

Blue Mountains Forest Partners
Project Planning Subcommittee Field Trip and Full Group Meeting
Minutes ~ May 17, 2007

Little Scotty/Damon Field Trip

Participants:

The second forest restoration project subcommittee met at the Forest Service at 9:30 to load vans and visit the second project under consideration by the collaborative group: the Little Scotty/Damon Creek area. During various sites that highlighted issues related to old growth, aspen, fuel build-up and riparian management, the group discussed reasons why this is a priority project for the group. Reasons included:

- This area is in the WUI and there are public safety concerns related to high fuel loads and stand density
- Insect and disease infestations
- Many opportunities for aspen restoration and old growth retention
- Interested landowners, ranchers who initially proposed this project and their willingness to work with the group on implementation
- Streams and riparian areas that need restoration, possible enclosures, spring development potential and hydrology recovery
- Not as many 'red flag' issues as in Dad's Creek: area has been impacted before, less fisheries issues, moderate terrain
- Economic feasibility: it will most likely be cost effective to implement the restoration work given the site conditions, and might provide opportunities to offset costs of other service work

After discussing these and other issues, the present subcommittee members voted unanimously to recommend to the full group that this be the second project to work on collaboratively with the Forest Service. The group also agreed to use the same precautions, criteria and parameters that were developed in the Dad's Creek memo to ensure proper safeguards. It was noted that one of the group members who had some reservations about this project was not able to participate in the field trip.

While the Little Scotty/Damon area was identified as the second project, specific project activities, treatments, and other issues were not yet defined; the group still needs to develop 'zones of agreement' around what they would like to see happen in the project area. Some issues rose to the top that will need lengthier group exploration, including:

- Broadcast burning – there were different perspectives related to when, how and how much burning should be done. It was suggested that we visit other sites to learn more about this, as well as review the best available science related to broadcast burning. The possibility of conducting some demonstration plots with different treatment was also suggested.
- Old growth – while there are opportunities to restore old growth stands, we will need to conduct a more thorough inventory of current conditions and issues in order to decide best management practices that will not adversely impact critical species habitat.

Full Group Meeting

Participants:

The full group met from 4pm-7pm at the Forest Service conference room. After a welcome and introductions, the group spent a few moments of silence reflecting on their own 'best possible outcomes' for the meeting. The April 20 meeting minutes were then approved.

I. First Project update: Dad's Creek

Karen Steer gave a brief summary of the highlights of the April 19 Dad's Creek field trip (found in last month's meeting minutes) and discussed the need to regroup the subcommittee to continue working with the Forest Service on project specifics. The group agreed that they would meet with the Forest Service before the next full group meeting to discuss these project issues. This meeting will likely be during the day of the next full group meeting (June 21). They will share information with each other and with the Forest Service over email until then.

II. Second Project update: Little Scotty/Damon Creek

Karen gave an overview of the field trip that occurred earlier that day (see summary from that trip above). After some discussion, the full group arrived at full consensus that this would be the second project to work on collaboratively with the Forest Service. The defined next steps include:

- The Dad's Creek Project Initiation Letter will be used as a template to develop a draft of the Little Scotty/Damon PIL for the Forest Service. Karen will develop a first draft and then circulate it to the subcommittee for revisions.
- The project planning subcommittee will work on this PIL over email and possible conference call.
- The subcommittee will present their progress, finding, and any decision items to the full group at the next meeting.

III. Workplan development

Members divided into three discussion groups with the goal of developing a short-term workplan. They began by discussing some of the critical issues and barriers that we need to overcome in order to achieve our collective goals. They then brainstormed possible activities and events that we might implement to address these issues. The full group then reconvened and each discussion group presented their priority issues and activities. This included:

- **Restoration versus Economics [or Restoration and Economics]:** There are varying perspectives on the role that economics play in forest restoration. Getting to a common understanding of this issue will take time, but our field trips and discussions are helping. We need to focus on finding funding for the restoration work to happen, but not at the detriment of the ecological needs. Defined activities include:
 - Within our project areas, mark specific trees with ribbon and discuss why they were selected based on restoration and economics
 - Science roundtable – bring relevant scientific research and experts to the conversation regarding restoration. This will help us build a common understanding through joint learning.

- Monitoring
 - Create an Economics subcommittee to work on economic issues (costs, contracting, effects of no action, etc)
 - Continue having field trips!
- **Developing a common vocabulary:** We each hold different definitions for the terms we use together and this creates some confusion. Old growth, forest health, prescribed fire, etc. Defined activities to overcome this barrier include:
 - Make cited scientific studies and research available to everyone through a library (web-based possibly)
 - Capture personal experiences and local knowledge of forest issues and share with the group
 - Science roundtable
 - More field trips around specific issues such as old growth, prescribed fire, etc.
- **Learn from others:** As we move ahead with our work, it would help to know what other communities are doing regarding forest restoration and collaboration. What have they learned? What are some best practices? How have they pursued economic and ecological outcomes? Some identified activities include:
 - A field trip to visit the Lakeview Stewardship Group
 - Invite participants from other collaborative groups to one of our meetings
- **Improve communications:** Sometimes, when we are out in the field we seem to agree about certain issues but then there is less agreement when it comes time to discuss the same issues around the table. Also, when we talk about the economic viability of accomplishing restoration work, we sometimes limit our discussion of goods (value) and services (costs) to within one project area rather than looking at the project as a whole. In general, we can get at these issues through better communication in the field, and by being very specific when we are actually voting on an activity and when we are just exploring and brainstorming issues. As we move ahead with project planning, we should consider economic and ecological issues for the full project area as well as specific sites.
- **Improve group governance and member leadership:** To date, the full group has developed a structure that has served it well, with a full group, project planning subcommittees, a fundraising subcommittee with a treasurer, and a facilitator. We are now at a place where it would be helpful to have a core group help provide strategic direction, be the ‘face’ of the group, communicate with members in between meetings, make sure we stay on track and moving forward, and liaison with the media.
 - It was suggested that we create another subcommittee, an Operations Committee, to serve this role. This committee will have diverse representation, be headed by co-chairs, and will report to the full group. The structure and function of this group will be revisited in a few months to ensure that it is working well for everyone...

Next steps:

1. **Workplan Activities:** Members volunteered to help develop the following priority activities of the short-term workplan. They will communicate with the full group to ensure that everyone's interests and ideas are integrated into the activities.
 - a. **Science Roundtable** – Tim Lillebo, Emily Platt, Asante Riverwind, Mike Billman, Dan Bishop. During the next few weeks, Karen will set up the first conference call for this group to meet.
 - b. **Lakeview Visit** – Mike Browning, Boyd Britton, Karen Steer. During the next few weeks, Karen will set up the first conference call for this group.
 - c. **Next Field trip** – Karen will work with the project subcommittee to organize the next field trip to include opportunities for flagging trees and other issues.
2. **Collaborative group structure:** Members were selected to be part of the two new subcommittees that were formed:
 - a. **Economics Subcommittee** – Mike, Dave, Dave, Glen, Dan (and possibly Mark Webb). They will select a group chair.
 - b. **Operations Subcommittee** – Mike Browning, Mike Billman, Tim Lillebo, Boyd Britton, Irene Jerome, Charlie O'Rourke, Jeff Fields, Mark Webb. They will select co-chairs. Karen will set up the first conference call for the group.

IV. Wrap-up and Next Steps

- The next full group meeting was scheduled for June 21 from 4-7. Karen and Diane will get in touch with folks regarding location and agenda
- The Dad's Creek subcommittee will likely meet earlier on the June 21 to work with the Forest Service on project activities. They will review materials and share information over email until then.
- The Little Scotty/Damon subcommittee will work on the PIL over email and then present a draft to the full group during the next meeting.
- The Science Roundtable and Lakeview Visit planning groups will meet over email and conference call to begin planning these events. They will present plans to the full group at the next meeting.
- The Economics and Operations Subcommittees will meet over email and conference call to solidify their roles, co-chairs, etc. They will present this to the full group at the next meeting.

Thanks everyone for a great meeting! See you next time.