



Big Hole Watershed Committee
Monthly Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2010 ~ 6:00 pm
Divide Granger Hall

In Attendance

Alan Weltzien; Alan Zetler; Art Christensen, Beaverhead Conservation District; Bill Johnson, landowner; Charlie Miller, Jack Pine Snowmobile Club; Cindy Ashcraft, rancher; Cindy Kromm, landowner; Corey Meier, BLM; Dale Ventres; Darren Olsen, USFS; Dave Ashcraft, rancher; Duane Johnson, landowner; Emma MacKenzie, BHWC; Erik Kalsta, rancher; G. O'Leary; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead Commissioner; George Trischman, rancher; Harold Peterson, rancher; Jack Kirkley, Pintler Audobon; Jake Troyer, MWA; Jami Murdoch, landowner; Jeanne Caddy, BHWC; Jeff Everett, USFWS; Jim Gross, landowner; Jim Hagenbarth, rancher; Jim Olsen, FWP; John Dillon, Lewis & Clark TU; John Ray; John Reinhardt, rancher; Karl Jensen, landowner; Kay Jensen, Divide Grange 143; Kevin Brown, BHWC; Liz Jones, rancher; Mark Kambich, rancher; Marty Hovan, BSB Water; Marv Johnson; Mike Bias, BHRF; Mike McGinley, Beaverhead Commissioner; Nathan Hunt, Groundhog Mining & Milling Co; Pete Kampershroer, rancher; Randy Smith, rancher; Ray Weaver, rancher; Rex Keil, landowner; Rick Sandru, rancher; Ron Glovan; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Steve Luebeck, sportsmen; Steve Parker, BHRF; Tim Tollett, Frontier Anglers; Tom Caddy, BHWC Weed Group.

Introductions/Review of Minutes

Introductions were made and the November 2009 minutes were reviewed and approved with no changes. Kevin Brown reminded the members and guests of the BHWC bylaws which includes the agreement to:

- Candidly identify and share interests,
- Listen carefully and respectfully to others and avoid interrupting,
- Offer suggestions with respect and care
- Share relevant information regarding the issues under consideration
- To communicate directly and to challenge ideas, not people

Precipitation and Stream Flow Report

Neither Dave Amman nor Mike Roberts were available for this meeting. The information for the January 2010 report is appended to these minutes. Kevin Brown reported briefly that the snowpack is down, the precipitation is 76% of average and the snowpack is 79% of average.

Watershed Restoration Planning

Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC Conservation Programs Director, was unable to attend the meeting and will present this at a later date.

Forest Jobs and Recreation Act

Erik Nylund and Tracy Stone-Manning of Senator Jon Tester's staff presented general information regarding the history of the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act, the three

aspects of timber, wilderness, and recreation management, and spoke very generally about the three areas of Montana that would be impacted. They then answered questions from BHWC members and guests at the meeting.

Questions focused on motorized access, recreation uses, logging, potential litigation, weeds, impact on the Big Hole River and the watershed.

- Impact on local businesses:
 - Concerns were expressed about the sustainability of local businesses that rely on current recreation uses if those uses are limited or changed significantly.
- Impact on the Big Hole River and the watershed:
 - Concern was expressed regarding the impact of increased recreation, motorized use, timber harvest and the associated roads on the water quality of the river. Answer: there will be no increase in motorized use – the current status quo will be maintained. The bill includes language that requires restoration of areas where new roads are built and overall less road density.
 - Suggestion: The bill should include quantified parallel river restoration.
- Logging:
 - How much logging is required? A mandatory cut of an average of 7,000 acres/year for 10 year in the 1.9 million acres of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest ... or ... a total of 70,000 acres, whichever comes later. Toward the end of this plan (10-15 years) the Agency will develop new plan. Also, a report is given to congress every five years and it could be 'tweaked' if necessary. Congress would then need to reauthorize the changes.
 - Is this amount of logging reasonable or sustainable? This number was developed to address the forest health problems. The primary treatment will be mechanical, and the Forest Service will be treating the landscape in a manner different than the past.
 - What is the market for the product? The mechanical treatment is not necessarily solely for commercial use. The logging industry has informed Senator Tester that there is a market for the product. The Senator is also looking at how this can assist with the revival of Smurfit-Stone.
 - Will green trees be cut if there is not market for the dead, beetle-kill trees? The local stakeholder groups will be part of the decision-making process on where to log and which trees should be logged.
 - Will the logging shift resources from already overburdened departments i.e. robbing Peter to pay Paul? The bill authorizes appropriations as necessary. They are also asking the Agency to take a hard look at cost savings and how it is currently doing business.
- Motorized access:
 - Will ranchers be able to access proposed wilderness and roadless areas with four-wheelers? Yes, there is language in the bill regarding grazing. Decisions regarding four-wheelers may be a decision up to the local district rangers. The bill largely follows the Forest Plan with regards to roads, trails, roadless areas, and proposed wilderness areas.
- Potential litigation:

- Sen. Tester realizes that litigation that ties up the bill into the future could be a problem. He is trying to circumvent this by creating projects that don't go to court.
- The bill may run on its own, or may hook onto an omnibus bill.
- They are looking to add language that limits the number of days for judges to rule on possible suits.
- If passed, Congress would mandate that the Agencies do this work – and they could sue the Forest Service for *not* taking action.
- Recreation uses:
 - Concern was expressed that if motorized use is restricted to historical uses, future innovations that allow for different and better uses may be limited.
 - Concern was expressed regarding loss of certain trails. Erik privately went over maps with individuals to explain that these trails would not be lost.
 - *Note: these maps are all available on Senator Tester's website, the link is at the end of this section of the minutes.*
- Weeds:
 - Concern was expressed about weed management. New roads and logging will create damage that encourages new weed growth. Also concern over limitations to motorized access in treating remote areas. Answer: motorized use is currently allowed for administrative uses.
 - Suggestion: put specific language into the bill regarding weed treatment.

Information regarding the Act—including the full text of the bill, maps, news stories, and feedback—can be found on his website at:

<http://tester.senate.gov/Legislation/foresthme.cfm>

Erik and Tracy recommended that anyone with suggestions for specific language for the bill should contact them.

(Information regarding wilderness grazing and road density as it pertains to the Act are available as pdf files on the BHWC website on our Information page under Resources. If you cannot access this information, please contact Emma and she will forward the information to you.)

Tracy also reported that although the watershed bill was passed, there were no appropriations for this year and the Wolf Kill Bill was also passed and signed into legislation. The implementing regulations have not yet been written regarding compensation.

Committee Reports

- Wildlife Working Group

Jim Hagenbarth reported that the next meeting of the wildlife group will take up the wolf issue. The meeting will be scheduled after the FWP Commissioners make their final decision on the newly proposed hunting regulations and Judge Malloy's ruling on whether wolves will be put back on the endangered species list. Jim indicated Judge Malloy will rule on procedure. Anyone interested in attending the wildlife meetings can

keep an eye on the BHWC website (www.bhwc.org) or email Emma (info@bhwc.org) to be put onto the email notification list.

- **Director's Report**

- Kevin Brown reported that the Steering Committee approved \$2,000 from appropriations funds for Jeff Everett's project with Martin Jackson in the Lapham Ditch.
- The year-end figures for donations was just over \$8,000 and for memberships was just under \$8,000. The staff is working on improving the process of tracking grants and creating a more efficient means of fundraising.
- The Land Use Planning group has been re-established and will be meeting on Wednesday, January 27 at 1pm in Dillon. Jennifer Boyer is helping to rekindle that effort and the first meeting will be a review of the information and comments received from the two educational forums held last spring and summer.

New Business

- The Drought Management Plan group will also be meeting in early February, before the BHWC annual meeting. Kevin will send out an email to the group members with meeting information. It was mentioned that the general policy is to change the plan only if it is used in a drought situation and changes are needed. It was also suggested that the phone tree be readjusted so that it makes more sense.
- Andrew Hansen did not attend the meeting and his suggestion regarding DMP Participant Compensation will be initially discussed at the DMP meeting.

Determine Future Agendas

- February 17: BHWC Annual Meeting. There will be no other presentations.
- March 17: The group discussed the possibility of moving the meeting to another night so as not to interfere with St Patrick's Day, but decided to keep the meeting as is. Topics proposed were:
 - The gold mine in the Highlands and its effects on the Big Hole
 - Dr Andrea Stierle and her research on the Berkeley Pit
 - Dr Mike Bias and his macro-invertebrate study, partially funded by BHWC

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.