

Minutes of Meeting
Idaho Panhandle National Forest Update
April 9, 2013
3:30 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Todd Tondee and Commissioner Dan Green met to discuss the following agenda items. Also present were USDA Forest Supervisor Mary Farnsworth, USDA District Ranger Chad Hudson and Deputy Clerk Brandie Bradley. Commissioner Jai Nelson was excused.

- A. **Call to Order:** Chairman Tondee called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m.
- B. **Introductions:** USDA Forest Supervisor Mary Farnsworth introduced the new District Ranger Chad Hudson for Region I.
- C. **Changes to the Agenda:** There were no changes made to the agenda.
- D. **Old Business:** There was no old business discussed.
- E. **New Business:**

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Supervisor Mary Farnsworth came before the Board to provide an update on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Ms. Farnsworth informed the Board that after ten (10) years in the making, her office is in the final stages of drafting and implementing a new Forest Plan. They expect to have this process completed in the next two (2) months. Ms. Farnsworth thanked the Board for their assistance with holding Public Meetings, and advised that they are no longer accepting public comments for consideration, but they are responding to all questions or comments that they receive. The new process will allow for open discussion and for an objection review to be held by a Deciding Official with the USDA. The Panhandle National Forest will be the first forest to have this procedure.

Ms. Farnsworth advised that the Forest Service will be experiencing budget reductions that will have a potential impact on recreation, campgrounds, general services, and road maintenance/closures within the Panhandle National Forest. Natural Resource Funds are expected to be reduced by approximately fifty percent (50%), and they are currently reviewing all forest assets for potential savings. The current plan is to reduce the amount of properties being leased by the Forest Service, liquidate properties owned, and reduce deferred maintenance, in an effort to avoid fee increases to the public. Ms. Farnsworth advised that they are currently leasing the Administration Building on Kathleen, and they are reviewing the possibility of building a new facility at a nearby location.

A five (5) year Forest Health/Restoration Plan was developed in the last six (6) months and now provides guidance for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Currently, there is 150 million board feet of wood that has been sold, and is waiting to be cut. They expect that this will begin soon.

District Ranger Chad Hudson provided updates specific to Kootenai County, beginning with the Conjecture Mine in the Bunco Road Area. The proposal received by the Forest Service is requesting year round, 24 hour access over the next five (5) years for this mining operation. The Forest Service is required to provide this company access, and is working with the Snowmobile Grooming Board to provide options that are agreeable to all parties.

Mr. Hudson advised the Board that they have had ongoing issues with recreational shooting of appliances, vehicles, and trash at Hayden Creek Recreation Area, and that while recreational shooting is an appropriate use of this land, it is very costly to remove and dispose of these items. The Forest Service has partnered with The Young Marines to clean up this area and the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office to assist with patrolling of the area. Mr. Hudson's office is currently working on a Forest Order that would still allow recreational shooting of paper and wood targets only.

Mr. Hudson informed the Board that, as there is a small window of opportunity for prescribed burns, some burning has started along the east side of Hayden Lake and North of I-90. This will continue throughout the spring, as long as conditions are optimal, and then again in the fall.

In closing, Mr. Hudson made a recommendation to the Board to send a Kootenai County representative to serve as a member of a group of about thirty (30) agencies that assist with forming opinions and alternatives on upcoming Forest Service Timber Projects. Ms. Farnsworth and Mr. Hudson expressed that they would like to meet with Board Annually or Bi-Annually to provide additional updates.

F. Staff Reports: There were no staff reports.

G. Public Comment: This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD T. HAYES, CLERK

BY: _____
Brandie Bradley, Deputy Clerk