

Government to Government
Custer County Board of Commissioners AND Salmon/Challis National Forest
Proceedings for 8/19/2019

Commissioner Wayne Butts Commissioner Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He welcomed everyone. Those present from Custer County were himself, Steve Smith/Commissioner, Randy Corgatelli/Commissioner, Lura Baker/County Clerk, Jim Hawkins/NRAC Chairman, Paul May/NRAC, Tim Kemery/NRAC, David Philips/NRAC and Harriet Henderson/NRAC. Attending on behalf of the Salmon/Challis National Forest were Chuck Mark/Forest Supervisor, Josh Milligan/Forest Plan Leader, and Bill Bauer/Forestry Program Leader. The main agenda topic to be discussed was Timber.

Chairman Wayne Butts asked for help getting the new forest plan language written that will evolve with the process and allow the plan be adjusted as needed. He stressed that the language needs to be manageable. The main thing for all Forest Plan sections is their wording doesn't become a steel trap. Wayne asked if Jim Hawkins would be the moderator for the evening, and he agreed. Jim pointed out that the Custer County Land Use Plan would like to see the minimum of a 10-year forest harvest plan continually on the books, to provide a real opportunity for private investment in a sawmill. In the past the Challis Forest harvested between 2 and 3 million board feet per year. Steve suggested the target be set, and then management be directed toward reaching the target. It was suggested the 10-year plan be updated every 5 years, and provide continuous assurance of raw materials. Chuck stated that the next forest plan will include an "ASQ", or Allowable Sale Quantity", the amount of timber they can harvest up to. Potential timber sale (saw timber) quantity, and Potential wood sale (post, poles, house logs, firewood) quantity will be included in the new forest plan. Bill reinforced that the current timber plan calls for 3 million board feet from the Challis Forest. Wayne asked if the Challis Forest and the Salmon Forests were remarkably different? Bill agreed that they are different, and especially in the "timber" area. Steve asked about having firewood within the "timber quota". What funds return to a community from timber sales, and what financial return is received from firewood? Bill responded that the "salvage sale fund" is how the USFS generates the income that allows them to perpetuate more timber sales. Timber sales return about 25% to the community, firewood sale receipts do not generate any such return. Current sales are about 50% firewood and 50% timber. Randy asked if they would consider writing more salvage timber sales following forest fires. The current litigation process can delay the sale until the materials are not longer worth processing. Bill interjected there is a statement in the new forest plan draft that is related to salvage sales and makes it more explicit, and less prone to litigation. Wayne asked how they could help get the wording changed to remove the chokehold of outside litigation. Sharon Bradley/NRAC attended. Jim asked about the removal of the NEPA burden that has been provided by congress through the Farm Bill. Kurt Pindell has stated that about 72,000 acres are now exempt from the NEPA process burden. Bill shared the forest service attitude in timber, that they want to get into fire & bug salvage areas and recover all the economic value possible. Chuck then reminded everyone that the new categories are all affected by NEPA, some are excluded and expedited, but all are affected.

Jim asked if the PWSQ(firewood) and the PTSQ(timber) were separate, or actually combined. Bill explained the Possible Timber Sale Quantity is a sub-set to the Possible Wood Sale Quantity numbers. It was asked if it possible to meet the quota numbers and actually never cut a green tree? They admitted that the firewood and salvage sales do not cut green timber. Our goal is to revive the timber industry

within our region, and not have to ship logs out of the area for processing. Firewood barely pays for the wood program; it is saw logs that generate income. Presently most logging sale income is leaving the local area. Wayne asked what the future plan or goal is? Jim suggested they set a goal of 150-year harvest cycles. Bill said the process is in place and special areas could be included in that plan. Jim then asked if there is a timber suitability map for the Challis/Salmon forest? Years ago, there was a timber suitability plan map developed, but nobody is able to locate it. Sharon Bradley remembers doing the maps for the project and that the records were sent to the Salmon office. Ernie Schneider was the one that was responsible for the project. Bill answered that they will go through a timber suitability determination for the new Forest Plan. History shows that the more accessible areas with roads are the ones that have the best suitability for timber harvest. Timber growth patterns have not changed over the years. Sharon asked that they take into consideration "cable system" areas, as well as the traditional "tractor system" areas. New logging systems have opened up different areas that were formerly off limits.

Wayne asked about the 300-foot setback from water created by PAC Fish and IN Fish regulations? Chuck is trying to work with them and get common sense inserted into the forest plan. In the RHCA "riparian areas" the FS is trying to get firewood collection permitted on the uphill side of the roads that parallel streams, as it really doesn't cause erosion because of the road. Steve spoke about the fuel loads that pile up in the bottoms of canyons, and how most public use is concentrated along the water. Removing the fuel loads through firewood cutting, will also reduce fire risk. Steve spoke about the aftermath of a big fire, and the runoff that cannot be stopped from draining into the streams. Jim reminded the group about the chop date of 01/01/1995 when the interim guidance could have been changed. The Challis Forest let it slide and have since continued to operate under the 300-foot setback. Chuck is trying to adapt controlling criteria that relates to our climate and conditions. Sharon talked about old sedimentation standards of "30% depth fines", that were impossible to meet. All admitted that it isn't even understood where that criteria came from. Jim spoke about the impossibility of controlling a cloud burst, and the silt generated by a 30-minute event. Wayne asked about standards and how the wording could be done to provide reasonable access and ensure future use. Josh stated the issues that surface over and over need to be included in the forest plan wording, such as "beaver dams". Does this become duplicate management? ie: Fish & Game for the animals, and USFS for the dams. Those events that people have no control over need to be listed. ie: cloudbursts, animal activity,

Wayne asked if the "insect & disease" issue in our forests is addressed in the new forest plan? Bill feels that disease is addressed and included. Mistletoe can be addressed, but not the effect of major regional drought. Sharon asked about timber standard size restrictions that are in the old plan and need to be removed from the new forest plan. Bill agreed that those size restrictions are his biggest frustration with the current plan. The forest team is working on changing those rules, and building more flexibility in for the forester up front. Chuck admitted they are very short on Silva culturist and top heavy with fire personnel in the agency. Steve asked about the pine beetle infestation and how the FS assessed and addressed the problem. Bill responded that the local area has already seen the pine beetle plague pass through, and it has about run its course through the entire west. Lodgepole pine 8" and larger were a pine beetles' favorite food. The pine beetles have peaked and are now collapsing. Steve asked about the next bug? Bill stated Douglas Fir beetles are now a big problem, and are killing the larger Douglas fir trees. A forest needs different size classes and different species of trees for it become a resilient and healthy forest. The major clean-up is being done with fire right now. David Phelps asked about how

they are addressing the huge fires we are having currently, and aren't we setting the forest up for the same scenario in another 75 years. Bill agreed that there is more that can be done within the accessible areas, and that fires will continue to play major part. Steve stressed that we need to use more than fire for forest management. Bill stated that getting forest product processing infrastructure rebuilt on this side of the forest is one of the major hurdles to get over for the USFS, to enable them to meet some of their management objectives. For the USFS to put up a huge timber sale and have no processing plant is foolish, as there will be no market. Questions were asked about the timber sale quantity. Bill explained that TSQ is a 10-year target, not just an annual target, which builds in flexibility.

Wayne has gone in behind the fuels reduction crews that you have working right now, and reported they are doing some excellent work. He would like it to be a local goal to utilize these thinned fuels in some beneficial way, perhaps a bio-fuels generator. Bill agreed that the materials should/could be utilized in a creative way. If there was easy access for the public, much of it would be used. Sharon asked if there were any "commercial firewood" sales being let? Bill said it is being thought out, but has not perfected as yet. Steve asked about possibilities for pelletized fuels being made? It is possible, but they are getting few requests. There are quite a few forests that no longer have any timber or lumber infrastructure, and need to be creative about ways to encourage its rebuilding. Jim asked if they have ever let a "green tree" firewood sale, or a salvage sale on green timber that has a limited use. Chuck stated they have Stewardship Contract authority, much like the BLM, to contract for services such as thinning an area. The Lemhi Forest restoration group has been successful for about 10 years doing such projects without any lawsuits or objections filed. It was asked if it was possible say provide grants, to encourage value added product manufacturing, by providing free or low-cost materials. Bill felt it described the "stewardship program" now being used in Lemhi County. Most projects are bid for, but some are a trade arrangement. IRSC "Integrated Resource Services Contract" has been codified through congress, which allows injecting funding to get some projects done.

Wayne talked about the area's that are currently not accessible via road, that do have valuable timber. Idaho roadless areas are already codified, and if a new road is put in, it must be removed when the project is completed. The road situation in the Annie Rooney timber sale is at an impasse, and the State of Idaho is the place to begin for roadless rule changes. The FS meets with the roadless committee twice a year to present their pending projects. The state provides guidance, but they do not make the decisions. Sharon Bradley brought up the "forest regulation" that sets up the harvest plan and provides the yield targets. The incidental rules that filter down from PAC Fish, and fires always seem to derail the project yield targets. The Silva cultural prescription cannot be replaced with a set of rules, they need to be allowed to do their jobs. Sharon asked if any the old timber prescriptions had been read and followed on the Challis Forest. Chuck and Bill apologized for not having read them to date. They want to protect the established plantations that are already in the district.

Josh talked about what he was hearing for new ideas. (1) Creating incentives to participate. (2) Keep existing participants involved. (3) Looking for new participants with new products. (4) A 15-year timber plan was suggested. (5) Firewood also needs incentives, to keep the plan moving forward. (6) Keep the harvest pathway clear and visible for all market participants. (7) Having the FS do prep-work in falling trees and decking firewood in certain areas to assists the public. Steve asked what caused the lumber mills to close in the past? Was it the constant threat of litigation? It was also felt the constant changing of FS personnel makes it very hard to develop the trust that is needed for progress. Wayne stated that he felt this coordination process has opened up the discussion and developed much better

understanding between us. He thanked all those that attended and participated. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

The next meeting date was discussed. October was offered and will be pursued.

Wayne F. Butts, Chairman
Custer County Board of Commissioners

Attest: _____
Lura H. Baker, County Clerk