

Bankhead Liaison Panel

Meeting Summary

February 11, 2003

Bank Building – Double Springs, AL

Approved for general distribution, 3/8/03.

Attendance

Liaison Panel Members:

Myra Ball, *Ala. Conservation and Multi-Use*
Charles Borden, *Resident, Recreationist, and Wild
Alabama Board member*
Margaret Dunn, *Cherokee Tribe of NE Alabama*
Ron Eakes, *Ala. Dept. of Wildlife & Freshwater
Fisheries; Area Manager, Black Warrior WMA*
Randy Feltman, *Logger and Local Resident*
Gene Gold, *Echota Cherokee of Alabama*
Quinton Humphries, *Winston Co. Commission*
*Rob Hurt, *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*
Randall LouAllen, *Lawrence Co. Commission*
Lamar Marshall, *Wild Alabama*
Mary Lee Ratliff, *Recreation*
Johnny Dean Warren, *Resident*
*Faron Weeks, *Warrior Mtn. Historical & Cultural
Society*

USFS Personnel:

John Creed, *Bankhead District*
Glen Gaines, *District Ranger*

* denotes Alternate Panel Member

Interested People/ Other Attendees:

Bobby Ayers
Sheron Ball
Katherine Byars
Edward Cagle
Sharon Cagle
Steve Cagle
P. Cahn
*Allen Ray Cantrell (Alternate)
Joe Copeland
Ruby Carter
Anthony Hood
Paul Huggins
Jim Hughes
Mike Henshaw
*Vince Meleski (Alternate)
*Jeff Still (Alternate)
Sheila Uptain
Keith Weeks
Judy Woodard

Facilitation Staff:

Juliana Birkhoff, *RESOLVE*
Bill Sanford, *Natural Resources Leadership Institute*

February 11, 2003 Meeting Agenda

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Pre-Meeting Open House (5:00 – 6:00 p.m.)

1. Welcome, Ground Rules, and Introductions
2. Review and Approve Proposed Additions to the Liaison Panel
3. Generate Questions and Information Needs About the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative
4. Prioritize Information Needs
5. Develop Work Groups
6. Proposed Next Set of Meetings

Post-Meeting Informal Q & A Period (until 9:30 p.m.)

Handouts Provided

1. Meeting Agenda: February 11
2. Ground Rules for the Meeting
3. Revised Draft Ground Rules for the Panel
4. Levels of Consensus
5. Process Map
6. Text Descriptions and Color Maps of the Alternatives
7. Liaison Panel Contact Information

Decisions/Agreements Made:

1. Panel agreed to operate by list of attached ground rules.
2. Panel approved January 23 meeting summary without changes.
3. Panel agreed to add Mike Henshaw as a member to the panel.
4. Panel identified a set of eight “top priority” questions to focus on. (See section IV.)
5. Panel agreed to have work groups on the following topics: plant and animal issues, cultural and historic resources, desired future forest conditions, and impacts on recreation.
6. Panel agreed to hold the next meeting on March 8.

Action Items:

1. Juliana will review representation needs for horseback riding interests with Mary Lee Ratliff and Jeff Stills.
2. Facilitators will continue to review possible representatives with the Steering Committee for commercial/industrial interests, tourism, and state and national environmental groups, and return with a new proposal to the panel for the March 8 meeting.
3. Facilitators will work with the USFS and the Steering Committee to locate experts to respond to the questions for the Panel. Other panel members and interested parties are encouraged to provide suggestions for potential speakers.
4. Panel Members will give formal charges to the work groups and identify Panel members to start them after March 8th.
5. Panel members are to return form with preferences for future meeting dates by Feb 14, 2003.

I. WELCOME, AGENDA, AND MEETING GROUND RULES

A. Welcome

Juliana Birkhoff welcomed those present and explained why Mary Lou Addor, the other lead facilitator, was unable to be present.

B. Agenda

Juliana reviewed the agenda and listed five objectives for the meeting:

- Review and approve proposed additions to Liaison Panel.
- Generate questions and information needs for future learning.
- Prioritize questions and information needs.
- Propose work groups.
- Review proposed next meeting dates.

Format Key: Questions (Q), Response (R),
Comment (C), Discussion (D) & Action (A): .

C. Ground Rules

Juliana clarified that the members of the Liaison Panel represent the interests of different stakeholder groups, and so we will turn to them before asking for input from others present.

In addition, Panel members were asked to stand their name card on end to signal when they wish to speak to the group.

Others present are invited to tap the Panel member representing their interests on the shoulder or pass them a note if they need to remind them of something. Juliana may also ask others present to share their input directly.

Juliana asked all present to limit sidebar conversations and to step into another room if they needed to consult with someone during the meeting.

- A The Panel agreed by consensus to operate by the list of ground rules attached to this summary.

D. Approval of January Meeting Summary

- A The Panel approved the January 23 meeting summary without changes. Juliana pointed out that the meeting summaries were not intended to be “minutes,” but rather a summary of highlights and decisions made in order to support overall “group memory.”

II. PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE LIAISON PANEL

Juliana explained that, in response to the Panel’s decision during the January 23 meeting, she and Mary Lou had worked with District Ranger Glen Gaines and the Steering Committee to develop and review a list of potential additions to the Liaison Panel.

Juliana reported the following:

- Mike Henshaw (Winston County agricultural extension) agreed to serve on the Panel, if invited.
- Steve Cagel, Vicky Morese (Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce), and Billy Rye (consulting forester) might be willing to serve on the Panel.
- Keith Tassin (The Nature Conservancy) declined, but the Nature Conservancy will suggest others who might be able to serve.
- Brad McLane (Alabama Rivers) will not be able to serve on the Panel either.
- Juliana and Mary Lou were unable to reach Greg Preston, a current member of the Panel who has not attended Panel meetings recently. Faron Weeks will serve as Greg’s alternate.

- Q What about horseback riders?
- R Mary Lee Ratliff and Jeff Still have agreed that Mary Lee is able to represent their interests, with Jeff Still, her alternate, helping.

- Q Should the Panel have two people representing horseback riders? Many horseback riders have been coming to these meetings.
- R Because the Panel is operating by consensus, it does not need more than one person representing any interest group. The only reason to add new members is if they represent a new group with significant information to affect implementation of an agreement or if they could block implementation.
- C Juliana will check with Mary Lee and Jeff to see what the different interest groups are, and whether Mary Lee can represent them (with Jeff’s assistance). If it does not seem workable, Juliana will come back to the Panel with a proposal at the next meeting.

- Q What about native/historical interests?
- D Faron might meet that need, but he is already representing two other interest groups.
- C Rather than adding to Panel membership right now, a work group could follow these issues and report back to the Panel.

The facilitators will keep checking into possible representatives for commercial/ industrial interests, tourism, and state and national environmental groups. She will work with the Steering Committee and will come back to the Panel next time with a proposal.

- A The Panel agreed to add Mike Henshaw as a new member of the Panel.
- C Consider Bob Ellis (Lawrence County Historical Commission) as a possibility for working groups.

III. QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION NEEDS

The Panel brainstormed a list of scientific and technical questions that they need answered in order to come to a good

decision regarding the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

- How much commercial logging? Options?
- Overuse of the forest (e.g. amount of logging)
- What are the effects of a natural, rejuvenated, restored forest
- Threatened / endangered species – effects of each on sensitive/rare, etc.?
- Pre-settlement fire disturbance – effects on soils, how often, etc.?
- Pre-settlement forest types?
- Possible to use environment-friendly treatment alternatives?
- Differences in prescriptions – blue stem longleaf/shortleaf? Re: burn schedule, wildlife, etc.
- Definitions of terminology (e.g. woodlands vs. forest); a glossary.
- Effects of prescriptions/treatments on So. Pine Beetle.
- What is the timetable on the thinning? Priorities/timetables – what economic impacts?
- What are the positive effects from each alternative?
- How would this affect landowners?
- How does increased demands/use affect forest health?
- Effects of each fire prescription on forest health?
- Looking at evapotranspiration rates, effects.
- What effect of restoration activities on cultural/historic sites? What could happen?
- What interests/values will not be met w/ current alternatives?
- Benefits of small clearcuts?
- How do we increase indigenous wildlife to BNF, including game and non-game species?
- Consequences of each alternative re: surrounding forest types?
- Natural distribution of shortleaf/longleaf

- Effects of runoff of fields – pesticides, insecticide, etc.

IV. PRIORITIZE INFORMATION NEEDS

From the list, Panel members indicated their preferences for the questions to focus on first. The eight questions/areas that the Panel identified as the highest priorities were the following:

- What were the fire disturbances on the Bankhead Forest previously? Pre-settlement?
- What are the historic forest community types on the Bankhead? Pre-settlement?
- What do we know about the ecology, pest, and pathogen vulnerability and sustainability of “natural forests versus restored forests?
- What are the projected impacts from each proposed alternative (different forest community types) on threatened and endangered species?
- What will be the impact of the forest health and restoration initiative on indigenous wildlife? What do we know about ways to increase indigenous wildlife?
- What will the positive effects be from each alternative on the soils. Water quality, watershed health, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species from each alternative in the forest health and restoration initiative?
- What are the effects of overuse, whether from logging, hiking, horseback riding, or whatever, on forest health? Does the forest health and restoration initiative address any of these affects?
- How might the forest health and restoration initiative affect landowners? Negative and positive effects? Aesthetics, access, private forest health? How does the forest health and restoration initiative

address these impacts or mitigate any negative impacts?

Juliana noted that these will be the first eight questions that we focus on. We can add more questions later.

The panel will use this list of questions in two ways:

- To bring together presentations for March 8
- To develop work groups

Q Who is qualified to talk about these questions in an unbiased manner?

R Juliana proposed to find a diverse 2-3 people to address these questions, with the Forest Service and the Steering Committee helping. If we can only find one person to talk about a particular topic, at least the Panel will know that they are getting information from a single perspective.

Q Since the Panel is not directly addressing cultural or recreational issues, will these issues be addressed in the overall plan?

R Glen said the Forest Service proposal and the accompanying range of alternatives will include something on the effects of each alternative in different contexts or to different users. However, no decisions would be made about building trails, etc. in this proposal

Q Why are we dealing with the past so much? The forest is what it is and we should just start from there.

R Because the past is important to some of the people on the Panel. For consensus, we have to address everyone's interests.

C Juliana will work with the USFS and the Steering Committee to find some experts to address these questions for the Panel.

C Juliana invited Panel members and others present to send her suggestions about

potential experts who could address these questions.

V. DEVELOP WORK GROUPS

Juliana described work groups as a way for the Panel to pursue issues in depth between meetings. Made up of a small group of Panel members and others, work groups can take an issue and pursue it in depth between meetings – through discussion, walking the land, conducting research, or other ways. Then they can report their learnings to the Panel. This is a more efficient approach than having everyone on the Panel learn about everything in great detail. Given our timeline for making a recommendation to the USFS, work groups will be very useful.

A Following discussion, the Panel decided to form work groups on the following topics:

- Plants and animals (including threatened and endangered species, locally rare and sensitive species, and non-T/E wildlife and plants)
- Cultural and historic resources
- Desired future forest conditions
- Impacts on recreation

Q Aren't we only talking about 20,000 acres?

R Yes, but these are key areas of the forest and will affect many people personally.

R Glen said that although this process is focused on specific areas, the decisions made will form a framework that will broadly affect the rest of the forest and its future direction.

D The Panel discussed possibly forming work groups on economic impacts, tourism, and watershed, but decided not to do so now.

A The Panel decided to wait until after the March 8 information session to give formal charges to the work groups and to identify Panel members to start them.

- C The Liaison Panel needs to start thinking about whom they can bring in to work on these groups. Work groups are a good way to tap into new resources and to spread out the work.

VI. PROPOSED NEXT SET OF MEETINGS

A. March 8

Next Liaison Panel meeting will be March 8.

Panel members are requested to help the facilitators find a suitable location for the meeting.

The facilitators proposed the following agenda for the meeting:

- Negotiation/communication training
- Education/information session
- Go into the forest to look at some specific sites

B. Future Dates

The following schedule was proposed for the remaining meetings:

- Week of March 24-29:
Education/information session #2
- Week of April 14-19: Narrowing issues
- Saturday, May 3: Public education session
- Week of May 5-10: Narrowing toward consensus
- Week of May 26-31: Consensus on an alternative to recommend to USFS?

Juliana gave Panel members a form with several proposed dates for the remaining meetings. She asked them to return that form to Bill Sanford in person or via fax by the end of the week.

C. Staying In Touch

Please contact the facilitators with any comments, questions, or concerns – as far before meetings as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.