

Minutes
Flathead Basin Commission Meeting
Glacier National Park
September 14, 2011

FBC Attendees: Chas Cartwright, Chip Weber, Mickey Sogard, Pam Holmquist, Jack Potter, Dan Bangeman, Jan Metzmaker, Mark Reller, Jan Metzmaker, Jim Satterfield, Kate Hunt, Julie Dalsoglio, and Caryn Miske.

Other attendees: Tom Cox, Flathead Lakers, Christi Buffington, Kirby Campbell-Rierson, Virginia Sloan, Tony Cooper, Ky (USFS boat inspector), Bill Baum, and Hungry Horse News reporter.

July 2011 meeting minutes unanimously passed.

TRANSBOUNDARY:

GNLCC: Caryn Miske discussed the role of the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC), which is jointly sponsored by NPS and USFWS, in implementing the BC-MT MOU. Given that two federal agencies have been tasked with implementing a State/Provincial MOU, the federal agencies are seeking guidance at the local level. The FBC and Erin Sexton, with approval from the Governors Office, are providing the GNLCC with assistance in crafting an initial plan for implementation.

North fork oil and gas lease retirements: about 90% of the existing federal leases in the North Fork have been retired, and this process continues to move forward. Pending legislation will ensure that future leases in this area are restricted. At the local level the FBC is working with state partners, NGOs and others to facilitate the exchange of mineral rights associated with the Coal Creek State Forest lands in the North Fork in order to effectuate Montana's commitments related to the BC-MT MOU.

Chas Cartwright noted that implementation of the MOU is also contingent on ensuring that "sunk costs" are reimbursed. Cartwright will meet with Kat Imhoff of the Nature Conservancy to better assess the status of the fundraising for the \$4.7 million required. The Nature Conservancy of Canada has already secured their half of the funding (approximately \$5 million).

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Review of draft plan discussed. Julie Dalsoglio suggested that additional text be added to the water quality goal, and agreed to provide the draft text. Mark Reller suggested that our efforts with volunteer organizations be highlighted. Caryn Miske noted that the associated Action Plan requires updating. She will work on this effort along with assistance from Chip Weber. The plan, with the suggested edits, will be voted on at the November meeting.

MEETING SCHEDULE & MEMBER PARTICIPATION:

Members discussed the need for targeted meetings, flexibility in the meeting schedule (especially during the legislative session), the option to call special meetings and to permit members to call in and/or join by video-conference which could be accommodated at the DNRC or USFS facilities. Meeting dates selected for 2012:

February 15 (Kalispell)

April 18 (Pablo or Polson)

June 20 (Kalispell)

September 12 (Pablo or Polson)

November 7 (Kalispell)

December 5 (Pablo or Polson)

Members also discussed options for outreach including enhanced email list serve, Daily Interlake Day Planner; press releases and volunteer network.

UPDATE from FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST:

Chip Weber discussed projects being undertaken by the FNF including: water quality monitoring; participation in the Crown of the Continent initiatives; Americas Great Outdoors (FNF recently developed a document outlining the possible actions agencies can take to contribute to a sustainable environment and economy). The AGO is in its start up phase and this will be discussed again as opportunities evolve. Weber also reviewed the Southwest Crown Collaborative forest restoration project, which included funding for AIS activities in the Swan. As part of this project and under direction from Congress, over the next four years the FNF will conduct a watershed condition class assessment and define a minimum road system designed to protect watershed health. The project also focuses on fire and post fire management and suppression activities in terms of watershed needs. Lastly, Weber reported on the completion of the Legacy Lands consolidation of State and federal lands in the Swan, which included a 10 year fiber agreement to be managed in concert with The Nature Conservancy and Plum Creek.

FBC UPDATES

Caryn Miske stated that the Volunteer Monitoring Program continued this year, with 50 lakes now enrolled in the program. The Whitefish Lake Institute is managing the program on behalf of the FBC and FWP (the two funding agencies that support the program). AIS monitoring is now included as part of the program.

The Flathead Lakers and the Clark Fork Coalition each received \$25,000 for AIS plant surveys. Thus far, only curly leaf pond weed was found in the Eagle Bend area. A plan to manage the infestation is being developed. Treatment is likely expected this spring.

Miske reviewed the funding sources supporting the Flathead AIS coordinator, Erik Hanson. Chas Cartwright asked that this be an action item for the November agenda.

AIS UPDATES

Eileen Ryce and Linnaea Schroer discussed the Region 1 AIS Coordinator staffing reassignment, and committed to rehiring prior to the end of December. The intention is to have a Region 1 coordinator managed through the ANS program in Helena.

The water craft inspection program was reviewed, and Linnaea noted that over 6,000 boats were inspected during the 2011 field season by FWP. She was uncertain as to the percentage of total boats surveyed. Currently, 47,000 boats are registered in the State, but the agencies do not know how many out of state boats enter state waters.

Schroer discussed the reports that boaters have passed through stations with no inspections, and FWP is investigating. She noted that issues this past summer arose due to inconsistent training and the late start which made it difficult to hire seasonal workers. She also explained that it was hard to manage crews from Helena, and hoped that a new training protocol would improve the situation. FWP plans to have one multi-day training session in Helena for all inspectors several months prior to the start of the field season.

Eileen Ryce then discussed questions related to AIS enforcement. She explained that the 1-800 TIPMONT number will be used for AIS violations. Questions arose about whether law enforcement personnel were adequately trained to handle these calls.

Ryce described the Rapid Response exercise planned for October at Lake Koocanusa/Libby on October 5-6. The exercise will focus on working with BC to develop a containment plan. The FBC will be invited to participate in the exercise.

She also noted that the State ANS plan is being revised, and noted that the Flathead Basin AIS Strategic Plan will be appended to the State Plan. Ryce expected that a draft will be available by late winter or early spring.

Lastly, Ryce mentioned the AIS Summit in Helena. The agenda for the Summit is currently under development, and she will be looking for help from regional partners.

Greg Ames, from the Dept. of Agriculture then discussed the Management Area for Noxon, which includes highway inspection stations at 200 and 56. The Management Area operates as a light temporary quarantine, which allows traffic in and out of EWM waters. The Dept. hired 18 inspectors prior to July 4th and ran their inspection stations through Labor Day weekend. The Dept. has also contracted with DNRC to undertake weed surveys in various parts of the State.

Dave Burch, from the Dept. of Agriculture, reviewed their field season results explaining that 1,603 boats were inspected, and that boat "drive by" was still high. To combat this problem, the Dept. is working with local sheriffs and State Highway patrol. Craig McLane, an aquatic plant specialist, was also hired to further the Department's efforts.

Chas Cartwright then focused on the need for: more protection at State border crossings, and Highway Inspections in and adjacent to Region 1.

Ryce then summarized the status of the three border stations and the two highway inspection station operated by FWP:

- Culbertson: operated 4 days per week, 10 hours per day
- Wibaux: operated 4 days per week, 10 hours per day
- Dena Mora: operated 4 days per week, 10 hours per day
- Ronan (Highway 93): operated 7 days per week, 10-12 hours per day
- Clearwater Junction : station operation just before Labor Day, operated 4 days per week, 10 hhours per day

Ryce explained that they are planning for an inspection station in Lima (I-15) for the 2012 season, and hope to increase the hours of operation at Culbertson, Dena Mora and Wibaux. She also committed to continue the Ronan Station.

It was also pointed out that the Station at Troy serves as a border station for the Flathead, and that Wyoming was inspecting boat at I-94. Questions arose about using data and resources from Homeland Security to further assist.

Questions were also raised about adding protection for both American and Canadian holidays.

Chas Cartwright reiterated the need for an inspection station on Highway 2 into the Flathead. Ryce was reluctant to commit citing safety concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tony Cooper, a former FWP boat inspector in the Flathead was critical of the management of the FWP boat inspection program. He focused on lack of quarantine protocols and training.

Christy Buffington, an Educator for the Flathead Lakers briefly discussed her watershed education survey.

Meeting adjourned.