

MFCN Advisory Council Meeting Tuesday, September 8, 2026

NOTES

In Attendance:

Gordy Sanders, MFCN Advisory Council Chair

Steve Kimball, Coordinator MFCN

Tim Selim, U of MT NR Policy Group (intern, notes)

Margaret Gorski, Ravalli County Collaborative

Skip Kowalski, Bitterroot Forest Collaborative

Joe Cohenour, Big Elk Divide Restoration Committee, Elkhorn Working Group

Amy Seaman, Montana Watershed Coordination Council

Hilary Eisen, Wild Montana

Jim Burchfield, Lolo Restoration Committee, SW Crown Collaborative

Jason Glenn, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ali Ulwelling, MT DNRC

Sean Steinebach, Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group

Vaia Errett, Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group

Julie Thurston, Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative

Erin Clark, Lolo Restoration Committee, Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative

Emily Guiberson, BLM

Melissa Simpson, Forest Service

Peter Kolb, Montana Forest Owners Association

MFCN Financial Report:

- Approximately \$74k remaining for workshops, webinars, and operations. This is down from more than \$200k several years ago.
- Funding for November workshop is approaching &10k.
- NFF grant/RFP has been submitted. It would provide up to \$23k for outreach etc., but not operations. Awaiting results.

Agency Updates:

- Melissa Simpson, USFS – Reorganization is ongoing. No State Director announced for MT yet. The northern regional office is waiting for reassignments which are likely to occur within the calendar year. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) identifies collaboratives while lacking dedicated funding and clarity on submittal and approval process.
- Ali Ulwelling, DNRC – NOFO is an additional step for states to receive funding and potential impacts are unclear. October 18-24th is forest products week. This highlights importance of local forest products by getting students involved with mill tours and other events. Media will be involved to increase awareness.
- Emily Guiberson, BLM – Has used NOFO process previously with GNA. Will now be utilizing Notice of Intent (NOI) process with county, state, tribal, and regional partners which could be more efficient than the NOFO.
- Jason Glenn, NRCS – No updates currently.

Roadless Rule Discussion:

The approaching deadline for public comments on rescinding the Roadless Rule prompted a wide-ranging discussion among Advisory Council members.

Members noted that rescinding the rule could affect the entire MFCN network. Because MFCN represents a diverse coalition, some members may support rescission while others may oppose it. The Council recognized that adopting a formal position could risk alienating members or prompting some to withdraw. The Council considered whether MFCN should take a position on the Roadless Rule or instead provide a draft letter that members could adapt for their own public comments. This option was discussed in light of the short 30-day comment period, which created challenges for meaningful analysis, participation and collaboration. A draft letter had already been circulated among Advisory Council members. Rather than advocating for or against rescission, the letter criticized aspects of the federal process that made public participation and collaboration more difficult, and suggests developing a Montana Roadless Rule using collaboration.

A vote was taken and the majority agreed that MFCN should proceed with the letter so that member groups could sign on before the deadline if they decide to do so. The letter offers support to its members without MFCN taking a particular stance on the issue. Groups will also be considering developing individual letters from their groups.

Advisory Council Member Comments and Updates:

- Margaret Gorski (Ravalli County Coll)
 - Dave Beatty was invited to talk about the Sheep Creek Mine exploration proposal.
- Jim Burchfield, Lolo Restoration Committee, SW Crown Collaborative
 - LRC Meeting at 5 pm, and SW Crown 1 pm Thursday.
- Sean Steinebach Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
 - Engagement and timing are difficult as a collaborative group. Last meeting was a tour of Sun Mountain Lumber. Considering engaging in the amicus brief process.
- Vaia Errett, Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group
 - Stakeholders are still at the table despite truncated time limit. Optimistic group can enter litigation.
- Peter Kolb, Montana Forest Owners Association
 - Lost significant portion of stewardship funding (federal funding via DNRC) used to educate landowners. Budget has been reduced.
- Amy Seaman, Montana Watershed Coordination Council
 - How do we best focus energy and resources amid collaborative headwinds? Watershed collaboration less of a focus currently.
- Erin Clark, Lolo Restoration Committee, Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative
 - Cornhole for clean water on 9/19. Table spaces are available for organizations. \$20. Kootenai Forest Fair on 9/26 in Libby.
- Joe Cohenour, Big Elk Divide Restoration Committee, Elkhorn Working Group
 - Progress on Dutchman Creek restoration including introducing cutthroat. Trying to initiate N Elkhorn trails project. EWG hired new administrative assistant.
- Julie Thurston, Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative

- Rose presenting at Thursday meeting. Landowner workshop October 8th.
- Hilarie Eisen, Wild Montana
 - Focused on roadless rule and travel management rule. USFS project along east side of Gallatin River is progressing.
- Steve Kimball (MFCN)
 - Draft agenda and speakers confirmed for the workshop. 10/14 webinar about engaging in federal litigation. MFCN awards open until 9/30. Need more nominations. A new partnership with UMT was established to increase engagement.

Group Leaders Meeting: 9/17/2026 10:00 - Noon
Next Meeting: 10/13/2026 10:30 - Noon