



Whittell Forest & Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 29th, 2021

Present: Sarah Bisbing (Chair); Hunter Noble (Secretary), Anna Belle Monti (Fuels Forester, USDA), Tom Hall (Community Member), John Christopherson (Deputy Administrator, NV Division of Forestry), Chris Pritsos, (Associate Dean, College of Agriculture Biotechnology and Natural Resources), Vic Redding (VP, Administration and Finance), Ahmad Itani (AVP, Research), Mridul Gautam (VP, Research & Innovation)

Absent: Pat King (Community Member)

Welcome & Introductions

Dr. Sarah Bisbing, Director of the Whittell Forest and Wildlife Area welcomed everyone.

Previous Meeting Minutes

1. Sarah asked for any additional comments/changes for the previous meeting minutes (01/2021).
2. Tom Hall noted several minor grammatical and spelling corrections.
 - a. Tom brought forth a motion to add the corrections approve the corrected meeting minutes.
 - b. Chris Pritsos seconded, and the motion passed.

Forest Planning & Progress Updates

Master Plan

1. Sarah Bisbing briefly provided an update on the status of the Master Plan, which is now in draft form and continues to be worked on by H&K Architects.
2. The Master Plan provides details on the potential access options, as well as outlines the development of the Little Valley Research Station infrastructure.

Access Updates:

1. Sarah briefly reviewed the current access route as well as the several options that are included in the Master Plan document.
2. Sarah also recognized Tom, who has generously provided access to the Lonkey Flume Trail from his property, which provides access to Whittell Forest via a ~1 mile hike.
 - a. Wildlife faculty from UNR are interested in placing wildlife cameras along the trail.
 - b. Tom invited all members of the Advisory Committee to visit his property.
 - c. Tom also detailed how the trail would likely need to stay as a foot trail and could not be converted for vehicle use.
3. Sarah asked Anna Belle Monti about Forest Service access and the possibility of road construction. Anna Belle detailed their current lack of access to Little Valley and the issues it causes for the Forest Service.
 - a. Being landlocked from Little Valley is currently inhibiting the completion of several forest management projects.
 - b. Any road construction that involves national forest land will require NEPA.
 - c. Anna Belle emphasized that she would like to partner with UNR to find an access solution, but that it may take time.

Discussion:

John Christopherson asked about the current condition of Little Valley Rd. Anna Belle provided details from her last visit. Hunter and Sarah added that the Franktown Creek Irrigation Company (FCIC) Water Master had driven up the road as recently as October 2020. Anna Belle said that FCIC or Cliff



Brother's Ranch may have done some road repairs. John suggested walking the Forest Service portions of the road to assess the condition.

The discussion pivoted to UNR's access agreements with the private landowners in the area, and Sarah explained that they are looking into the previous access agreements that UNR had with certain individuals. John and Anna Belle provided their thoughts on ways to approach access agreements. Sarah asked Tom for his opinion on access options, as an attorney who is an expert in easements, access, and water rights, which he provided. He remains optimistic about finding a solution, and recommended a sub-committee be formed to conduct additional research. Sarah added that UNR currently relies on short-term access agreement and needs to find a longer-term solution. She then suggested tabling this discussion and having a subcommittee further investigate, to which the Committee agreed.

The discussion then moved on to funding, where Sarah explained the need for funding to build infrastructure to support research and teaching, as well as the infrastructure options detailed in the Master Plan. For housing, wall tents in the short term, with more permanent yurts in the long term. There is also a need for a way to handle human waste. There is currently an outhouse, but it is unknown if it can be used. Sarah included that she wants to push for funding in the next 5 years to construct the yurts.

Forest Outreach

Post Wildfire Restoration

1. Sarah explained the ongoing restoration work efforts as part of the UNR independent study course. She showed a map of 6 private parcels that students have and continue to work on.
2. Hunter is leading students in wildfire restoration activities on private landowner's properties (with permission of the owners) affected by the Little Valley Fire. This includes activities like snag felling, tree planting, dead vegetation removal, creek cleaning, which have provided students hands on training they normally do not have the opportunity for.
3. Work has been done on a total of 6 properties so far, and the owners have been very happy with the work of the students and that UNR is engaging with them. Course will be offered year-round so work by students will continue.
4. Hunter then updated the group on properties where restoration is in progress and next steps.

Ongoing Outreach and Meetings

5. Hunter and Sarah will continue outreach efforts with the community.
6. Our work is being shared via word of mouth, and we are receiving more requests each week.
7. Sarah and Hunter are also leading an inter-organization planning group to support a town hall meeting for the WWV community in late June.

Forest Research

Summer Operations at Whittell

1. This will be Sarah and Hunter's first summer at Whittell.
2. Hunter will lead a preliminary forest inventory to collect basic stand data.
3. Students will also assist in maintenance and checking the property for past impacts as well as property upgrades needed.
4. Sarah detailed that the Whittell Graduate Fellowship is now open with \$6,000 dollars available in one fellowship or two \$3,000 fellowships.
5. Sarah provided information on the Inaugural Little Valley BioBlitz, taking place May 29th, and is open to the UNR campus (faculty and students). The event will help identify and catalogue the species present on Whittell while also promoting the Forest.
6. Sarah discussed the common garden experiment that will occur on Whittell as part of the larger Adaptive Management Experiment focused on forests and climate change.



Open Discussion on Agenda Items

1. Ahmad asked Hunter to explain the new equipment that R&I is purchasing for Whittell Forest.
 - a. Hunter detailed the CAT compact track loader and its attachments (mulching head, dozer blade, bucket) which can be used for fuels reduction, road maintenance, and other forest operations.
 - b. Hunter then added that R&I will also be funding a woodchipper, which can be used for additional fuel reduction and restoration activities, both on Whittell and in the West Washoe Valley
2. Tom switched the discussion to funding and asked Mridul how UNR being a land grant institution may factor.
 - a. Mridul provided details and the opportunities for Whittell Forest.
 - b. Tom added his experience receiving FIPS funding for his own property and suggested that UNR may be able to access the funds, as well as emphasizing that outside the box thinking in general is important.
3. Tom then moved the discussion to Whittell Forest's legal documents and the information they may provide, as he has experience with these as a real estate attorney.
 - a. Tom provided his opinions on the type of documents that should be looked for and the variety of information they may provide. These include – Any deeds, appraisals, and assessments of the property. Ahmad asked how we could find these documents, and Tom replied that a chain of title would likely be necessary.
 - b. Sarah offered to follow up with UNR Real Estate to inquire on what documents we have or need to better understand the history of the Forest.
4. Ahmad switched the discussion to funding opportunities that may help secure access and asked Chris if he knew of any federal funding opportunities.
 - a. Chris detailed the McIntire-Stennis funding that UNR currently receives but that there may be other opportunities.
 - b. Hunter added that in his research many federal grants require providing public access.
 - c. Sarah seconded this and added that many other similar research forests/reserve limit public access but also already have clear access opportunities.
 - d. Anna Belle added that the public is constantly seeking road access to Little Valley and that federal funding may not align with the future goals of the forest
5. John moved the conversation to the June meeting with the West Washoe Valley Community asked for details about the meeting.
 - a. He added that they will have aerial imagery of the burn scar available.
 - b. Sarah detailed the preliminary plans for the meeting on June 23rd with the community members of the West Washoe Valley, Living with Fire, Forest Service, UNR, and Nevada Division of Forestry

Meeting Adjourns