



SGPC Monthly Meeting
May 21, 2020, - 1:00-3:00 P.M.
Zoom Remote Meeting
NOTES

Participants:

1. Jon Paul Anderson, High Cascade, Inc.
2. Erin Black, Mt. Adams Ranger, GPNF
3. Lucy Brookham, Cascade Forest Conservancy
4. Bengt Coffin, S. Zone Planner, GPNF
5. Gary Collins, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington
6. Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, Saving Skamania County
7. Sharon Frazey, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
8. Jeremy Grose, SDS Lumber
9. Chuck Hersey, WA Department of Natural Resources
10. Kevin James, Ecologist, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, USFS
11. Mackenzie Karnstein, OSU Student
12. Tom Lannen, Skamania County Commissioner
13. Rick Larson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
14. Matt Little, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, WA Chapter
15. Jay McLaughlin, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
16. Jeffrey Mocniak, Melchomy Craft Mead/Cascadia Education Project
17. Dean Myerson, Friends of Mt. Adams
18. Ryan Ojerio, Washington Trails Association
19. Dave Olson, Restoration and Stewardship Staff Officer, GPNF (phone)
20. Josh Petit, SGPC Coordinator
21. Emily Stevenson, Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
22. Sean Tran, WA Department of Natural Resources
23. Jim White, Underwood Conservation District
24. Molly Whitney, Cascade Forest Conservancy
25. Sue Wright, Community Member

Meeting Purpose: The objectives of this meeting were to: (a) discuss and vote on the Upper Wind early seral ZOA recommendations, (b) receive an update on the 10-Year Vegetation Strategy, (c) receive an update on the Translating ZOA Work into Conditions-based NEPA initiative, and (d) receive an update on the Temp Roads Pilot Monitoring Project recommendations.

April Meeting Notes: Approved as written.

FS 10-Year Vegetation Strategy Update (*Kevin James, Western Washington Ecologist, Mount-Baker Snoqualmie NF, USFS*)

- Slides available upon request (contact Josh).
- Partnered with Jessica Hudec and Phil Monsanto.
- Landscape priorities & objectives
- Analyzed all subwatersheds at Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 6, according to top priorities
 - Methodology for selecting subwatersheds
 - Identify subwatersheds that address top priorities
 - Present to Interdisciplinary Team and Forest Leadership Team for review
 - Provide final spatial layers for years 2021 through 2030

- Survey results - priorities to consider:
 - Align vegetation management with road issues, such as high road density, and road failures
 - Aquatic restoration needs
 - Desire to increase structure of homogenous forest such as plantations
 - Improve connectivity for habitat types and species of concern

- Landscape priorities – used below criteria (data) to identify next locations
 - Planning areas prioritized in 2012-2026
 - Land use allocations
 - Aquatic Conservation Strategy criteria of Key Watersheds
 - Federally listed fish distribution/critical habitat
 - Open road network
 - Modeled forest structure: used old-growth structure index (OGSI) 80-year & 200-year thresholds from 2012 Gradient Nearest Neighbor (GNN- a vegetation mapping method)
 - Modeled connectivity
 - Harvest

- Subwatersheds considered:
 - Project areas left over from the last planning effort from 2012 to 2026: Yellowjacket, Little White, Skate
 - New areas for 2023 through 2030

- Masked out areas:
 - Withdrawn administratively and congressionally
 - Recently been restored

- Look at remaining subwatersheds – do they meet criteria to address top priorities of survey
 - Aquatic priorities: watersheds, road density, aquatic needs
 - Road density – Considered road density >2mi/sq mi as threshold
 - Tier 1 or tier 2 Key Watersheds

- Listed Fish distribution
- Terrestrial priorities: second growth, increased diversity
 - Improve connectivity, patch types
- Considered Land use allocations – Adaptive Management Areas (AMA), Late Successional Reserve (LSR), Matrix (MATR), Managed Late Successional Areas (MLSA)
- Considered Forest structure using old-growth structure index (OGSI): (1) density of large live trees, (2) diversity of live tree size classes, (3) density of large snags, and (4) percentage of cover of down woody material.
- Calculations from Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) plots and Gradient Nearest Neighbor (GNN) data
- 80 year & 200 year threshold – where would we see old-growth structure developing
- Southwest younger
- Central and north are more interspersed with managed, mature, and older
- Southwest
 - Could help accelerate development of old growth characteristics, reduce edge contrast, increase patch size & connectivity;
 - Work to create complex early seral habitat
 - Larger patches of mature forest adjacent to plantations; with variable density thinning would increase patch size in 60 years from harvest
 - Need to consider if can generate viable planning area, need to do additional analysis with specialists
- Kalama Project Area identified in last planning effort but does not meet all criteria of analysis today
- East Fork Lewis Project Area, Lewis River, Quartz, Swampy, Upper Clear Cr
(Note: list not comprehensive)

Next steps:

- Review and feedback from resource specialists, refine planning areas
- Timeframe & sequence of project areas

Questions:

- 1) Where does the 2 mile/square mile threshold for road density come from?
 - Looking at effects of road density for hydrological processes, from Watershed Analysis
 - Example of what is on the forest: low level is about 1 mi/sq mi, high is above 3 mi/sq mi
- 2) What type of roads does this consider?
 - Just open roads, not decommissioned or temporary roads

- 3) WA Trails Association: Did you consider recreation opportunities and challenges – like Silver Star Recreation area?
-Recreation has not been considered in the past, but potential area for follow-up with Rec Subcommittee

Translating ZOA Work into Conditions-based NEPA Update (*Erin Black, USFS District Ranger*)

- Background: Lisa and Erin worked on developing National Forest Foundation (NFF) grant objectives a year ago - trying to identify what success looks like to increase scope and scale; efficiency. At that time, there were national efforts looking at Environmental Analysis Decision Making (EADM) which reexamines how to conduct NEPA and find efficiencies. Erin values NEPA law and process, but also believes it is useful to eliminate extra work that does not provide valuable info. Important to reexamine process – opportunity to do more with the same resources and still have quality projects. For example: Recently the wildlife biologist needed to complete a deer & elk model analysis which would take a lot of time. But specialists already knew deer and elk habitat was degraded, and the proposed project would improve habitat.
- Part of NFF objectives were to explore conditions-based NEPA. Condition-based NEPA is grouping types of activities, and if meet all of conditions, could move forward. For example, if have 600 acres of small trees to thin, would look at exact ground to make sure meet all conditions. Forest leadership thought that this process would take time and be controversial and not buy much; since forest is increasing the size of projects already and has the support of collaborative for plantation thinning.

Upper Wind Early Seral ZOA

Overview of proposed FS action (*Erin Black, USFS District Ranger*)

- Map presented on screen. Jon Nakae presented information on proposed action at Lisa's last meeting (February). Scoping will go out next week.
 - Bulk of treatments are plantation thinning under 80 years old (yo);
 - Early seral proposal: mix of stands, about 400 acres, all in matrix, benefit early seral species, looking for diversity across landscape, 60% stands are plantation 31-54yo; 40% up to 120yo; originally hoping up to 80yo; but since past management was not contiguous; once buffer out riparian, owl habitat; these were the stands available.

ZOA subcommittee progress (*Molly Whitney, CFC; Jon Paul Anderson, High Cascade Inc.*)

- Molly – Cascade Forest Conservancy (CFC) had concerns from the get-go when learned of area at 120 years from fire disturbance.
 - This stand could soon become old growth.
 - CFC has concerns of potential carbon storage (available to discuss this topic further).

- Variation of human made vs. natural disturbance on land. Humans not able to adequately make changes that resemble fire, windthrow – natural disturbances.
- What are we losing by taking away late seral and making it early seral?
- During ZOA Subcommittee conversation, had many long discussions over long period of time.
- CFC's previous proposal for the 3 stand ages:
 - 80-120yo – treat ½ with thinning, leave ½ untouched
 - 50-80yo – mid – as FS has proposed
 - 30-50yo – young – may be expensive, but not opposed to include if FS chooses to
- Other proposal ZOA Subcommittee put on table yesterday:
 - What if treated 40 to 50 acres of the older stand (80-120yo) – just to see what look like?
 - CFC considered that option and sent in email to FS personnel
 - Too soon to say what FS feedback on this option looks like
- Jon Paul commented:
 - Concern with managing matrix ground for habitat when the primary goal of matrix is for timber production
 - FS put a lot of thought and work on creating sideboards for this project to protect habitat
 - Other option may be to treat ½ acres of 80-120 year old trees
- Understand this is a controversial issue with different thoughts. We have had lots of good conversations, and see everyone's sides. Good to have come to discuss interests rather than positions.

Group Discussion:

- There are 180 acres of 120 years old trees.
- Newest proposal includes considering these native stands and treating 40 to 50 acres.
- CFC comments:
 - Recently considered the Swift sale which contains 120ac of regeneration harvest. It is hard to be comfortable with that size. Sale hasn't been treated yet, so don't know outcome or effects.
 - Indian Heaven & McClellan Meadows are on either side of the proposed early seral habitat creation – do we need early seral in this space? Where as an alternative there could be old growth in a relatively short amount of time?
- Emily S. question: Is this matrix land and not set aside as LSR? Molly's responded that any management that is regeneration is a stretch for CFC members.
- Matt L. question: Why have you chosen this 40-50ac to have least impact? Why here and not other areas to the south? Response: That's as far as the subcommittee got in conversations.

- Initial proposal: ½ thinning in older stands; alternative proposal from yesterday: 40-50ac regeneration harvest in older stands
- CFC: Hope to find way to keep the trees that survived fire, trees that are wider and taller; and still get 40-50ac out of the 180ac. Swift hasn't happened yet and no monitoring done.
- CFC wants to note that even if agree to go ahead with this proposal, still not comfortable with creating early seral habitat from 120-year-old stand.
- There is concern that early seral treatment in matrix would potentially lead to loss of timber supply.
- Jeremy and Jon Paul concerned that this is a change management objectives to more of LSR scenario. Hate to hold off trying that – where can we meet in the middle?
- Comment on experiment style – maybe try some thinning and regeneration harvest in 80-120 yr old stand.

Vote:

- Josh: Are we ready to vote? Fully support proposed action as Erin presented at the start, Neutral, or Opposed
- All felt we were not able to vote on the Zoom Call. But Josh will create a survey and send link to all members.
- Remember SGPC policy for an official measure, only eligible voters can vote. To be eligible need to have attended 2 of the last 3 collaborative or subcommittee meetings. But want to hear everyone's feedback.
- Comment: Don't agree to limit regeneration harvest in matrix. Agree for this proposal only, but remember that the goal of matrix is to grow timber.

Ranger Updates (*Erin Black, USFS District Ranger*)

- Closure order for rec has been rescinded. There is now a smaller closure, more is open. Campgrounds remain closed early to mid-June (~10th). Ape Cave and the Observatory staying closed due to challenge of social distancing. Lower Falls day site is within new closure order because of challenge of social distancing and search and rescue. Campground is open.
- Timber quiet. Cebu, a GNA sale is active. Three or four more will become active in coming weeks.
- Summer seasonals are coming on board. Few have already started. More to start on Tuesday. Final group will start two weeks after that.
- Please keep eyes and ears open. Would appreciate phone call if see anything.
- Scoping letter will go out next week. Often it goes out with Collaborative letter, but take time with Zones of Agreement work.

Monitoring Subcommittee Temp Roads Recommendations Update (*Sharon Frazey, MARS*)

- Subcommittee met yesterday to come up with recommendations from Temporary Roads Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring Project. Sharon will type up. If you are interested in being involved in this, please contact Sharon.

Next Steps & Closing

- Upcoming meetings: stick with Zoom platform.
- Thank you! Discussion of managing meetings; how to stay balanced and productive during COVID?
- Get outside, drink, humor, Zoom Happy Hours