



GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Date: May 23, 2014

Participating Agencies

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Grand Teton National Park
Yellowstone National Park

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Elk Refuge
Red Rock Lakes
National Wildlife Refuge

Bureau of Land Management

Idaho, Montana, Wyoming

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF
Bridger-Teton NF
Caribou-Targhee NF
Custer National Forest
Gallatin National Forest
Shoshone National Forest

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To: Participants of the March 24, 2014 GYCC Public Conversation

From: Joe Alexander, Chair, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee

Subject: Meeting Summary

I am pleased to convey this meeting summary as my first official action as incoming Chair of the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee. While I was unable to attend the March 24, 2014 GYCC Public Conversation, my colleagues assure me the conversations were robust and the participants offered many helpful suggestions and insightful observations.

The attached notes begin with a one-page meeting synopsis, followed by a compilation of statements generated from each of the five discussion questions. The individual bullet statements have been consolidated and summarized to some degree where it removed a level of duplication.

My GYCC colleagues and I are discussing the many ideas heard at the meeting. We have decided to hold another Public Conversation in Bozeman MT in conjunction with our regularly scheduled meeting the last week of October 2014. Our Spring 2015 meeting will be held in Cody, WY and we anticipate holding a third, possibly final, Public Conversation in conjunction with that meeting. We will also add all meeting participants to our GYCC newsletter email list. Be looking for the next newsletter edition in early summer.

Let me thank you all again for your time, your ideas and your sincere interest in our Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Please direct any questions to GYCC Executive Coordinator Virginia Kelly at 406-587-6704, or vkelly@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph G. Alexander

JOSEPH G. ALEXANDER
Chair, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee

March 24, 2014 GYCC Public Conversation Synopsis

Welcome and Introductions: Over 50 members of the public joined GYCC members and staff at a *Public Conversation* in Jackson Wyoming to discuss Greater Yellowstone issues. Public participants included Tribal representatives, private citizens, representatives of environmental and tourism organizations, county and municipal staff, Wyoming county commissioners, Idaho and Wyoming state legislators, staff for the US Congressional delegation, and media representatives.

GYCC Chair Dan Wenk (Yellowstone NP Superintendent) opened the meeting by welcoming participants. Each GYCC manager, participant and staff introduced themselves. Dan explained the meeting purpose as:

- The GYCC wants to more strategically address ecosystem-scale issues, to improve collaboration with nonfederal entities, and to increase capacity through partnerships.
- The GYCC has limited capacity to implement big changes in its operations. It can reorient its focus (e.g. priority issues) and can work in different ways with each other and the public.
- The GYCC needs to deliberate before it can come to consensus on issues it may hear at the meeting.
- The GYCC will develop a summary report of the meeting (will not include answers to specific questions).

GYCC Coordinator Virginia Kelly provided a GYCC overview, explaining its members, mission, history, priorities, structure, decision making process, how the work gets done, and some notable achievements.

Facilitator Steve Smutko outlined the meeting procedure. Given the large turn-out, participants broke into five small groups, each with one or two managers, to discuss and report out on five questions in turn:

Facilitated Dialogue Questions

1. What is the GYCC doing that you would like them to continue or do more of?
2. How can the GYCC best interact with you and other stakeholders on GYE-scale issues?
3. If the GYCC were successfully collaborating with you and other stakeholders on GYE-scale issues, what would that look like? If you were successfully collaborating with the GYCC, describe what that would look like.
4. Understanding the GYCC addresses region-wide, ecosystem-scale issues that cut across agency boundaries and missions, what issues should the GYCC be addressing?
5. What GYE-level priorities should the GYCC focus on in the near future (3-5 years)?

Primary Themes from Participants. Three primary themes emerged from the dialogue:

1. **Improve Communication.** Participants requested more communication from GYCC, and suggested more meetings in more places; news releases, newsletters, website, list serve, social media.
2. **Increase Non-Federal Agency Participation.** Many participants suggested the GYCC operate more collaboratively and expressed a desire to work with subcommittees, or to help with projects.
3. **GYCC Priority Focus:** Participants expressed support for existing GYCC priorities, and suggested adding transportation/transit/travel standards; human use/impacts.

A summary of responses for each of the five discussion question follows.

Question 1 Summary

What is the GYCC doing that you would like them to continue or do more of?

Ecosystem Scale Coordination: Participants appreciated that the GYCC operates at the ecosystem scale:

- The value of coordination to address issues at the GYE scale
- Concept of ecosystem scale and (practical level) community
- Thinks about landscape as a whole not as island; beyond Yellowstone ecosystem north and west
- Landscape level outcomes – reporting out across ecosystem
- Coordinating and leveraging shared issues (eg weeds)
- Aligning the missions of each organization to achieve projects on the ground
- Pooling funding to get work done; separate units couldn't get it done
- Info on how funding or lack of funding affects daily operations

GYCC Priorities: Participants agreed with GYCC ecosystem scale priorities, and mentioned some in particular:

- Setting priorities; prioritized list is good
- Proactive approach to climate change with ecosystem; focus/coordination on climate change policy, although not seen much implementation
- Species – what is going on with the species
- Protect the greater landscape integrity
- Further connect people to the land & education: Could include defining core principles & topics (coordinated & coherent message)

Expanded interaction: Participants appreciated the work of GYCC subcommittees and asked the GYCC to work with a broader group of the public and stakeholders:

- Work with subcommittees
- Expand effort to outreach to and work with State and Local agencies and NGOs
- Include more user groups – grazing and mining
- Sustainable Operations coordination with other agencies. Continue and broaden sustainable ops beyond federal footprint, include more private lands and partners/managers/communities. E.g. Yellowstone recycling facility is only shared with West Yellowstone. The Yosemite counterpart to GYCC has cities and counties included

Communication and Outreach: Participants want more communication and outreach:

- Communication, communication, communication: Enhance information flow; look for new portals to convey information. More regular communication to the public; keep them informed. Get word out to more stakeholders and individuals. Help us understand what GYCC is doing.
- More of this kind of outreach; more of these types of meetings around GYE
- Hearing community and involving; spirit of cooperation and communication in communities
- Enhance coordination and consultation with Tribes; tell the story of Native Americans in the GYE
- More at interagency as GYCC with individual agency planning projects. Case by case may include communities.

Question 2 Summary

How can the GYCC best interact with you and other stakeholders on GYE-scale issues?

Methods of Communication: Participants suggested numerous communication methods and channels:

- Enhance community interaction, coordination, and communication
- Lots of good work being done but the channels of communication are not as clear or well utilized as they could be. Explore mechanism of communicating, efficient way; various outreach methods
- Meetings: Regular meetings with representatives and public. Move meetings around with public sessions. More meetings throughout GYE i.e. Idaho. Maybe smaller groups. Interagency functions – increase frequency.
- Quarterly or monthly GYCC newsletters that outlines what is on the horizon across all agencies; “pre-scoping”. Increase frequency of GYCC newsletter; create mailing list.
- Do more media releases
- Push the website for more outreach. Consider better use of Listservs, web directories, etc.
- Use social media.
- Create more collaborative learning sessions
- Communication through other agencies such as JHWF (Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation), GYC (Greater Yellowstone Coalition), JHCA (Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance)
- Helping us understand what scale the public stakeholders should interact with GYCC rather than individual agencies and units
- Move beyond MOUs to more meaningful interaction: Example: Tribes assisting with archeological site inventories
- Super good idea that the GYCC members coordinate in this group.

Expanded role in creating ecosystem standards and providing input to other agencies was suggested:

- Ecosystem wide species, resource standards to help local entities to increase awareness. Ecosystem wide interest – planning.
- Provide input / feedback to other agencies, other entities i.e. land use.

Additional Partners; Act as Convener: Participants asked the GYCC to work with more entities:

- More representation; expand membership to communities/townships/counties/local governments
- Make sure towns/parties are engaged. County roundtable – more meetings like today’s. Counties can help support land management goals in some areas – leverage. An opportunity for local land managers, electeds etc. to interact on an informal basis directly with stakeholders.
- Play increasing role as convener in GYE. Annual symposium around issue
- The existing structure of sub-groups is sufficient, but underutilized in terms of non-federal entities. Stakeholders, including NGOs, other governmental organizations (Tribes included), etc. are not being utilized as much as they could or wish to be. Open up the subcommittees – provide info on who is sitting on the subcommittees. Can subcommittees reach out more to public/ NGOs?
- Bring in stakeholders with areas that overlay within the GYE. Challenge – who are stakeholders?
- Increase partnership opportunities. Let outside groups help with funding and provide input.
- Provide a space for the private sector.
- Suggestions for how NGO/public can help agencies add capacity etc.

Question 3 Summary

If the GYCC were successfully collaborating with you and other stakeholders on GYE-scale issues, what would that look like? If you were successfully collaborating with the GYCC, describe what that would look like.

Communication / Interaction: Participants suggested increased communication and interaction between the GYCC and the public / stakeholders

- More face to face meetings and advertise them.
- Other outlets – radio and newspaper. Information clearing houses. Communicate with other organizations with a following. NGOs can help spread the word.
- Communicate priorities to stakeholders. Know what they are doing; better education. Understanding needs across agencies so we can do what we do. Coordinated activities of GYCC are clear; it would be a successful collaboration.
- Engaging NP issue experts in subject issues when appropriate.
- Develop an engagement strategy with GYCC - Convening function

Align Strategies / Coordinated Action: Participants suggested GYCC take a role in aligning strategies and coordinating action:

- Help align policies and strategies. Maintain a balance among mission, priorities
- Encourage the GYCC to become a forum for management of species and issues which explores the underlying factual issues and discusses those issues and developed common management standards in response.
- Coordinating actions, securing common interest
- GYCC help prioritize what we do at local level.
- Have better understanding of shared or differing policies and practices.

Capacity Building; Collaboration: Participants encouraged collaboration and offered resources:

- Build relationships. View stakeholders as partners. Meaningfully involve stakeholders – view them as an asset not a liability. Invitations to participate. Early and frequent communication. Focus on finding areas of agreement – we can agree on 90% of the issues. Start with low hanging fruit to build trust and collaboration.
- Define priorities, and then reach out, invited to appropriate subcommittee, understand how fit into big picture; something I can do. Subcommittees to partner more with outside agencies, etc. Create non-elite resource list by community to invite into subcommittee / issue.
- GYCC defines, with the public, the issues and priorities. Look for common ground. Be bold, be a teacher, let us help. If not able to speak with one voice, then facilitate discussion (e.g. on wildlife disease/feeding grounds). Move beyond the fire drills of the day.
- Share resources (i.e. GIS) – try to avoid duplication. Marshall resources to help; funds. Provide volunteers, knowledge, resources (i.e. JHWF (Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation)). Get work done on the ground with collaboration from NGOs and the public.
- Plug into existing structures where appropriate. Can we encourage watershed council structure? GYCC agencies would ensure their members play well in that forum and share federal land priority.
- Find a way to give us collaboration in different avenues. Bringing people together with GYCC leadership helps them understand how they can help. Participants can provide resources in a collaborative to help achieve goals GYCC has in common with collaborators.
- Form large collaborations to gain political support and funds and additional resources. We don't necessarily need to reinvent the wheel in terms of meaningful collaboration. There are a variety of models: Crown of the Continent, Everglades, Banff, etc.

Question 4 Summary

Understanding the GYCC addresses region-wide, ecosystem-scale issues that cut across agency boundaries and missions, what issues should the GYCC be addressing?

(Responses listed alphabetically)

Air and Water

- Water quality and watersheds and water quantity. Air quality – Class I airsheds.

Climate Change

- Climate refugia for non-mobile species (species that stay put)

Connect People to the Land / Public Land Relevancy

- Connecting people to land
- Recognize integrating people are part of the ecosystem; recognition ecosystem's value to people and communities, money spiritual, quality of life
- Connect with communities to understand what issues may change/impact them.
- Societal values and youth education; disconnect from nature. -Importance of values as well as knowledge transfer. Develop curriculum. Potential sub group on human dimension for natural resource management.
- Continue to develop sense that this is a unique system that needs to be managed as such
- Build back consistency of support for public lands to understand access decisions

Human Use, Impacts and Landscape Protection

- Recreational
- Quantifying and mitigating human impacts while balancing need to protect and balancing the need for the enjoyment of a national treasure.
- Efficiency and sustainability of operations and managing visitation
- Ecosystem sustainability -- allow uses and enjoyment but protect natural and cultural resources
- Balancing needs of local economy with ecosystem management
- Human growth nodes in peripheral areas impact GYE
- Housing, broadband access.
- Landscape protection; fragmentation
- Land use planning including no development
- Local/State government needs to think of this ecosystem as a valued asset.

Invasives

- Coordinated approach to invasive aquatic species like mussels.
- Vulnerabilities - invasives, disease - focus on these

Sustainability

- Encourage continued focus on sustainable operations, efficiency & sustainability
- Carbon emissions
- Renewable energy i.e. hydro retrofits.
- Work with downstream water users to encourage conservation

Travel / Transportation

- Transportation
- Transit infrastructure.
- Consistent travel standards across federal agency lands and adjoining state lands

Question 4 Summary

Understanding the GYCC addresses region-wide, ecosystem-scale issues that cut across agency boundaries and missions, what issues should the GYCC be addressing?

Wildlife

- State fish and game agencies -- bring them into the mix of discussions especially when considering cross jurisdictional movement of wildlife
- Land use policies that may affect wildlife migration.
- Wildlife disease – common concerns – chronic wasting disease, Brucellosis, etc.
- Federal family having common definitions/goals for YES.
- Aiding and protecting Rare T&E species as well as protecting and improving that habitat.
- Migratory wildlife in and out of GYE. Meta populations stay connected at Yellowstone to Yukon scale not just Greater Yellowstone. Wildlife movement corridor - a trans boundary issue
- The GYE is the last best place in the Continental US to achieve large landscape conservation. The GYCC needs to coordinate its work around protecting the natural values and ecosystem functions including connectivity to the Central Idaho Wildlands and Crown of the Continent. No easy task but all decisions should be put to the test of protecting or enhancing the wildlife, habitat and water values of the GYE.

GYCC Operations

- Enhancing collaboration, communication, engagement and relationships with stakeholders and the public.
- Continue to develop sense that this is a unique system that needs to be managed as such
- Goals for priorities -- what are goals people can buy into? NGOs to buy into and support? Find common ground.
- Building on successes -- set a goal, accomplish, then celebrate and build on it
- Better coordination and alignment of planning processes; common set of goals and directives among the federal agencies. Consistency across regions and agencies
- Decision making process. Scale of GYCC you could make better decisions than if went district by district (IE phosphate mine)
- Expand GYCC universe, anti – silo. Expand network of GYCC and sub committees
- Create a sense of stewardship by residents and visitors. Harness power of concerned public and visitors, through education and other means.
- Go beyond low-hanging fruit and work on larger, more controversial topics/opportunities.
- Stay flexible and current on science, don't be attached to old guidelines
- Ask self-assessment question: GYE has been successful, but are we doing all we ought to be doing to perpetuate that?
- Take long term vision >50 years to achieve goals and develop plans.
- Time for a new vision exercise for GYCC, with communities and stakeholders

Tribal Role and Function

- Role and function of the Tribes with the GYCC

Other

- Existing priorities are a good list – start working

Question 5 Summary

What GYE-level priorities should the GYCC focus on in the near future (3-5 years)?

Several priority topics were identified, as well as many ideas for how the GYCC could operate.

Priority topics (listed alphabetically)

- Climate change and sustainability – including efficiency & sustainability
- Connecting people to the land; societal values and youth education. Educate public about their responsibility to protect natural resources.
- Human use: Evaluate type of use and amount of use. Ecosystem sustainability; ensure that increase in use of GYE does not degrade natural resources and cultural resources.
- Invasive species
- Water
- Wildlife: Delist grizzlies and prevent listing of sage grouse

GYCC Operation

- Enhance collaboration, communication, and relationships with stakeholders and the public. Keep building relationships; reset/ enhance relationships with stakeholders. Create engagement strategies and effective collaborations
- All the agencies stay engaged, continue to expand GYCC “universe” – stay together.
- Consistency in different regions. A process to make sure agency actions are coordinated. Ecosystem level policies, standardized principles developed by GYCC carried on by NPOs.
- Develop goals and timeline around current priorities. Set clear 3-5 year goals for existing priorities. Analyze threats to prioritize issues
- When political entity makes decision they realize/recognize its impact to YES
- Role and function of the Tribes with the GYCC. Involve the Tribes perspective on ecosystem management. The tribal perspective would invite thoughts on ecological and cultural preservation and protection. Conduct one-on-one (not consultation) on this approach with the tribes having direct interest.
- Why aren't State G&F on committees?
- Develop sense in people that is a unique ecosystem
- Stay flexible and current and don't be attached to old guidelines.
- Expanding network offer GYCC capacity with “ecosystem watch” (like “neighborhood watch”).
- Envision >50 years to develop plans and goals.
- It's time for a new vision from the GYCC.
- Place of leadership and self-assessment. Is the GYCC doing everything they should be doing? Steps for improvement? Guidance?
- GYE is extraordinary by any global standard for its perpetuation and protection of at least half of area of natural values. Ask if we are doing everything we should? Could we do more? Celebrate what we've done well.
- Elevate the GYE as a national treasure to receive more and consistent funding. Also to look at harnessing our 4 million visitors as part of the GYA family.