoration here in a cost-effective way due to access constraints.
    - 2. Restore 1 – moderate to high value system; opportunities for integrated restoration are still high; high cost/time inputs
    - 3. Restore 2, 3 – low to moderate value system; low to moderate opportunities for integrated restoration; lower cost/time inputs
    - 4. Defer – low value system; low opportunities for integrated restoration; low cost/time inputs
  - iv. EMRI's work suggests that aquatic prioritization should strive to conserve, improve, and protect what already works; build from strengths; and work toward the greatest benefit with the least cost.
- f. EMRI's assessment corresponds well with the 10-year output numbers the SWCC identified in our CFLR proposal.
- g. Weeds were not addressed relative to the landscape assessment because there is no good, comprehensive data available.
  - i. EMRI recommends that the SWCC should develop a weed strategy at the ecosystem and landscape level.
- h. Discussion:
  - i. There was discussion about whether the SWCC should identify an ecological restoration target before spatially identifying

restoration opportunities in the SW Crown or after. Seeing all the restoration opportunities (not just the prioritized ones) would provide more project options to work with, thus allowing the SWCC to reach our targeted outputs even when dealing with various management constraints. However, having a target beforehand would help EMRI narrow down the universe of possibilities as they work to spatially identify restoration opportunities based on the results of their landscape assessment. It also provides a scientific justification for the SWCC's projected outputs.

- i. **VOTE:** The SWCC agrees that 10% historical representation by ecological site is a good place to start the conversation about spatially identifying restoration opportunities with the Districts, and the SWCC recognizes that EMRI will meet with all Districts to determine whether this goal is feasible and what it would take to achieve it.
  - i. **Approved:** 21 thumbs up; 1 thumbs sideways
    - 1. Joe Kerkvliet voted thumbs sideways due to a lack of full understanding.

### III. Presentation and Discussion of FS Roads by Susan Colyer

- a. *(Susan's PowerPoint presentation is available at: <http://www.swcrown.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Forest-Service-Roads-101.pdf>)*
- b. Randy Gage, present at this meeting, is the Lolo Forest Transportation Planner. He sits in on all ID Team meetings on the Lolo, leads the roads analysis, is the keeper of the forest transportation atlas, and is a great resource on all things roads-related.
- c. Definitions
  - i. Forest Road: Roads that are needed for the protection, administration and utilization of national forests.
    - 1. Not necessarily under FS jurisdiction. Some are under the jurisdiction of the State, county, etc.
  - ii. National Forest System Roads: Roads deemed necessary for management.
    - 1. Under FS jurisdiction.
  - iii. Unauthorized Road: Not a forest road or temporary road and not included in forest transportation atlas (which is a display of system roads, trails, and airfields). FS has no need for this road.
    - 1. Undetermined routes are a type of unauthorized road.
  - iv. Temporary Road: A road necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas
    - 1. Just needed for a short time.

2. Located in non-environmentally sensitive areas.
  3. Not built to permanent road specs.
  4. The Lolo NF defines it as a road built and decommissioned in one season.
  5. Often bulldozed, but not graveled.
  6. Cut bank and fill slope often steeper than for permanent road.
  7. Built to minimum standard.
  8. Operating system restricted to account for environmental considerations.
- v. Short-term Specified Road: Timber sale road meant to be temporary, but will be in place more than one season.
1. Engineered and constructed based on set of design drawings and specifications.
- vi. Public v. private road
1. A public road is maintained by a public road authority and is typically a maintenance level 3, 4, or 5 road.
  2. A private road is under private ownership authorized by an easement granted to a private party or a road that provides access pursuant to a reserved or outstanding right.
- vii. Road Maintenance Levels
1. One
    - a. Closed to traffic, including administrative traffic; put in storage for more than one year; receives basic custodial maintenance to prevent resource damage; would need to be reopened before it could be used for fire.
    - b. There are about 2500 miles (out of ~6500 total) in this category on the Lolo NF.
    - c. These roads still are considered in road density calculations for grizzly bear management standards if they still have structures (culverts, etc.).
  2. Two
    - a. High-clearance roads; open intermittently or year-round; receives minor traffic; sometimes used for log hauling; not subject to Highway Safety Act.
    - b. National direction says most roads should be this level.
    - c. 2100 miles in this category on the Lolo.
  3. Three
    - a. Roads opened and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in passenger car; warning signs and

traffic control are required; single lane road with turnouts.

4. Four
  - a. Provides a higher degree of user comfort at higher speeds; surfaced with crushed aggregate, paved, or dust-abated.
  - b. 124 miles in this category on the Lolo, including the Cottonwood Lakes road.
5. Five
  - a. High degree of user comfort; typically paved; most often found in administrative sites, campgrounds, and parking lots.
  - b. 35 miles in this category on the Lolo.
- viii. Road Management Objectives identifies the road's purpose.
  1. Not very many roads on the Lolo actually have road management objectives identified.
  2. The Lincoln District has RMOs for 90% of their system roads.
  3. The Swan Lake District has RMOs for almost all their system roads except the recently acquired Plum Creek roads.
- ix. Cost-Share Roads
  1. Shared between FS and private timber companies; non-revocable; reduces impacts on land by needing fewer roads; saves money.
  2. Lolo NF has 400 miles of cost-share roads with Plum Creek but recently gained exclusive access to another 235 miles through the Montana Legacy Project. The Lolo NF also has 150 miles shared with DNRC.
  3. These roads can be more difficult to manager because both parties have to agree to the management plan.
- x. Road Storage and Decommissioning
  1. A formal analysis and decision are required in order to decide a road isn't needed.
  2. Closure Levels (1-5)
    - a. One – Put a gate at the entrance; leave culverts and road drainage up to BMP standards.
    - b. Two – Entrance obliteration; leave culverts, block entrance, keep road drainage up to BMP standards.
    - c. Three – Scarify road surface; remove culverts, obliterate entrance, waterbar the surface.
    - d. Four – Rip the road surface (deep ripping); remove culverts, obliterate entrance

- e. Five – Recontour the road; remove culverts, put natural terrain back
- 3. Level 2 and 3 closures are typically done if the agency wants to keep the road in storage.
- 4. The idea behind decommissioning is to restore the natural drainage and treat weeds.
- 5. There are dilemmas around how much to decommission roads: If there's vegetation already grown back in, is it better to go back in and remove all that just to remove pipes? Or is it better to leave the pipes in order to avoid ripping out trees and other vegetation?
- 6. Closure levels 2 - 5 could qualify for core grizzly bear habitat.
- 7. Full recontouring costs about \$7,000 to \$8,000/mile average for Lolo.
- xi. Monitoring: The Lolo NF does road monitoring annually on a random sample of projects.
- xii. Discussion/Questions
  - 1. On maintenance level 2 roads, BMP work is really only done if there's a project planned in the area.
  - 2. One issue to consider is that sometimes the agency really need to build a new road – that's ecologically the best thing to do, but CFLR doesn't allow new road construction.
- xiii. Closure/Next Steps
  - 1. There are questions about the roads-related language in the Act. The SWCC's current understanding is that a District in the SWCC can build a new permanent road on the landscape but that they cannot use CFLR funding or match to accomplish this.
  - 2. ACTION ITEMS:
    - a. Cory will provide an update at the next meeting on the Monitoring Committee's plans to monitor roads and road decommissioning.
    - b. The Prioritization Committee will, at their next meeting, discuss how this roads information intersects with EMRI's landscape analysis and the SWCC's prioritization process.
    - c. Chip will double check what is allowed and not allowed regarding building roads in CFLR landscapes.

IV. Discussion of how to approach projects in which only a portion is funded by and/or consistent with the requirements of the CFLR Program

- a. Two projects currently under analysis in the Swan Lake District (Glacier Loon and Cold Jim) may not be 100% consistent with CFLR but are seeking CFLR funds for certain portions of these projects. TWS submitted comments on the Glacier Loon Scoping Notice asking questions about how and whether this project is consistent with CFLR. Last week, TWS, SEC, and FS met last week to discuss these two projects and discuss how to move forward. Everyone present at that meeting agreed that, ultimately, all projects that go forward under CFLR must be fully consistent with CFLR and that a large amount of the concerns that have been raised could be addressed by improving communication such that we all have a common understanding of terms used in project descriptions.
- b. What does it mean to be consistent with CFLR, specifically as it pertains to NEPA planning processes? Does it mean one NEPA analysis can have CFLR and non-CFLR components, or do they have to go through two separate NEPA processes?
  - i. Given budget and staffing realities, it is inefficient and a waste of taxpayer dollars to conduct two NEPA analyses for these two projects in the same area when they can incorporate all activities in one NEPA analysis. Yet it will be difficult to explain the nuances of project funding to the public, and if we combine CFLR and non-CFLR components into one NEPA analysis, the public may not understand that CFLR funds and match are only being spent on the CFLR-consistent aspects of the project.
  - ii. This issue is likely to be larger in the Swan, in which the District must work within the confines of the Grizzly Bear Agreement. Because they only have a 2- to 3-year window in which to work in one Grizzly Bear Management Area, it is most efficient to do as much as possible within that window. This may mean that some proposed activities will focus on timber management, in accordance with the Forest Plan, while other activities are focused on restoration and are consistent with CFLR.
- c. It may be worthwhile to think about the goals of CFLR more broadly (i.e. don't forget the economic and social sustainability goals), which could allow more diverse projects to still fall under the CFLR umbrella.
- d. One suggestion is to have at least fully CFLR-consistent alternative in every NEPA analysis or to at least discuss and explain any inconsistencies with CFLR in the NEPA analysis.
- e. Proposed course of action for the next couple of months:
  - i. Ask the FS, when moving forward with any project, whether they think it's fully or partially consistent with CFLR.
  - ii. Consider a new project in which the Purpose and Need are taken directly from the Act.

- iii. Ensure that all SWCC members follow a community-based process.
- iv. ACTION ITEM: The Communications Committee will discuss the complex issue of partially and fully CFLR-consistent projects and provide their thoughts and input to the SWCC.

V. Monitoring

- a. The Socioeconomic monitoring working group has developed a list of potential questions to monitor the goal of maximizing the utilization of wood products:
  - i. Are we maximizing the utilization of forest products from restoration and fuel treatments?
  - ii. How are production and utilization of various wood utilization policies within a contract offsetting or adding to costs?
  - iii. Are we making long term plans with an eye toward providing a sustainable supply of forest products? Sustainable/predictable harvests will aid maintenance and growth of forest products industry.
  - iv. Are we adequately measuring job creation, job duration, and job quality and other impacts related to a “sound forest products industry and local economy?”
  - v. Are there ways of designing contracts to promote local job creation, duration, and quality?
  - vi. How is “best value” being applied and to what effect?
    - 1. This should be an agenda item for a later meeting.
  - vii. How does the removal or retention of small diameter material impact the ecological and cost effectiveness of vegetative treatments? Explore tradeoffs between various treatments costs and ecological impacts. This is different from effects of biomass removal/treatment on contract costs and bids.
  - viii. How much carbon is stored in forest and forest products over time? How much carbon is emitted in harvesting, processing, and restoration treatments (underburning, slash disposal)?
- b. ACTION ITEM: Everyone should provide feedback to Joe or Cory about which of the proposed wood utilization monitoring questions you think is most relevant as well as any key questions that have been missed by January 19<sup>th</sup>.

VI. Communications Committee Report

- a. Megan sent the draft annual update to the SWCC last week for their review.
- b. ACTION ITEM: Everyone will provide comments on the Annual Update to Megan by Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.

- c. Megan will incorporate and send out a final version next Friday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, for an email vote to approve the report.

VII. Brief Executive Committee Report

- a. Discussion of further charter revisions
  - i. Based on a review of the 2001 FACA regulations, the Executive Committee recommends that the SWCC Charter be amended such that a FS employee is not a co-chair in order to make it clear that the FS does not manage or control the SWCC. The Charter should further be amended to address all three FACA questions: 1) Does the agency manage or control the membership or composition of the group? 2) Does the agency manage or control the group's agenda? 3) Does the agency fund the group's activities?
    - 1. This change should be applied to all subcommittee charters and structures.
  - ii. Megan and Sandy will revise the charter according to these recommendations, and the SWCC will have at least seven days to review the amendments before next meeting. The SWCC will vote on the amendments at the next meeting.
- b. Stewardship agreements and authorities
  - i. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is in the process of canceling a stewardship agreement that covered part of the SW Crown. There was discussion about whether another group should enter into a stewardship agreement covering the SW Crown so that we don't lose this implementation tool. Specifically, the Blackfoot Challenge is considering entering such an agreement and would like the consensus from the SWCC to ensure, assuming the SWCC values the stewardship agreement tool, that this tool is available throughout the SWCC project area.
    - 1. The group agreed that having stewardship agreements available as an implementation tool is valuable.
    - 2. Gary requested input from the SWCC regarding whether the group would find value in the Challenge entering into a stewardship agreement with the FS.
    - 3. All agreed that more discussion is needed on this and that such a discussion needs to be informed by reviewing our charter and conflict of interest statement.
    - 4. ACTION ITEM: Megan will add a discussion item about the Blackfoot Challenge's request for input regarding their consideration of entering a stewardship agreement with the FS to the next meeting agenda.
  - ii. It is ultimately the FS' decision to determine the best tool to use to implement a project, but they would like input from the SWCC and all interested parties regarding the best tool to use.

VIII. Next meetings: February 14, March 13, April 10, May 8