South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative
Little White Salmon Field Trip
October 21, 2021, 9am-1pm

Participants:

1. Aldo Aguilar - GPNF Soil Scientist, USFS
2. Joel Basch - MARD Asst. Fire Mgmt. Officer, USFS
3. Erin Black - MARD District Ranger, USFS
4. Bengt Coffin - MARD Hydrologist, USFS
5. Sharon Frazey - Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
6. Jeremy Grose - SDS Lumber
7. Bob Hamlin - Skamania County Commissioner
8. Chris Harper - Acting MARD Fire Mgmt. Officer, USFS
9. Paul Henry - Community Member
10. Chuck Hersey - Forest Health Planning Section Manager, WA DNR
11. Jessica Hudec - GPNF Western Washington Ecologist, USFS
12. Melody Huskey - GPNF Wildlife Biologist, USFS
13. Paul Leusch - GPNF Deputy Fire Staff, USFS
14. Garrett Meigs - Forest Health Specialist, WA DNR
15. Jeffrey Mocniak - Melchemy Craft Mead/Cascadia Education Project
16. Blake Murphy - GPNF South Zone Silviculturist, USFS
17. Josh Petit - SGPC Coordinator
18. Greg Robertson - GPNF Fish Biologist, USFS
19. Sean Roome - Campaign Coordinator, Cascade Forest Conservancy
20. Neal Sacon - Mill A Fire Chief
21. Justin Sharpe - GPNF Fire Planner, USFS
22. Dirk Shupe - GPNF Fire Staff Officer, USFS
23. Andrew Spaeth - Environmental Planner, WA DNR
24. Emily Stevenson - Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
25. Sean Tackley - GPNF South Zone Planning Team Lead, USFS
26. Philip Watness - Skamania Pioneer
27. Jim White - Underwood Conservation District

***Stop 1*: Lower Columbia River Fish Health Center**

• Field Trip Objectives**:** This field trip to the Little White Salmon watershed focused on USFS landscape-scale planning and fire and fuels reduction to incorporate Collaborative feedback and featured stops at: (a) the Lower Columbia River Fish Health Center, (b) Goat Point, (c) Oklahoma Campground, and (d) an unofficial post-trip social gathering at Everybody's Brewing in White Salmon

- September Notes: Approved as written
- Introductions from attendees
  Prompt: What do you hope to get out of today's field trip?

- Landscape characterization highlights - See FS handouts (*Bengt Coffin, Blake Murphy, Jessica Hudec, Chris Harper, Greg Robertson, Melody Huskey, Aldo Aguilar, USFS*)
- Ranger sideboards (*Erin Black, USFS*)
- Project schedule recap (*Sean Tackley, USFS*)

***Stop 2*: Goat Point**

- Site history (*Blake Murphy, USFS*)
    - 2016 harvest, leave ~140 sq ft basal area (BA), 60% canopy cover, started with ~240 BA
    - This area is diverse in ecology, habitat, fire – transitional zone
- Context: Fuels, fire risk, and fire ecology (*Jessica Hudec, USFS*)
- Risk reduction strategy: highest values at risk and ecological resilience
- Scale at project level and larger level
- Manage tree spacing and lateral fuels
- Remove slash from mechanical thinning and burn pile
- Chris Harper noted that under-burning probability not the tool to use here
    - Because is expensive and too much smoke
    - Also a narrow window and there would be high Douglas fir mortality
- Values: community, human life and property
- Ecological objective – habitat
    - This area is diverse, complex
    - Non-analog: there is nothing to compare to when looking at Historical Range of Variability (HRV)
    - Use HRV for idea of where to go
- Comment on piles – they provide diversity
    - Note that it's important to consider where piles are left – need to be away from roads and dispersed camping
- Potential vegetation management proposals and adaptation strategies and tactics in Little White Salmon and other transitional zone landscapes (*Blake Murphy, USFS*)
    - Salvage from Ice Storm – maintain integrity from damage and get volume out
    - Consider drought impacts, reduce BA, homogeneity
    - Size of openings – consider invasives, drought – water balance deficit
    - This stand looks open but the Doug fir crowns will close in 10-20 years
    - Looking across the road into untreated stand
        - Native stand with disturbances approx. 85 and 130 yrs ago
        - Trees are competing too much – susceptible to disease, insects, mortality
- Fuels reduction for fire protection/Willard fuel break proposal *(Chris Harper, USFS)*
    - Consider control lines, enhance fuel breaks, it's easier to maintain bigger fuel breaks
    - Comment that watershed is 86,000 acres and treatment is planned on 15% of total acreage, so ~70% no treatment and fire risk
- Community concern and project history (*Neal Sacon, Mill A Fire Chief*)
    - There are dispersed campers throughout the valley
    - Need to focus on community education for prescribed burning and acceptable levels of particulate
    - Note that GP is very selective on the areas where implement broadcast burning

- Implement a lot of mechanical removal of conifer seedlings for fuel breaks

Q&A

- Question whether fuel breaks are the top priority
- Have to consider placement in "fuel-scape" and other values
- Comment on the importance of looking for opportunity to create big patches
  - How the system works
  - Fire is at 20,000-acre level; don't want to continue treatments at the 20 to 40-acre level
  - Emily Platt started looking at larger treatment areas
- Discussion on suppression and being able to stop ~90% of fires, not able to stop 1-2% due to fire weather; it's the margin of fires we hope to catch with fuels treatments
- Garrett mentioned Fire Resiliency Division is working on DNR Work of Wildfire Rapid Assessment Protocol (WOWRAP) looking at wildland fire from this past season in Umatilla and Methow
- Some fire effects are beneficial but others are stand replacing events
- Wildfire is a blunt tool

• Transit to Stop 3
- Observe wildland-urban interface (WUI) along Oklahoma Rd
- Think about what the landscape needs -- prescriptions, thinning, etc
- Remember not all NF/USFS land (mixed ownership)

***Stop 3*: Oklahoma Campground**

- Comments / observations on WUI during the drive?
  - Need fuel break, middle-aged Douglas fir stands near community
  - Opportunity for bigger blocks of fuel treatments
  - Simplified, consider adding diversity
  - Bob Hamlin noted that the County completed an inventory and there is a lot of private that could be developed, need to consider building codes to address edges
  - Rare plants nearby
- Recap DNR landscape characterization highlights/recommendations (*Jessica H., USFS; Garrett Meigs and Andrew Spaeth, WA DNR*)
  - There were stand replacing fires historically ~100 years ago
  - Would consider fuels reduction along road, but also have skip areas as it follows the river
  - See Little White Salmon Landscape Evaluation Summary document
  - Priority planning area of 20-Year Forest Health Plan
    - This is the furthest west of the planning areas and has a lot of interesting features, fire, and climate
    - Used LIDAR and photos to determine the amount of area / acres in or departed from condition
    - Identified 17,750-27,500 acres needing treatment
    - Considered drought vulnerability and fire risk based on climate change models
  - Chuck noted that DNR has completed analysis on 30 areas
    - Usually find that 30-40% of area needs treatment to more open forest
    - Highest is about 60%; Little White is 20-30%
    - Goal of treatment needed would be 12,000 acres

        - FS has identified 5,000-6,000 acres of stand exams
        - Chuck challenges group to see how close can get
        - Bigger patches are important to get synergistic effects we are looking for
    - Dual Benefit Analysis – link between restoration and fire response
    - PODS - Potential Operational Delineations - *Fire management and planning units whose boundaries are defined by potential control features (e.g., roads, natural barriers), and within which fire risk to values can be quantified and summarized)*
        - During Big Hollow Fire, the Incident Management Teams followed the boundary
        - Review Little White Presentation from last year (~January/February)
        - Ana Barros, Fire Scientist is modeling the PODS and will hopefully complete analysis for Little White in the next few weeks
    - Dual Benefit Analysis
        - Restoring landscapes - stand types
        - Climate & Drought - aid future fire management
    - Multiple objectives at multiple scales - sustainability index
        - Does Spotted owl habitat overlap?
            - Field allocation process, better management
            - Working toward monitoring of historic centers with USFWS – more accurate, current data
                - Use ARUs - Acoustic Recording Units
            - Note on managing late successional habitat or owls
                - Melody mentioned forest where didn't see any owls for long time and then flushed 10 out during forest fire
    - Fire Refugia - lower severity areas or areas not likely to burn
        - Identifying current and future habitat with LIDAR
    - Neal mentioned the clock is ticking
        - Be practical with taxpayer dollars, there needs to be a time where put pencils down, and pull chainsaws out
        - Motto of greatest good for the greatest number - including owls
    - Discussion of surrounding landowners
        - Broughton land is separate from SDS
        - Managed by American Forest Management
    - Other Actions
        - Older cohort (130 years old) – may be proposed for thinning
        - Recreation - not sure if opportunities need to be part of NEPA document
        - Early seral habitat - may be considered
        - Huckleberry restoration
        - Aquatic Restoration - can this be a part of the activities; improving instream habitat, floodplain restoration, meadow enhancement, beaver habitat?
            - GNA has flexibility and could be considered as a tool; one GNA sale per zone per year
- Trip recap and next steps (*Sean T., USFS*)
- Closing (*Josh P., SGPC*)
    - Optional meet-up at Everybody's Brewing in White Salmon
    - Next meeting: November 18 from 1-3:30pm