

Thursday, November 16, 2017 - Page 9

Group tours burned area

by Shana Neesvig

Cabinet Forestry Collaborative (CFC) group visited Cub Creek Fire burned areas last Friday afternoon to get a real-life visual of the landscape, as future comments will be requested by the Forest Service (FS) when they propose salvage projects in the Beaver Creek vicinity.

Shawn Morgan, Doug Ferrell, Howard Morkert and Bill Meadows all took part in the tour. They all agreed that it's always better to make comments on areas that you have seen in person, and just like anything else in life, you should educate yourself so you can make informed decisions.

Cub Creek fire went through this past summer leaving what Morgan,

TRL forester, described as a wonderful "mosaic" of burned areas. There are pockets of light burn along with few areas of scorched tree specimens. This type of burn provides resources that are desired for salvage harvesting according to Morgan.

As well as assessing Cub Creek fire remains CFC also looked at TRL's Helwick timber sale area, which burned after the sale closed but before removing all timber. The FS and TRL will reassess the economic values of the remaining Helwick timber and make adjustments according to formulas designed for this type of situation. According to Morgan, there is a clause in sale agreements that recognize catastrophic events such as a fire.

According to Ferrell, the

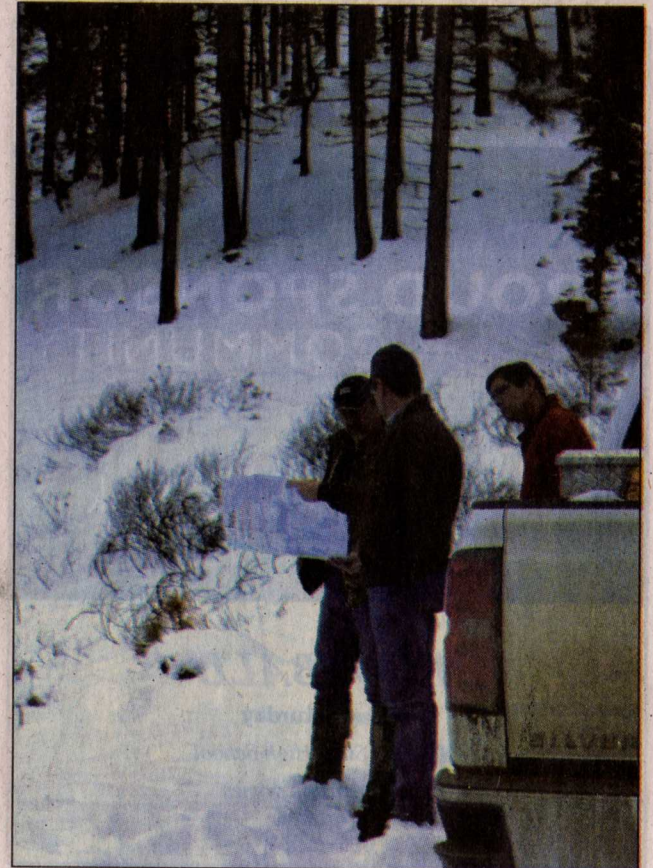
group takes into account proposed or potential forestry projects and "looks for opportunities to expand the scope of the project and treat as many acres as possible." CFC also tries to apply any tools available to expedite the analysis and decision making processes on these projects. Examples are through working with the state to analyze and complete projects, and addressing provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill to apply categorical exclusions when possible.

CFC, part of the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC), is a partnership of Montana recreationists, business owners, conservationists and mill operators who have come together to find "common-ground" in managing

public lands of the Cabinet District.

Ferrell said the group dynamics were concerning to him at the beginning, feeling agreements would never be reached. But after three years of witnessing the CFC working together, he has realized that 90 percent of people have the same interests in mind. He stated that the extremists on both sides are what give one another a bad reputation. By coming together and discussing the issues, they have realized that there is more in common than they all thought, and agreements are not difficult to achieve after all.

For more information on CFC or KFSC you can contact Ferrell at 406-827-4341, or visit www.kootenaifuture.org.



Ledger photo by Shana Neesvig

ASSESSING THE BURN – Shawn Morgan, Howard Morkert and Doug Ferrell (front to back) view Beaver Creek drainage Cub Creek Fire effects Friday afternoon as part of a Cabinet Forest Collaborative field tour.