

## **Good information exchange at the 2011 Summer Interlocal**

The North Fork Landowners Association hosted the 2011 Summer Interlocal on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at Sondreson Hall. It was well attended with around 30 landowners and 16 people representing various government and regional organizations. Following are some highlights:

### **From Flathead County Public Works – Dave Prunty**

- This year between 8-9 miles of the North Fork road has been treated for dust abatement, starting at Camas junction and ending around a mile after Polebridge. This treatment included magnesium chloride. The RAC funded 50% of the costs and Flathead County picked up the rest.
- Magnesium chloride is a salt and will have some impact on the environment and vehicles. On the other hand, it is the most cost effective and has been used on the Forest Service roads for years with minimal impact.
- There is a second RAC-funded road improvement project planned whereby crush mixed with bentonite and some 1-inch-minus will be laid down starting just above Polebridge and going 8-9 miles. This project begins with roadbed preparation including crowning and ditches along the side. The planned result is a 4-6" lift" on a roadbed also making it 22-24' wide (less in some areas). The lay down of the crush is scheduled to start in September, but Prunty said that a more realistic start was next spring after the runoff is complete. Improvements further north are contingent on funding; the RAC program probably will end in 2012.
- Individual landowners owners can participate in a cost-sharing program for dust abatement on the road in front of their land at a rate of \$1.11 a linear square foot this year where the county pays 50% and the owner 50% with a minimum of ½ mile. Interested landowners should contact the Road Department in February about applying for the dust cost share program.
- Landowners are welcome to put culverts at the front of their driveways but Prunty recommended that they first call the Road Dept (758-5790) and ask for Patti to get advice. She is their right-of-way specialist.
- The minimal work has been performed on the slump above Wurtz to make it passable and they're looking into engineering alternatives, but there is little chance that a permanent fix will be put into place because of budget constraints. The same answer for the slump above Ford Station.
- There are no plans to haul any gravel for the road near the border.

### **Flathead National Forest – Jimmy DeHerrera**

- The Forest Service road program this year in general includes, brushing, blading, and emergency road repairs.
- As a result of the Red Whale Project two roads that were previously opened at Moran Creek and Hay Creek will be closed until the Project is completed. The Moose Creek Road will be closed approximately 1 mile before the Moose Creek Trailhead (Forest Trail 9) while work is underway in that area. The mitigation is required for grizzly bear security.
- There are actually several projects ongoing under the heading of Glacier View District Fuel Reduction Plan From Red Whale Project Decision. DeHerrera left a

map at Sondreson Hall that details all of these projects. It may be found pinned on the wall next to the “records” cabinet. DeHerrera emphasized that the project had been developed in conjunction with North Fork landowners.

- On Sondreson Meadow DeHerrera said that they are working on road repairs but there would be no pit toilet or boat launch because this isn’t an official takeout. Before the end of the year a new steel slide will be put in at Ford and the access slope improved. At the border, the contractor will install a new boat slide at the approved boat launch. At Glacier Rim access, they will pull the concrete ramp and put in a new one.
- The slash piles on Moose Creek Road will be covered this August and burned this fall.
- DeHerrera announced that they will be spraying weeds next to private property boundaries. Property owners will receive letters telling you when that will be happening.
- Both Thoma and Cyclone lookouts will be manned this year.
- The Forest Service budget is down this year and is projected to be even lower next year, increasing the importance of collaboration.

#### **Glacier National Park – Scott Emmerich**

- One of their goals is to get the Inside North Fork Road opened as soon as possible.
- They have spent a lot of money on weed reduction and are making progress. They also are hitting aquatic invasive species hard.
- Kintla Road is due to be graded this summer.
- The Park is doing what it can to reduce the tourist traffic in the North Fork. For example, when a tourist asks rangers for recommendations, rangers have been instructed not to point them towards the North Fork unless they are specifically asked.

#### **Montana Department of State Lands/DNRC – Brian Manning**

- North Fork By-Two timber sale has been completed. \$381K was collected for the school trust. Repairs are being made to the nearby roads that were damaged during this project. They plan to do some planting in the sale area in 2013, primarily rust-resistant white pine, larch and ponderosa pine.
- There is another upcoming timber sale for 133 acres on Coal ridge.
- The contractor has a deadline of October 14<sup>th</sup> to burn the large slash piles. People who would like to cut firewood prior to the burn can do so with permits.

#### **U.S. Border Patrol – Ralph Montano**

- All three stations in this district have had apprehensions, but they can’t tell us for what, how many, how often, etc. for security reasons.
- The current staff level stands at around 25 personnel; staffing depends on quarterly threat assessments.
- Stone Garden is still being funded.
- Border Patrol personnel can detain a suspect for a crime (e.g., breaking and entering), then turn the suspect over to the agency with jurisdiction over the offense.
- Border Patrol personnel are trained to handle emergency situations and can provide help and support on the North Fork. They can be first responders and

then turn the situation over to the appropriate authorities. They have aided North Valley Search and Rescue on a number of occasions. Finally, within the Spokane Sector, the Whitefish Station has the only Border Patrol certified search and rescue dog in the area.

**Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks - Tim Thier and Tim Manley**

- There are several fisheries projects underway partly funded by Bonneville Power Administration. This includes habitat improvement for Coal Creek looking for gravel recruitment and bull trout spawning. Having said that, they don't anticipate any vast improvements in the bull trout population because the mysis shrimp problem in Flathead Lake has not gone away.
- They are performing studies on the whitefish population because we don't know much about them and because their numbers have been dropping.
- They are still monitoring wolves in the area and have identified three and possibly four packs.
- They are not monitoring mountain lions. If landowners have a problem with mountain lions they can call, but there are few options other than destroying the lion if it becomes a threat.
- There is evidence that the deer and elk populations are coming back including an increase in the number of fawns this year and yearling bucks in the harvest last year.
- There is concern that the moose population is decreasing. A flight over last year saw 40 moose but not many calves. There will likely be a moose study in Northwest Montana looking at moose recruitment. There was some recent research in Minnesota linking a drastic decline in moose population to climate change. The assumption is that the warmer weather brings an increase in parasites, affecting the moose reproduction and recruitment.
- The wolf hunt has been approved for Montana this year with 220 in the quota state wide out of an estimated population of 1,000 wolves and a quota of 2 for the North Fork out of an estimated population of 30-35. The beginning of the hunt will coincide with the general hunting season but will continue until December 31 to give hunters more opportunity.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Rox Rogers**

- Rox Rogers works with private landowners to restore habitat.
- She would be happy if we had some projects for her. She also purchases chemicals and has the landowner apply for weed control. To contact Ms. Rogers for more information, email [rox\\_rogers@fws.gov](mailto:rox_rogers@fws.gov).