



April 4, 2019

Carolyn Upton  
Lolo National Forest  
24 Fort Missoula Road  
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Rob Gump  
Bitterroot National Forest  
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Dear Chris and Rob:

This letter is to provide a recap of the combined Lolo/ Bitterroot National Forest/Timber Industry meeting that was held at the Lolo Supervisors Office in Missoula on March 6, 2019. 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.

The Lolo Forest provided an update including a discussion on how the furlough didn't impact the current program of work, however planning on future projects could be set back. There has been a lot of movement of personnel within the Lolo and the Forest Service in general. The real issue is that there are not enough people within the Forest Service right now to fill all of the positions, and when someone takes a job it leaves a gap elsewhere. The Lolo budget for FY19 is basically flat and the priorities for FY19 are fuels reduction and providing timber. Carolyn Upton the new incoming Forest Supervisor will report for work on the Lolo on March 20. Carolyn most recently has been the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Joe Alexander who works as the Regional Director of Recreation, Lands, and Minerals is acting Forest Supervisor until Carolyn arrives. Other new staff included Erin Carey, District Ranger at Plains, Quinn Carver, acting District Ranger on Seely Lake, and Eric Tomisk, District Ranger on Nine Mile. Brandon Payer is the acting Contracting Officer for the Lolo and he is from the Willamette.

Rob Gump reported that Matt Anderson will be the new Forest Supervisor for the Bitterroot and will be arriving on March 18. Matt is coming from the Tongass National Forest. Rob reported that the big project on the Bitterroot is Gold Butterfly and the final EA will be coming out in two months. Rob also reported that trust funds such as the salvage sale funds were taken during fire borrowing last summer and haven't been returned yet. This is concerning for hiring summer staff. Rob also reported that the Lolo and Bitterroot are scheduled to possibly begin sharing staff in the future including the Timber Management Officer David Haupt.

There are currently nine active sales on the Lolo and the snow conditions have been very conducive for winter logging. It looks like 60-70% of the salvage volume has been removed at this time from the 2017 fire salvage sales.

David Haupt discussed targets for the western Montana Pod. The FY19 target is 175 MMBF and the Lolo's portion of that volume is 45 MMBF. The Bitterroot's portion is 13.9 MMBF. Tom Schultz requested that the Forest not only track volume sold, but also track acres treated because of the amount of acres in poor forest health in Montana. The Forest said they would try to get those acres and report them at our next meeting. Bryan Lorengo talked about the fire salvage sales underrunning. David said they were aware of some of the underruns, but most are still within their cruising standards of plus or minus 30%. There was a discussion that all fire decks should be sold as scaled sales. Other issues regarding the Lolo program included the hiring challenge and finding good people. The Forest is looking at hiring more contractors to get the work done. David also reported at our last meeting the Forest was very concerned they wouldn't have the volume for their FY21 program. Since then they have brought a new project forward, Sawmill Petty, that they hope to do an expedited 18 month NEPA process. The Lolo hopes to build their long term program up to 50 MMBF. (See attached timber sale program.)

Rob reported that the timber program on the Bitterroot had been up and down between 2000 and 2016. The target for the next five years will be in the 18-20 MMBF but will jump up to 30 MMBF by FY23. Tabor Mountain is the big project for FY'19 with a little over 6 MMBF in the timber sale. (See attached sale program.)

Mike O'Herron updated the group on the work the Montana DNRC is doing to build the GNA program. The DNRC currently has GNA staff working in Libby on the Kootenai and just hired a forester for the Flathead located in Kalispell. Under H.B. 2 currently being considered by the Montana legislature, the DNRC could possibly hire 6 ½ new people for the GNA program, but 6 ½ people would have to be reduced from the DNRC current staffing. The Grant Creek project on the Lolo will be a GNA project as well as the Three Mile project on the Bitterroot for FY19. The B-D is planning a new GNA project called Rancho Deluxe.

The Group discussed our summer field trip and decided to look at the Sawmill Petty project on the Nine Mile Ranger District.

AFRC and our members would like to thank both the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forest 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. We are looking forward to our next meeting in June or July to look at the Sawmill Petty project.

Sincerely,



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