

Spotted Dog Minutes

6/19/2014

John called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He said at the last meeting we were charged to break into groups and work on specific topics. Because we don't have very many participants it was decided to break into access and travel management and wildlife populations and resources for this meeting tonight. We also had handouts from the adjacent landowner meetings expressing goals and working with FWP.

Dan Lucas gave a report on working with the adjacent landowners and their goals to expand the total footprint of the WMA to include adjacent landowners. The number one goal was rangeland health and to have proper functioning uplands and riparian areas. 2. Manage for fire resiliency and catastrophic fire resistance. 3. Manage for appropriate distribution of elk use on both the WMA and adjacent private lands. 4. Increase branch antlered bull populations. 5. Develop cooperative agreements on hunter access both on WMA and private. 6. Economic flexibility and viability of surrounding ranch operations. 7. Establish a desirable population of elk.

Dan discussed how they wanted to reach those goals. He discussed season of use and rotation. Also discussed was distribution as far as fencing, spring development, and mineral placement. Intensity of use goal was to be at 40 percent utilization and 20 percent stream bank disturbance as triggers for moving cattle. Use of irrigation resources to provide quality forage, utilize grazing to enhance elk habitat and improve rangeland health across the WMA and adjacent lands and hunter access issues are all goals of the adjacent landowners.

John said Chase stressed that in order to make it work all the resources have to work together and will be a working document to make sure that our goals are being met. Dan McQueary said his view from the talk that Chase gave was that they came to a consensus and everyone gets their say and there is trust within that group. Dan M. said he hopes it doesn't take this group too long to trust each other and realize we want a good resource for the entire group.

Mike Thompson asked when we first started; the goal was how do we want to manage the WMA. He said now it looks like we are looking at the whole picture as neighbors' working with neighbors and FWP is one of your neighbors. He felt we are making the transition to look at not only the WMA but adjacent landowners and how it can be managed together.

The working group broke into two groups and Mike Thompson gave a report on access from their subgroup. He said their group does not think more access is good and some feel that less access would be better. The group felt there should be no more access. Jake Creek access will probably be cut off because of Rock Creek ownership. The group discussed that there are no elk on the WMA because of hunter pressure and so limited hunting access may be an interest. Mike said FWP proposed a permit only for the WMA and that they thought about proposing that on the Spotted Dog but there was very little public comment so they withdrew that proposal. They may propose that again in 2 years. He said the group talked about a sanctuary on the WMA and not having any hunting access in that area. He said

the group expressed concern that with access comes weeds and off roading. He said in general there may be two seasonal accesses between summer use and hunting use. He said DNRC also needs access for management.

Dan Lucas reported on the wildlife sub group. He said within the whole hunting district, 1400 head of elk is FWP's goal with 20 percent one way or the other. He said they also discussed ratios of cows to bulls. Some of the observations are more elk calves are being born later and they wondered if this was because there are not enough bulls or disturbance of bow hunters. They talked about hunter management. Bear numbers, wolf management, and large predator management within the WMA and surround landowners. He said they talked about moose numbers on the WMA and browsing on willows etc. and impact on riparian. He said they talked about whether antelope winter on the WMA or not. Beaver habitat was discussed.

John said as we move forward we need to make sure that we develop and in-depth proposal that has been thought out and making sure that all the groups have been heard from.

Jim wondered if there is a format that needs to be followed when writing up a proposal. Mike said we need to come away with a management plan as the end goal. Rick Northrup said yes there is a format. Jim wondered if we could use the Beartooth group's management plan so we do not have to re-invent the wheel. Mike said from these sub-committees we can start drafting a management plan. Jim said we need to make a recommendation to the commission and he is wondering what that format should look like. Dan McQueary said one of the things that came out of the Beartooth WMA is they used to go to the commission and now the commission comes to them to make management decisions and to make sure it is working.

Dan said he likes the idea of putting the condensed ideas on paper from each group and sharing with everyone and start putting that into a working document.

Jodi said we will do a tour of the Spotted Dog on July 1. The focus of this tour will be to look at some upland sites and riparian and visit with resource professionals. Dan L., Jodi and Ray will set up the tour stops. Next meeting will be July 17, 2014 at the Elks at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jodi Pauley