MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, October 1, 2019, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Oregon Department of Forestry, 2600 State St, Salem, OR

ATTENDEES

Participants: Julie Firman (ODFW), Rod Krahmer (ODFW), Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Ken Phippen (NOAA Fisheries), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Brian Pew (ODF)

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Aaron Gabbe and David Zippin (ICF) – *by phone*, Randy Smith, ODF

Facilitation Team: Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Debra Nudelman (Kearns & West), Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Deb Nudelman (Kearns & West) welcomed members. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Deb reviewed the agenda, which includes: 1) Agency updates from Scoping Team (ST) members, 2) Update on stakeholder engagement, 3) Overview of Chapter 2: Environmental Setting, 4) Review terrestrial species habitat models, 5) Overview of riparian strategy, 6) Prepare for October 9 field tour of Tillamook State Forest, 7) Confirm topics for Steering Committee (SC) update, and 8) Approach going forward, next steps and summary.

Deb asked members for comments on the September 3, 2019 ST meeting summary. Members had no edits or changes.

Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF) reflected on the past ST meeting. At the last meeting, ST members reviewed SC feedback on the Biological Goals and Objectives (BGOs), reviewed terrestrial models, and reviewed the timber harvest modeling approach. ODF is in the process of seeking stakeholder input on the BGOs.

AGENCY UPDATES

Members provided the following updates relevant to the Western Oregon State Forests HCP process:

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF): ODF provided the following updates: 1) ODF will provide an HCP update to the Board of Forestry (BOF) in November. 2) The BOF is expected to make a decision on whether to move forward with HCP and the NEPA process in September 2020. There will be a full-day workshop with the Board on September 10, 2020 to talk about the HCP. 3) ODF is engaging with the Elliott Forest HCP Steering Committee and Technical Team to become more integrated into that process. 4) The fisher candidate conservation agreement was signed last week, and ODF received a permit for BOF lands and select districts.

NOAA Fisheries: Provided updates regarding spring Chinook. NOAA Fisheries received a petition on the species. Troy Rahmig (ICF) clarified that going forward the Western Oregon HCP will include spring Chinook as a covered species.

Ken Phippen will retire in December.

USFWS: The agency is hoping to publish a decision and proposal on fisher species later this month.

ODFW: Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff on the marbled murrelet litigation.

Western Oregon HCP Stakeholder Engagement Update

The next meeting open to the public is scheduled for October 15 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The meeting will be located in Portland, at Portland State University. NOAA Fisheries will not be able to attend due to a conflict. The meeting will focus on the process to develop the BGOs and seek input on the BGOs. We will clarify that no conservation strategies have been developed yet; these strategies will be developed soon and will include the opportunity for the public and stakeholders to provide input.

There was a question about whether the meeting will include a presentation of timber goals and objectives: some stakeholders will be interested in hearing about the timber goals and objectives in conjunction with the BGOs. ODF clarified that the timber goals and objectives will not be developed in time for the October meeting open to the public but can be shared at a future meeting. At the October meeting open to the public, we can explain that development of timber harvest objectives is in progress.

Deb explained that the project team is also engaging in small group discussions with stakeholders to review the Western Oregon HCP Mission, Vision, and Goals, the conceptual BGOs, and other topics of interest to stakeholders. The project team held a meeting with industry representatives earlier this month and will have a meeting with conservation interests on October 2.

Deb reminded the ST that the stakeholder engagement process includes meetings open to the public, followed by opportunities to engage in deeper ways with stakeholders that are interested in the topics discussed at those meetings open to the public. There is a recognition that stakeholders may believe that the HCP process is further along than it is, and stakeholders will likely want more information than is available at this time.

ST members expressed interest in hearing the key concerns, ideas, and issues that come out of the smaller-group stakeholder meetings, as appropriate.

Troy provided a brief summary on the meeting with industry stakeholders. The project team walked through the HCP process and how stakeholders are engaged. Industry stakeholders had questions about how the HCP will be negotiated, and how far along the HCP is in the process. They had questions about details of actions and strategies of the HCP, which is information that is not available yet. They reviewed the Mission, Vision, and Goals and BGOs and provided some specific suggestions on the BGOs, which the project team will present at a future ST meeting for group consideration. Industry stakeholders expressed interest in meeting often on HCP topics.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Troy presented an overview of Chapter 2: Environmental Setting. The chapter characterizes the forest today and provides baseline environmental information. It is intended to be a concise overview and includes references to literature as needed. Troy reviewed the table of contents, noting that the chapter is organized by eco-region. Four eco-regions are represented: coast range, West Cascades, Klamath Mountains, and Willamette Valley. The chapter describes:

- The history of the forest, including history of each eco-region. There is also some description at the county level and a description of current land uses.
- Physical setting.
- Ecological setting that helps to characterize the forest as it is today, including forest types and forest age and how that relates to species diversity. There is also an ecological description for each eco-region. The section includes a new way to think about the forest structure: categorized by early seral, mid-seral, and late-seral forest stages.
- High level discussion of covered species. Species accounts will be included as an appendix to this chapter.

Troy explained the review process for Chapter 2:

- The chapter is currently on SharePoint. Troy will also email the document to all ST members for their review.
- The ST members are asked to strive to provide their comments and thoughts on the chapter by October 25, prior to the next ST meeting, so that the group can discuss the chapter at that time. They can also come to the next ST meeting with their comments if they are not able to provide their input in advance.
- Members should “reply all” with their email comments and edits.
- ICF will consolidate all ST comments that are submitted prior to the next ST meeting.

Discussion

ST members discussed and provided the following questions and comments:

- Members asked why the project team chose to describe the forest structure by three seral stages. ODF explained that there are five stand structure types defined under ODF's current Forest Management Plan (FMP); there are limitations to the five-stand structure approach. We are looking to move into seral stages because that better describes Oregon's forests and provides more flexibility. This seral stage framework could be used in the FMP and HCP.
    - Some members had questions about how the seral stages approach would apply to managed stand.
    - ODF explained that under the current five-stand structure types approach, it is hard to quantify and measure inventory. The seral stages characterization helps with adaptive management and silviculture management because it makes it easier to inventory the forest.
    - The project team seeks ST feedback on this new way to characterize the forest. ST members are encouraged to review the chapter and provide thoughts on how to characterize the forest.
- Members had questions about how the forests are split up into eco-regions. Separating the Willamette Valley from the West Cascades may be a concern for species management for smolts. Suggest linking the floodplain back to the West Cascades; the Willamette Valley is the flood plain for the West Cascades, so separating the two areas out is a concern for species management. Troy clarified that the conservation actions will not be so discrete between eco-regions that it would impede management.

TERRESTRIAL SPECIES HABITAT MODELS

Troy introduced the topic of terrestrial species habitat models, noting that the ST briefly touched on the topic at their last meeting. The intent today is to describe the approach and methodology for developing the species models, including the assumptions used, and to walk through initial work on modeling for the six terrestrial species. There will be a deeper dive to go through each specific species at later ST meetings.

Troy, Aaron Gabbe (ICF) and Nick Palazzotto (ODF) introduced a PowerPoint presentation. The key points of the presentation and member comments during the presentation included:

- "Expert opinion" models were developed for six species. The models describe the suitability of the landscape in providing habitat for the species. Expert opinion models are different than statistical models, which use species occurrence data to understand species habitat. We do not have enough occurrence data in Oregon forests for these terrestrial species, which is why we are using expert opinion models.

- The models inform the conservation strategy and take assessment. The primary purpose is to supplement what we know about the species from occurrence data and to strengthen our understanding of where the species are likely to occur on the landscape.

- The following methods were used to develop the models:
    - Use stand-level inventory (SLI) data to characterize the landscape. This SLI data is useful to characterize the habitat relationships.
    - Selected parameters from the SLI inventory variables to describe key habitat characteristics.
    - Characterized relationship between each habitat parameter and quality and standardized it. Selected three to five parameters to characterize each species. Used a logistic model to do that for each parameter; this also helped to normalize the habitat suitability for each parameter.
    - When indicated by literature, weighted some parameters more heavily than others, in cases where certain parameters were a better indicator of habitat suitability.

- Oregon Slender Salamander Model:
    - The parameters selected to characterize the species habitat include total downed wood, large downed wood, canopy height, and stand density index. Large downed wood is the most important parameter for the species, and total downed wood is a good supplemental parameter to understand habitat suitability. Oregon slender salamander tend to thrive in older forests; canopy height and stand density index are associated with older forests.
    - **Discussion:** ST members discussed the parameters selected and provided the following questions:
        - Question about why canopy height was selected, rather than canopy cover, which is more related to mortality? Canopy height indicates the presence of tall trees, but canopy cover influences natural mortality and temperature to help cool the forest areas.
            - ODF and ICF responded that no canopy cover metric is readily available but can be calculated. Canopy height was selected as a parameter because canopy height means “big trees” which often converts to large downed wood, which is the most important element for salamander habitat.

        - Members pointed out that the benefits of downed wood for the Oregon slender salamander are similar to the benefits of downed wood for coho.

    - Question about whether the team constructed a correlation matrix.

        - ICF responded that the team can construct a correlation matrix as a next step, however, it is not exactly clear how we would use the results of a correlation matrix. There may be a choice to be made about whether to have more parameters, or whether to have a simple model. A sensitivity analysis could be conducted to see what happens if we remove some of those closely correlated parameters.

- Presented a sample table that summarizes the model for Oregon slender salamander. The table will go into the species account and explains how the species model was built and rationale for selecting the various habitat parameters. A similar table will be developed for each species. The table describes, for each parameter, what level of each parameter is needed for the habitat to qualify as "high," "medium," or "low," suitability for the species.

- The current model shows what is on the landscape today. The SLI data can be put into a growth model, to predict where habitat could become more or less suitable in the future based on potential forest growth.

- Presented a worksheet that characterizes the relationship between downed wood parameters and quality of habitat for Oregon slender salamander. It creates an index of habitat quality for certain quantities of downed wood. As more downed wood is found in a stand, the probability of habitat suitability increases. The team came up with thresholds for what qualifies as "high," "medium," or "low," suitability for the species; this translates into a habitat suitability index. There is some flexibility to define what the thresholds are and how to define suitability for each variable using expert opinion and literature. The same kind of characterization can be done for other parameters.

- Presented a matrix showing a weighted product expert model. It shows the relationship between the total downed wood parameter and habitat quality. Large downed wood is more important than any other variable, so is more heavily weighted in the model. The weights can be adjusted based on ST input and our understanding of the species. The matrix shows that as each parameter increases, the suitability index increases. It is important to compare this matrix to what we would expect to see on the ground to make sure we are giving the right amount of weight to each parameter. This matrix can also help us understand whether certain parameters are unnecessary for the model, either because the parameter is essentially duplicative of another parameter, or because the parameter doesn't affect habitat suitability much.

    - Presented a coarse-scale map showing the three categories of suitability of lands for the species (high, medium, and low). With five categories of suitability, we can more precisely identify the most suitable lands for the species.

- Next steps on the terrestrial model development includes:
    - Refine the models. This will include an analysis to compare the overlap between the models' habitat with the occurrence data. We will also compare the models with other published models, to see if there is similarity in the models' predictions on suitability of habitat.
    - Have discussions with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) ST members to go through the models, review parameters, and tweak parameters real-time together.
    - Get a focused external review of the models by species experts.
    - Eventually, what comes out of the terrestrial habitat modeling will be linked up with timber harvest modeling.
    - Timeline: Any substantial changes to the models should occur over the next several weeks. It will be harder to make more than minor tweaks in the future.

Discussion

ST members discussed and made the following comments:

- The model is intended to project habitat, not location of species. It will be important to message that.
- Would hope to see some surveys conducted for some species and adjust the models in the future as a result of those surveys. The models should not be static; if surveys warrant it, the models should be changeable to match what is happening on the ground. Troy noted that the HCP will include adaptive management strategies and indicate that as new information emerges on the species, changes can be made.
- Question about how murrelet habitat boundaries are drawn in the literature.

RIPARIAN STRATEGY

Troy provided a high-level overview of the riparian strategy approach and noted that:

- The ICF/ODF team is developing a riparian buffer framework. The intent is to develop a standardized buffer with the flexibility to shift the buffer based on the landscape.
- The team is also working to memorialize the current process that ODF implements on the landscape. It will be important that the ST clearly understands the process.

- Terrain Works is under contract and is working on the modeling. This will be important information as we consider the landscape today and under various climate scenarios for the future. The product should be available by late October, and Terrain Works may attend a future ST meeting to present.

- During the October 9 field tour, there will be more explanation and discussion around the process for developing a riparian buffer.

Discussion on Riparian Strategy

ST members commented that site-specific data is important. Prescription data is lacking in information about what is really on the ground. If the HCP has a prescription data approach, there should be cases where a site-specific exception could be made.

PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER 9 FIELD TOUR

Cindy provided information in preparation for the October 9 field tour into the Tillamook Forest:

- Cindy will send out an email later this week with the full agenda.

- ST members should meet at the Tillamook Office between 8:30am-9:00am, to leave promptly at 9:00am. The field tour is from 9:00am-4:00pm.

- The goal of the field tour is to provide an understanding of how ODF implements the current practices under its FMP, how the resource specialists weigh in, and how upland strategies can contribute to aquatic strategies.

- ST members should bring their own lunch.

- There will be space for everyone to ride in ODF vehicles.

- There will be some short walks off-road into riparian areas.

NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

Cindy thanked members for their time and participation.

The project team reviewed dates for upcoming meetings:

- The next ST meetings are scheduled for:
    - October 29, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Salem
    - November 5, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Salem
    - November 20, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Salem

- The October 24, 2019 joint SC-ST meeting is cancelled.

- The next meeting open to the public is scheduled for October 15.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

Chapter 2:

- ICF – Email Chapter 2 to all ST members for their review.
- ST members – Strive to provide comments and thoughts on chapter 2 by October 25, so the group can discuss the chapter at the next ST meeting, or come to the next ST meeting with comments if members are not able to provide their input in advance.
    - Members should “reply all” with their email comments and edits.
- ICF – Consolidate ST comments that are submitted for review and discuss at next ST meeting.

Terrestrial Models:

- ICF – Follow up with USFWS and ODFW Scoping Team members to continue to discuss the terrestrial models.