



**Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP
Annual Update to USFWS for 2014
2/18/2015
DNRC Missoula Headquarters -- Moon Conference Room
10:00 am to 3:30 pm
Final Meeting Notes**

Present:

Jodi Bush	USFWS
Jim Bower	DNRC
Ross Baty	DNRC
Gary Frank	DNRC (1 st hr)
Sonya Germann	DNRC (1 st hr)
Jeff Schmalenberg	DNRC
Sam Dexter	DNRC (notes)

MEETING NOTES:

HCP Update/Overview

Jeff started the meeting with introductions, an overview of the agenda, and quick overview of implementation in 2014. Implementation went smoothly in 2014 and the payoff of training efforts during the last two years was evident. The HCP implementation checklist has taken a lot of work to get it where it is, but it has been a very useful aid for implementation.

- Transition Lands – One section of land in the Bozeman area (grizzly bear non-recovery occupied habitat) was sold to a private party in 2014. DNRC is still well within the allowable acreage caps pertaining to land transactions.
- No changed circumstances occurred during 2014.
- DNRC provided a discussion on the AGOL “Collector”/Road data tool for road data collection.
 - o Road inventory will always be a challenge and having this user-friendly road updating technology will enable us to have much better and more current road information, which will aid accuracy in reporting and project analyses.
 - o Most road inventory completed at project level;
 - o DNRC posed to implement a pilot project on data collection/integration summer of 2015, and hope to have the new data management tools up and running by 2016. Huge step forward for DNRC.
- Special Projects Monitoring
 - o Currently no special terrestrial projects to report. However, DNRC continues to support the bear ranger in the Swan, Kathy Ake (USFS) data manager for NCDE, Swan Ecosystem Center I & E, and Lolo National Forest fisher project.
- Training
 - o Training this year was generally through one-on-one interaction at the project level, but no program-wide training in 2014.
 - o Bear training video an ongoing and expanding success, fire crews expressing interest etc. To date 133 employees have reviewed the material (10 additional staff in 2014).



Terrestrial Monitoring Commitments

Ross led the discussion on the implementation and monitoring of HCP terrestrial wildlife commitments.

- Terrestrial Species Overview
 - Lynx and Bear Dens Encountered
 - None encountered for 2014
 - Human/bear incidents
 - None involving bears occurred on state land in 2014. One situation involving garbage and a long-term camper in the Blackfoot Valley was reported to DNRC by FWP and it was addressed and resolved within 2 days of notice.
 - A shed grizzly bear collar was found in the Swan and returned to FWP and CSKT – subadult male bear earlier from the Ronan area.
 - Livestock/grizzly bear incidents
 - None reported for 2014
 - A number of allowances were *not* triggered concerning bear habitat, involving gravel pits, avalanche chutes, and easements as described in the annual report.
- Lynx
 - The lynx critical habitat litigation process is ongoing and unresolved. DNRC should continue on the current course of HCP implementation.
 - DNRC is evaluating some possible errors in how the lynx habitat model identifies suitable habitat on the Central Land Office. Some native rangeland stands are being classed as temporary non suitable habitat and seedling/sapling class stands are being excluded. These issues will be addressed and reported to the USFWS as soon as possible and at the 2015 annual meeting.
 - If habitat definitions for lynx are revised DNRC should notify Jim Zelenak with the USFWS so that improvements can be incorporated into modeling.
- Species Listings/Updates
 - Jodi mentioned the current status review of the lynx being conducted by the USFWS.
 - Fishers have been petitioned for listing and the petition is in process.
 - Yellow-billed cuckoo has been listed and Jodi will forward USFWS habitat and distribution information to Ross when available.
 - Northern long-eared bats being proposed – little influence on DNRC. Very far eastern portion of the state. Primarily a white-nose syndrome disease issue affecting the species.
 - Wolverines currently in litigation.
- HCP Implementation Checklist Update
 - Process has evolved over time and is quite effective in its current iteration. No near-term vision to alter this tool.
 - For the last 3 years, an average of about 30 projects have been undertaken and been included in reporting.



Aquatic Monitoring Commitments

- Implementation Monitoring
 - RMZ harvest allowances
 - The HCP outlines a number of reasons for implementing harvest allowances within this zone.
 - Only 1 site where an RMZ harvest allowance occurred in 2014 (Bull Lake; no HCP-covered species present.)
 - Update on RMZ age class estimates and harvest allowance acres across aquatic planning units
 - Improvements from previous years due to better hydro and SLI data precision/resolution.
 - Connectivity strategy
 - DNRC is well ahead of the HCP timetable; only a single priority 1 site remains.
 - Grazing strategy
 - DNRC gave an overview of license management strategy.
 - Approximately 3 corrective actions on average have been applied each year.
 - Cumulative watershed effects coarse filters
 - DNRC described the levels of analysis in CWE filters. Most projects utilized a more conservative 'Level 2 or 3' assessment approach in 2014.
- Effectiveness Monitoring:
 - RMZ effectiveness monitoring (LWD, shade, stream temperature)
 - RMZ conservation strategies are proving highly effective and data collected to date is accurately verifying model results used in the HCP EIS.
 - Timber sale inspections reports
 - Useful and effective communication tool at the project level between foresters and contracted parties to verify the application timber sale mitigations and provide a mechanism for corrective actions in necessary.
 - Sediment monitoring
 - Bear Creek bridge installation
 - Turbidity data collected at site is helping DNRC understand the magnitude, duration, frequency and spatial extent of suspended sediment pulses from road-stream crossing installations and removals.
 - DNRC is in design phase of a case study for effectiveness monitoring of corrective actions/BMPs
 - DNRC has refined and expanded sampling and analytical methods for continuous, in-situ stream turbidity monitoring
 - Long-term vision is to understand total sediment production and delivery prior to and following implementation of road drainage corrective actions (BMPs) adjacent to various road-stream crossing sites.
 - Study is expected to be in place by end of 2015 field season.
 - Fish passage monitoring
 - DNRC focuses on emulating geomorphic and stream bed processes.



- Corrective actions were implemented at one site (Whiskey Gulch) to ensure site restoration meets the criteria outlined in the conservation strategy (photos and project was shared).
- Redd trampling study
 - “Pilot study” approach has been modified due to new literature on subject, as well as practicality of drawing worthwhile data from limited DNRC sampling.
 - DNRC is expected to submit a detailed plan outlined the modified management approach to the USFWS within a couple months.
 - Modified approach addresses redd trampling risk at all HCP grazing license parcels with covered fish species (rather than at a select group of study reaches as originally proposed in the “Pilot study”.)
 - Problem sites will also be mitigated more quickly than expected under the originally proposed in the “Pilot study”.
 - Implementation of the modified approach has already evaluated approximately 65% of applicable parcels.

New Science

- DNRC suggested to the USFWS that both parties need to acknowledge this study completed by Mark Ruby, which utilized telemetry data that was collected with support from the cooperators of the Swan Agreement. This data, now published was relevant in the DNRC HCP lawsuit.

Ruby, M.D. 2014. Evaluation of grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) movement and habitat use in relationship to human development in the Swan-Clearwater valleys, Montana. University of Montana, M.S. Thesis, May 2014.

Compliance with ITP

- Based on the updates at the annual meeting, the draft annual report and continued communication with the USFWS, DNRC is complying with the requirements and terms of the HCP.

Action Items

- DNRC will provide a hard copy of the implementation checklist to Jodi.
- Jodi (USFWS) will provide habitat information and descriptions for yellow-billed cuckoo when it becomes available.
- DNRC will provide notice of any needed changes to the CLO lynx habitat filter to the USFWS with explanations prior to implementing them.
- DNRC will continue work on tracking road data updates and tools to verify changes in open road amounts.