

Spotted Dog Minutes

9/18/2014

Attendance: John Hollenback, Jim Flynn, Jodi Pauley, Fred Staedler, Brian Quigley, John Stavlo, Bill Lombardi, John Beck, Louis Smith, Dan Lucas. Others present: Pat Hansen, FWP present: Mike Thompson, Ray Vinkey, Rick Northrup

John called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm. He said we are going to have the working group members sit at the table and guests sit toward the back. Guests are welcome to make comments as well as called upon. He said this group needs to come up with some detailed plans on the layers of the WMA. He said as a working group we need to develop those plans with confidence and one that can be presented to the commission. He said we will also break into groups again and discuss specific topics. He said the working group should be able to brainstorm and finalize a short list of 4 or 5 guiding principles, discuss the management plan and the role of the working group in developing management plans.

Mike Thompson said we need to develop 3 or 4 guiding principles for each of the areas within the WMA. He said if we can develop some goals and then stick to those guiding principles we have come a long way. Jim Flynn said last meeting we talked about what form the management plan should take and the role of the working group in developing a management plan. He said he would feel more comfortable defining those roles first. John H. said that the idea is to define those 4 or 5 guiding principles so we know how to develop the management plan. Brian said he thinks we need to develop the management plan first. John Stavlo said we have a management plan that is already in place by FWP, he felt that we need to take that existing plan and make adjustments, write a new plan or whatever this group decides. He said we need to make sure we are meeting these criteria first before we make any changes to the existing management plan. Jim said he thought we were going to develop a management plan from what was originally written. Mike said the first management plan was a basis to get started but we have lots of different ideas that need to be written into this plan. He said some of the things in the plan are not specific enough in the current WMA. John Stavlo asked is that the format that we are going to follow. Mike said the notion is that we will have two documents. He said when we broke into smaller groups at our previous meetings we started to develop some visions that are larger than the current WMA. He said the surrounding landowners are interested in creating a larger community when it comes to access, hunting, grazing, etc. He said we need to develop a management plan but then also a document that takes into account this larger community of landowners, public interests, etc. He said this document can look any way that this working group wants it to look. He said we are going to build this together rather than FWP just bringing to this group or this group simply bringing their ideas to present to FWP. Jim asked when a group brings a plan to the commission it is not necessarily an FWP endorsed document. Fred Staedler asked wouldn't it be better to have one document with some sub-forms within the entire document.

Jim asked if there is a written plan in the Beartooth WMA. Rick Northrup said yes they have an FWP management plan. Jim said it would be helpful to have the management plans from the Beartooth and Devils Kitchen group it may be more helpful so we are not re-inventing the wheel. Dan Lucas said when

we look at the existing WMA the format makes sense to use. He said there are goals, inventories and resources. The management part of the plan right now is only 4 pages this may change as this group develops it, and then there is a budget, and appendices. He said the format is already there, this group can develop the goals and the management portion, Paul Hansen is taking care of the inventory so that part will be completed as well.

Jim Flynn said our overall goal is to 1. Manage and enhance the natural resources on behalf of the general public. 2. Be a good neighbor with the surrounding landowners and residents of Powell County. 3. Decisions that are made are sustainable to future generations and long term. 4. Provide access to a wide variety of uses consistent with the management plan. 5. Primary function of WMA is to provide wildlife habitat.

Jim said we have to remember that this property was purchased with NRD monies rather than with sportsman's money, etc. He said we need to think about the replacement of lost habitat, etc... Rick said the general goal with all FWP WMA's is to provide wildlife habitat, then recreation but because this is an elk winter range, FWP would not support snowmobiling for example. Bill said whatever we come up with it has to be defensible to the general public. He said this area is a WMA and needs to be managed like other WMA's. Fred said we also have to remember that 1/3 of that WMA is also school trust lands and they are there to generate funds for school trust funds. Jim said he does not want to tie up these goals so tight that we don't have flexibility to change, etc. and that the funding source of this money needs to be recognized. Rick said we need to make sure for example if we put cattle grazing in the WMA that it enhances wildlife habitat, etc. Bill said he has seen some tangible reasons that cattle grazing will enhance this area. Rick said yes but they also have pressure from other groups that argue the other way against grazing so it needs to be defensible. John said whether we like it or not the organized groups are out there and that wildlife needs to be our number one goal and then we can build around that. He said we need to be prepared to listen to those groups and take those ideas into consideration. Brian wondered if the people who are against grazing and have the scientific evidence can bring it to this group so we can see this. Louis said we have had lots of researched data on why grazing can be beneficial but let's hear why it is not good.

Rick said if every group can come up with some guidelines then it can define your work environment, etc. John asked if there are groups out there that are against grazing. Who are they? Rick said he has been approached by the Helena hunters and anglers association and others. John wondered if those groups would come and present their scientific evidence. Jim said for the next four month let's take a vow not to talk grazing because there are other subjects that need to be taken care of first before we can address grazing.

John Stavlo said if we take these five principles and if we make detailed plans and they fit under these principles then it is defensible. Mike said we need to think about the economic viability of the neighbors in this plan as well. Ray asked if we need to build how this WMA was funded within our principles. Jim said no and he does not think we should talk economics in our principles. Bill Lombardi said someone has to pay for this WMA, from taxpayers, etc.

The group worked on refining the principles 1. The primary purpose of the Spotted Dog WMA is to benefit wildlife, fish habitat and natural resources on behalf of the general public. 2. Be a good neighbor with the landowners and the residents of Powell County. 3. Actions will be sustainable for future generations. 4. Provide access for a wide variety of uses consistent with the management plan.

John wondered if next meeting do we discuss the principles lightly and then break into our groups. John Stavlo said he wondered why the surrounding landowners are only having a separate meeting. Jodi said it is like sub-committee and anyone can come to these meetings but they are focusing on grazing specifically so that this group does not have to focus on grazing so much. Jim said he would like to see the Great Falls plan at the next meeting.

Next meeting is October 16 at 6:30 at the Elks Club

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Pauley