

Gravelly Landscape Collaborative Meeting NOTES
September 13, 2017 5:30-8:00pm

Purpose:

Provide an update on the Greenhorn project
Discussion on Greenhorn project implementation and coordination with grazing

Attending: Dan Allhands, Dale Olson, Reed and Lynn Rowberry, Darcie Warden, Julie McLaughlin, Megan Thrash, Julie York, John Anderson, Gary Giem, Kevin Suzuki, Ryan Ellis, Dan Dorenbos, Neil Barnosky, Art Hall, Jody Lueck, Sami Lueck, Dick Lueck, John Meyer, Glenn Hockett, Richard Stem.
Jennifer Boyer: Facilitator

Updates:

GLC did some tabling over the summer at the Madison County Fair and Madison Fly Fishing Event and added a good number of folks to our mailing list. Discussions with the Ruby Alliance have included opportunities to support GLC and the Greenhorn project.

The National Forest Retirees organization have drafted a letter to Agriculture Secretary sharing the retirees are concerned about the resources our agency has to accomplish work. The organization is interested in pushing solutions forward. How can we get more resources and support the agency to be in a better situation? A strong collaborative can be a good advocate for the work and agency and attract resources to support projects.

Greenhorn Project Update:

*See scoping document and map for more details

http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/106020_FSPLT3_4052449.pdf

Dale Olson reviewed the map of the Greenhorn project that includes a variety of treatments over 17,000 acres. The timber harvest areas are still being refined a bit more, but are not expected to change dramatically. The areas that are difficult to access will use aerial ignition (displayed on the map in pink). The green areas on the map are conifer encroachment areas can be masticating or broadcast burning or lop and burning. Some units were added in the past few months for connectivity for Big Horn Sheep. This is the proposal based on outreach and the work of the collaborative and public outreach that has adjusted the project.

What about the warm springs road? The FS and engineers are still brainstorming how to address the road damage and sediment input from the spring on the warm springs road. No road closures are currently identified in the Greenhorn project. Beaver mimicry projects have been proposed in some areas where the floodplain has been disconnected from the stream.

16,072 acres with a variety of treatments

1,757 acres – commercial thin and prescribed fire

11,200 acres - prescribed fire

3,100 acres - noncommercial thin and prescribed fire

15 acres – clear cut and prescribed fire

The scoping is a little delayed, we are in the final draft (it is an EA) this is the one opportunity to comment at this level. It will be about 17 pages that broadly describes the project. Early next week it is expected to be public. There will be a 30 day comment period once the scoping is issued. The final decision should be September 2018.

GLC Talking Points for Scoping Comment Letter:

The GLC steering committee will draft a letter, the letter will be distributed to our mailing list with 1 week to provide comments. The GLC steering committee will finalize the comment letter and submit.

- GLC brought the Greenhorn project to the FS – it is OUR project.
- The focus on burning to increase diversity on the landscape and address conifer encroachment is good and supported by specialists and biologists.
- Balancing the grazing permits with the improvements the treatments will bring to the landscape is important.
- Support extra focus on weed infestations that occur on disturbed ground.
- The decision memo will include the intention of the treatments and the plan for implementation (pre and post conditions to be met).
- The importance of the aspen habitat and goal not to lose this on the Gravelly landscape due to wildlife benefits and other vegetation associated with aspen. Aspen treatments are using the newest science that identifies conifer removal as the best approach.
- Roadless area treatments are allowed (no commercial harvest) with the use of fire and dropping trees.
- The importance of expanding available Big Horn Sheep corridors for movement and expansion.
- The approach of the project at a landscape scale with this level of landscape thinking is critical and serves as an excellent model.
- Maintain access and good conditions for hunting and recreation in the project area. Also handicapped access for hunting.
- Support the careful planning and implementation of projects along riparian corridors for fisheries and watershed functions.
- Support habitat improvements for beaver, Big Horn Sheep, mule deer and moose.
- Add request to clarify and state the communication process for implementation of the treatments.
- Low tech approach when possible (regarding logging).

Grazing Impacts, Timing and Communication Discussion:

- Need to work with grazing permittees as the burn units are planned and coordinate timing.
- Warm Springs Grazing Association has a good record of management and record keeping.
- Can we use our rest pastures if the timing of the treatments impacts our usual rotation? The treatments will be executed over a number of years and done in small blocks scattered over the landscape both to address the desired outcome of a mosaic of conditions on the landscape and to reduce burden on grazing pastures. Many thresholds are taken into account for the timing of the treatment including moisture levels. Rest pastures can be used with an amendment to the grazing plan.
- If infrastructure is burned (fences) the FS will replace.

Topics for November and December Meetings:

- Update on grayling – fisheries biologist Matt Yeager
- Shared meeting with Ruby Watershed Council – contact David or Gary
- Wildlife presentations
 - Mule Deer Foundation and Dean Waltee
 - Big Horn sheep continue south to expand the habitat and get on big horn mountain
 - FWP Howard Bert in Bozeman looking at blue grouse.
 - John Helle –impacts on sheep operation and the MOU with FWP and USFWS
- South fork and west fork Madison – looking at the Doug Fir open park communities in that region, could offer some opportunity for future work. – quick refresher of this area?
- More work is probably needed in the Tabaco Roots – is there an opportunity to expand work there or doing another collaborative (Ruby Alliance)? Would we be spread too far and thin? Some previous work had been planned but didn't get done. The CD is also working on some creeks in the Tabaco Roots, and there is WUI work in the area too. *Possible meeting focus in the spring to start a collaborative effort?*