

Idaho Shared Stewardship Advisory Group (SSAG) Meeting—Hybrid Meeting
IDL Director's Office in Boise and via Zoom Online Conferencing
1/25/23

Meeting Notes by Ara Andrea, IDL Statewide Shared Stewardship Coordinator

Members attending in Boise IDL Office

- Governor Brad Little
- SSAG Chair, Jamie Neill
- Tim Christopherson (**member**, Associated Logging Contractors)
- David Rosenkrance (**member**, Deputy Regional Forester, USFS Region 4)
- Knute Sandahl (**member**, State Fire Marshal, Idaho Lands Resource Coordinating Council)
- Tom Schultz (**member**, Idaho Forest Group, Large Forest Manufacturing)
- Curtis Elke (**member**, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- Jonathan Oppenheimer (proxy for **member** John Robison, Idaho Conservation League, Conservation NGO)

IDL Staff and Key Partners attending in Boise IDL Office

- Dustin Miller (**member**, Director, IDL)
- Ara Andrea (**member**, Idaho Shared Stewardship Coordinator, IDL)
- Craig Foss (State Forester)
- Jeff Lau (North Idaho Shared Stewardship Coordinator, Idaho Panhandle National Forests and IDL)
- Brian Davis (South Idaho Shared Stewardship Coordinator, Payette National Forest and IDL)
- Jon Songster (Good Neighbor Authority Bureau Chief)
- Linda Jackson (Payette National Forest Supervisor, USFS)
- John Riling (Silviculturist, Boise National Forest, USFS)
- Dirk Mendive (Rep. Fulcher's Office)
- Casey Attebery (Sen. Crapo's Office)
- Peter Stegner (Riley, Stegner and Associates)
- Shawn Keough (Associated Logging Contractors)
- Craig Quartermann (Rep. Simpson's Office)
- David Francomb (Boise National Forest Deputy Supervisor, USFS)
- Dennis Becker (Dean, College of Natural Resources, University of Idaho)

Members attending Online via Zoom

- Tim Garcia (**member**, State & Private Forestry Director, USFS Region 1)
- Kurt Dyroff (**member**, National Wild Turkey Federation, Conservation NGO)
- Anna Torma (**member**, PotlatchDeltic, Industrial Forest Landowner)
- David Easley (**member**, Idaho Forest Owners Association, Family Forest Landowners)
- Matthew Ward (proxy for **member** John Roberts, The Nature Conservancy, Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership)
- Sage Dixon (**member**, State Representative, Idaho House of Representatives)

IDL Staff and Key Partners attending via Zoom

- Carl Petrick (Idaho Panhandle National Forests Supervisor, USFS)
- Brant Petersen (Idaho State Liaison, USFS)
- Darren Parker (Sen. Risch's Office)
- Robert Jaeger (Forest Stewardship Coordinator, USFWS)
- Robbie Johnson (Public Information Officer, IDL)
- Archie Gray (Forestry Assistance Bureau Chief, IDL)

Members Not Present:

- Brett Bennett (**member**, Bennett Lumber, Small Forest Manufacturing)

Vacant Member Seats

- Member, Idaho Senate (previously Sen. Steve Vick)
- Member, County Commissioner (previously Boundary County Commissioner Dan Dinning)

Notes:

- Jamie Neill, Chair of SSAG, welcomed everyone and hosted round-robin introductions of participants. He gave a brief history of his professional experience, including 10 years with Rep. Simpson's Office—and his involvement with many of the Congressman's natural resources and forestry-based proposals.
- Jamie gave a summary of Governor Little's SFY24 proposed budget, emphasizing increased funding in education, including promotion of on-demand and technical careers—and increased support for recreation management. He also noted that the Governor's initiatives have been heavily focused on forestry and fire, exemplified by his *Working Lands, Working Communities* initiative following the 2021 Western Governors Association (WGA) conference, and the more recent inclusion of fire-management funding increases in IDL's budget.
- Ara Andrea, Jeff Lau, and Brian Davis presented slides to give members an overview of statewide cross-boundary project accomplishments ([presentation attached](#)), ending with a virtual field tour (video) of completed forest-management and fuels-reduction projects in the Scattered Lands cross-boundary project area in southwest Bonner County (<https://youtu.be/1kxcTBoPXRI>). Most of the active and completed cross-boundary treatments and GNA harvests are occurring in Bonner County's Scattered Lands focal area—with other projects getting completed on private forestlands in Adams County's Highway 95 Corridor focal area. While most of the first USDA-designated Southwest Idaho Landscape (SIL) incorporates most of the South-Idaho Shared Stewardship Priority Landscape, there is a southern section of the SIL in Boise County (encompassing the nationally #11-ranked high-risk Fireshed) that will be included in the Shared Stewardship Priority Landscape; this inclusion will be the next Shared Stewardship Focal Area, the *Boise Front Project*, focusing on cross-boundary work next to the Idaho City District of the Boise National Forest. New partners, for funding and operating, like the National Forest Foundation, the USFWS, Avista Corporation, Idaho Power, Adams Soil & Water Conservation District, and the National Deer Association have joined our Shared Stewardship teams. GNA work on national forests and BLM lands continues to expand—and the first GNA agreement with the Salmon-Challis National Forest is in the final stages of completion, with a second, more timber-focused, agreement being developed with the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.
- Tom Schultz noted that it would be helpful, in informing SSAG members of Shared Stewardship accomplishments, to show not just number of acres treated, but to show how close we are getting to *doubling the number of acres treated* on Idaho's national forests by 2025 (a performance metric stated in Idaho's Shared Stewardship Agreement with the USDA USFS). How could we convey accomplishments with respect to what *needs to be done*. Tom Schultz also conveyed that Stand Density Index (SDI) numbers were being calculated for Idaho forests by University of Idaho's Dr. Greg Latta (Policy Analysis Group).
- Governor Little gave an opening address to the SSAG members, focusing on his continued support for enhancing active management on at-risk forests, his promotion of forest, fuels and smoke management at the upcoming WGA conference—and the need for Idaho to maintain a strong commercial timber industry to pay for these needed treatments after infrastructure funds are finished. He asked SSAG members to help make this much-needed work on our forests continue at an ongoing sustainable pace and scale. We need to show Congress that Idaho has a plan to make the *end goal* attainable.

Governor Little's Talking Points:

- Idaho's rainy-day and fire funds are filled; Idaho is economically in good shape and should be resilient to fluctuating economic conditions in the nation or region. The Governor's budget includes increased fire-management funding in IDL's allocations—standing up the Cottonwood District in southeast Idaho.
 - With these federal funds Idaho is receiving, we need to be an example to the rest of the country. It's all about sustainability and scale. When you see the number of acres needing treatment, compared to what we're getting done, we need to fully realize our need to sustain this kind of work over a long period of time. Governor Little asked for members' help in making Idaho a good example among the states in continuing this as self-supporting work, appreciating Idaho's mill infrastructure and continued ability to generate money to support other needed forest-health and fuels-reduction projects.
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- Tom Schultz asked about the USFS response to Governor Little's letter to Chief Moore (last August)—and the state's role in establishing *emergency* declarations (enhancements of ESD authorities from the last Farm Bill, the BIL, and the IRA including the Western Fireshed Emergency Action Determination) on the highest-risk forests to expedite some of the NEPA, contracting and consultation processes. Governor Little noted the bigger issue is recognizing what kind of filter we have to go through to get a categorical exclusion (CE). Jamie responded that the Chief said that emergency-declaration guidance would be coming to the states from the USFS last fall on how the states, through partnerships with the USFS, can trigger emergency-situation status on national forests. This guidance hasn't come yet, but we still anticipate receipt of this information soon. The Governor's Office is in touch with the USFS Washington Office (WO) and Chief Moore's Chief of Staff to ensure this effort moves forward. Tom Schultz conveyed that 5 million bd. ft. of timber is under litigation in Region 1, and anything to help expedite these treatments on national forests—including state assistance in emergency declarations—needs to be pursued.
 - Jonathan Oppenheimer noted we need to recognize the need for large amounts of prescribed fire to even come close to our targets of acres needing treatment, and he appreciates the boost in the IDL's fire-protection budget.
 - David Rosenkranz gave a brief summary of the USFS's budget, noting that the infrastructure funds in this year's budget have not yet been fully allocated to the field offices. The regular appropriations in FFY22 were \$22.1 million and the FFY23 appropriations are expected to be the same. The Wildfire Crisis Strategy Funding (WCSF, from BIL and IRA funds) equaled \$17.7 million in FFY22 (primarily going to the Southwest Idaho Landscape) and will be \$66 million in FFY23 (including the new Lower Salmon Landscape). Lifetime funding of the WCSF, for Idaho only (both Regions), is expected to be \$262 million. The USFS is "looking under every rock" for partners to help get work done. David added that none of these funds will need to be held back to accommodate or support a bad fire season.
 - Linda Jackson added that the Payette N. F. was working on the GNA agreement with Adams County, initiating another GNA agreement with Valley County, and would be meeting with the Nez Perce tribe next Monday to discuss good-neighbor opportunities—recognizing that the USFS cannot get this done by itself.
 - Craig Foss talked about the discrepancy between IDL's goal of not growing government, and the need to staff up to even begin to take on this magnitude of funds and needed work. While IDL has increased staffing in Fire Management and GNA, it's going to take many

more partners to come close to reaching these goals. Bringing other agencies and entities to the table who have capacity is going to be key; we must think “way bigger.”

- Tim Garcia noted that it takes a long time between bill passage and grants being awarded to the states—and that USFS State & Private Forestry (S&PF) will receive a final budget in February. He anticipates increased S&PF grants to IDL (from BIL and IRA funding), including FAP implementation funds, supplemental UCF support, and Hazardous Fuels Reduction monies. The last several years, before infrastructure funding, the S&PF funds have supplied \$3 to \$4 million to IDL in grant-funding assistance.
- Tim Garcia announced the second round of USDA-designated high-risk priority landscapes in the nation, including an area in the Lower Salmon River drainage on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest:
 - <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/01/19/biden-harris-administration-launches-new-efforts-address-wildfire>
 - https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/WCS-Second-Landscapes.pdf
- Craig Foss gave an overview of the infrastructure funds received by IDL from the USFS, totaling \$925,000 to date, with \$573,000 of that awarded for Forest Action Plan implementation projects and about \$300,000 for State and Volunteer Fire Assistance. \$50,000 of that was awarded to IDL through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) to assist other entities in Idaho to develop and submit CWDG grant applications. We do not yet know which applicants have been selected to receive an award. Total funds requested: \$4,129,756. Here are the applicants in Idaho:
 - Island Park Sustainable Fire Community - \$1,524,573 requested for fuels reduction, outreach, and home risk evaluations
 - Idaho Firewise - \$225,214 requested for education support to Washington and Owyhee counties on CWPP implementation efforts
 - Idaho Firewise - \$193,844 requested for education support to Idaho County on CWPP implementation efforts
 - Boise Fire Department - \$1,346,625 requested for wildfire adaptation efforts via multiple activities (fuels reduction, outreach/education, equipment purchases in support of fuels reduction activities)
 - Fremont County - \$71,500 requested for conducting wildfire risk home evaluations
 - Bannock County - \$78,000 requested for wildfire risk planning efforts
 - Clark County - \$690,000 (\$70k to IDL) for fuels reduction activities
- John Riling and Brian Davis gave a presentation on the Boise Front Project, a new cross-boundary project on and around the Boise National Forest in the Idaho City District, encompassing the #11 highest-risk Fireshed in the nation ([presentation attached](#)). Modeling from the Fire Modeling Institute, generating a quantitative wildfire-risk assessment specific to the Southwest Idaho Landscape, is being used to delineate targeted treatment areas. A partnership with the National Forest Foundation (NFF) will enable much larger grant and project administration, as well as bring in third-party matching funds, to add much more capacity on and off the national forest in this area. The Boise N. F. is working with multiple partners, including Idaho Power and the USFS Enterprise GIS Team, to develop common restoration goals and needs assessments—and acquire commitment from partners for manpower and cash contributions.
 - The link to the Wildfire Risk to Communities interactive website that John Riling referred to in his presentation: [Homepage - Wildfire Risk to Communities](#)

- With limited purchasers/mill infrastructure in this landscape, we will have to do more noncommercial thinning and prescribed burning. We have to think more creatively about *how* to get work done, acquire more implementation partners and explore new contracting opportunities.
 - There are already several NEPA-cleared projects on the Boise N. F. in this Boise Front area that are ready to implement.
 - We need to have NFF group together smaller non-industrial private forestlands to present a more attractive package to mastication and thinning operators.
 - The Boise N. F. and partners are working on a feasibility study on this project area, with focused team discussions on social license, funding opportunities and partnership catalysts.
- Tim Christopherson responded to multiple member comments on solving the roadblocks of insufficient numbers of loggers, extension of logging seasons to facilitate reduced hauling resources, and lack of a new generation of people in these technical forestry fields. He and other loggers cannot hire operators; people don't want to do hard work in the woods. Limited loggers will prefer to take on long-term contracts, working on more contiguous acres on one ownership—potentially leaving smaller ownerships unharvested and unthinned.
 - Curtis Elke conveyed that Idaho NRCS is looking at increasing staff by approximately 50 employees across the state. Curtis made note of the Healthy Forest Reserve Program—a 10-year cost-share agreement that helps landowners enhance and protect forests on private and tribal lands through easements and financial assistance. Curtis also brought hard copies of the NRCS Climate Quick Reference Guide (*attached*). This Guide is from an interactive map of the U.S. where these analyses/guides can be generated for any state or county: <https://webapps.jornada.nmsu.edu/climate-quick-guides/>
 - Tom Schultz commented that agencies are hesitant to take a large jump—and are stuck in “incrementalism.” We need to all think about different ways of doing business to meet these goals—and bring new and varied partners to the table to truly increase capacity. How do we leverage partners, like NWTF, to bring in money and manpower to make a difference? What is the advantage of Idaho bringing SIL or the new Lower Salmon Landscape into a Shared Stewardship priority landscape? Tom asked what SSAG members could do to advocate for the Governor to designate, or promote, another high-risk Fireshed or USDA high-priority landscape in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF).
 - Jonathan Oppenheimer noted that 1) Shared Stewardship accomplishment metrics need to be shown within the framework of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—and with more emphasis on how cross-boundary project accomplishments are resulting in watershed improvements.
 - Carl Petrick commented that the USFS has used Forest Stewardship contracts with NGOs to quadruple outputs on the national forests (in the Southeast) and he is trying to bring that model to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, working now with the National Deer Association. Doing this successfully takes a lot of trust and relationship-building.
 - A lot of discussion evolved around: ***How do we incubate lasting programs and business infrastructure with this large infusion of funds?***
 - Ara will send out polls to SSAG members to determine the best time to gather for the next SSAG meeting.
 - Meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.