

Idaho Shared Stewardship Advisory Group (SSAG) Meeting—Online via Zoom

4/26/22

Meeting Notes by Ara Andrea, IDL Statewide Shared Stewardship Coordinator

Notes:

- Nate Fisher, Chair of SSAG, welcomed everyone and hosted round-robin introductions of participants.
- Governor Little gave an opening address to the SSAG members, focusing on Idaho's second year of record surplus funds, tax relief and the resulting projects and programs that have prospered. He referred to the "trifecta" of increased state investments and pointed specifically to record state investments in water quality/quantity and fire suppression and prevention—and his success in rallying bi-partisan support for these issues across the West as the current Chair of the Western Governors Association. Relaying his continued support for the collaborative programs and processes, like Shared Stewardship, that result in increased capacity for getting needed treatments done on Idaho forestlands—he said he looked forward to the committee's ideas to further expand project work on the ground, especially with incoming IIJA (Infrastructure Bill) funds.
- Jeff Lau (North-Idaho Shared Stewardship Coordinator), Lynn Oliver (South-Idaho Shared Stewardship Coordinator) and Ara Andrea presented PowerPoint slides conveying a summary of accomplishments in the two Shared Stewardship Priority Landscapes. (*A detailed list of these accomplishments was sent to members prior to the meeting.*) Most of the cross-boundary treatments are occurring in Bonner County's Scattered Lands focal area—with other projects emerging in Adams County's Highway 95 Corridor focal area. New partners, for funding and operating, are being explored and brought into our Shared Stewardship teams. GNA work on national forests continues to successfully grow—and the first GNA-administered timber sale on BLM forestlands is currently being implemented in Adams County. Conversations with all seven national forests in Idaho have started to explore opportunities for more cross-boundary work and GNA assistance.
- Tim Garcia (USFS State & Private Forestry Director, Regions 1 and 4) and Jake Strohmeyer (Acting USFS Intermountain Infrastructure Coordinator) gave a presentation describing the USFS's 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy, conveying how Chief Moore took advantage of the IIJA terms and funding to establish this wildfire-risk reduction plan. In April, Sec. Vilsack announced the top 10 prioritized Initial Investment Landscapes in the nation, which include the Southwest Idaho Priority Landscape. This USDA-designated landscape incorporates most of Idaho's southern Shared Stewardship Priority Landscape and the nationally #11-ranked high-risk Fireshed in the Boise Front Range. It encompasses 1.7 million acres and will receive a first round of IIJA funding totaling almost \$60 million dollars over 3 years—with over \$17 million coming in FFY22.
- Craig Foss (IDL State Forester) gave a summary of the Region 1 Roundtable meeting which was held online April 20, 21 and 22—reporting that the partners' meeting, on the third day, collectively identified challenges and solutions to getting these funds moved toward project implementation. He also announced that the Region 4 Roundtable would be held May 3, 4 and 5. Craig then reported on *known* IIJA funding that was heading to the State of Idaho through State & Private Forestry authorities, which includes a little over \$1 million for support of Forest Action Plan implementation, State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance. He closed with reporting to the committee the issues and challenges Idaho is facing such as

how to incubate and grow capacity with partnering non-profit organizations and NGOs, counties, and other organizations.

- Curtis Elke (Idaho NRCS State Conservationist) informed participants about the USDA announcement of \$1 billion to be invested in partnerships to support climate-smart ag and forestry projects. Applications for the first round of funding (\$5 million to \$100 million) are due on May 6—and for the second round of funding, due on June 10. ([Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities | USDA](#))
- John Robison (SSAG member; Idaho Conservation League) emphasized a key strategy for implementation success is keeping all Shared Stewardship partners—including SSAG members and Collaboratives—informed of all opportunities coming to Idaho's national forests, other federal agencies and state agencies. This will require increased inter-agency and cross-organization communication.
- Tom Schultz (SSAG member; Idaho Forest Group) offered a solution: that one person (within IDL, USFS or contracted) is assigned responsibility collecting and displaying all of these opportunities together in a single repository—which could act as a clearinghouse for all Shared Stewardship partners collaborating on cross-boundary projects. This person could bring people together to explore these opportunities and work cooperatively to get the work done. Tom summarized a successful program in Montana where the state DNRC hosted a \$4.5-million dollar grant program—and got the money targeted to on-the-ground operations quickly. <https://www.montanaforestactionplan.org/pages/request-for-proposals>.
- Responses confirmed that collecting more *funding* opportunities right now is not part of the needed solution. Shared Stewardship teams need people, manpower and streamlined processes (grant administration, contracting processes, etc.). Also, it takes a full team of partners to carry out projects and collect data on funding and manpower opportunities at a regional scale. It would be very difficult for one person, or a single position, to take on the responsibility of collecting these human-capital opportunities for Shared Stewardship and Infrastructure-funded projects statewide.
- Dan Dinning (SSAG member; Boundary County Commissioner) asked if the USFS could use the IIJA-enhanced Emergency Situation Determination process to increase our ability to carry out these fuels-reduction projects in a timelier manner.
- Curtis Elke asked for more information on Idaho's Red Tape Reduction Act ([Cutting Red Tape | Office of the Governor\(idaho.gov\)](#)) and emphasized his desire for Idaho NRCS to partner more with Shared Stewardship cross-boundary efforts and help in finding solutions. He stated he wants to know the “pain points” Idaho is experiencing in trying to implement cross-boundary projects.
- Tom Schultz asked that Ara Andrea (and Shared Stewardship coordinators) create a “pinch-point” list to pass on to the SSAG members.
- Discussion continued regarding exploring how the Emergency Situation Declaration process might be used to expedite fire-mitigation project work on the Payette, Boise and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests—and the need to examine how that process can best be carried out.
- The next SSAG meeting will ideally include a half-day meeting and a field trip in the north Idaho Shared Stewardship Priority Landscape. We will try to schedule this on the front or back end of the upcoming Western Governors Association conference in Coeur d'Alene (late July)—or if that's not possible, in October.