

SESSION NAME: *Coalition of Forested Counties Overview*

DAY & TIME: October 19th, 11 AM

SPEAKER #1 NAME: Carol Brooker

MAJOR POINTS:

- 1999: MT Coalition of Forested Counties formed to provide a unified voice in management of public lands focus has often been on PILT and SRS
- National group will gather at the end of November. Carol would love stories from counties – personal stories. Will SRS and PILT affect your county? Will you have to cut services? Departments? Share those stories with Carol.

SPEAKER #2 NAME: Mark Peck

MAJOR POINTS:

- Grew up in a logging family; left Libby after high school for a military career. Returned to Libby later in life. School system is dramatically smaller, economy is much smaller
- Power of counties coming together and power of bringing MT Forest Collaboration Network together to sit down together and look at solutions.
- Thinking about Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition – right now they're lacking good policy. This is a policy issue.
- The direction we're going here is critical. Excited that this gathering is happening.
- Shared story of lawsuit on the Kootenai National Forest – KFSC and Forest Service collaborated for 6 years to develop a project that was then litigated by Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

SPEAKER #3 NAME: Greg Chilcott

MAJOR POINTS:

- Are we, as the MT Coalition of Forested Counties, headed in the right direction?
- For years we blamed the lack of projects on the Forest Service.

- It's a new day; the Forest Service and State have been working hard to help counties better navigate the waters of federal forest management.
- Federal Forest Advisor position will be in front of State Leg (position was only 2 years in length). Commissioners need to let state legislatures know that it's a solid position that they benefit from.
- When collaboration started he wasn't impressed with the term – took a while to “see the light.”
- County commissioner duty: Help the Forest Service identify the social and cultural impacts of forest projects in counties.
- Counties need to have adopted plans – to help communication and coordination.

FULL DISCUSSION – MAJOR POINTS

- Is the Coalition headed in the right direction? Everyone in the room needs to understand the SRS and PILT payments that come to the counties. Without long-term funding through SRS and PILT, some counties aren't going to buy in to stewardship projects and authorities like Good Neighbor Authority. Long term certainty is critical.
- Important to note that FS doesn't determine funding; that's Congress. Chris Marklund will update the group about the latest status of PILT and SRS.
- Everyone is supportive of fully funding these, but there's always going to be a management piece that we'll have to go back to. We can do both advocate for PILT, SRS and more management – we must do both.
- Counties often hear that they need to find a new/different economy – that's difficult and often impossible when counties have >70% federal lands.
- Counties also hear that PLT and SRS is like “welfare.” Important to remember that the bills were authorized to allow counties to maintain roads and access into public lands – the roads will not stay open without PILT or SRS.
- Counties should take the initiative to write the legislation that they want – tell them what they want in legislation and tell them how they see the issues. Be more proactive, roll up sleeve, and get to work.

- FS – Needs counties to help drive alternate industries for timber (non saw, biomass, young growth). Many forests have dead trees all over the place. How do we get them off the landscape.
- Biomass sells for almost nothing. Sale of biomass won't turn into receipts.
- FS – We have the contracting tools, but the other problem is that we need a market – some sort of market to take the products.
- Important to focus on policy – current the Forest Service is burdened with many laws and regulations that make work challenging.
- Need to have a national discussion about Western issues. Ensure presidential candidates have to discuss issues that matter to Westerners. Carol noted that on the national board, many of the members are from the East. There are many people lobbying hard for SRS around the country. For example, the majority of board members are school superintendents.