

Montana Forest Council
June 26, 2024

DNRC Conference Room
2705 Spurgin Road, Missoula

Participants: Gordy Sanders – Pyramid Mountain Lumber, Marc Vessar & Ashley Machus – MT DNRC, Lexi Smith – MSU Extension Forestry, Coleen Michael and Justin Doble – MT Logging Association, James Mackey – Stimson Lumber Company, Caleb Deitz – Flathead Ridge Ranch, Tom Agens – Packaging Corporation of America, Rich Lane – Willis Enterprises, Cameron Wohlschlegel – FS Stoltze Land & Lumber, Brian Hobday – Green Diamond Resource, Gordy Mouw – SFI

Guests: Bryce Maxell – MT Natural Heritage Program

Program Administrator: Julia Altemus – Montana Wood Products Association

Welcome/Anti-Trust Statement: Gordy Sanders

February 21, 2024, Meeting Notes: No edits

SFI Annual Meeting Highlights: Gordy Mouw gave an update on the SFI Annual Conference in Atlanta, GA. There is a SFI memo that offers highlights of the meetings. Sessions on EUDR and supply chain management and solutions. Shared best practices around climate smart forestry and community. In addition, there are SIC sessions. Alabama and PA SICs shared their work around biodiversity and fiber sourcing and how they incorporated these into their logging training and some of the fact sheets they produced. They used an SFI grant to help develop these fact sheets. Gordy M just finished an informational email that he sent to the SIC chairs and coordinators, The SICs also heard about SFI communications that SICs can use to promote their work in each state, followed by break-out groups. The SICs really want to talk state to state and around the region. Gordy M will set up regional meetings this fall. More SFI information sharing was asked for as well. 2025 Annual Conference in Minneapolis, May 20th – 23rd. Gordy S said a couple years ago the Washington SIC received a community grant for studying tethered logging. He wanted to know if it had been published. Gordy M, yes it has been published at forest.org website under the member category. There is a webinar that shows the results of the study.

Pollinators: Bryce Maxell gave a presentation on pollinators and invertebrates and the work of the NHP. Most people think bees and butterflies are the only pollinators, but moths and others are in that category. The program tries to keep as many species as possible out of listing status. This relies heavily on current data. Vertebrate front doing well. Invertebrates are not doing so well. We have identified 7000 species but believe there are closer to 15,000 species in MT. Probably not even halfway there in the database. Trying to

focus on taxa that we know are of greatest concern but need more focus on pollinators. There has been a log of work for Monarch and species they rely on. The program doesn't really have the staff expertise needed to get a head of the invertebrates. Vertebrate global conservation ranks assigned is 100% of species, on global invertebrates' rank is at 55%, for the state, invertebrates are about 8%. Same is true for fungi and non-vascular plants. Asked in their last partner meeting what is the need for accurate information, 88% said it is important in terms of resource managers making decisions. Asked the Library Commission for staffing for an invertebrate zoology position and vegetation ecologist position, the Commission declined to move the request forward to the Governor's office. They need about \$200K including both positions. They do have a little money that they use to contract out invertebrate data work, but they are far behind in collecting needed data. If they are petitioned for a listed species, they are ahead for vertebrates, but not for invertebrates. Recovering America's Wildlife Act would drive money to states for invertebrates and vascular plants. Fish Wildlife and Parks has agreed to include invertebrates and vascular plants in their state wildlife action plan which is up in 2025.

Educational Brochure: Gordy wanted to know what brochure the MFC should tackle next. Marc said the pre-commercial thinning brochure is printed. Everyone has copies. Next, maybe voluntary wildlife guidelines for the SMZ. Marc wanted to know what the timeline is. First of April every year. Good to have it available for the spring training programs. The VWG for SMZ was part of the SMZ law in 1991. The original bill was crafted for riparian forest management for wildlife. Having an information brochure was helpful. David Nikonow volunteered to help update the brochure. Who else? Bryce, Caleb D. and Brian H. Ashley said that when the content is updated that she would be happy to work on the design. In addition, Cameron suggested that we should focus on slash mitigation. Burning and slash piles, alternatives, biochar, biomass, grinding etc. Gordy S said the Prescribed Fire Council is coming together and will have the ability to reference information and they may appreciate information on prescribed fire. Justin agreed that a slash mitigation brochure is a good idea. Brian, the Prescribed Fire Council just had a meeting. Will take about six months to get off the ground. Eventually should have cooperation between the Fire Council and information coming from the MFC. Gordy S said it takes about a year to year and a half to get our brochures done. Marc would like to have various pictures of slash. Marc said it's important to tie forest management to forest products, that we can't burn our way out of the woods. Tom agreed to tie in to fire resiliency. Bryce suggested he would work on a pollinator brochure after the slash mitigation brochure. Volunteers - Cameron, Marc, Brian H.

Spring 2024 Training Recap: Justin, 1200 people went through 1st Aid and Fire. Substantial number of agency people, not just loggers. What's New in Logging class in Kalispell, 21 contractors attended. Contracting 201 class in Missoula, good attendance. 3 written safety classes after the 1st aid class. Advanced SFI was at Luebrecht. 14 attended and 14 at the Forest Stewardship class. Mostly forestry consultants or fuels folks. Less and less loggers, but an increase in fuels projects. 4 BMP/SMZ classes. 2 log scaling classes. One in Kalispell (43 attended) and one in Deer Lodge (46 attended). Reviewing ideas of what to

offer next year. Gordy S, maybe at the November meeting we can talk about the 2025 training program.

Project Learning Tree/SFI: Lexi gave an update. As mentioned in the last meeting, the national conference for PLT combined Project Wet and Project Wild. The steering committee was represented at the meeting. Are in the works of getting funds added to the PLT account from the FS. Working on finalizing their 2025 workplan. Stewardship, 2 of the 5 planned done so far. Frenchtown had 25 participants and 14 ownerships, Bozeman had 27 participants and 18 ownerships, have already 1/3 of plans submitted so far. There is an increase in requests to attend these workshops. Kalispell is full and Eureka is almost full, Condon there is 18 ownerships signed up so far. Received funding for the Condon workshop from the MT Forest Stewardship Foundation and Title 3 Grants from Missoula County and Lincoln County. Rich wanted to know if there are large owners or small? Lexi said there is a mixture. Do the landowners come in what they what to do with their lands? Again, there is a spectrum of goals. Overall, landowners want a resilient forest. Wildlife, wildfire, and privacy are important goals.

MFC Financial Report: Coleen said Flathead Ridge Ranch is a new participant and waiting to hear back from IFG. Pyramid will not be participating next year, but if there is a buyer, they may continue to support. Dave Clay from the FS will be joining in the future, and we should ask the FS to help fund. Julia wanted to know if we ever asked the Forestry School since Ben Super is a member of the MFC. We should ask them as well. Otherwise, financial support is in good shape.

Member and Partner Updates: **Gordy S** said that this is the last meeting that he will chair. Cameron has offered to take over. **Ashley**, brochures are on google drive and will share them again. The Bird brochure still needs review. When done, then she will share the final. MT Forest Info website for landowners launching in August. **Brian H**, have an external audit this fall. Also, have 2 sites picked for BMP/SMZ field reviews this summer. Three quarters through pre-commercial thinning 1400 acres. Running one machinal crew and one cut-to length crew. Starting a MT Forest Action Plan Grant, ¾ through road brushing and maintenance and through the precommercial thinning. Will start the fuel reduction project, which is an 87 acres fuel break just west of Island Lake. **Cameron**, all contractors are back in the woods. 3 different line sites and one tether starting soon. The steepest slope work in a long time. Have a surveillance audit in October. Mill is running 50 hours/week, just reduced production because of finished lumber. Need market conditions to improve. **Caleb**, 2 sites working. 50% complete with their shaded fuel break which is a MT Forest Action Plan grant. Had an audit this spring. **James**, Stimson has a surveillance on the west side this summer, have a field review and will participate on the review team. Four sites going. Will be slowing down a little this fall. **Marc**, no SMZ violations. 32 sites for field reviews. Want contractors out there for the reviews. Start in Miles City. Gordy S, said it is important to invite legislators, and agency people. Marc said have a couple DEQ people attending. 47 people on the teams. He will contact the congressional staff as well. **Tom**, just went through an internal audit on chain of custody and fiber sourcing. No issues.

The mill is running well and selling every ton of paper they make. No plans to curtail at least through the 1st quarter of next year. **Rich**, sending out 21 to 24 rail cars a week to PCA. Actively buying pulp logs again! Still can't use cedar or burned logs. **Ashley** manages the conservation education grant for youth conservation education forestry projects. There is a little extra money to get the youth out to the forests to learn about forestry. **Coleen**, the ALP notifications will be sent out soon. There is about a 12% drop in the loggers that met basic. **Gordy**, Pyramid will not have a surveillance audit, SFI certified until the end of the year. Will have all the logs run within a couple of days then move the employees to the planer. Auction is scheduled for the end of September or first of October. Still one interested buyer. They could even make an offer after the auction. Talking to mills about 3rd party contracts. **Julia**, the deadline for the SIC annual report is June 29th. New format again, a new learning curve. Once done, it will be posted to the SFI Implementation Committee on the MWPA website. There is a session coming in January, already have bill drafts that will impact this industry and forest landowners. The annual meeting is in Whitefish on September 19 – 20th. **Justin**, most of the loggers are working. A worry is what is everyone going to do with the pine?

Next Meeting: Zoom November 13, 2024

Topic: MFC

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