



Meeting Notes
August 19, 2021, 1-3 P.M.
Zoom Remote Meeting

Participants:

1. Erin Black, MARD District Ranger, USFS
2. Lucy Brookham, Cascade Forest Conservancy
3. Gary Collins, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington
4. Tom Lannen, Skamania County Commissioner
5. Rick Larson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
6. Matt Little, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
7. Ryan Ojerio, Washington Trails Association
8. Josh Petit, Collaborative Coordinator
9. Mary Repar, Community Member
10. Whitney Reynier, Klickitat County Program Coordinator
11. Sean Roome, Cascade Forest Conservancy
12. Emily Stevenson, Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
13. Sean Tran, WA Department of Natural Resources
14. Sean Tackley, GPNF South Zone Planning Team Lead, USFS
15. Crystal Tolmie, Friends of the White Salmon
16. Jim White, Underwood Conservation District

• **Welcome & Introductions**

- **Meeting Purpose:** This meeting featured: (a) a screening of *Wilder Than Wild* documentary and follow-up discussion, (b) a planning discussion for our October field trip, (c) USFS Ranger Updates, and (d) SGPC Monthly News.
- **July Meeting Notes:** Approved as written.

- **Film screening: Screening and discussion of *Wilder Than Wild***
 - Film background and impetus of screening
 - Low-hanging item given schedule change
 - Also All Lands deliverable along with *The West is Burning* (after grant modifications were made due to COVID)
 - Immersion approach to topic of fire in the WUI; appropriate given recent and current fire seasons, our new FS planning area (Little White Salmon), and new ZOA topic (i.e., salvage)
 - Opening shots of CA wildfires
 - 5-6 states with largest wildfires on record in recent years
 - Climate change driver in background – drier conditions and more extreme weather
 - Large fires now in landscapes that were historically fire-adapted
 - Kevin White (producer) – documented changes in landscape and fire seasonality
 - Yosemite wildfire
 - 20,000 ft column of smoke
 - Steepness of terrain and fire behavior
 - Dante’s Inferno
 - Grew 50-75,000 acres in a day
 - Could not contain; only get people out of the way
 - Tuolumne Camp impacts
 - Two-thirds of folks evacuated; youth camp impacts (Jerry Baker)
 - DC-10 dropped load at right time and place to cease fire
 - 90+ years in operation
 - 10-minute evacuation warning
 - Was a crown fire so burned through quickly
 - Cabin 46 – still standing but gutted by fire
 - Held vigil in city park and sang songs about TC
 - Rim fire indicative of trend toward ‘mega-fires’
 - Rim of the World Overlook—steep slopes, not many trees standing and those standing mostly dead (no live-trees for 7-10 miles)
 - Corral Creek – showed differences pre and post Rim Fire
 - Example of hot burned areas from Rim Fire – everything dead in 4.5 miles area; old growth trees irreplaceable; impacts on OG-dependent species
 - Lost forest cover for watershed purposes largest single impact
 - Hetch Hetchy and potential impacts to SF drinking supply
 - Rode with Yosemite Fire Chief to view area
 - Hot, dry, windy, massive fuel build-up
 - Dense forest = wildfire fuel
 - Some beneficial impacts from fire in certain areas with larger trees
 - Cleans out understory
 - Traditional Sierra forests could ride a horse through
 - John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and their contrasting views

- Historic burning by CA Indians – changes when were removed
 - Not an entirely natural landscape due to fire historically used on landscape
 - Use of prescribed fire kept large fires under control
 - Muir was preservationist – protect and keep as-is
 - Gifford Pinchot was practitioner – first chief of FS
 - Battle over Hetch Hetchy Valley (Muir opposed, Pinchot supported)
- Example of use of understory prescribed fire
- Importance of prescribed fire for controlling fire
- Historic FS view of fire
 - In 1910, 78 FS firefighters died, changed views of fire and a move to fire suppression (e.g., Smokey Bear)
 - Can't avoid fire – we can't win (i.e., can't fully suppress)
 - Smokey Bear -- history of effective messaging and associated negative impacts on forests today
- Thomas Willson of Yurok Tribe
 - Impacts of Smokey Bear (has done harm to bears as has led to reduction of huckleberry habitat)
 - Landscapes overrun by conifers due to fire exclusion
 - Stories of his youth burning hillsides with matches under grandmother's instructions
 - Now threatened by police to cease fire or face jailtime
 - Fuels now abundant and high-severity fire risk is high
- Visit to Fire Science Lab in Missoula
 - How does fire spread and behave?
 - Like a liquid – fire flows
 - When windy, embers can travel miles to forests or to rooftops
- Need to encourage introduction of 'constructive' fire (versus destructive)
- Prescribed fire healthier and safer in long-run
- Art and science to use of fire on landscape
- Understanding of fuels, weather, topography to inform prescribed fire practices
- Scale of fuels and threat continuing to grow – need to act now for well-being of future generations
- Issue of smoke and air quality – has been a barrier to public acceptance of prescribed fire in past
- Need to accept some smoke to prevent bigger fires (and more smoke)
- Smoke is health hazard; but bigger fires send people to hospital
- Need funding from congress to do preventative work (thinning, logging, shredding, prescribed fire)
- Money required to protect lives and property
- WUI – more than 50 million people in US live here
 - High risk of wildfire
- Cabin evacuation due to Butte Fire

- Producer filmed fire
- Firefighters at greater risk
- Firefighter memorials – many have died fighting fire (more than 300 since 2000)
- Today we see symptoms of problem over past 4-5 years
 - Drought and overstocked forest --> bark beetle attacks
 - BBs destroy water/nutrient transport mechanism and kills trees
 - 85,000 sq miles of forests in Western US
- Forests are both victims and sources of GHG emissions due to deforestation and forest fires
- Chilean fires, Amazon, Indonesia
- Climate change and other factors leading to large-scale conversion of forests
- Role of forests for water and oxygen provision
- What do we want forests to look like in 100, 200, or 500 years?
- Need to get away from debate and develop consensus about future needs for forests
- YSS – Yosemite Stanislaw Solutions – cross-section of agencies and groups looking at what’s wrong in the forest – findings consensus to restore forest health
- Yurok Tribe reinitiating tradition of tribal fire with help of FS
 - Understory brush had created hazard
 - Burning had been outlawed
 - Merging culture with outside agencies
 - Earth is suffocating due to fuels; must clear so earth can breathe
 - Helps with gathering of traditional foods
 - Wildlife returns when food sources return
 - Prescribed fire a tool in these efforts
- Youth and volunteer engagement opportunities with YSS
 - Kid testimonies for why it’s important to plant trees (e.g., helps us, animals, the world, owls, oxygen, food, shelter)
 - Planting seeds for future generations
- Wine Country fires
 - Firefighters confronted by devastation
 - Combination of volatile factors – winds, topography
 - 9,000 buildings and 44 lives lost
 - Fires now affecting urban areas (used to just be WUI)
- Thomas Fire
- 2018 even worse fire season (Camp Fire and destruction of Paradise)
- Working toward positive changes on all sides
- Must steward our lands – we all have a stake and responsibility to act
- Discussion
 - CA focus to film but still relevant
 - Both screenings part of All Lands Grant deliverables
 - Suggested organically by different Collaborative members
 - All of this before the 2020 fire season; a timely film

- General thoughts from members
 - JW: Forests on Westside have not had frequent fire like CA, but with climate change who knows? Did not touch enough on landscape level (where we live), which makes sometimes it difficult to introduce prescribed fire; more complex with mixed management/ownership
 - MR: Interesting; why do humans think they can control Mother Nature without understanding the processes? Maybe we should think about shrinking WUI; discouraging homes built in places where they shouldn't be (e.g., Wind River HWY); folks expect to be saved but might not always be possible; we need discussion of WUI and to consider larger timescales (100, 200, 500-year view) relative to our relationship with nature
 - RL: Fires not as frequent as eastside but (100-200 yrs) when the westside fires burn they are intense; could see half the forest burn up; need to make fire high priority (not good enough to take reactive approach)
 - TL: Not part of human psyche to think long-term; westside vs. eastside and CA versus Cascades, we have proof of what can happened (e.g., Eagle Creek Fire); why so hard to get into forest to do salvage (e.g., BHF)?; seedlings becoming scarce commodity
 - JP: What about local opinions toward prescribed fire on GP? Any local insight?
 - JW: 30 years ago was tough due to AQ requirements; conundrum due to changing species and landscapes; almost need to change ESA given how species have adapted to these conditions over time
 - EB: Prescribed fire relatively accepted these days on GP; very little pushback; Little White will be interesting as sits on watershed divide across east and westside
 - JP: Interesting that film was put out prior to 2020 fire season; foreboding; what is role of forest collaboratives in this issue?
 - ES: Good opportunity with Little White to bring in more folks and talk more about it
 - MR: Could get update from CR Gorge Commission's Vital Signs Indicators work with NEON; would like to look at bark beetles as a natural response to changing forest conditions; provide detritus etc
 - JW: Many different species of beetles, not all the same; could be good guest speaker topic to present on this in future
 - RL: Question for EB: Does GP have a plan for large-scale fire prevention if they look like will cover landscape?
 - EB: One thing we have done is look at PODs (potential operational delineations); way to break forest down into smaller polygons for fire assessment and mitigation

- RL: What about a fire forum with experts from GP, WSU, OSU, to talk about strategies for being more proactive on the landscape?

- **Discussion: Little White Field Trip Planning Session**

- JP: Use this time to brainstorm sites, starting points, lunch stop, key stakeholder to invite; any initial ideas?
- ES: South Prairie gorgeous place for lunch
- ST: Agrees with ES. Also a good place to talk about the unique features (hydrology, geology) of the watershed
- ES: Could check out two LSR stands on the west side of the lava bed that are currently in the proposal?
- JW: Sales in Trout Creek area could be good sites; LWS Valley itself (no specific sites in mind)
- RO: Could check out user trails along 68 rd. with old growth stands; Lost Creek grove; also potential Willard fuel break; could be a good site to visit; beautiful stop
- JP: Sounds like some opportunity for cross-boundary focus here
- MR: Mt. Adams glaciers receding; could view as part of this trip; emphasis on climate change; impacts on our watersheds
- JW: Jerry Franklin stands could be interesting to see changes over time (along 66 rd) – 1996 study; could revisit this to see successional changes relative to these different management actions
- EB: Could start in Willard at the Fish Health Center; October, so building has electricity in case we need; lots of parking space; could be good for carpooling from there
- JP: Still invite Willard Fire Chief?
- EB: He is interested; will check about this date
- MR: Any tribal members that may be interested?
- JP: No contacts beyond Ryan Sanchey of Yakima tribe. Good to incorporate the TEK approach
- ST: Early seral and huckleberry habitat improvement (tribes, deer, elk); Yakima Tribe could be good to loop in for this aspect
- EB: Interested in visiting Monte Cristo site (Osborne Panorama choice)?
JW: About 1,000 ft climb so would take 30 minutes to get up so may eat up too much time
- JP: Maybe get a drone up there?
- ES: Can we get a copy of LWS potential stands map?

- **Update: USFS Ranger Updates (Erin Black, USFS)**

- We are at IFPL-3 (extreme fire danger; level of dryness and fire risk)
- North end has gotten more moisture so will likely drop to 2; no fires on GP
- Need to stay vigilant

- On planning side, BHF roadside salvage project (this was extra project); nod to the Collaborative for trusting FS to handle responsibly
- Lower Trout creek in-stream work and 43 rd realignment; mostly supported but concerns over future use of nursery fields; expect short EA
- South Side trailhead; work slated to redo trailhead over labor day; improve for climbers and campers
- Cleaning up forest; next Thursday district meeting to find places on forest to pick up trash; anyone interested can be plugged in; will try to do COVID-safely
- Next week, field trip with Yakima Nation to talk huckleberries, encroachment near Cold Springs area
- Road repairs across forest; 88 rd culvert currently being fixed; 90 ; 25 rd have road work at the moment
- Sold last timber sale on South end
- Q&A:
 - LB: What is status of Upper Wind?
 - EB: Close but not finished quite yet.
 - WR: Is the south climb moving toward a permit system?
 - EB: It's on the table
 - JP: What is current FS policy regarding meeting with Delta variant?
 - EB: Still in status quo; masks in vehicles; 25% capacity in govt buildings
- **Update: SGPC Monthly News (*Josh Petit, SGPC*)**
 - DNR BFP Grant successfully funded so good news!
 - Rec Subcommittee will meet in coming 1-2 months to continue discussions of GPNF Sust Rec Strategy, OHV use on forest (JP meeting with FS and CATS group in coming month to discuss this)
 - September Sebo/GNA trip (9/23)
 - October Little White Salmon trip (10/21); stay tuned for more information
- **Closing**
 - Next meeting info.: September meeting SEBO/GNA trip; 9/23 from 12-4pm; meet at Lone Butte Snow Park (having already eaten lunch); beers after at Backwoods after ~5pm; stay tuned for additional information in coming weeks!