

Tanana Valley State Forest
Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

October 27, 2011, 6:00-9:30 PM

DNR Large Conference Room, 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, Alaska

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Introductions – Mark Eliot, Northern Regional Forester

Attending:

CAC Members: Doug Bowers, Brad Cox, Paul Karczmarczyk, Tom Malone, Thomas Nerbonne, Al Pagh, Dan Rees and Chris Stark.

Guests and staff: FNSB- Paul Costello, Cora Shook and Kerry Barnes; APT - Thomas Deerfield and Dave Stancliff; DOF - Chris Maisch (brief visit), Mark Eliot, Al Edgren, Jeff Hermanns, KT Pyne, Rick Jandreau (teleconference) and Jim Schwarber (note-taker)

Public Teleconferenced in: Priscilla Pharr and Kurt Helms

Three seats (Mining, Recreation, and Lower Valley Representative) on the committee are vacant, and 3 current seats (Forest Industry, Environmental Interests, and Native Community) are expiring at the end of December 2011. The Division of Forestry will be advertizing to recruit for these six seats. Current members with expiring seats may apply to be reappointed.

The CAC reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting; a couple misspellings were noted, otherwise the minutes are OK.

New Business:

Delta Area Forestry Update – Al Edgren, Delta Area Forester

Al reported on the Delta High School Biomass Boiler project that broke ground in April 2011. The building is smaller than one for the Tok School biomass boiler, but can hold 4 van loads of chips (2 in hopper and 2 Vans parked in bays) – or about a month's supply of chips. The boiler manufacturer's owner participated in the installation of the boiler. The chip delivery system uses a dual parallel auger system to move chips from the storage bin. Dry Creek purchased a chip van and is providing 17-18% moisture chips to the school. They are working through the

start-up bugs. A little steam shows from the stack when the boiler is started up, but disappears within an hour of operation. Teachers are asking for a light to be turned on the building when the boiler is running, since there is no smoke showing when it is operational. A van load of chips (15-18 tons, depending on percentage of moisture) costs the school \$1080. The equivalent BTU amount of oil would cost \$7723. This represents a fuel savings of >86% for the school. The school boiler may use an average of 1 van load per week, once winter temperatures drop. Al passed out two articles on biomass, saying it is important to educate people about the biomass project. Public support is important to its success; and some negative rumors, ranging from the project is a failure, to DOF will be clear-cutting the entire forest to fuel the boiler, have circulated in Delta about the project.

Thomas Deerfield mentioned that the 15 'Fuels for Schools' projects in Montana faced local opposition at first, but two years later everyone thinks it turned out ok. There is a need for articles about Alaska success stories. Thomas introduced Dave Stancliff, an APT employee who does public outreach for the Tok APT proposed biomass project. In the Lower '48, the biomass energy and pulp industries compete for the same raw biomass product. Delta barley growers would like barley to fuel the boiler – but the dollar cost per BTU is key. Wood chips are less expensive than barley at this time. Fort Greely is considering heating the base with biomass; a feasibility study is underway. They estimate burning 20,000 tons per year or needing 3 vans per day of wood chips.

Al next reviewed the East Volkmar Fire that burned near Delta last May-June, using a PowerPoint presentation. This lightning-caused fire burned about 12 million board feet of commercial white spruce in the Tanana Valley State Forest and about the same amount of hardwoods. They are preparing a FLUP to propose harvesting the burned timber while it retains some value. Newly burned trees retain harvest value for two to seven years, providing a short-term salvage window. Doyon had even more timber resources impacted by the Volkmar Fire. There was discussion about considering protecting biomass values from wildland fire, using a 100 year outlook. Some areas may have up to 100/tons per acre of biomass. DOF will sell by this by the number of tons harvested off the TVSF. The burned area is not within existing Five Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS), though it will be added to the next FYSTS. There is a good ice bridge site for crossing the Tanana River for accessing this area. CAC members thanked Al for the excellent presentation and photos.

Jeff Hermanns, Tok Area Forester, reported only 10 acres burned in his area. There was no lightning, few human started fire; and then it rained. DOF is considering how to do a 25 year timber (biomass) contract to meet the projected volume needs for the proposed APT power plant in Tok. Issues include how to address possible, though unknown wildland fire impacts on the available biomass. One fire could burn a lot of the proposed contracted area.

- Salvage timber sale underway in the Porcupine Creek area
- 800 acre FLUP one mile from Eagle Subdivision – no local opposition
- 500 acre FLUP for 2004 Taylor Complex Fire area for salvage
- Tok Area received \$56,000 of \$600,000 timber road CIP
 - Building 7 miles of access road from MP 12.4 of Taylor Highway on north side of Tanana River along ridges to access TVSF
 - 4.5 miles built; using DOF equipment and staff – stretches dollars
 - Opens access to several hundred thousand acres of state land
 - Snowmachine clubs support new access
- Conducting a biomass inventory research project with APT
 - Still little known about just how much energy in an acre
 - Sampling 1/100th acre plots; cutting measuring, weighing, etc.
 - For mass and growth rates; plus tables for each species
 - Will combine with timber-typing inventory already completed
 - To assess volume for each area typed
 - Will help answer how much acreage will need to be harvested
- Tok School's wood-chip boiler going from hot water to steam output
 - In order to drive a 60 KW electric turbine to offset school's needs
 - When operational – will be first high school to use biomass for both heat and electricity
 - Estimated savings of up to \$200,000/year
 - Boiler's first year of operation went well;
 - Though it ran out of chips at times
- Joe Young installed a new sawmill – a \$300,000 investment
 - An 'overhead end dogging scragg mill'
 - Makes 4x4s out of small diameter material
 - They may start making presto logs
- The Fire Academy – Jeff's "most rewarding project he's run in years"
 - \$390,000 annual appropriation for Fire Academy(s)
 - Possibly in McGrath or Tok this year

- 'Boot Camp' for training 40 young firefighters

Thomas Deerfield provided an update on the proposed APT Tok Combined Heat and Power (CHP) project.

- He introduced Dave Stancliff, who was hired by APT to do public outreach for the project.
- APT is working with DOF the past year on a long-term 25 year contract for biomass fuel
 - Good progress so far
 - Goal is to have a contract by first ¼ of 2012
 - AEA Round 4 grant for feasibility study
 - Develop harvest contract
 - Conduct 'investment-grade' feasibility study
 - Next is 'technology review'
 - Current state-of-the art for woodchips – KWs
 - Environmental analysis
 - Fiscal analysis
 - Resource assessment
 - Hired Claire Doig
 - Determine 'fuel cost' of delivered chips
 - Road costs/ tons per acre, etc.
 - Are Tok forests feasible to harvest?
 - 25 year harvest plan (including costs)

Over past 5 or 6 years, about 300-500 acres of biomass were harvested in Tok. Feller bunchers were used at a cost of about \$1200 per acre, with whole tree utilization. The big question is at what scale and at what cost to achieve major harvesting of biomass in the Tok Area? Tok being mostly flat ground is key to helping make this work.

- APT estimates needing 20-25,000 tons of biomass a year for a 2 MW power plant
- At 40 tons per acre, would need to harvest 600 acres a year
- Not expected to compete with or block other projects/uses
- Project may support infrastructure to do other tasks

Mr. Deerfield hopes to see a proliferation of biomass energy projects in Alaska before the end of his career. The APT project supports keeping jobs and dollars in

the community. There is a concern in the Tok community over large areas being clear-cut for biomass; DOF is working on addressing this through laying out timber sales in a patch work.

[Brief interruption with the GCI Bridge for those teleconferencing in at 8 PM; call re-established by 8:15]

KT Pyne, Area Forester, provided a report on Fairbanks Area Forestry activities using handouts and a PowerPoint presentation.

- Recruitment for a vacant Operations Forester is underway
- 75 active timber sales in Fairbanks Area
 - First ever Aspen sale; harvest going to Pellet Mill
- 85 wildland fires burned 50,746 acres
 - Two major fires – Moose Mountain and Hastings
 - Half of the Hastings Fire affected TVSF lands
- Important to understand that insect damage will extend from fire damaged areas up to 300 feet into the surrounding green, unburned forest. The actual impacts from a fire are greater than the area of burned trees.
- New fireline roads built to fight the Hastings Fire may provide access to the TVSF; especially the southern dozer fireline leading off of Himalaya Road. This southern fireline was blocked with a berm put in by unknown party(ies).

A person on the teleconference line who lives in the Himalaya area asked if the Borough will charge for firewood. A Borough representative said they charge \$5 a cord for a cutting permit on Borough lands. The person on the phone replied, “We were told by DOF firefighters that we could cut firewood left along the rehabbed areas as long as the branches were left.” Ms. Pyne will work to mark land ownership by the state of Alaska and Borough in the Himalaya area.

- Firewood from clearing for the railroad extension and levee project near Salcha is being provided to the Salcha Fairgrounds for sale to the public.
- Fairbanks Area Forestry is starting a new firewood program that is issuing permits for personal use firewood cutting in “Designated Firewood Areas.” The new permits now allow the harvest of green spruce for firewood. Permittees do not have to report how many cords they actually harvest.

- There is still little accessible dry firewood for personal use.

The Bonanza Creek Long-Term Ecological Research folks have requested DOF permanently close, with gates, Zasada and Argyle Roads that lead off of Bonanza in the research area. They are experiencing problems from the public cutting trees within the research plots. OK for ATVs to use area roads – they just want to keep vehicles out. Discussion centered on how difficult it is keeping a road closed. In the past, gates have been removed, and the public is unwilling to accept restricted access. There is also the perception that on one hand DOF is seeking more access and roads, while on the other they are closing a road. Other options to closing the road were discussed, from putting up information signs every 100 feet, doing more public outreach, or moving the research plots further off the road to better protect them from damage. Any effort may need a lot of coordination with DOT, the various publics, etc. There will be a public outcry if the two road gates are put in and locked. Another issue mentioned was the presence of big hunting camps, including the use of bulldozers.

A discussion of Superior Pellet Mill's mix of tree species used for their pellets took place. Their present formula is 75% spruce and 25% aspen. Earlier pellets made with a birch component caused problems – perhaps because it was difficult to fully remove bark from the birch in the winter.

Via teleconference, Priscilla asked questions about the fuels clearing projects near Himalaya. She asked if the firewood could be set aside instead of buried in piles mixed with dirt before being burned - "Ruins our chainsaws." Chris Stark said this sounds like a worthy agenda item for a future meeting.

Mark Eliot said it was important to have the CAC hear, review, and respond to these types of issues. There may be better ways to conduct a fuels project.

The next CAC meeting date was set for Thursday, January 12, 2012, and the CAC adjourned about 9:30 PM.