

**From:** Dani Southard

**Sent:** Friday, September 18, 2020 5:30 PM

**To:** Snelson, Scott I -FS; Steele, Kurt -FS; Connolly, Shannon B -FS; Frisbee, C - FS; Turk, Janette L -FS; Danczyk, Gary M -FS; Kies, Julie - FS; Dwallien@nationalforests.org; Marlee Ostheimer; mselig; Spencer Cordovano; kdibari@nationalforests.org; Marymitsos

**Cc:** Dani Southard

**Subject:** notes from Flathead cabin discussion

All-

Thank you to everyone for a good call on Wednesday about the Flathead cabin concept (we'll find a better name for this...) Attached are some notes from our discussion including the list of those who were on the call. Please take a few minutes to look through the notes and let me know if you have any edits. I'm also attaching the resources Scott circulated prior to the call.

I'll work with Janette to get a time on our calendars in early November for a follow up call. Thank you for bringing this idea forward to the NFF. We're looking forward to seeing what we can collectively make of it.

Have a wonderful weekend.

**Dani Southard**

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## Flathead Connected Cabin Discussion

Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### Attendance:

Kurt Steele, Forest Supervisor, Flathead NF

Scott Snelson, District Ranger, Spotted Bear, Flathead NF

Shannon Connolly- Recreation, Spotted Bear RD, Flathead NF

Chris Prew, - Recreation Program Manager, Supervisors Office, Flathead NF

Janette Turk- Forest Partnership Coordinator, Flathead NF

Julie Kyes - Wood and Biomass Utilization Coordinator, Region 1 and 4

Dayle Wallien, Conservation Partnerships Director - National Forest Foundation

Marcus Selig, Vice President, Field Programs - National Forest Foundation

Spencer Plumb, Conservation Finance Program Manager – National Forest Foundation

Karen DiBari, Conservation Connect Director- National Forest Foundation

Dani Southard, Northern Rockies Program Manager

Marlee Ostheimer, Conservation Partnerships Manager – National Forest Foundation

### Next Steps

- NFF discuss further internally
- Forest fly an RFP to get a better look at cost
- NFF to set up another team call in 6 weeks or so to discuss priorities over the next two years
- Begin conceptualizing linked system?
- Gary Danczyk is speaking about this concept (today) at the national level; will mention the Forest is talking with NFF about this

**Overview:** In order to adapt to changing use recreational pressures and manage anticipate or ongoing resource concerns, including but not limited to grizzly bear human interactions, the Flathead National Forest is looking to develop several cabin rental opportunities on the Spotted Bear Ranger District. There are currently 29 sites that have been identified as potential opportunities on the Spotted Bear RD. There is potential to expand the cabin system to other areas on the Forest and even throughout the Montana region to create a hut to hut system.

**NFF question: Actual cost per cabin unit and per pod? 50K seems low for a cabin; does this include build on site or just the structure?**

- Julie suggested that an RFP could be used to identify different open source models and could be a good basis to determine cost and feasibility of standardizing a design that could work to create a connected network. Forest could note preference to small diameter wood material.
- Current thinking is that cabins would be very basic to accommodate 4 people and placed on top of helical piers rather than hardened foundations, to make structures easier to move if needed and minimize ground disturbance.
- 500 square foot shell (rectangular building with a loft) for \$50,000. There may be a need to consider electricity for some locations. Trying to stay away from plumbing to keep maintenance costs low.
- In addition to recreational cabins, could be used as a template for employee housing or admin sites

**NFF question: what is the timeline and realistic feasibility of production of cabins from Wooden Haus? What are the alternatives (if any) if this is not a viable business to purchase from?** Wooden Haus is likely 2 years out from a production standpoint. Suggestion that NFF connect with Pat Clark directly. RFP could identify additional options.

**NFF question: How would these cabins be maintained over time? There could be significant costs involved in this.** Maintenance model could be kept in-house with FS or externalized through partnership with nonprofit partner similar to 10<sup>th</sup> mountain division in Co. half of cabin rental fees would be directed to a fund to maintain and replace structures overtime, as needed.

**NFF Question: Has a map been developed to depict where cabins would be located or potential for a connected network?** Spotted Bear – 6 sites of four cabins each are doable in the near term. These locations have been mapped out.

**NFF question From a NEPA standpoint, what (if any) would be the hurdles?** Only allowed one (new) development per 10 years per bear management unit. Cabin site selection will need to be strategic. Could replace old sites (campsites) with a cabin. Overall probably positive for the bears (hard side units). Huts could be viewed as temporary, allowing some flexibility from a NEPA standpoint at the developed rec sites that are truly Admin in nature. Helical pier foundation, not dug foundation, keeps structures temporary.

**NFF question: Could a connected system be established on the Flathead first and then extended to other Forests? Have there been any discussions with other Forests about this?** There could be interest at a national level for a national design standard. There is interest on other districts and forests for an interconnected cabin system, (Seeley RD, Kootenai NF, for example) for both rental cabins and employee housing. Seeley Lake interested in a winter hut system.

**NFF question: How many years to get this lifted off the ground? (Grandest vision) – 10-year: CDT hut system.** With simplified with standardized design and/or stimulus bill, could be a 5-year plan.

**Funding:** No support through GAOA this year, but potentially in future years.

#### **Where NFF can help/what is our role?**

NFF could support the project by adding capacity: funding, contracting, collaboration, bringing partners in to build support, supporting the development of a standalone maintenance non-profit (if needed). We need to have a better idea of the phased proposal

#### **Additional info on 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division**

The 10th Mt. Div Hut Association is a nonprofit that builds, restores, maintains, and manages the entire hut system. The Association is a nonprofit org that operates under special use permits and manages all aspects of the huts, from building and maintenance, to stocking with firewood and toilet paper, to managing reservations and payments. By all intents and purposes, the huts are the Association's, and the FS simply owns the land on which they are located.

The model has been incredibly successful. The organization is very well funded (from user fees and donations), and the huts are impeccably maintained. The only challenge is that the huts are so popular it can be difficult to get reservations. <https://www.huts.org/>  
Association's ED, Ben Dodge – NFF has connections to Ben.