

Thunder Basin Plan Amendment
NEPA Prep Call
1/28/2019

Attendees: Monique Nelson (notes), Chad Prosser, Geri Proctor, Steve Kozlowski, Tait Rutherford, Russ Bacon

Proposed Action Questions:

1. We did not receive a full proposed action from the collaborative. Should this mini IDT prepare a proposed action based on the Collaborative's work to present to the IDT at our kickoff meeting?
 - Yes, this team should take the lead on preparing a proposed action for approval by Russ, presentation in the PIL, and review and refinement by the IDT. The proposed action should be based on the Collaborative's recommendations, with more detail developed by this team.
 - We do not anticipate seeking review from the collaborative in advance of public scoping.
 - Two primary tasks for this team in the first couple weeks are (1) Project timeline (plan to provide draft to Russ by Friday 2/1) and (2) Proposed Action.
2. Collaborative meeting scheduled for Feb 26 in Douglas. Who should plan to attend?
 - Geri will find out more about the agenda for the meeting. Depending on agenda, it's likely that the plan amendment team will not need to attend or can call in to this meeting rather than attend in person.
3. Are there any suggestions in the Collaborative's letters that are a no-go for the Forest Supervisor (steering committee, new boundaries and buffers for 3.63 and CRZA, de-emphasize BFF, emphasis on forage for livestock and pasture management, conservation of associated species)?
 - There are no "no-go" recommendations at this time.
 - Steve pointed out that the NGOs recommend not pursuing a plan amendment—which is a no-go. We will be pursuing a plan amendment.
 - Also, we will seek a balanced approach to multiple use management, and may not emphasize livestock forage availability to the extent recommended by some members of the Collaborative.
 - While we anticipate de-emphasizing reintroduction of black-footed ferret in the Grassland Plan, we do hope that this amendment and future management will help get us to a place where we can reintroduce BFF to the Grassland in the future.
4. What will be the geographic extent of the analysis? MA 3.63 and CRZA, potential Cheyenne River/Antelope Creek/Frog Creek SIA, prairie dog colonies outside of 3.63?
 - The intent is not a full redesign of prairie dog management on the Thunder Basin. We want to keep the scope/extent of the analysis as narrow as possible.
 - Primary emphasis will be on 3.63 and CRZA as described in the Collaborative's letters. Will need to discuss and analyze management/control of prairie dogs outside of 3.63 as well (areas currently defined by Categories 2 and 3).
5. Will the existing 2009/2015 Prairie Dog Strategy remain in place or will it be completely replaced by the Plan Amendment? Should we expect to have prairie dog management Categories in the amended plan?
 - Preference of Forest Supervisor and team members is for the 2015 Strategy and Prairie Dog Management Categories to be integrated into the proposed action so that all

management direction ends up in the Grassland Plan. Collaborative's letter also recommends removal of management categories.

6. Do we expect adaptive management to take the form of decision trees similar to past work? Or follow something similar to the NE/SD plan?
 - Intent is to remove the decision trees that are in the current management strategies. At this time, the NE/SD appears to be a good example for allowing some decision-making flexibility.
7. Thoughts on letter from USFWS regarding use of anti-coagulants?
 - We do not expect to consider use of anti-coagulants in the proposed action; we will likely not analyze in detail any alternative that includes use of anticoagulants.
 - Geri is looking for supporting documentation for that decision (FWS letters, risk assessments, etc).
 - We also need to look into agency policy and use of Rozol by the Forest Service in case we can refer to policy and policy updates on use of those rodenticides rather than making the decision locally (Monique and Chad).
8. Throughout the plan amendment, can we refer to Ecological Site Descriptions and use them to describe existing and desired vegetation conditions and move away from the emphasis on seral stages?
 - Yes we can move to ESDs to integrate current science.
 - Chad/Monique/Geri need to look at the rest of the plan where seral stages are the primary means of describing existing and desired conditions and make a strategy for how to keep the scope of the amendment narrow while relying on ESDs for this plan amendment. NE/SD and ND plans may be good examples for this.
 - Use of ESDs may also be a good way to engage with NRCS. Following this project, we may want to pursue ESD updates on some of the most common sites on the Thunder Basin; we can also call out this expertise in their cooperating agency MOU.

Other Project Questions

9. When is this team available for the IDT kickoff?
 - May be some conflicts the week of Feb 11 (Chad and Russ surgery). Chad will look into his schedule and see if this week would work.
 - President's Day week could be an option
 - Monique on A/L week of 2/25 but could be in Laramie for 1 day.
10. For species of conservation concern: We are preparing a list of potential SCCs and will evaluate the impacts of our alternatives on the viability of species on that list on the grassland. Any further expectations or known requirements?
 - Correct, no further expectations at this time.
11. Are MOUS drafted for Cooperating Agencies?
 - Monique draft MOUs. Ask Melissa Martin for copies from 2015.
12. Can we plan an IDT or core team field trip?
 - Yes—Will plan to schedule in April after Tiffany Young is on board.
13. Is the WDA subgroup still meeting? What is our role?
 - The subgroup (which was never a formal subgroup of the Collaborative) is no longer meeting. We can use the content they provided to develop the proposed action, and continue working with WDA directly in cooperating agency status.
14. TBGPEA has an agreement to supply data to the SO. Do you know the status of the data or agreement?

- The agreement is not started yet—Geri is lead.
 - TBGPEA does collect a lot of data and in the agreement we intend to define their role and provide some funding for the work they have completed.
15. Other team members not currently identified in the draft PIL – status, are they needed?
- Will provide draft of the Roles and Responsibilities section of the PIL to Russ by the end of this week to identify personnel gaps and make decisions on roles.