

## **Sub Committee Name: Access, Habitat, Wilderness and Set Aside**

*How do you provide access for human needs and protect important habitat?*

**Meeting Date: January 8, 2021 9:30-1:00 am**

**Committee members in attendance:** Patti Adair, Charles Amerein, Anthony Botello, Leisa Cook, Dan Dorran, Nicholas Goldstein, Calla Hagle, Jim Hamsher, Bill Harvey, Mark Kirsch, Bill Lind, Tom Montoya, Mark Owens, Sam Palmer, Steve Pozzanghera, Julia Riber, Kevin Robinette, Carl Scheeler, Craig Trulock

**Interested Public:**

**Invited Guests:** Dennis Dougherty (USFS)

**Documents/presentations reviewed:**

**Key Issues Discussed, Decisions Made, Points of Agreement/Disagreement:**

- This meeting was called because the group wanted to solicit advice from Craig Trulock and others with the United States Forest Service (USFS), such as Nick Goldstein and guest Dennis Dougherty, about the process of recommending set asides within a forest plan.
- Dougherty opened the proceedings by giving a brief overview of some of the technical complications of the overall process and his experience with these processes during the last forest plan revision. His big takeaway from that experience was the need for each of the component plans to comply and comport with the relevant overarching forest plan. He admitted that within this dynamic, access can be a difficult subject. He discussed how in the previous revision, the group recommended a high degree of fidelity of existing uses on the landscape. Allocation of uses was stressed, with the group making sure that each part of the forest was marked for use appropriately. However, Dougherty cautioned that it is important to remember that the Forest Plan does not designate motor use, the travel management plan does. In addition, there are statutorily designated areas, some of which are designated by Congress, and other areas designated administratively by the Forest Service. One of the mechanisms for this designation is the forest plan, which is used to address things like certain deficits of valued parameters identified by the document.
- There was a question about how these designations take place and Dougherty introduced the “suitability rating table matrix” which was used in the previous plan revision. He described the table, which includes a whole suite of management activities on one side and management areas and designations on the other, which the Forest Service can use to determine land allocation suitability based on a broad view of the overall desired land allocations within the plan, and is used to make suitability recommendations of land use and access. Dougherty admitted that it became a somewhat unwieldy framework due to the number of caveats and amendments that crept in, but it underlines the broader binary decision of land allocation between “suitable” and “unsuitable” which is generally used to approach land use designation recommendations.
- There was a question about **where the final decision about the recommendations occurs**, and Tom Montoya, also of the USFS, described how the recommendations made in a forest plan will go through a separate, follow-up review and NEPA process.
- **Local Economic Concerns** were raised, especially over the issue of additional set-aside recommendations within the forest plan. There was a question whether the USFS has a mandate to recommend additional set-asides? Nick Goldstein answered that the short answer is no, however there are other groups that may suggest their own recommendations. Different NEPA

recommendations can be made that the process will consider for their final recommendation, from no recommended additional wilderness set-asides to the comprehensive proposals generally provided by wilderness advocate groups. The recommendation made to Congress could be written to emphasize whatever particular blend is preferred by the group. Balance was stressed throughout the meeting and by a diverse group of participants, and it was agreed that the recommendation from this group would formally state the Counties preference for no additional set-asides. In addition, there was a suggestion that the group could share some of its economic concerns with the Socioeconomic Subcommittee in order to help develop recommendations based on quantifiable facts and data.

- **Inventoried Roadless Areas** was a subject that was brought up at the end of the meeting as a potential area for future discussion.
- Finally, there was a question about whether there is a way to rollback RNAs and other NEPA set-asides. There is if a changed ecological condition it is possible, however, Congress has that authority, and it may be a difficult process.

**Potential Areas of Overlap to Other Subcommittees:**

- Potentially reach out to the **Socioeconomic subcommittee** regarding the economic concerns raised above.

**Questions or Feedback needed from other Subcommittees:**

**Issues to elevate for full BIC consideration:**

**Next Steps:**

- Nick Goldstein will provide [the suitability tables](#) and [the land management process](#) mentioned in the meeting to share with the group.
- Subcommittee members Carl Scheeler and Mark Owens agreed to draft a set of recommendations based on this meeting which aim to strike a balance between alternatives and share it with the group prior to the next meeting.
- The subcommittee will discuss when to hold the next meeting offline.

**Next Meeting: TBD**