

Spotted Dog Minutes

1/15/2015

Attendance: John Hollenback, Jim Flynn, Bill Mosier, Jodi Pauley, John Stavlo, Neil Horne, John Beck, Fred Staedler, Dan McQuery, Bill Pierce, Brian Quigley. Others present: Pat Hansen, and 2 guests. FWP present: Dave Dziak, Mike Thompson, Jason Lindstrom, Rick Northrup

John called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. John asked if there were any corrections to the last two sets of minutes. Nothing was added. John said we would like to discuss the Beartooth Management plan. He felt there was a lot of the goals the same and a good place to start discussion. Neil felt there is very little access on the Beartooth and he would want to make sure we discuss access on the Spotted Dog. Mike asked Rick about the format and its flexibility. Rick said there is a format and there is an infrastructure and the access component and comes mostly from a wildlife standpoint. He felt it may need to be organized a little differently but the content is there. Jim said the plan is very informative and covers 40 some years and he hopes it doesn't take that long to develop this plan. He said he still does not have much of an idea today as he did when we first started on what direction we really are taking. He wondered exactly what is the time line for this group and who is responsible for what. Is the department going to give us some fish guidelines and then we respond or is it the committee's responsibility to come up with guidelines and move forward. He said he does not know what the management scheme is for managing elk, is it up to FWP to make that decision or up to the committee to develop the nuts and bolts. He felt surrounding landowners are going to have more one on one with the FWP than some of the other members of this committee. He felt that there is less and less people at the table because we have not made any concrete decisions and maybe we need to meet less often but when we do let's develop some concrete plans.

John felt this group was charged to help make certain decisions and to be a part of the plan. Mike said there has been a lot of investment in getting to the point of talking to each other, etc. He said there is a lot of technical work that needs to be done from FWP and everyone needs to be happy with the decision and make sure it works for landowners, anglers, sportsman, etc. He said FWP has not produced anything as of yet that is more detailed for the Spotted Dog. Jim said he would like to see some paperwork and would like to start moving forward. He said we have talked a lot about grazing but has the department given any thought about what the end game looks like concerning grazing. He said he comes to these meetings and he doesn't know exactly what this group is going to talk about for the evening.

Mike wondered if the rest of Paul Hansen work was done yet. Rick said they put in more plots than they anticipated and they are running about a month behind and will be done by February. Jodi said she agrees with Jim in that we need to start building the management plan and working to develop a plan. John said our group was charged to develop a plan and he still feels that way. Neil said he agrees with Jim and we need to get a plan on the floor. He said we talked grazing to death and he learned a lot about grazing and understands the importance that grazing may be beneficial. Jim said we need to start dealing with the issue and get away from the generalities. John Stavlo said as we converse about all of these issues, FWP is still moving forward with plans on managing the WMA and that pool of money that is used

to manage this will be gone unless we start making some decisions. Rick said that money is for infrastructure like fencing, roads and weed management. John S. said he would like to see more water development for wildlife on the west side. Mike said that money is not for those types of things but it would have to come from other resources. Jason said last time he discussed a lot of the projects that they need to implement but it takes time to develop these projects. He said for example, riparian management depends on the grazing plan, the road plan, etc. He said money is also an issue and certain projects have to be prioritized as we go. Jim said we need to know that and what kind of time frames we all need to develop. Jim wondered what we were going to discuss at the next meeting. Mike said we probably need the information from Paul Hansen to begin with and then from a management project we would map those units and identify range conditions, objectives, conditions on the ground and what kind of goals for wildlife for each of those areas. We could identify such things as do we want livestock in those areas, how do we move the public through those areas, etc. Jim said let's say we have a report from Paul in March then how many days before we can move forward. Mike said it may be up to 90 days before we can develop the next plan. Jim said then what do we do in February, is it on roads, signs, etc. He said we need to get some ideas on the ground and concrete. John Beck wondered if the NRCS has done any work yet. John H. said not yet.

Dan McQueary said FWP now owns this ground and really the only thing we have gotten from them is they have built a perimeter fence and they are actively fighting weeds. Otherwise we have not seen any plan. Dan said FWP bought this for a wildlife management area and specifically for elk but they are not staying there. He said his understanding was this committee was designed to have FWP give us some recommendations and direction and then this committee would help give direction and comment and this is not happening. He said we are not any closer than we were 4 years ago when FWP bought this place. Mike said he is getting blindsided here and there is no hidden agenda by FWP. He said their intention was to get support from a group of citizens to help them develop a plan for the WMA.

Jodi said she felt the Bearthooth plan is a great blueprint. In future meetings can FWP develop the plan say for access, we give it to the committee and as a group we work on access and then the next meeting we work on the next issue, etc. Jim said realistically do we need to meet every month or do we meet when there is more meat and potatoes on the table to mold and take shape. Jim said we need to get some stuff from the department so we can start moving forward. Fred suggested that next month we talk access with maps, etc. Neal said we have the framework already in place and we need to start developing a more comprehensive plan. Brian said there is 40,000 acres let's take a few sections and manage one area and jump off the bridge and start doing some managing. Jim said do we need the Paul Hansen plan first before we move forward. Mike said yes he agrees. Jim said there are more people out there than what is in the room that have concerns of how the Spotted Dog is managed. He said we cannot sacrifice quality for speed and some of these things can end up in litigation and whatever we turn out may have to stand up in court, etc. Rick said we should have Paul's work ready by March. Jodi wondered how long it would take to start developing a management plan. Mike said it would probably be until the end of the year to get the full skeleton put together. John said without this group though the process would not have been along as far as it is. Mike said that is absolutely correct. Brian said what kind of hoops do you have to jump through to take a small piece of the Spotted Dog and start managing

it. Mike said we need to look at Paul's report first on a whole and see what areas there are of concern, etc. Jodi said she would hope that this group has given FWP some ideas to help them move forward. Mike said absolutely we have the minutes as a backbone and discussions of this group to help develop that framework.

John Beck asked if we had elk harvest figures yet. Mike said it will take about 2 months before they get those numbers. John wondered what changes were made that were enacted in this hunting season. Mike said there were no changes. He said they talked about special permits but they got very little public comment and it was decided they should wait. 2015 will remain the same. 2016 is when the next changes will be implemented. He said those conversations are not too early to start developing hunting recommendations. Mike said the current elk population is above their projection and they would like to reduce elk numbers. John said we have some of those bullet points and things that we talked about at each meeting that can be used a backbone to develop a management plan.

Jim wondered on the BTWMA if the goals, objectives and strategies are specific to the Beartooth. Rick said yes.

Neil wondered what does a good neighbor mean to the citizens of Powell County and FWP, Mike said this group is part of it, having some of the surrounding landowners around the table and creating good relations.

John said lets meet in March for Paul's talk. John said it is an important meeting and encouraged all members to attend.

Next meeting is March 19, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Pauley