



## Meeting Notes | July 16, 2020, 1:00-3:00pm Zoom Remote Meeting

### Participants:

1. Jon Paul Anderson, High Cascade, Inc.
2. John Bailey, OSU College of Forestry
3. Erin Black, District Ranger, USFS
4. Lucy Brookham, Cascade Forest Conservancy
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. Mackenzie Karnstein, OSU Student
10. Tom Lannen, Skamania County Commissioner
11. Rick Larson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
12. Tom Linde, Gifford Pinchot Accountability Group
13. Jeffrey Mocniak, Melchomy Craft Mead/Cascadia Education Project
14. Ryan Ojerio, Washington Trails Association
15. Josh Petit, SGPC Coordinator
16. Andrew Spaeth, WA Department of Natural Resources
17. Emily Stevenson, Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
18. Jim White, Underwood Conservation District
19. Molly Whitney, Cascade Forest Conservancy

**Meeting Purpose:** This meeting involved: (a) a guest presentation by Dr. John Bailey from OSU, (b) a discussion of the ZOA Subcommittee's work on the Upper Wind early seral issue and associated *SGPC Summary of Positions* letter, (c) a brief update on upcoming guest speakers /field trips, and (d) optional social time with all interested attendees for an informal catch-up.

**June Meeting Notes:** Jim White sent notes on demo study for update. Approved otherwise. Amended notes will be sent out next week.

**Guest Speaker | Dr. John Bailey (Oregon State University):** John presented a talk on landscape-scale management with an eye to wildfire risk across the east-west divide and then fielded questions.

- GP is a mix of the east-side and west-side forests on a continuum
- John works in the College of Forestry at OSU
- Anomalies are an emerging crisis in wildland fire management
- New paradigm is landscape-scale thinking
  - Anticipation and preparedness
  - Cohesive strategy
- East-west divide
- Anomalies/crisis:
  - Ignored role of fire
  - Elevated hazard
  - Elevated risks
  - Climate change and fire seasons/behavior
    - Warmer temps
    - Precipitation and snowpack
    - Drought stress and impacts
- Fuels treatments/planning can happen and are effective
  - Stand-level: mechanical, chemical, and prescribed burn treatments
  - Landscape-level fire risk
  - Yields a positive return on investment to do the work ahead of time
- Fire behavior gradient - still accumulating fuels - conceptual framework
- 1900's suppression model
  - During low and modest fire season we have success with suppression (because we have time and resources available)
  - During high fire behavior periods we continue to fail
  - Prescribed burning - in low range of fire behavior
  - Kicks the can down the road
- Suppression and Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) success in high severity period
- Alternative future
  - Prescribed burning in low and modest fire behavior can be successful
- Risk Reduction
  - Large fire sheds will burn anyhow
    - Plan for them now: scaled at 5-10,000 ac
- Response PODs (r-PODs) - Potential Operational Delineations
  - Identify where roads/trails/ridgelines need to be improved, plan well in advance
  - Example: Study of fire in Umpqua in 2013 where ignition points grew into substantial fire
  - Started backburning in emergency mode; fire burned 40,000 ac at a cost of ~\$17mil
  - Could have started planning in advance to mitigate risks
- Large fire sheds
  - Big planning 'lift' needed; culturally and socially; they will burn anyway
  - Can plan now (rather than in emergency situation) and get more low severity than high severity fire
  - Can try prescribed fire of large areas (e.g., 5,000 - 10,000 acres); this will interrupt landscape fire flow

- Keeping the 1900's paradigm just means larger percentages of fire in higher severity
- Risk reduction
  - Most ignitions happen during favorable weather conditions
  - Time for prescribed fire
  - Last month's fire is this month's fuel break
    - Updated future containment lines
    - Burn the burns
- Need a change in public mindset to 'fire is a tool'
- Bottom line/the reality
  - Wildland fire is going to happen no matter what
  - Our forests were resistant, but we changed that
  - Humans will have to adapt to wildland fire
  - Planning, building, maintaining and evacuating
  - Smoke and flames
  - Cohesive strategy
- Q&A
  - Tom Lannen: When Eagle Creek fire jumped the river, was a huge challenge because change in state and more houses. How do we proceed with management of forests in future?
    - John: We originally underestimated how much fire was in west-side forests. Also need to consider climate change implications: structure, species composition.
  - Josh: Did the Eagle Creek fire change public awareness/interest in fire mitigation and/or willingness to listen to your message?
    - John: Another example of bringing awareness of fire; yesterday gave another interview w Oregon Live reporter. Landscape is on track. There are some high severity areas that were too big and too intense, and it didn't have to be that way if had been treated. But there is also a lot of mixed, moderate, and low severity and areas of no burn. It is natural mosaic, that is quickly recovering. Not all catastrophic from an ecology perspective. The fire didn't burn houses, but we spent a lot of money fighting it. We can learn from this. The smoke in Portland brought a lot of attention to wildland fire issues.
- Mary Ann: Can we manage differently in special forest areas/protected areas like Indian Heaven?
  - John: I can't push policy but can push a message that it's important to think about values, different parts of ownership, and let local land managers and collaboratives manage themselves.
- Jim W.: Is there a strategy? The state's 20-year plan for Eastern WA will take a herculean effort. Is there a strategy for where to treat (because the west-side grows back so rapidly)?
  - John: Modeled outgrowth and productivity and how they burn. There are cascading complexities - such as roads, etc. Has to be reactive to time. Needs to tie in all other values such as timber and jobs. Have to consider logical economic component.
- Lucy B. - We are looking to create early seral habitat because missing and low abundance. Are there strategic policy shifts to bring early seral habitat back?
  - John: Early seral generally historically had about a 100-year burn interval. In the overall landscape: the grassy meadow, south facing exposure, oak savanna, early seral habitats have disappeared in the number of acres and how they are connected. Fires have created early seral habitat (and great vistas). Can let fire burn when ecologically appropriate, in

the right places, doesn't harm anyone. Consider how this ties in with thinning and clearcuts.

- Ryan: This parallels with work in public health and flood hazard planning and mapping. Where we are throwing money at emergencies but not good at planning. This is a social science crux in convincing people.
  - John: Looking at arc of my career, I am having more discussions now. The problem is social. Need to change public thought process.
- Mary Ann: Are you comfortable with your understanding of prehistoric management of forest?
  - John: I'd give us a B+/A- grade in terms of how much old growth vs early seral. Large group of researchers who have analyzed fire scars. This guides our thinking. We are trying to understand indigenous burning better. And consider what will be resistant and resilient in the future?
- Jim W.: This is an imperfect science and things will go wrong. Prescribed burn in Michigan that got out of control. And as a result, they shut it down for 20 yrs.
  - John: Important to consider how to keep positive even if things go wrong. On average, about 1-2% of prescribed fire gets out of control. We are dedicated to adaptive management and learning over time.
- Erin: I am surprised at how much support there is in our small prescribed fire program. But one comment, we always get is people don't want smoke. How do you get message out there?
  - John: Air quality people can show research on burning in various conditions. Part of messaging to groups is prescribed burning and fire management are better because can choose conditions and can warn you about conditions. It's better than high severity smoke for weeks on end.
- Tom Linde: How do you deal with human development out in rural areas - the possible impacts and conflicts in development versus treatment?
  - John: National Wildfire Cohesive Strategy and Fire Adapted Communities have been successful. Make sure we are aware of populations that are still growing just like developing in floodplains. WUI can coexist with solutions but needs proactive land management.

**Zones of Agreement Subcommittee Update:** Progress on Upper Wind Early Seral and *SGPC Summary of Positions* letter (*Molly Whitney, CFC*)

- Committee tried to find ways for various representatives to compromise on plan, realizing this is a test case or pilot.
- Lots of respectful, informative discussions, but we realized the conversations weren't representative of the Collaborative as a whole (based on survey feedback).
- We realized that we can't negotiate and compromise from our end if not representing the Collaborative. We could make a ZOA that we all felt comfortable with, such as avoiding older trees or smaller acreages.
- We have pivoted toward summarizing SGPC member opinions on issue and ZOA Subcommittee will continue working to find other areas of agreement (e.g., treatment of older stands).
- Jon Paul was right again! ;-)
- *SGPC Summary of Positions* letter for FS planning purposes is being crafted right now and we will get out to Collaborative next week. This summarizes the diversity of member opinions.
- ZOA Subcommittee and larger group worked well together on this challenging issue. Think this is a good decision.

- Erin: Want to make sure the larger group does not think this is a setback. This is the most collaboration I've seen since the group has started. Should not be viewed as inability to make progress. We are further along than we were. We are primed and ready to go on future projects and proposals.
  - Josh: Yes, can be a slow-moving process when dealing with tough issues. Was good to see ZOA Subcommittee working so respectfully together. No one is trying to stonewall anyone and is encouraging to see diverse parties working so well together.

### **Future Guest Speakers and Potential Field Trip** (*Josh Petit, SGPC*)

- For the August meeting, Dr. Matt Reilly (OSU) will talk about his west-side history project, and Dr. Andy Gray (OSU) will talk about his research on the Yacolt burn.
- The September meeting will be packed with guest speakers. We will have Dr. Matt Betts (OSU) who will present on how forest structure and age class can shape wildlife dynamics; and Dr. Dave Peterson (UW) who will share his knowledge on regional climate change projections and how land managers and forestland owners can implement small-scale mitigation strategies; and Dr. Mark Swanson (WSU) will present on compositional, structural, and function attributes of early successional forest sites in the PNW.
- For October, there is a potential field trip in the works. Considering a visit to GNA site; perhaps arranged in small group visits if required due to COVID.
- Jim W.: Consider watching the webinar by Dan Donato who studies west-side, wet forests. Josh sent the link to the webinar via email. Reach out to him if need resent.

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

- Recreation use is way up; numbers we haven't seen before. Good news that forest is relevant, but harder to do our work safely. Be aware of this.
- There are angry people taking out frustrations on FS staff on the west-side.
- Lots of people climbing Mt. Adams with lots of helicopter evacuations.
- Bioregional Assessment; first step in modernizing the NW Forest Plan. This is a beautiful document. Check it out (link below):

**Link:** <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd677501>

- Gives background and recommendations on how to amend NW Forest Plan.
- It is not a decision document. It is for the public and managers to use for NWFP revisions. It may give the group emphasis points.
- Some main recommendations:
  - Focus on species
  - Has recreation: public use
  - How does prescribed fire play a role?
  - Incorporate uncertainty and how climate change affects forests
  - Address weeds
  - Combine all aquatic direction

- **\*\*FS has opened another scoping period for the Upper Wind project as some folks missed first deadline:**
  - Important to submit prior to deadline for legal standing. Contact Erin/Bengt for more info.
  - FS generally wants comments whether they are in the formal comment period or not. If you have already submitted comments, you don't need to submit them again. If you have not, please do so right away.
- **Timber activity:**
  - Preparing last sale (Hart). Also, 10 bough sales. There is a lot of active logging right now.
  - Big T is about to be awarded.
  - Turning attention to FY 21; timber crew out marking boundaries.
- **Q&A:**
  - Jim White: Seeing lots of hikers on PCT?
    - Erin: They were talking about shutting down, but did not
  - Mary Ann: Have seen 45-50 cars at connection at dam. Can't handle that number. Trail probably being overused. One of few places that are open. There are 5 or 6 people in a car. There are a lot at the Bridge of the Gods too. It would be interesting to hear from PCT folks.
  - Tom Linde: Tracking trail and has extensive overuse by day hikers/over weekends; pretty significant numbers.
  - Is there a need for road/gate management volunteers?
    - Erin: Hasn't worked on this since Lisa transitioned. There are two new gates up in the Lone Butte area; an example of what needs to be done.

### **Next Meeting Info & Closing**

- *Reminder:* Steering Committee still discussing when meetings can be held in Stevenson with limitations and additional protocols. Stay tuned for updates.
  - August & September meetings will still be remote.
  - October hoping for field trip.
  - Maybe we'll be able to meet in person in November depending on COVID.

### **Social Time for 30 minutes for Informal Catch-up**

No notes.