

Sublette County WPLI Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
December 7, 2016
Pinedale, WY

Draft for Review

Approved

Committee Members Present:

Coke Landers, *Agriculture/Ranching*
 Dan Smitherman, *Conservation*
 Mike Henn, *Conservation District*
 Mike Crosson, *Sportsmen*
 Mike Smith, *Energy*
 Dave Bell, *General Public*
 Bill Lanning, *Motorized Recreation*
 Monte Skinner, *Non-Motorized Recreation*

Others:

Steve Smutko, UW Ruckelshaus Institute, Facilitator
 Bart Myers, Sublette County Planning Dept.

Agenda:

Old Business:

1. Approve and sign charter
2. Review of impressions from overflights
3. Future panel presentations

New Business:

4. Discussion of alternative GIS platforms: county GIS and WYGISC-WPLI
5. Process map: moving from data collection to recommendations
6. Lake Mountain WSA: additional information to consider:
 - A. Outfitter/Guide permit information
 - B. Wildlife information: WYGISC-WPLI map layers
 - C. Vegetation data from grazing allotment file
 - D. Other
7. Data and information platforms: WCCA Hub?
Create Sublette WPLI website?
8. Public comment

Handouts:

1. Agenda
2. Committee Charter as approved 11/02/16
3. Book: *Getting to Yes*
4. WPLI Process map

Actions Taken:

1. The committee will invite a representative of Governor Mead's office to a future committee meeting to present information on process for aggregating county recommendations into a legislative package.
2. Co-chairman Smitherman will gather information on similar efforts by other states and localities and will identify specific people with leadership roles. Smitherman will share the information from this research with the committee members via email.
3. The committee decided that additional layers that may be unique and beneficial to the Sublette County Advisory Committee could be added to the County GIS in the future if needed.
4. The committee will invite BLM and Wyoming Game & Fish wildlife biologists to the January meeting to present wildlife data relevant to the Lake Mountain WSA.
5. The University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute will create a Sublette County WPLI website for more transparent sharing of information and data among the committee and with the public.

Meeting Summary

Co-Chairmen Smitherman and Landers called the meeting to order at 1:03pm. For the first order of business the co-chairmen asked the advisory committee members, as well of members of the public in attendance to introduce themselves. The committee briefly discussed the upcoming panel discussion scheduled for December 14, 2016, with co-chairman Smitherman offering his apologizes for any misunderstanding regarding the intent of the panel discussion. Smitherman continued by informing the committee that would only be able to attend the first portion of the discussion and that a contingent from Teton County was planning on attending the panel discussion on the 14th. Co-chairman Smitherman also reminded the committee that the consensus decision-making process was to be used by the committee in their deliberations. The co-chairmen next asked Steve Smutko to review and proceed with the scheduled agenda items. Mr. Smutko provided a brief overview of the consensus decision making process being utilized by the committee and his role as a facilitator.

For the first agenda item Mr. Smutko provided an approved version of the charter to the committee for their signature. The committee suggested removing the Ruckelshaus Institute logo from the cover page of the charter and replacing with the Sublette County logo. Co-chairman Smitherman and the committee briefly discussed other Wyoming counties which are participating in the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative.

For the second agenda item Mr. Smutko asked the committee members to give their impressions from the overflights of the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Sublette County. Mike Henn began by stating he was impressed with the vast amount of country in Shoal Creek the WSA, that there was a lot of unique geology and unique spots with wilderness characteristics that may warrant a certain level of protection. Henn also said he saw lots of uses in the Shoal Creek WSA: grazing, recreation, and so forth. Henn continued by stating that Scab Creek looked like a rock pile. Continuing Henn said that probably the main reason why Scab Creek met the wilderness characteristics is because you can't get a lot of motorized use in there. The committee as a whole discussed Scab Creek being designated as a Primitive Area prior to being designated as a WSA. Henn concluded his impressions of Scab Creek by commenting on the area tying into the forest wilderness area, that it is rough and unique and that the topography and geology lend themselves to wilderness characteristics. Henn then discussed his impressions of Lake Mountain, stating that the other two WSAs are adjacent to wilderness areas, unlike Lake Mountain. Henn said Lake Mountain has development around it, although portions of the WSA still remains mostly road less due to topography. Henn stated it puzzles him as to why it is a WSA. Henn thanked the nonprofit for donating the flights over the WSAs.

Co-chairman Landers stated that he only flew over Shoal Creek and couldn't see much due to being airsick. Landers said he would need to get boots on the ground in order to develop a feel for the WSAs.

Committee member Mike Crosson was the next to give his impressions of the overflights. With respect to Shoal Creek Crosson said the area has lot of wilderness characteristics and not much development. Crosson commented on some illegal activity in the WSA, such as an ATV road towards Fish Creek Lake. Crosson commented on the views and high peaks, stating it is a beautiful area, which abuts a wilderness area. With respect to Scab Creek Crosson discussed the fact that the area abuts an existing wilderness area, has limited access and that he can see why Scab Creek was designated as a WSA. Crosson concluded by stating that his impressions and comments from the last meeting regarding Lake Mountain had not changed.

Committee member Monte Skinner was next to discuss his impressions of the overflights. Skinner offered comments regarding Scab Creek by discussing approximately 500 acres of timber harvested from the area years ago, before the area was designated a Primitive Area. Skinner said the big problem is that there is only one entrance into the wilderness area, that there is use in the Scab Creek WSA, but everything else outside it is owned by ranchers, so access is restricted. Skinner stated he feels Scab Creek should not be

classified as wilderness for that reason and that it is rough country for sure. Skinner continued by discussing Soda Lake, which is adjacent and has access, but no trail exists to Scab Creek now, that Pocket Creek is the only other entrance. Skinner commented on ranchers damming some of the creeks coming out of the wilderness and that the ponds are still there. Skinner said it is a shame that the ranchers can't get access to those dams to repair them. Skinner wrapped up his impressions of Scab Creek by saying ATV access is possible near Pocket Creek (outside of WSA). Skinner said his impressions of Shoal Creek are that it is a beautiful area, but he doesn't think it should be classified as wilderness because it is difficult to access and steep and Skinner doesn't think it can be taken over by motorized vehicles. For his impressions of Lake Mountain Skinner commented on the roads and that you can't go into the WSA because of terrain. Skinner concluded by saying he doesn't think Lake Mountain should be classified as wilderness.

Co-chairman Smitherman was next to give his impression of the overflights, starting with Lake Mountain. Smitherman said his comments from the last meeting regarding Lake Mountain still stand, offering that one area adjacent to the Lake Mountain WSA remains undeveloped, while the other adjacent areas are developed. Smitherman said Scab Creek has little access, just the Scab Creek access trail. For his impressions of Shoal Creek Smitherman stated that he has been in the Shoal Creek WSA numerous times and that there is a lot of recreation capacity and potential associated with this WSA. Smitherman commented on the grazing potential, mosaic pattern associated with the recent fire and effects of the fire on creating better elk habitat. Smitherman concluded by stating Lake Mountain has the least wilderness characteristics, but does have value and parts of the WSA should be protected. Smitherman said he believes that Scab Creek and Shoal Creek have real wilderness potential.

The next committee member to provide his impressions was Dave Bell. Regarding Lake Mountain, Bell stated that he could pick 15 other areas that would be better qualified as wilderness and that the WSA designation seemed to be an afterthought. Bell said the overflight of Lake Mountain did not change his opinion. For Scab Creek Bell commented on how rocky the area is and that it is amazing how broken, faulted and rugged that country is and that it is hard to get through. Bell said Scab Creek does about a wilderness area, which is in its favor for considering it for a wilderness area. However, Bell said he hasn't made up his mind on Scab Creek and the committee still needs to get data on the area. Bell commented that on a recent trip into the Scab Creek area he was appalled at the condition of the trail, which is in really bad shape and highly eroded. Bell said to hike the trail would be brutal, leading co-chairman Smitherman to comment that the erosion is most pronounced just above the switch backs, above the second steep climb. For his impressions of Shoal Creek Bell said the overflight was his first experience in the area and that it is absolutely beautiful. Bell said he was amazed at the beauty and size of the area and that he would like to see more information about trails and usage. Bell said that of the three WSAs, Shoal Creek has the greatest potential for wilderness. Bell also thanked the nonprofit for arranging the flight.

Committee member Lanning was the next to discuss the overflights, stating he didn't make any of the flights, hasn't been in Shoal Creek, has only been on the boundary of Scab Creek (it definitely looks rocky) and is not prepared to offer recommendations at this time.

Committee member Mike Smith was the final committee member to offer his observations. Smith said that he couldn't see much of Shoal Creek during the overflight. Smith continued by stating Scab Creek appears to have potential worth looking at, but he has no firm position yet on Scab Creek. Smith concluded by saying that Lake Mountain appears to currently have the protection it deserves.

The next agenda item involved future panel presentations. The discussion began with thoughts on future panels comprised of state/local/federal representatives, with the committee being in agreement that there was no need to hear from Commissioner Bousman, Gregory Cowen (Wyoming County Commissioners Association) or Travis McNiven (Senator Barrasso's staff) again. Committee members were in agreement that there is a need to hear from the Governor's Office, perhaps at the January committee meeting in Pinedale. Steve Smutko stated he would contact Gregory Cowen to extend an invitation to the Governor's

Office to attend a future committee meeting, but that meeting may not be January's meeting given the short notice. Making sure Teton County is invited to future panel presentations was discussed. Committee member Mike Henn said he believes future panel discussions perhaps need to address options and process, so all committee members have the same understanding. The committee discussed options and process being a topic at the statewide Public Lands Initiative sponsored by the County Commissioners Association in Lander on March 23rd. Committee member Mike Smith discussed use of the term options and that because this is a legislative process the recommendation of the committee doesn't need to be all or nothing with respect to a wilderness vs. non-wilderness designation. Smith wanted to be clear that when the options were discussed, this was the meaning and understanding of the other committee members. The other committee members agreed the term options, as being discussed, was used in the context of alternatives available to the committee when making recommendations.

A panel presentation from non-governmental organizations (NGO) was the next item reviewed. Presenters for a NGO panel included looking at stakeholders involved in other initiatives in the west, specifically Utah and Idaho. The belief was that the committee could look at what others have done and how they did it and learn what tools are valuable, what worked/didn't work, to learn from others and tap into the expertise others have gained in going through a similar process. The committee discussed the make-up of an NGO panel being three to five presenters representing livestock producers, motorized user groups and the chairs or leaders of committees similar to the Sublette County Advisory Committee. It was decided Co-chairman Smitherman would research and share information with the committee on what other states and localities have undergone in a similar effort, which has resulted in successful legislation. As part of that research Smitherman will identify specific people with leadership roles in the process, who know the tools and what works. Smitherman will share the information from this research with the committee members via email. The idea of the panel being physically present and/or using Skype was discussed, with the committee deferring the date and make-up of the NGO panel until the January 2017 committee meeting.

After a short break Co-chairman Smitherman announced that for now the December 14th panel discussion was still a go, but would be dependent upon weather, with a final decision being made Monday (December 12th). The next agenda item was a discussion of the various GIS platforms available. Rich Greenwood, the Sublette County GIS specialist, gave an overview and demonstration of the capability and various layers available with the County GIS. Co-chairman Smitherman demonstrated the WYGISC capability and available layers. The concept of adding more layers to the County GIS was discussed, with the committee deciding there was no need to go to the expense and work involved in adding additional layers to the County GIS, that a combination of the County GIS and WYGIS would meet the needs of the committee. The committee decided that additional layers that may be unique and beneficial to the Sublette County Advisory Committee could be added to the County GIS in the future if needed.

For the next agenda item Steve Smutko lead the committee in a discussion on consensus decision making and the steps associated with the collaborative problem solving process. Smutko and the committee discussed a plan for the committee moving forward, concentrating on gathering data on the WSAs in the County and starting to think about management options available. The committee discussed looking at all three WSAs collectively vs. looking at each WSA individually. The committee agreed on the need to get on the ground in all three WSAs in order to get a feel on how to move forward. This discussion centered on the idea of taking on one WSA at a time, especially with Lake Mountain being so different from the other two WSAs. This lead to a discussion on the wildlife habitat values associated with Lake Mountain and if that played a role and factored into a decision on the wilderness status of Lake Mountain. The committee discussed the option of protecting valuable wildlife habitat, without recommending wilderness status for Lake Mountain. As a result of this deliberation, the committee agreed on the need to determine what if any protections are already in place for all three WSAs. In wrapping up this discussion, Smutko directed the committee to start thinking about what they want on the January and February agendas.

The committee moved on to the next agenda item, with the committee addressing additional data needs for

Lake Mountain. The Committee and Steve Smutko discussed the data needs document from the WCCA guidelines and how to fill in the gaps regarding data needs for Lake Mountain. Co-chairman Smitherman presented information regarding outfitters permitted in the Lake Mountain WSA, pointing out that not every outfitter permitted for the area actually guides or provides outfitter services in the area. The committee discussed the implications of non-residents not being able to hunt in wilderness areas without an outfitter, as provided under State law. The committee agreed that the outfitter information presented showed that while there is use in the WSA by outfitters, no single outfitter is dependent upon Lake Mountain and the outfitter information was of no further use to the committee.

The discussion of Lake Mountain data needs continued, with the committee identifying the need to obtain data on wildlife. Specific data regarding the wildlife the committee identified as needed included; any threatened or endangered species linked to Lake Mountain, sensitive species (to include both animal and plant) and the need to understand the implications of specific wildlife protection designations. The committee determined that having the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and a Bureau of Land Management biologist present this information to the committee was the course of action that would be pursued. The committee wrapped up the discussion of data needs for Lake Mountain by addressing vegetation and timber inventory for the area, noting that the most recent information is from the 1980's.

For the final agenda item the committee discussed various options for the public to obtain information regarding committee activities. The WCCA and County websites were discussed, with Steve Smutko presenting an overview of a website the Ruckelshaus Institute is developing for the Teton County Advisory Committee, with Mr. Smutko offering to develop a similar website for the Sublette County committee, as part of the services offered by the Ruckelshaus Institute. This website would provide a single location for the public to keep informed regarding activities of the Sublette County Advisory Committee. The committee agreed to accept the offer of Smutko to develop the website.

Co-chairman Smitherman informed the committee he would be unable to attend the January 4, 2017 meeting. The committee next discussed the Sublette County Federal and State Land Use Policy, with Co-chairman Smitherman expressing concerns with the policies in this plan. The committee decided to thoroughly review the County Federal and State Land Use Plan, highlighting concerns. Those concerns are to be provided to County Planner Myers, who would then present the concerns of the committee to the County Commissioners. Co-chairmen Smitherman and Landers next asked for public comment, with Tony Gosar speaking about his experiences with the inventorying process and conflicts between user groups.

Prior to adjourning the committee discussed the agenda for January 4, 2017 meeting. The agenda agreed upon included the presentation of wildlife data from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Bureau of Land Management, making a decision regarding a panel discussion from non-governmental agencies and setting a snow date if there is the need to reschedule the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management panel set for December 14th. With no additional agenda items or business the December 7, 2016 Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 5:17pm

Next Meeting –

Date: January 4, 2017

Time: 1:00pm – 5:00pm

Location: Sublette County Commission Chambers, Pinedale

Draft Agenda

1. Review discuss committee website
2. Wildlife information for Lake Mountain WSA, WGF and BLM
3. Decision on NGO/other states panel presentation

