

North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed Advisory Group

Draft Meeting Notes

July 23, 2015

1:00 – 3:00 pm

US Forest Service Bldg., Smelterville, ID

Moose Drool Watershed Restoration Project Tour

Next meeting: 2015 River Cleanup – August 29

Please visit the WAG website:

<http://www.deq.idaho.gov/north-fork-cda-river-subbasin-wag>

Contact Kajsa Van de Riet with any questions:

(208) 666-4633 or Kajsa.VandeRiet@deq.idaho.gov

Participants: Will Young, Melissa Hendrickson, Dan Scaife, Wade Jerome, Kajsa Van de Riet, Jeff Johnson, Dave Leptich, Caj Matheson, Sandra Raskell, Amanda Parrish, Dan McCracken, Ed Lider, Tarita Harju, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt

Meeting Purpose: To convene the Watershed Advisory Group for the purposes of water quality improvements and protection in the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Subbasin through Total Maximum Daily Load development and implementation. Rather than a regular meeting, July's meeting was a field tour of the Forest Service's Moose Drool Watershed Restoration Project.

About the Project

Moose Drool is a large-scale watershed restoration project being led by the Forest Service and implemented by local contractors. It's located in Kootenai County 15 miles northeast of Coeur d'Alene in the headwaters of the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River, and it covers approximately 22,000 acres. Before the project began, many streams in the area were impaired by excessive sediment and temperature. Habitats for fish and wildlife weren't fully functional. These stressors were caused by historic road building, railroads, and timber practices as well as present-day impacts from failing culverts and recreation. The Moose Drool project's goals are to improve the ecological conditions of the Little North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Watershed including improved water quality. Restoration activities include two methods for road treatments, floodplain restoration, placement of large wood in channels, and stream channel modification.

The USDA Forest Service - Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District (Forest Service) staff and their contractors on the Moose Drool Watershed Restoration Project (Moose Drool) are:

- improving water quality including reduced sediment and temperature
- making large-scale improvements in fish and wildlife habitat including important westslope cutthroat trout habitat
- supporting the local watershed restoration economy and jobs, and
- providing opportunities for engaging public and stakeholders in restoration.

The project started in 2012 and is ongoing in 2015. Most of the work planned for Moose Drool has already been implemented due to a large investment in 2014 from the Forest Service. Overall, approximately \$2 million went into contracts for the project and this supported a local watershed restoration economy and jobs. In 2014, when \$1.8 million was spent on the Moose Drool Project, there were 65 contractor employees on the site and 26 pieces of heavy equipment rented locally.

Accomplishments so far include: 26 miles of stream habitat enhanced, 3.4 miles of floodplain restored, 97 miles of road decommissioned, 141 road crossings at stream channels excavated, and more than 1,800 pieces of large wood placed into streams. Reducing the export of sediment is especially relevant for the Coeur d'Alene River system and Coeur d'Alene Lake. Sediment loads from treated roads was estimated to be reduced by 60-99% and would improve both chronic and episodic loading. One estimate found sediment loads would be reduced approximately 350 tons per year. Overall sediment reductions could be much higher since catastrophic failures would be largely eliminated. Field visits already reveal improvements to watershed health and water quality and these results are only expected to improve as the sites revegetate.

The Tour

We met near the Horse Haven landing strip. The tour was led by Forest Service staff: Will Young, Melissa Hendrickson, and Wade Jerome. A total of 14 people participated in the tour. Forest Service staff took us up Rd 794 to a site where we could see road decommissioning with segments of recontouring, large woody debris placement in floodplains, large woody debris in the stream channel, and an excavated stream crossing with culvert removed. This was the site where the North Idaho Fly Casters and volunteers planted trees in June, and the trees were still green and growing! Along the road, were decked logs staged for future work in the area. The site is adjacent to Iron Creek and benefits to Iron Creek habitats were already visible.

The next stop was high up on the hill where we got to see the small area logged to provide trees for the large woody debris placements. There were also several decommissioned roads to view along the way. The last stop was an excavated stream crossing in a small tributary. We discussed contracting, methods for the work, the importance of grade control, the value of reducing these sediment sources, and the significant scale of this project within the North Fork Coeur d'Alene River Subbasin.

Then we had lunch and informal discussion before calling it a day. Overall, it was a great time, very informative, and a great example of watershed restoration work!

Upcoming Events:

August:

- Respect the River Cleanup - 8/29