

Spotted Dog Workgroup

Meeting #2

June 19, 2013

Deer Lodge Community Center

Chairman John Hollenback laid out some ground rules: Use courtesy when others are talking—don't carry on multiple conversations, don't interrupt.

FWP gave a presentation on Wildlife Management Areas and Spotted Dog WMA (1hour)

WMA's: (Mike's presentation) background on resources, policies, budget

The earliest WMAs were funded with FWP license dollars with matching funds from the federal Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, which places an 11% excise tax on arms and ammunition. That money is then reallocated to the states for wildlife management: For every license dollar spent, 3 dollars of P-R funding may be used as a match. The Judith River WMA was the first WMA in Montana, purchased in the late '30s or early '40s.

In 1987, the Montana Legislature enacted House Bill 526, now known as Habitat MT, which earmarks a portion of Montana resident and nonresident hunting license revenues for wildlife habitat acquisition and maintenance. For many years FWP placed a priority on using these funds to acquire conservation easements, which protect habitat values while leaving the land in private ownership, but in the last several years (prior to 2013) the governor's office placed a priority on fee-title land purchases. As of 2011, FWP owned 349,000 acres in fee title, leased 94,884 acres (primarily lands adjacent to fee title) and held conservation easements on 390,195 acres. (14 fee-title properties (WMAs) cover about 164,388 acres in R2.)

There is a focus on elk habitat management on Spotted Dog WMA, and there are multiple ways to accomplish it. If we do it well, we will support many other wildlife species as well.

In Region 2, Dave Dziak is the field manager of Wildlife Management Areas. In addition to Dave, he has (2) 6 mo. & (2) 9 mo. positions available for assistance.

We have an annual operations budget of \$30,000 (does not include salaries or benefits) for all R2 WMAs plus project by project requests for habitat MT dollars. At the moment, there are enough dollars to go around. Plus, we have an additional NRD grant of

\$1,227,000 for 5yr start-up costs on Spotted Dog WMA (weeds, fences, road) (through 2015).

Handouts: 1) quarterly progress reports 2) County Weed management plan

*Vegetation inventory for Spotted Dog has begun (upland & riparian) and was contracted to Ecological Solutions group (objective, independent assessment of vegetation condition). This inventory only included FWP-owned lands.

Ray Vinkey passed out a list of WMA resources—documents pertaining to the WMA. The current grazing lease w/ Rock Creek Cattle is June 11-Oct.15

John: Where does cattle lease money go? Charge per AUM? We'll follow up

Jim F: Explained why WMA money went into one pot for distribution

Brian: Each WMA needs to be self-sufficient.

Donna: Gov't body is different than private in how they generate & distribute \$

John S: The FWP Plan stated that 2013 would be a year of rest from grazing. Was this year's grazing a political decision? If so, do we expect this to continue? Mike T—we do not expect it to continue. This is intended to be the last year of grazing by RCCC, and then institute at least a year or two of rest.

Brian = We need grazing plan in place soon; What is the resource? The grass. Managed landscape can be more productive for all. Is there a way to provide for both?

Mike--We are at least 1yr out for grazing because we need time for thoughtful planning

Jason: What were the findings of the vegetation inventory?

Mike: Uplands= generally good shape; west slope = tougher. Riparian=generally poor

John: encouraged by potential for landowner involvement. Grazing set aside for year or two won't matter much, but can't wait much longer than that. We need to make progress over the next 1-2 yrs. Consider temp. fences for riparian?

Brian: Fencing? 2-wire electric fence for cross-fencing

Field tour soon

John: Is there a bio-based management plan? Yes. But not at the detail that you seek. Group will help build the management plan.

Dave: passed out map of Spotted Dog WMA.

\$475,000 budget for roads, \$605,000 for boundary fence, \$146,845 for weeds (Dave's prelim budget)

*fence = \$1.80/2.30 per ft. depending on terrain – might need more detail from Dave's report

1,600 acres of herbicide treatment plus some insect control sites
\$1.27mil budget/\$521,000 spent/ \$706,000 balance

John: Maintenance on fence? FWP is responsible for our part at a minimum. Some old fence went to landowners and some went to contractor.

Jodi: response on weed spraying? Dave said that the weed and veg response was mixed so far.

John: Jot down questions as you go, we need to narrow down meeting agendas as we move forward to specific topics. Mike – Gov has directed FWP to review WMA operations and maintenance needs for the coming 5-10yrs.

Topics for next meeting:

Tour would help

At future meetings-round robin so everyone has a chance to speak.

Bill Mosier: Would like to see more specifics on range inventory and where we could use cattle in the interim . Use and rest cycles identified through inventory (to also include DNRC)

Anne Roberts: new USFS bio for Spotted Dog area (based in Butte)

Next meeting will be 3rd Wednesday of July (17th)

We'll get tour date info out to the group

Improve publishings on FWP web of meeting Info

Jason-access (When, where, what type) wants to make sure we address

Adjourned at 8:45pm

Absent: Corey, Steve, Joe, Luke J.