

Gravelly Landscape Collaborative Meeting Notes
MONDAY, June 3, 2019

Purpose: Focus on Opportunities in the Southwest Tobacco Roots

Attending: Linda Owens, Kevin Suzuki, Jim King, John Wagoner, Dean Waltee, Sean Claffey, Dave Delisi, Joe Sampson, Darcie Warden, Richard Stem, Dale Olson, John Anderson, John Meyer, Jennifer Boyer facilitator.

June-August 2019 Calendar of Events

June 17-19 Range Days <https://www.montanarangedays.org/>

June 18 field tour of Snowcrest, Helle Livestock, and Jack Creek

June 19 – Clear Creek site tour contact Jim King USFS jamesking@fs.fed.us

June 26 – Pint Night in Sheridan with Watershed Trivia

June 28 – Ramshorn restoration field tour contact David Stout david@rvcd.org

July 30 – Ruby Habitat Foundation Wildlife Speaker Series: Mountain Lion 5:30 potluck, 7:00 presentation.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/WCSCommunityPartnerships/events/?ref=page_internal

July 31 – Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance field tour on public-private lands and snowcrest agreement contact Darcie Warden dwarden@greateryellowstone.org

Saturday, August 3 – Madison Valley Weed Fundraiser

<https://www.facebook.com/events/441915776544930/>

7th Annual Summer Wildlife Speaker Series Lineup!

June 17-Sage Grouse-Dillon, MT

June 25-Bighorn Sheep-Ennis, MT

July 17-Wolverine-Lima, MT

July 30-Mountain Lion-Laurin, MT

August 8-Otters-Divide, MT

August 20-Pronghorn-Cameron, MT

August 27-Owls-Dillon, MT

September 5-Mountain Lions-Bozeman, MT

August 10-16, **2020** Cycle Greater Yellowstone through Alder and Sheridan

<https://www.cyclegreateryellowstone.com/>

Trapline:

- MVRG is producing a booklet that provides the protocols for when there is a grizzly conflict or activity.
- Active wolves in N. Meadow Creek drainage, horse fatalities.
- Compost site near Norris is open and working well.
- Weed control efforts in Madison include bio control, Jack Creek, Quake Lake to Reynolds Pass.
- Controlled burn project around Lyons - USFS
- NRCS is doing short and long-range planning focusing on conifer encroachment.
- MT FW&P is concentrating on recreation and wildlife surveys. Habitat work is focused on aspen, shrub, grassland, mountain mahogany and Doug fir removal. The work is supported by grants and includes mechanical treatment with jackpot burning.
- TNC / SW Sagebrush Partnership is focusing on projects to enhance wet meadow, ephemeral habitats in headwaters and conifer removal. Working in partnership with BLM and Ruby Watershed.
- Ruby watershed is doing restoration work on Ramshorn, California drainages. Working with partners and FW&P on Westslope Cutthroat project in Ramshorn.
- BLM will be conducting watershed assessment in the Madison beginning July 15-August. This includes streams, uplands and allotments.
- BLM has agreements with TNC and Ruby Watershed to carry out restoration work includes BLM and private lands focused on conifer removal and sage grouse. Archeology review is finishing up for 6,000 acres of sagebrush steppe habitat work in the Ruby.
- Stem Consulting working at national level to assist FS moving projects forward.
- USFS moose project is being implemented. Case regarding domestic and big horned sheep was dismissed.

Greenhorn Project:

The timeline has been delayed due to multiple factors.

Clint, the team leader for the project, has moved to different position. A new ID team leader will be coming on board soon. For now, other folks in Regional Office have been filling in and picking up the work.

The Scenery Analysis required additional work and won't be completed for a couple weeks. The Heritage work needs to be completed and is awaiting a new cultural resource person to be assigned to complete.

The timber sales need to provide enough funds to pay its way and cover road work etc. The analysis shows that one alternative comes up short, about \$50K in the red. One alternative is to log in the winter so not as much road work is necessary, an additional analysis for winter logging needs to be completed. The winter logging analysis shouldn't take too much additional work since the larger impacts are during the summer. Wildlife biologists note that there would be less impact on wildlife in winter compared to spring/summer elk calving and movements.

Bottom line: the Greenhorn EA review will take longer than the end of June to complete.

See attached area map supporting the discussion of project opportunities and achieving landscape scale ecological function and resilience in the SW Tobacco Roots:

NRCS (blue line area) targeted implementation plan for next 5 years. This initiative will allocate \$300,000 per year to treat juniper and Doug fir encroachment. NRCS has interest from landowners and many areas that are in the vicinity of other conifer encroachment projects on public lands.

TNC can help facilitate and implement the projects in the SW T-Roots area and can help get better contracting rates when we get multiple projects on the ground because contractors get more competitive.

BLM riparian projects are being done but stop at the FS boundary. Extending these treatments (conifer removal in riparian areas) on FS lands would expand the positive impact. The conifer removal will support willow and maple and aspen habitats. Using trees felled to reduce grazing impacts during the initial growth period, supports the outcomes (example in CA creek).

Westslope Cutthroat trout (WCT) has one pure population in the Ruby watershed, Ramshorn drainage. A barrier on private lands will protect 13-14 miles of pure WCT.

Ruby Watershed is doing stream restoration in Ramshorn and Horse and California Creeks. Need to develop sediment plan for Ramshorn Creek drainage both on and off the Forest Service lands. Granite Creek also has riparian conifer removal potential. The Ruby watershed is doing some floodplain functionality to the lower section of Granite where it comes into Alder Gulch, currently in the project development phase.

BLM projects include areas outside of the Greenhorns recently completed the archeology – cultural clearance. BLM is partnering with Ruby watershed and TNC and we can get better rates and expand the scope of our projects with private partners. This year about 7500 acres – there will be some slash and mechanical (masticators) treatments. Also, 9,000 acres identified in South T-Roots identified for treatment. There is a lot of potential in the Granite and Ramshorn and California Creek drainages. Sagebrush steppe restoration is a focus. When projects are in a WSA the treatment is prescribed burning rather than mechanical. BLM also has timber sales between California Creek around the south end of T-Root range and also the Meadow Creek drainage on the east side.

BLM has 3 areas for sage grouse and re-establishing the sage steppe vegetation. This involves fire followed by 2 cuttings. USGS funding with U MT study focus on song bird response to vegetation and fuel treatments.

BLM has 18 miles of riparian treated or proposed treatments of conifer removal. This was supported through a programmatic EA for watershed restoration, now looking for a conifer programmatic EA.

USFS purple areas on the map includes aspen and timber harvest and conifer encroachment – 16,000 acres were looked at 2001. How much timber harvest is available in this areas? A quick analysis identified there could be opportunities in Ramshorn also in Mill Gulch and Granite Creek.

Local communities including and fire departments would be supportive of work to reduce risk in the WUI.

From a wildlife perspective, the opportunities in the South T-Roots are similar to those developed in the Greenhorns, but on steroids, much more encroachment and loss of habitat and resiliency. There are also opportunities to re-establish open park areas that have been lost to Doug fir. Benefits to Grizzly connectivity and ungulate species. There is opportunity to support the diversity of wildlife through treatments that support rabbitbrush, mountain mahogany, aspen and restoring critical winter range. Opportunities for stream restoration and floodplain reconnection exist in this area as well (mining and loss of beaver impacts).

Outreach: landowners, ranchers in the area.

Field Trip Locations and Topics: Doug fir communities and loss of parkland. BLM treatments up Noble Fork of Wisconsin Creek good site to see outcome of logging and fire treatments. Areas that illustrate aspen release opportunities and the potential of CE use. Stream restoration and floodplain re-connection potential or post-restoration. Wildlife focus on ungulates and other species.

Next Steps:

June-August

- Attend the great events, workshops and tours in the area this summer
- Email updates on Greenhorn project will keep mailing list up to date
- Outreach to landowners and interested parties in the SW T-Roots
- Field Trip planning

September

- Host field trip in SW T-Roots learning about current conditions, project opportunities.

October – November

- GLC learning and work sessions refining SW T-Root project and approach with resource specialists and community partners.