



Whittell Forest & Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Present:** Sarah Bisbing (Chair); Hunter Noble (Secretary), Anna Belle Monti (Fuels Forester, USDA), Tom Hall (Community Member), Pat King (Community Member), 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:** John Christopherson (Deputy Administrator, NV Division of Forestry)

### Previous Meeting Minutes

Hunter Noble asked for any additional comments or changes to the previous meeting minutes (04/2021). No additional comments or changes were suggested. Tom Hall motioned to approve the meeting minutes as presented, Chris Pritsos seconded, and the motioned passed.

### Forest Planning & Progress Updates

#### **Grants in Review:**

Sarah Bisbing detailed the Western States Fire Managers (WSFM) and Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grants submitted by NDF on behalf of UNR. Each would provide roughly \$300,000, which would be matched by an additional \$300,000 by Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF). WSFM would be used for mechanical fuel reduction, and LSR would fund additional restoration activities including DroneSeed.

#### **Discussion:**

Chris Pritsos asked how competitive the grants are. Sarah Bisbing explained that the grants are submitted at the state level and reviewed federally, so they are competitive. However, she believes the WSFM is the stronger of the two candidates and has a good chance. Mridul asked about other aerial drone seeding companies, the technology, and why DroneSeed was being used. Anna Belle Monti detailed trials performed by DroneSeed and a local company on federal land. She explained the greater capacity of DroneSeed as an established company and their level of professionalism. Mridul and Anna Belle both expressed that there is a further need for research into the technology and that any trees are better than none on the landscape.

#### **Whittell Burn Scar Snag Felling:**

Hunter provided details on the snag felling planned project within the Little Valley Fire burn scar. NDF class C fellers will fell snags in the area identified by members of the WWV community on UNR property. Steep slopes, advanced regeneration, and age of the snags will pose challenges. NDF is planning to begin the work in Spring 2022.

#### **Access Updates:**

Hunter briefly reviewed the current access route through Hobart Rd. He then detailed the Lonkey Flume Trail and the access that it provides to Whittell Forest by foot thanks to the generosity of Tom and Peggy Hall.



**Discussion:**

Chris Pritsos asked about ATV access on the trail and Hunter explained several limitations will limit its use to a foot trail. Sarah discussed other historic access routes and their role as part as well as research as part of the Master Plan. Mridul asked for any updates regarding access on these other roads. Tom provided some history of access roads into Little Valley. Sarah then asked Anna Belle to update the group on Musgrove/Big Canyon. Anna Belle explained the land swap with the private inholding, and now the Forest Service owns all the property and roads in the canyon. The road access is still being evaluated by the USFS legal team and is in preliminary discussions, no decisions have been made.

**Forest Equipment:**

Hunter described the CAT Skid Steer funded by the VPRI. The machine will be able to conduct mechanical fuels reduction, road maintenance, and site preparations projects. Hunter also described the woodchipper also supported by the VPRI that will be used for mechanical fuels reduction on Whittell Forest and in WWV.

**Forest Facilities:**

Hunter explained how with the help of students, a previously dilapidated shed was restored to working condition and is now in use again. He also described how students assisted with repairs of the outhouse that restored it to provide a flushing toilet at the campground. Next, he detailed how during a tour of the Forest, John Christopherson showed Hunter where the original well was drilled. Hunter then described how the plans for the installation of a 200 square foot Tuff Shed on Whittell with the greater need for equipment storage. The conversation then transitioned to discuss the vandalism that occurred in early August on Whittell. The discussion then shifted to the use policy for Whittell, with Sarah describing the current access policies.

**Discussion:**

Tom detailed how signage must be present across the property boundary. He was surprised that someone would vandalize, but that a more consistent presence and signage would help. Pat asked about the liability if a trespasser got hurt on the Forest, and Tom explained the statues that protect the landowners in the state of Nevada. Tom added that University Police or the Sheriff's office would be a good contact. Chris asked about the firearm policy on Whittell, and Sarah explained that hunting and firearms are not permitted, but there is not sufficient signage. Anna Belle added that adding signs at the boundaries is an important first step since Whittell is surrounded by national forest that has less restrictive policies. Mridul suggested speaking to UNR legal counsel about the matter. Sarah added that putting signage on the western slope would be very difficult

**Forest Outreach & Teaching**

**West Washoe Valley Community Meeting:**

Sarah described the WWV community town hall meeting held in June. Roughly 50 members of the public attended as well as representatives from UNR, NDF, USFS, LWF, and TMFPD. This was the first time a meeting of this size and with members of all agencies had been held since the fire. The meeting provided opportunity for agencies to provide updates on their policies and the work that has been completed and is ongoing. It also allowed community members to ask questions and express their concerns. Actionable items from the meeting include the community identify leaders to act as a liaison between agencies and facilitate the creation of a firer adapted community.



**Discussion:**

Tom noted that he felt the meeting went very well and that many members of the community were ready to listen and move forward. He suggested having a following up meeting for progress updates. Pat King seconded Tom's feeling and expressed that the meeting allowed community members to have their questions answered and hear the perspective of UNR. Anna Belle added that a critical point of the meeting was engaging newer members of the community who moved in after the fire. It was agreed by Advisory Committee members present at the town hall that community leaders still need to be identified.

**Work with WWV Landowners/Post-Fire Restoration Internship:**

Hunter detailed the ongoing work by students in the WWV as part of the post-fire restoration internship. Students to date have completed almost 2000-man hours of work assisting landowners in the WWV. Multiple landowners have expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the work being conducted by students.

**Whittell Forest Tour:**

Hunter described tour that he and Sarah held for members of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Nevada Division of Forestry, the Tahoe Fund, and the Office of Research and Innovation. The tour resulted in productive discussions about the many opportunities that Whittell presents as well as ways to use it for student teaching.

**Courses at Whittell Forest:**

Sarah described the silviculture class field trip that occurred in mid-October. Students gathered forest inventory data as part of their class which provided hands on experience. Students expressed how much they enjoyed spending time at the Forest and camping overnight. Sarah reminded the group the importance of access, as the drive time is a challenge for faculty and students.

**Forest Research**

**Whittell Fellowship:**

Hunter provided an update on the two current graduate students who were awarded the Whittell Fellowship. One project is investigating using charcoal left after fires to determine burn temperatures and burn severity from fires. The other project is remeasuring to update a long-term arthropod population dataset on the forest.

**Alert Wildfire Camera:**

Graham Kent and his lab, with the help of Hunter and students installed an Alert Wildfire Camera on the Eastern ridge, with the camera looking North. The camera will help provide early detection for wildfires and help protect the surrounding communities of Whittell. [Link to camera](#)

**Forest Inventory:**

With the help of students, Hunter has continued progress in measuring forest wide inventory plots. The data will be used to help write the forest management plan and also used by students in their classes

**Wildlife Cameras:**

With the help of students, Hunter put up over a dozen game cameras across the forest, primarily along the Lonkey Flume Trail. The cameras have captured a variety of wildlife, including bears, bobcats, deer, skunks, mountain lions, and foxes.

**Meeting Adjourns**