

Government to Government
Custer County Board of Commissioners AND Salmon/Challis National Forest
Proceedings for 7/8/2024

Commissioner Chairman Randy Corgatelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The agenda topics to be discussed were 1) Forest Plan Socio-Economic Study, 2) Salmon National Forest Plan Revision, 3) Challis National Forest Revision, 4) Wilderness Plans for JMJP & Boulder White Could Wilderness'. He welcomed everyone and asked for introductions around. Those present from Custer County were himself, Steve Smith/Commissioner, Jake Zollinger/Commissioner, Tina Hawkins/Deputy Clerk, Jim Hawkins/NRAC Chairman, Harriet Henderson/NRAC, Commissioner elect Will Naillon, Commissioner elect Gordon Vaden and Cindy Philps was in the audience. Attending on behalf of the Salmon/Challis National Forest were Heather DeGeest/Forest Supervisor, Josh Milligan/ Assistant Forest Supervisor, Chris Waverek/ Challis-Yankee Fork Acting District Ranger, John Runkle/Middle Fork Deputy District Ranger and Lance Stavast/Lost River District Ranger

Chairman Corgatelli presented Jim Hawkins/NRAC Chairman as the moderator of the meeting. Jim expressed his desire to discuss each agenda topic. Jim began by reviewed the foundational legal direction we must stay within and stated he would keep participants to the agenda topics.

Hawkins asked Forest Supervisor Heather DeGeest if she was working on the required socio-economic studies for the upcoming Forest Plan Revisions? DeGeest deferred to Josh Milligan. Milligan referred to a study that was done in the early 1990's and stated they are trying to update it to 2020's. It will include timber, range, recreation and firewood economic forces and their influence on the economy. They will be including Lemhi County goals in their Salmon Forest Plan Revision. J.J. Research Co. is doing the initial study and a draft is expected to be available in mid-August. Jolie Turek/CEDA Director has been their contact for Custer County. Jim Hawkins requested a copy of the study from 1990's, and Milligan agreed to provide him a copy. Jim Hawkins expressed his opinion that a socio-economic study should be about the financial impact of Forest Service decisions upon the local economy. Commissioner Smith agreed that impact is a much better description than influence. Hawkins offered a copy of the Custer Lemhi Economic Study that he was involved with in 1991. Milligan stressed the places where the Forest Service has influence, not the overall rule system. All present agreed that the mother cow livestock count in Lemhi and Custer Counties has dropped dramatically since the last Forest Plan was written. Chairman Corgatelli spoke on the disappearance of all logging related jobs during the last 50 years. Commissioner Smith spoke on the slow crawl of getting grazing permits approved and how it stifles the economy. Smith offered to send a digital copy of the C.L.E.M. to those who wanted a copy. Commissioner Zollinger inquired about what costs the Forest Service the most? "Fires" was the response. He then asked what brings in the most funding? "Guide fees" was the response. Zollinger then inquired just what would help prevent the forest fires? Josh Milligan responded that fuel reduction such as thinning and controlled burns. Hawkins then requested to see the current economic study that is being conducted through CEDA (Custer Economic Development Assn.) and LEDA (Lemhi Economic Development Assn.) Josh Milligan agreed to provide a copy. Commissioner Smith asked Forest Supervisor DeGeest if her office has aligned their efforts with the Custer County Land Use Plan? DeGeest responded with a "yes".

Heather let everyone know that the Salmon Forest Plan Revision would begin in the calendar year of 2025. Moderator Hawkins inquired if Custer County Commissioners would have an observational seat at the table when the Forest Plan Revision begins? DeGeest responded that "Yes" they will. Challis Forest Plan concerns will be addressed in separate planning meetings. Hawkins outlined his expectations of planning meetings that Custer County would like to attend. ie: Range, Timber, Recreation, etc. Commissioner Smith inquired about the impact of opinions and comments from the County Commissioners, and if such comments would hold more sway than that of the general public? It was then decided after much discussion that when a decision is to be made, Custer County Commissioners will be able to attend the meeting. Supervisor DeGeest then informed the Board of Commissioners that she has not chosen a lead person. Instead she is utilizing an in-house service team that is based in Denver, Colorado. This prompted concerned comments from the Commissioners delegation. Use of Google earth photos, not on the ground inspections, was a big problem during the last revision efforts.

Commissioner Zollinger expressed his gratitude about the District Rangers attendance at the NRAC and Commissioners Meetings each month. Supervisor Heather responded that she expects her Rangers to be involved and informed and able to connect with residents about Forest Plan Revision. She then listed what she had heard during the meeting. She heard the need to be involved in the Salmon Forest Plan Revision process. Commissioner Zollinger inquired if she had the funding needed to complete the Forest Plan Revisions? Heather responded that the team has been hired. Custer County responded by voicing their concerns about using "google" to gather important data. The team must live up to County expectations and provide good accurate data to build the Revision Plan. Commissioner Zollinger stated how glad he is to hear that the local rangers will be fully involved. Heather DeGeest stated that the opportunity is in the alternatives, and they all need to be looked at. Commissioner Smith urged everyone to keep the revision process moving forward. Commissioner Zollinger reminded all that there will never be a "perfect" time to get these forest plan revisions done. Josh Milligan stated their target is to get the Forest Plan Revision done within 4 years. Commissioner Corgatelli inquired about just how many of todays meeting attendees would still be involved in 4 years? Commissioner Zollinger inquired about the service team members, where they live and if they travel? Josh Milligan responded that they do not live in the area they do come and go. There are 10 members on the team, and some of their work is done virtually. Commissioner Smith inquired about the names and bio's of the team members? He also asked who gets to choose the team members?

The Wilderness Management Plans for the JMJP and Boulder White Cloud Wilderness were then discussed. The areas became wilderness in 2018. Both Lance Stavast and Josh Milligan felt the Wilderness Management Plans had been completed, and agreed to look at the plans they have on file. Heather DeGeest asked the area rangers to please follow up with a copy for the commissioners. Jim Hawkins then inquired about the cadastral survey that would show the physical delineation of the wilderness property boundaries and accurately establish land ownership. The Forest Service delegation did not know, and agreed to look into the survey information.

The meeting was adjourned 8:34 PM.


Randy Corgatelli, Chairman
Custer County Commissioner

Attest: 
Lura H. Baker, Clerk

