

Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Erwin Senior Adults Center

Friday, May 7, 2010

Steering Committee Members Attending:

Mark Shelley, Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition; Joe McGuinness, Cherokee National Forest; Steve Henson, Southern Multiple Use Council; Katherine Medlock, The Nature Conservancy; Steve Novak, Wildlaw; Parker Street, Ruffed Grouse Society; Dwight King, Volunteer Logging Company/Sullivan County Commissioner; Catherine Murray, Cherokee Forest Voices; Dennis Daniel, National Wild Turkey Federation; Danny Osborne, Tennessee Division of Forestry; Terry Porter, Tennessee Forestry Association. Facilitators: Karen Firehock and Melinda Holland, E2 Inc.

Members not attending: John Gregory, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Region 4.

Observers Attending:

David Ray, The Nature Conservancy, North Carolina Chapter; Alex Wyss, The Nature Conservancy; Mary Jennings U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Susan Shaw, Cherokee National Forest (CNF).

Introductions:

The meeting began with opening remarks from project facilitator Karen Firehock, followed by the introduction of the Steering Committee members, observers and an opportunity for observer comments.

General Committee Business:

The March 16, 2010 meeting notes were approved by the Steering Committee without any changes.

Situation Assessment

Facilitator Karen Firehock gave an update on the situation assessment process. She noted that the list of stakeholders to be interviewed during the assessment was developed during the steering committee's last conference call and circulated to the Steering Committee several times by email, and the input received from Steering Committee members was incorporated. Ms. Firehock stated that the list is complete as of this meeting, which will allow the facilitators to begin scheduling the assessment interviews. Ms. Firehock also reviewed the Assessment Interview Guide, and agreed to make the changes suggested during this meeting. The key change was to add woody biomass and insects and invasive species to the list of issues, (question three) and to delete the subheadings of "biological" and "socio-economic" as several members thought that might be confusing and establish a false dichotomy between the issues. The term "management paralysis" was also deleted since it sounded as if it were leading the survey respondents to a particular conclusion and the interview guide's questions need to be as neutral as possible to avoid biasing the outcome. At the conclusion of this discussion, the Steering

Committee agreed that they were comfortable with the Interview Guide as modified (copy attached). Ms. Firehock noted that the assessment interviews would start in the next two weeks and predicted that the assessment would be completed in late June.

Operating Procedures

Next, the Facilitators reviewed the purpose and contents of the draft Steering Committee Operating Procedures (which had previously been circulated by email). The Committee suggested some changes to the draft, which are reflected in the attached PDF version. The Steering Committee adopted the Operating Procedures as modified. The Operating Procedures will be posted on the CNF Restoration Initiative website maintained by the facilitation team.

Project Work Plan

The Steering Committee next discussed its work plan for moving the project forward, starting with a draft document provided by Katherine Medlock. The facilitators led a discussion about when to schedule the various project activities. The schedule developed by the Steering Committee at this meeting is as follows:

May - June 2010 – Steering Committee members submit a brief description of their key topics/issues they want the Initiative to address.

June 2010 – Complete the Situation Assessment; Discuss and refine the Steering Committee's list of topics and issues.

July 2010 – Presentation of findings from the Situation Assessment to the Steering Committee; Presentation(s) by experts to the Steering Committee.

August 2010 - Presentation(s) by experts to the Steering Committee; On-line survey (open for two to three weeks).

September 2010 – Present results of on-line survey to Steering Committee; Steering Committee to agree on the topics and issues to be addressed by the Initiative; hold three introductory/educational public meetings (to be held in the same week in three different locations, see below).

Public Meetings: After some discussion, the Steering Committee proposed holding three educational public meetings during the same week in September in locations near the north end of the forest (such as Mountain City), the middle (such as Johnson City, Jonesborough, or Elizabethton), and the south end (such as Del Rio). Topics suggested for these initial public meetings included the results of the assessment and on-line survey, the initiative's case statement, background on key issues, educational/technical presentations. They also discussed holding educational/outreach activities at the Appalachian Fair, Green County fair, the Storytelling Festival, and other arts/crafts festivals or county fairs. Steering Committee members noted the need for education for the public on the issues involved in the Restoration Initiative. Making presentations to specific clubs and organizations was also suggested. Public meetings later in the process could be based around technical/educational presentations which focus on the list of Initiative topics agreed to by the Steering Committee. It was suggested that the group work to make meeting notices interesting and relevant so that people would be more likely to attend.

Planning Process Targets: Katherine Medlock offered to begin drafting a list of targets/issues which will need to be covered under The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Action Planning (CAP) tool (which has been suggested as a template for the Initiative's approach to restoration planning). Steering Committee

members agreed to submit a brief description of the key topics/issues they want the Initiative to address, which Katherine will compile and combine into a draft planning framework to be discussed at the June Committee meeting. Experts can be invited to speak to the Steering Committee on these topics during the process to explain the scientific views on the issues and possible solutions.

On-line Survey: The Steering Committee favored waiting to finalize the on-line survey until after the assessment findings have been evaluated. This will allow development of more focused questions based on more specific restoration ideas. Members suggested advertising the on-line survey and mailing information about the survey to organizations with an interest in these issues. Steering Committee members discussed the need for the on-line survey to be more specific about the scope of this Initiative and what is not included.

Next Steps

The next committee meeting will be scheduled using the Doodle.com web tool. Karen Firehock will email Steering Committee members the link for filling out the Doodle schedule poll as a way to schedule meetings.

Web Site: E² Inc. has a template developed for the website, Karen Firehock will send it to the Steering Committee for their review prior to the June committee meeting.

Action Items:

- Email to the Steering Committee members the link for filling out the Doodle schedule poll (Karen Firehock).
- Develop a list of organizations to make presentations to; organizations to notify about the survey (All).
- Draft an initial list of targets/issues and present the CAP process (Katherine Medlock)
- Steering Committee members submit a brief description of the key topics/issues they want the initiative to address, which Katherine will compile and combine into a draft planning framework to be discussed at the June Committee meeting.
- Submit photos of CNF before the June Committee meeting – prizes will be given for the top 3 photos to be used on the project web site.
- A post-meeting hike will be organized in CNF to view examples of some restoration issues (Katherine Medlock).

Attachments

- Stakeholder categories and possible interviewees (excel spreadsheet)
- Revised Operating Procedures
- Revised Assessment Interview Guide

For more information or to suggest corrections to the minutes, contact karenfirehock@gmail.com