

## **Kootenai Stakeholder Coalition General Meeting**

**(2/4/15)**

The meeting was opened at 5:30 PM by chair person, Robyn King following introductions. The meeting minutes from the December 4, 2014 meeting were approved by the membership.

### **Elections-**

Elections for board members are scheduled for the next general meeting. Robyn referred folks to the handout listing the current 14 members. We can have up to 15 board members. She asked that current board members and new nominations be received by her at least 15 days prior to the next general meeting. She also urged anybody who is not a current member to fill out the application located in the handouts and send to her.

### **Common Ground Report-**

Jessie Grossman reported that the committee was making good headway addressing the wilderness/recreation recommendations. Ed Levert reported that there have been no changes in the vegetative guidelines since last reported. Jessie went on to explain that the final sign off for the vegetation guidelines would take place once we had reached agreement on the wilderness/recreation recommendations. The Common Ground committee is open to new members who are interested in wilderness and recreation on the Kootenai.

### **Montana Forests in Focus Initiative-**

Mo Bookwalter presented this new program to the group. Mo is a new employee of the DNRC, serving as a liaison to work in the USFS Regional Office providing the connection between the two agencies regarding national forest system management. This position is a direct result of the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, which provides incentives for forest restoration. Five million acres of federal lands were identified as meeting the need for restoration with the majority of the Kootenai N.F. included.

There are four parts to the program: 1) Forest Restoration & Industry Retention, 2) Tribal, State & Private Forests, 3) Federal Forest Management and 4) collaboration & Partnerships.

Some of the incentives included the use of categorical exclusions for areas affected by insects and disease up to 3,000 acres with no new road construction and up to one million dollars to help Montana forests with collaboration, restoration, thinning, sale prep, etc.

The Governor's Office is currently doing a MEPA document for the work with comments from the scoping due on February 5.

## **Kootenai N.F.- Where is the Forest heading as a forest?**

Forest Supervisor, Chris Savage chaired this portion of the program. The primary intent was to elicit comments and suggestions from the stakeholders in regard to the Forest's timber management plans for the next five years. He has already asked for feedback from the Lincoln County Commissioners and will present this same program to industry in April. Chris first outlined some of the opportunities provided in the way of streamlining the NEPA process. This included the provisions within the 2014 Farm Bill EA/EIS process that reduces the number of action alternatives and shortens the objections period. He also discussed a programmatic approach to both the pre-commercial and commercial thinning of regenerated forest stands. He mentioned that the Forest had applied for funding through the Governor's Initiative that would be applied to the above.

Chris spent some time explaining how the current shortfall in qualified personnel and budget shortfalls limited the Forest's ability to make any major changes from the planned 50 MMBF/yr. timber sale program.

Following Chris's introduction the room was asked to provide suggestions to the four district's proposed timber sale program. This was the "working" part of the exercise with stakeholders encouraged to visit one or all of the stations. Most of the presentations centered on landscape level priorities with projects identified specifically if they were already in the program. Each district representative took notes on the comments and presented them upon conclusion of the exercise.

Chris then discussed the travel management plan and how that was to be handled on the Forest. He stated that travel management was going to be done at the project level, but based on a recent court case the Forest is required to complete subpart A of travel analysis. The KNF will be hosting open houses for the travel planning process beginning at the Three Rivers district on Feb 19<sup>th</sup>. The Forest will issue a report in August of September of 2015 that makes recommendations for project level road planning across the forest. This process will also have some influence on a recreational strategy for the forest. He also stated that there would be a five year plan presentation to the stakeholders next fall with a focus on recreation.

Co-chair Tim Dougherty summarized the meeting tonight as being very positive. He thanked our new guests including Senator Tester and Daine's aides, Chad Campbell and Spencer Merwin respectively. He encouraged these new folks to stay engaged with the process.

The meeting concluded at 8:15 PM.

**Next Meeting- April 1, 2015**

Ed Levert, Secretary