

Spotted Dog 7/21/2016

FWP present: Randy Arnold, Rick Northrup, Mike Thompson

Spotted Dog members: John Hollenback, Jim Flynn, Neil Horne, Dan McQuery, Bill Pierce, Jodi Pauley, Bill Mosier, Liz Smith, Louis Smith, Pat Hansen, Doug Crachy.

John Hollenback called the meeting to order. He said at the meeting we would like to pull all the notes together from each committee and to start to develop a management plan that will be in draft to eventually go to the public. John said he would like each chairman to help FWP put this together. He said at the last meeting Dan McQueary was going to visit with landowners on their thoughts on a grazing plan, etc. He said this is not an opportunity for a landowner to expand their herds but an opportunity to work with the WMA and manage the resources that are surrounding the WMA between domestic livestock and wildlife. He said we also discussed the historical aspect of the Spotted Dog and that it needs to be a part of the management plan.

Neil asked if the idea was a trade between domestic and wildlife grazing. John said yes that is correct. Jim said yes we want to expand the whole WMA and manage it as a unit between WMA and private landowners.

Liz said the B tags have been expanded and there has been a historical migration of wildlife historically on the spotted dog. With the expansion of the B tags hopefully this will push some of the elk back onto the Spotted Dog where they historically and habitually used to live. And this will help the surrounding landowners as well.

Rick said if we take in fees for FWP those monies go into a trust account and those dollars are used to maintain our regional offices.

John said there are other WMA's that are working and we can draft off of those. Jim said we need to go back to Chase Hibbard and how the Beartooth is set up and some of those components can be taken from those management plans.

Rick Northrup said we would like to think about that the exchange of grazing is not a compensation to the private landowner but an exchange of resources. Using the word recoup is not correct. The landowners are part of a larger land area and a cooperative management scheme.

There was some discussion on the county road. The question is identifying the original road between all parties concerned especially with the district court and the legality of moving the right-away. There are sections of the road that will be very difficult to define where it is at. If we try and move the road that is a very public process. John said this process could take a very long time and he did not think we should put our management recommendations on hold for the road. He said there was a recommendation from the access committee that they had two options that stemmed around two scenarios on whether the road goes through or not. Randy said the statute is written that if there is a problem in identifying a road then you go to the district court and let it go through the court process and this is a good place to start.

Mike said we have a new FWP wildlife biologist, Julie Golla and she will be out of Anaconda. He said FWP will start putting the plan in writing. He said one of the tools they will use is the work that Paul Hansen did. We need to identify the renewable resources and how they fit into the WMA. He said we will also fill in some of the historical aspects and notes taken from other committees. Then once we have a draft written then we can fill in the holes

Liz said she has had several people asking about the county road and should there be a written statement from this committee. Jim said the county commissioners have said it is a county road. Doug said it is a county road but is not open yet as it goes through the legality process of district court. Randy said there is a county road but the process right now is figuring out if there a right of way and the district court is take care of this process.

There was some discussion about access and what they are looking for on the WMA. Jodi said we had talked in the committee about seasonal access, additional access, how does the access look by truck, ATV, Horseback, foot, etc. and will there be multi-use etc. Neil said part of the wildlife concern with surrounding landowners is how access is pushing wildlife off of the Spotted Dog. Louis asked if there is a shoulder season in August. Mike said that is correct and is being used to harvest high numbers. This hunting pressure will push wildlife back onto the Spotted Dog as well. John said we need to get Kelvin involved with the landowners since he has the range background. Louis said the elk are starting to now calve in the hay meadows and this is becoming a problem.

John said he would like to have the chairman of each of these committees get together with their groups, send their recommendations to Mike and let's start getting this on paper in a draft form as we are just spinning the wheels and getting some frustration from the committee. John said he would talk to Kelvin directly and try and set up a meeting with the landowners.

Rick said once we had an idea of the landowners that are interested and some criteria in place we would sit down with landowners and find out what ideas they have on the table as well.

Rick said the management plan right now is going to be the basics but not the total nuts and bolts of every area of the WMA. Right now for example we will not address grazing rotation, etc. Mike said input from all sides may be good.

Jodi said she would try and pull together some of the prior notes to send to Mike from committees and bulleted notes.

There will be no meeting in August but committees can meet, etc.

Randy said FWP has also been working with the DNRC in acquiring the school sections that are checker boarded amongst the Spotted Dog WMA.

Next meeting is September 15, 2016. (Note meeting was changed to September 22, 2016.)