

Oregon Board of Forestry Subcommittee on Federal Forests

Draft Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2015 Meeting

Department of Forestry (ODF) Headquarters, 2600 State Street Salem, Oregon

Attending

Board of Forestry: *Subcommittee Chair Nils Christoffersen, Tom Insko, and Tom Imeson*

Absent: *Cindy Deacon Williams*

ODF: *Doug Decker, Chad Davis, Kevin Birch, Katie Morrison, and Sabrina Perez*

Governor's Office: *Tom Tuchmann and Lauri Aunun*

Others: *Meg Mitchell, Ann Forest Burns, Ann Walker, Wayne Giesy, Rex Storm and Gil Riddell*

Subcommittee Chair, Nils Christoffersen, called the public meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

Link to Audio Meeting Minutes [*1 hour*]

Agenda Review

Subcommittee Chair Nils Christoffersen briefly reviewed the agenda with intent to review the minutes, provide timely updates, discuss the Forest Service Renewal Document introduced at the January 7 Board of Forestry meeting, and take public comment.

Review of Minutes

The Subcommittee members reviewed and approved the minutes from the November 18 meeting with no recommended changes. Nils noted value around the discussion on developing metrics for the state to monitor progress in the pace and scale of federal forest restoration.

Timely Updates

Subcommittee Member Tom Insko noted his participation on a panel at the Oregon Leadership Summit, providing opportunity to share key messages around federal forest restoration, and sharing in general, that there was a good tone from the rural prosperity perspective; however, there were concerns expressed around the restrictive processes that are hampering efforts towards progress, especially when given a meaningful tool such as the Farm Bill. Tom noted that others were aware of the decision on Snow Basin in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest impacting a number of operators in terms of timber sale access and complications in the removal of logs, creating tension and uncertainty in how to proceed with much of the great work coming out of the collaboratives.

Subcommittee Chair Nils Christoffersen noted the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Lower Joseph Creek was out for a 90-day public comment period due to the inclusion of natural resource areas, ending February 12 and prior to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative being able to achieve consensus; although the conversations were valuable for the Forest Service to get a sense of where the group was on matters of: where treatment should occur, comfort in working the riparian conservation areas, opinions on the road system with both construction or maintenance and closure of road segments. There was more agreement on general forest treatments using the Franklin Johnson Field Guide as the base for design. The group is still hopeful in moving to a positive conclusion of the NEPA process this spring and implementation by this summer or fall. Nils noted the recent legal decision on Snow Basin and initial anxiety expressed from others around the court opinion which the Forest Service is still actively reviewing.

Forest Service Renewal Document

State Forester Doug Decker noted the significant change in leadership occurring in the Governor's Office, recognizing a recent meeting with Governor Brown and other natural resource directors, where she expressed

initial alignment with the former Kitzhaber agenda with a focus on education, small business, and ethics reforms. Governor Brown does have one initial change to the way she's engaging with the federal forest policy topic that will bring change to the structure in working with Tom Tuchmann, moving to a non-contract format.

Tom Tuchmann noted his transition out of his role with the Governor's office and the State, recognizing it as a friendly transition and understanding the strong desire by the Governor to have full-time staff in her office. Tom noted the former governor's release of the Forest Service Renewal Summary, receiving a lot of positive feedback and interest in the issues. Reactions ranged from an immediate yes to concern but flexibility to deal with administratively. At the Western Governors Association (WGA), an initial kickoff meeting involved eight different states, with the governors of California, Montana, Utah, Alaska, Wyoming, and Idaho, encouraged by the bipartisan nature of the effort. The next step was to come up with a foundation for putting a position together. It's important to recognize the WGA is made up of the individual governors and when Governor Kitzhaber resigned, the leadership position will go to another governor. The Association itself is trying to figure out how to best move this issue forward but there is much interest. Tom expressed gratitude for the Board's leadership and relationships with colleagues at the Department, ODFW, and DEQ.

State Forester Decker, building onto Tom's comments, noted his attendance at a recent National Association of State Foresters meeting where they made a resolution that the renewal proposal fits within their agenda. Doug subsequently met with other members of the Council of Western State Foresters, describing a high level of enthusiasm for ideas in the proposals. The council is a 501(3)(c) organization consisting of the western regional foresters and a few professional staff in Denver. Soon the western regional foresters and the state foresters will combine for a joint meeting, adding a day to do further workshop-style work on these renewal proposals as a coalition. Doug noted excellent discussion on the templates and the Good Neighbor authority, and recognized that other states were hiring similar federal forest policy-type positions and a network forming.

Doug referenced the renewal document with all, recognizing Tom Tuchmann's role with the Governor's office in Oregon coming to a close and the effort taking root with the regional foresters and state foresters. He described a future meeting with the Region 6 leadership team where this definitely has currency and a good chance of moving forward.

Recognizing the new Governor has a lot on her mind, Doug had asked Richard Whitman to get an endorsement on the forest service renewal document. The action is at Western Governors Association, seeking wider participation and eventually moving to Congress. Furthermore, Doug indicated strong support and enthusiasm from Washington DC staff in carrying the proposal forward.

Wayne Giesy, a member of the public, asked Tom Tuchmann, if there was concern for where the environmental community would come in, noting challenges in getting to an approved Forest Management Plan, with Tom responding that there were plenty of concerns on all sides, but a real opportunity to bring everyone together and that the Western Governors Association were uniquely positioned to do that.

Subcommittee Member Tom Insko asked Tom Tuchmann if there was any indication for a timeframe when Governor Brown might make a decision regarding staffing for engagement on federal forest issues, with State Forester Decker answering that on a broad level, she did anticipate making any major changes in staff beyond what she's already done with Richard Whitman's presence essential, Brian Shipley appointed as the new Chief of Staff, Kristen Leonard moving from the Port to the Governor's Office, and Kristen Grainger. There wasn't a big appetite for the proposals at this time feeling like it's up to us to step in there, with us being Doug, Chad, Kevin, and the Council, to help the WGA and not to expect further staffing.

Subcommittee Chair Nils Christoffersen noted for the record that in addition to the various groups that have mentioned that have reviewed this and are interested in it, a coalition of community-based groups, the rural

voices for conservation coalition are similarly intrigued by it and in the past, two hundred plus members were able to sign on to a position paper. If we were able to rebuild to that level of participation, they would be a good supporter to draw on.

State Forester Decker questioned the Subcommittee on how they might feel their role would change noting a responsibility to keep efforts moving ahead and opportunities to share information.

Federal Forests Support Package – Budget Package 185

State Forester Decker noted the federal forests support package within the Department's budget, and recent discussions with Legislators offering a green-light endorsement.

Chad Davis, referenced the discussion on metrics noted earlier and the recent work of staff putting together a narrative and a storyboard as a conversation starter around the Lower Joseph, noting that piece of work being meant for working with a legislator and talking about what this package delivers and how these type of investments make a difference in the end. In addition, Chad reminded others that we have a contract with the Ecosystem Workforce Program (EWP), working with Cass Mosely, and an end of the month deadline for the one-pagers. Chad acknowledged that the Forest Service had contracted with EWP as well. Specific to the ten-year contract on the Malheur and jobs impact story, folks need to know of that investment and how many jobs are coming out of that effort beyond timber jobs alone but the supporting jobs created from the timber as well.

Next, Chad referenced what the report would deliver related to assessing the economic impacts of timber, looking at timber sold, timber cut, board footage and the economic impacts within that component. Third, the EWP is producing an informative graphic on where the money goes, looking at investments across different scales, whether the dollars are moving to the four northern counties, going out of state, etc. Fourth, a large component will be focused on supporting collaboration, asking what the collaboratives talk about, what did they do, and what are the activities to get there. Chad described a more detailed report was asked of Cass and due at the end of the biennium noting issue in having a year to deliver on two years of result, but a resulting list of 9-10 different metrics.

Related to the collaborative support piece, Chad noted the Blue Mountain Forest Partners, has used state funds to build agreement on three different projects where those three totaled 100,000 acres in agreement where it was previously 30-40,000.

Chad noted value in being able to use ODF seasonal employees at the front and tail end of the fire season, with their contributions to sale layout of over 2300 acres and 12 million feet of timber in the Ochoco and Malheur National Forests. Also referenced was the Forest Service leverage and investment match in the acquisition of LIDAR data.

On the Lower Joseph Creek, Chad described it as a great example of a type of partnership in local government with the Wallowa county NRC putting a lot money into the watershed and using some implementation dollars to finish up data collection. They put together a specialized NEPA team to put together a 90,000 acre project, four times the average size and a third of the national average, indicating a real success story to tell.

Public Comment

Ann Forest Burns of the American Forest Resources Council provided public testimony and written comment (Attachment 1) offering gratitude for the efforts of Tom Tuchmann and former Governor Kitzhaber as well as hope for the incoming Governor Brown's support of the forest service renewal proposal. Offering support for the metrics developed, Ms. Burns encouraged the group determine that they provide legal certainty at an accurate geographic level and as the proposal moves forward, Ms. Burns expressed

interest in working with the Subcommittee and the WGA to help you understand the consequences and strengthen the proposal so it has the desired outcome.

A brief discussion ensued with Gil Riddell and Ms. Burns' on any intent to find economic benefits versus revenue benefits in stewardship contracting, whether reforms were appropriate, if direct timber revenue sharing continues to be restrained and if they would continue to pursue a change to the permanent authorization of contracting.

Next Steps

Subcommittee Chair Nils Christoffersen noted the good discussion regarding the transition, summary of forest service renewal and interest expressed by the WGA and WFLC. Nils questioned the group on appropriate next steps related to the role of the Subcommittee and full board, describing intent to receive a full update from Chad on the effort to report back on the impact from the initial state investment on federal forest lands, interest in a short statement of interest in continuing to proceed on the 6.05 investment package., indicating it was clearly an important priority issue for the Subcommittee to continue to track and engage with partners and encourage support for the package through the end of the biennium.

Subcommittee Member Tom Imeson underscored the conversation about the subcommittee and board's role continuing to be the place where these kinds of conversations can continue to develop in terms of the state's role with respect to federal land management. Through primarily Doug and the western state foresters as things develop further down the road in the Governor's Office, the Subcommittee can continue to be a focal point.

Chair Christoffersen adjourned the public meeting at 3:30.