



April 3, 2019

Cheryl Probert, Forest Supervisor
Kootenai National Forest
31374 US Hwy 2
Libby, MT 59923

Dear Cheryl:

This letter is to provide a recap of the Kootenai National Forest/Timber Industry meeting that was held on March 5 at the Supervisors Office in Libby, Montana. The meeting started at 9:00 a.m. with introductions, and Tom Partin read the anti-trust statement. A copy of the attendees is attached.

Acting Forest Supervisor Cheryl Probert introduced herself as the current Supervisor on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Her role while acting Supervisor on the Kootenai is to put together a strong leadership team so when a new Supervisor is selected, they will come in with a strong team already in place. Cheryl mentioned that the Government furlough didn't impact the FY19 program, but it could affect planning for the FY20 program of work. She also reported that the current timber sale program that was handed out earlier is subject to change, and her job is to get the timber harvest level sustainable. To do that the Forest will be looking at using all of the tools for their use. Cheryl also reported that the Forest's budget was down so far this year, but more importantly \$2 million was borrowed from the salvage sale fund for the wildfire fund last year. K-V and reforestation funds had also been borrowed. This could be a big issue for the remainder of 2019 if they are not repaid. The Forest also hopes to extend the CFLRP project to incorporate the Young Growth Project.

Tom handed out AFRC's Washington D.C. update, which included an update on the 2018 Farm bill, an outline of President Trump's Executive Order, and an overview of the 2019 Forest Service budget. Ron Catlett from Senator Daines office gave brief updates on what the Senator has been working on. The Senator will continue to push forward a list of issues that weren't in the 2018 Farm Bill including a full fix to the Cottonwood decision, the use of pilot arbitration, and CE's for salvage.

Tom went over the highlights of AFRC's legal program which includes victories in cases involving a Supreme Court decision that ruled takings for a species in unoccupied habitat is illegal, Farm Bill CE's Good Neighbor Authority projects and use of Roadside CE's. Nick Smith from Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities updated the work that he has been doing to

promote projects which help to increase the pace and scale of restoration on our public timberlands and help to keep our rural communities and counties healthy. HFHC currently has over 200,000 followers on Facebook. Nick said that he is trying to highlight the need to fix the \$3.7 billion backlog of road maintenance by getting Forest roads as part of the nationwide transportation system. Nick reported the Forest Service received a 4.6% increase in funding and the timber target is increasing to 4.0 billion board feet in FY20.

Cheryl also reported that Region 1 is working on a plan to get to 500 MMBF using the Pod concept where staff is shared among different Forests, and Forests within a Pod combine their work to hit the Pod target. The Region is working with the FWS to streamline consultation on bull trout, and the Regional archeologist is streamlining the work for heritage surveys. The National office is also working on better litigation models and new CE, EA, and EIS templates through the EADM process.

Ed Coates reported that the Forest is well below the needed staffing for timber sale administrators, harvest inspectors. The Forest has been sharing staff for this work with the Flathead National Forest, especially on the salvage projects. The Kootenai now has support from the Regional Office to build up their program.

Gary Kedish gave a power point presentation with the FY19 and 5-year timber sale program (attached). Some of the highlights of the program included the hope that the East Reservoir litigation ends so more projects can be sold from that planning effort. The first project out of the Young Growth effort will be the Hoodoo project that AFRC visited in June 2018. The Forest is looking at reducing their target for 2019 down to 70 MMBF so they can be at a consistent level going forward at 70 MMBF.

Jodi Turk gave an update on the GNA program in Montana. The program was initially funded by industry making a three year commitment to put up \$150,000/year, \$550,000 from the Regional Office and \$75,000 from conservation groups. Two projects sold last fiscal year including Boulder Lowlands on the B-D and Elk Gem on the Kootenai. Several other Forests are now in the process of identifying projects that will go as GNA projects.

Again, thank you Cheryl and your staff for a great meeting. In the meantime, if there is anything AFRC can do to help you or your program please don't hesitate to call. The next Kootenai meeting will be in June or July when a field trip may be planned to look at one or more projects.

Sincerely,



Tom Partin
AFRC Consultant
P.O. Box 1934
Lake Oswego, Oregon 97035