

# MEETING SUMMARY

## WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, January 28, 2020, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

USFWS: 2600 SE 98<sup>th</sup> Ave, Portland, OR

### ATTENDEES

**Participants:** Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Rod Kraher (ODFW), Brian Pew (ODF), Mike Wilson (ODF), Brian Pew (ODF), Julie Firman – by phone

**Technical Consultant and Guests:** Troy Rahmig (ICF), Aaron Gabbe (ICF), Randy Smith (ODF), Corey Grinnell (ODF)

**Facilitation Team:** Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Deb Nudelman (Kearns & West), Michelle Bardini (Kearns & West)

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

Deb reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency updates, 2) Report out on Steering Committee (SC) progress and review updated Biological Goals and Objectives (BGOs), 3) Terrestrial strategy terminology, 4) Effects analysis and conservation strategy, 5) Northern spotted owl strategy, 6) Marbled murrelet strategy, 7) Confirm topics for SC update, and 8) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF) reflected on the past Scoping Team (ST) meeting. At the last meeting, members discussed stakeholder engagement. There have been several small group meetings with stakeholders to discuss the conservation strategy and to receive input. Meeting summaries from these stakeholder meetings will be provided to the ST to help inform the HCP development.

Additionally, ST members discussed the terrestrial and riparian strategies and looked at the landscape to understand how to approach these integrated strategies. There is a need to explore where fish and non-fish might come together and how to develop that buffer.

## **AGENCY UPDATES**

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

**Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW):** ODFW is working to decide on whether to list marbled murrelet as a covered species.

**Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF):** 1) ODF scheduled a more focused meeting with conservationists to discuss the marbled murrelet strategy, including conservation actions and how to enhance habitat. 2) The legislative session starts next week.

**Department of State Lands (DSL):** Ryan Singleton (DSL) is working on the Elliott HCP and Brian Pew (ODF) will be joining technical team for the Elliott HCP. The goal is to have a draft HCP by the end of the year.

**United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS):** USFWS is revising the northern spotted owl critical habitat. The potential exists for the HCP to determine where critical habitat is designated.

## **REPORT OUT ON STEERING COMMITTEE PROGRESS AND REVIEW UPDATED BGOs**

Deb reported out on the January 23 SC meeting. The SC discussed what is happening on the landscape at a policy level and lessons learned. The SC also discussed the NEPA process and the NEPA lead.

The project team provided high-level updates on the ST progress to date. ST members were encouraged to be in communication and coordination with SC members to keep the SC up to date on the development and process of the HCP. The SC received ST meeting summaries, stakeholder meeting summaries, and the stream buffer diagrams without numbers.

Troy briefly reviewed edits to the BGOs provided by the SC. The edits added clarity to the objectives for coastal marten. The SC approved the changes to the BGOs at the last meeting. ST members did not have any comments or concerns on the edits to the BGOs and agreed to move forward with the changes.

## **TERRESTRIAL STRATEGY TERMINOLOGY**

Troy discussed the terminology for the terrestrial strategy and explained the next steps are to discuss the effects analysis, conservation strategy, and methodology. The main goals of the BGOs are to conserve, maintain, and enhance and increase quality and quantity of habitat. We need to think through the methodology of the terrestrial strategy and determine how to designate areas within the permit area for the covered species.

Troy proposed using the terminology “habitat conservation areas (HCA).” These areas would:

- Be informed by observational data.
- Be supplemented with habitat models in places where there is not sufficient observational data.
- Strive for larger more contiguous areas. The focus is on long term function on the landscape.
- Look to optimize the terrestrial strategy by providing for all covered species and retain flexibility for covered activities outside of the HCA. The intent is to optimize the areas where there are overlapping species. The permit is issued on a species basis; we want to be able to point to how we are addressing conservation needs within the HCP.

Troy noted that management will still occur in the HCAs. The intent is to support conservation, but it is expected that timber activities that would support conservation goals would still occur in these areas.

The ST discussed the terrestrial strategy terminology and provided the following questions and comments:

- The public found that it would be helpful if the Forest Management Plan (FMP) and the HCP had similar terminology as the two plans will be compared. The FMP references durable conservation areas (DCAs) rather than HCAs. Suggestion to use consistent terminology.
- Does the terminology need to include the word “riparian” or is “HCA” sufficient?
  - There was interest to remove the riparian piece because riparian falls as a subset to the HCA.
  - ST decided to keep the riparian reserves and HCA separate. Additionally, members recommended not using the term “reserves” because it is anticipated that there will be active management in those areas.
- When the conservation strategy is refined and is integrated, the landscape may help inform what makes sense in terms of designations. We can continue to evolve the terminology.
- When we see how species and management actions overlap, we may want to differentiate between the HCAs at a later time.

## **EFFECTS ANALYSIS AND CONSERVATION STRATEGY**

Troy discussed valuing habitat in the effects analysis and conservation strategy and the need to define take. Troy explained it is important to have a common currency for accounting the effects and conservation. The intent is to understand how the covered activities will impact the covered species. Additionally, there is a need to determine what will be considered an “effect” under the

HCP and to determine what will be considered “conservation.” Depending on the species, this could be informed by observational data and may rely on habitat models.

Troy noted the currency for each species will be different. The ST will discuss the effects and conservation for each species and how to utilize the data and information to inform the strategies for each species.

## **NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL STRATEGY**

Troy walked through the development of the northern spotted owl strategy and explained the need to discuss how to use the data available to inform the conservation strategy and the effects analysis for the species.

Troy reviewed the northern spotted owl strategy. Key points of the presentation are as follows:

- The strategy includes long-term survey data.
- Focuses on locations that have been active recently but also focuses on the following additional sites:
  - Near active sites
  - Near sites that will be managed under the HCP anyway
  - Locations identified as important for the species
  - Have higher ODF ownership of surrounding habitat
  - Are representative of species range within the plan area
  - Overlap with HCAs for other covered species
- There is a need to refine the criteria for conserving locations.
- Will need to determine what constitutes an effect of a mitigation action under the HCP.

Troy presented maps showing activity centers on ODF lands and spotted owl suitability models. Active sites are broken into five categories that indicate the level of habitat suitability; this allows us to talk about how sites and habitat can change overtime and where that change occurs.

Additionally, Troy explained how active and non-active sites are currently being defined. Under current policies, active sites are defined as having observed northern spotted owls at a site in the past five years. However, for this exercise, we are looking at all sites that were defined as active in the past six years, as well as adjacent sites that are within a provincial radius. Troy clarified that if there is a site that has not been active in the last six years, then it would not be considered an effect under the HCP. As the strategy is developed, areas may be prioritized differently.

It was proposed to quantify effects using habitat loss rather than number of animals lost as the measurement unit. The idea is that conserving and increasing the suitable habitat will outweigh effects.

ST members discussed the northern spotted owl strategy and provided the following questions and comments:

- Members agreed with quantifying effects using habitat lost but noted the need to show the process of prioritizing habitat improvement.
- Suggestion to integrate the habitat model to see where we enhance lower or higher quality habitat.
- It was clarified that an action being considered an adverse effect or take is dependent on how much habitat is available. For example, if there is abundant habitat available, then removing some habitat doesn't constitute as take. If there is removal of suitable habitat in home range of an owl, this would be classified as an adverse effect.
- There are different types of effects; there is loss of habitat and loss of owls. Loss of habitat is not equal across the landscape. The impact of habitat loss is dependent on location and the amount of habitat available.
  - There is a need to think about how to quantify adverse effects and the tradeoffs.

### **Habitat Suitability Model**

Aaron Gabbe (ICF) presented the habitat suitability model. The model provided an overview of the parameters and categories for habitat quality and illustrated what it represents on the landscape. Aaron explained habitat is categorized by highly suitable, suitable low, marginal suitability, unsuitable, and no data. The parameters include trees per acre, top height, DDI, stand age, and canopy cover. This modeling and data use these categories and parameters to provide metrics and thresholds for what constitutes as quality habitat.

ST members discussed the habitat model and provided the following questions and comments:

- Will conservation of active sites be prioritized?
  - Not all active sites will be prioritized. The ST will have to make decisions about which sites to prioritize as there may be some sites that make more sense to focus on.
- Members noted the model does not seem to classify the level of habitat suitability consistently. For example, one site is classified as suitable habitat but has a higher metric than a site classified as highly suitable habitat.
  - There are some outliers and there will be cases where a histogram can be used to identify the site. Multiple sources of information will be needed to determine effect.

- The model is currently unweighted. The ST as a group will need to decide if we wanted to give certain parameters more weight.
- There is the ability to do post processing and find the stands on the landscape. LIDAR can also be used to look at stands or older trees.
- The HCP could include a conservation measure that restricts the removal of trees that are a certain size and age wherever they occur. This is a way of capturing the importance of old trees.
- There is value in categorizing sites that are outside the provincial radius. In general, the closer you are to a site's center the more likely you are to impact habitat. Suggestion to consider everything within a home range radius as it is important to know where sites are in the home range to make decisions about the habitat.
- Members agreed to call sites "active" or "inactive" but noted the activity status of the sites may vary.

Troy noted the larger takeaways and action items from the discussion and explained ICF and ODF will look at outliers in low suitability models and consider creating a histogram. This might result in a change in parameters. Additionally, ICF and ODF will continue to work on the definition of active sites in the last six years and will be providing information and data on active and inactive sites at a later time. The ST will be engaged step wise throughout the process and will be provided products for review.

## **MARBLED MURRELET STRATEGY**

Troy then walked through the development of the marbled murrelet strategy. The primary focus of the strategy will be around the survey and observational data. Troy explained the team approached this strategy by using marbled murrelet management areas (MMAs) as a cross check, rather than a starting place. We are focusing on the locations that have significant observations; this will then be supplemented with habitat suitability modelling. Troy noted the observational data looks at presence and visual observations.

Next steps include defining the desirable patch size, refining the criteria for conserving the occupied location, and determining mitigation actions under the HCP.

ST members discussed the marbled murrelet strategy development and the data. Key points of the conversation are as follows:

- LIDAR may be a better way to see habitat. Stochastic Local Interaction (SLI) may be less effective at predicting marbled murrelet use and structure.
  - SLI will be used for base modelling and to create thresholds. The model will undergo expert review to adjust the thresholds as needed. In general, we are looking at height of canopies. LIDAR may be used as a secondary filter to find

residual trees in younger stands, to look at current conditions, and to screen for specific parameters.

- Members expressed concern that the observational data does not include auditory observations. This is part of the protocol and could eliminate valid observations.
  - There are several sites that had audio sightings, but no birds were physically seen.
  - A heat map is being developed to look at observations in a productive way. Including audio may develop a fuller map.
  - Suggestion to classify the observational data using three categories: 1) significant observation, 2) presence visual, and 3) presence audio.

Troy then presented a heat map of the observational data. The map shows where the species was detected but doesn't quantify the number of detections. The areas that had more observations overtime are being valued. The map and new data speak to presence, type of presence, and occupancy and also shows the correlations. Audio presence is less significant than visual presence.

ST members discussed the heat map and provided the following comments and questions:

- ST members agreed with the concept of using the survey data and survey protocol as a primary guide and supplementing the data with LIDAR and other technologies.
- It was clarified that the hexagons in the heat map are random and do not capture MMMA's and what is on the ground.
- It was clarified that ODF currently has policies for designating MMMA's. If the HCP is successful, whatever strategies are developed would supplant the current MMMA policy. Under the HCP, the framework aims to be less rigid and prescriptive.

Troy recapped the next steps to developing the marbled murrelet strategy and noted it would be useful to have a conference call with terrestrial focused ST members to discuss the marbled murrelets strategy and how to use and supplement LIDAR and other technologies with the survey data.

## **CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The next SC meeting is scheduled for March 30. Members did not provide specific messages to communicate.

## **APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY**

Deb thanked members for their participation. The next terrestrial focused ST meeting will revisit the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet strategies and will also discuss Oregon slender salamander and red tree vole.

The next ST meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- Tuesday, February 4 (aquatic focused)
- Tuesday, February 25 (terrestrial focused)
- Tuesday, March 3 (aquatic focused)

## **ACTION ITEMS**

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- ICF and ODF – Identify outliers in low suitability models and consider creating a histogram for northern spotted owl.
- ICF and ODF – Continue to work on the definitions of active and inactive sites and compiling data and information.
- ICF – Schedule conference call with terrestrial focused ST members to discuss the marbled murrelets strategy and how to use and supplement LIDAR and other technologies with the survey data.