

# MEETING SUMMARY

## WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, June 25, 2020, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

*By Webinar and Teleconference Only*

### ATTENDEES

**Steering Committee:** Liz Dent (ODF), Kim Kratz (NOAA Fisheries/NMFS), Paul Henson (USFWS), Leah Feldon (DEQ), Bill Ryan (DSL), Doug Cottam (ODFW), Dan Edge (OSU)

**Technical Consultant:** David Zippin (ICF), Troy Rahmig (ICF)

**Facilitation Team:** Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Brett Brownscombe (Oregon Consensus), Debra Nudelman and Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West)

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West, welcomed SC members and kicked off the meeting.

Deb reviewed the agenda. The key agenda topics included: 1) Agency updates, stakeholder engagement updates, and updates on the Scoping Team (ST) progress, 2) Final draft of the Riparian Conservation areas (RCAs), 3) Summary of wood recruitment modeling, 4) Update on timber harvest modeling, 5) Discuss public presentation of the Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) and RCAs, 6) Upcoming Board of Forestry (BOF) meetings, 7) Steering Committee (SC) direction to the ST, and 8) Approach going forward and next steps.

Liz Dent, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), welcomed SC members. She explained there have been changes in the BOF membership. The current Chair is stepping down and the Governor has appointed three new Board members who will be joining this summer. The intent is still to bring the Administrative Draft of the HCP to the BOF at the October meeting.

### AGENCY UPDATES

SC members provided the following updates relevant to the Western Oregon HCP process:

- **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW):** The recent Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting focused on the furbearer program and beaver management. The agency is continuing to deal with issues and budget reductions related to COVID-19.

- **Department of State Lands (DSL):** The agency is developing a business case in support of inclusion of Common School Fund (CSF) lands in the HCP. The Land Board will need to make the ultimate decision on whether to include CSF lands in the HCP.
- **Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):** 1) The legislature is holding a special session in July to discuss the topic of budget reductions due to COVID-19, which is likely to impact DEQ's work, particularly in water quality. 2) The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) Chair and Vice-Chair terms will end on June 30. It is anticipated their terms will be renewed, but there has been some difficulty in bringing the Senate Committee together for appointment renewals.
- **Oregon State University (OSU):** Researchers have submitted research resumption plans to continue research that has been stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most will be able to restart projects.
- **ODF:** 1) There are several seats up for renewal on the BOF. 2) ODF is working to reengage the Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee (FTLAC) in the HCP process, but it has been a challenge due to other priorities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. 3) The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between industry and conservation groups to seek an HCP for aquatic species needs approval from the legislature. This has been discussed in the legislative special session and has moved out of committee. Funding is needed to support the work, which is under discussion.

## REPORT OUT ON SCOPING TEAM

Liz reminded members that development of the HCAs is an iterative process to ensure the HCAs can help meet the biological goals and objectives as well as be economically viable. The ST had questions about the linkages between the HCAs and timber harvest modeling, and ODF will spend more time discussing this with the ST. The timber harvest modeling and habitat modeling helps us understand how the HCAs perform both for the species and in terms of economic viability.

Troy Rahmig, ICF, reported out on the ST progress. The topics discussed at recent ST meetings included:

- Wood recruitment and temperature modeling, including a presentation from TerrainWorks.
- Defining the covered activities and management actions in HCAs.
- The aquatic strategy, including developing the RCAs and the riparian buffer strategy.
- The terrestrial strategy, including continued work on developing the HCAs, the interaction between timber modeling and HCAs, and the terrestrial monitoring program.

Troy noted that the HCP is a biologically focused document, but decisions within the HCP impact economic and social realities. As we move into the BOF decision-making phase, it will be important to distinguish between the decisions and components that are dealt with as part of the HCP document and what kind of decisions are made outside of it.

SC members discussed the ST progress and provided the following questions and comments:

- It will be important to provide information to the ST to help them understand the iterative process of developing the HCAs.
- It would be helpful for the SC to have a better understanding of what kinds of decisions and elements are within the purview of the HCP, and which are dealt with outside of the HCP.
  - This will be a topic for a future SC meeting. The project team will develop a document explaining what is included in the HCP as compared to other plans, such as the Forest Management Plan (FMP).
  - Suggestion to include the reasoning for why certain elements or decisions are part of the HCP or not. There may be questions about why the HCP does not include certain elements as well as some assumptions on the traditional practices that HCPs typically include. For example, there are some water quality issues that are within the HCP but have clear linkages to the water quality standards.

## **REPORT OUT ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The next meeting open to the public is scheduled for Monday, July 13 from 1-4:30pm via webinar. The meeting time has been extended because there is a lot of information to share and in anticipation of robust stakeholder discussion. SC members were encouraged to attend if possible.

## **RIPARIAN CONSERVATION AREAS**

Troy provided an update on the riparian strategy. Key topics of the presentation included:

- **Temperature Protection Zone (TPZ):** The TPZ is intended to provide protection in the parts of the stream that are not fish-bearing themselves but are just upstream of fish-bearing streams. Recent ST meetings and some past SC meetings included some discussion on the potential length and width of the buffer for the TPZ. The timber harvest modeling has helped ODF understand economic tradeoffs of different buffer approaches. ODF can now commit to a 120' wide buffer in the non-fish bearing streams for a length of 500' from the end of fish line. The buffer width would then drop to 35' beyond that 500' TPZ.
  - The intent is to provide this information to the public at the July 13 meeting open to the public.
- **Wood Recruitment Modeling:** Provided an update on wood recruitment modeling and temperature vulnerability. Wood recruitment is a major component of the riparian strategy. The objectives were to understand how much wood is coming into the system from riparian buffers, where the wood is coming from, and whether the wood would actually reach fish-bearing streams. Several scenarios were modeled. Modeling results

confirmed that a 120' general buffer in riparian areas is effective to bring wood into the system. There are three sources of wood: 1) riparian tree fall, 2) landslide events, and 3) debris flow delivery.

- The modeling shows that the current proposed buffers will capture nearly all wood that could potentially make its way into the aquatic system (99%). Most of the wood is coming from stream-side sources (trees falling into riparian areas adjacent to fish-bearing streams). The rest of the wood (a small amount) is recruited from debris flows in non-fish-bearing streams.
- The Elliott HCP includes wood recruitment in the 80-85% range. The Elliott HCP process involved developing a wood recruitment target and then devising buffers to meet that range. The Western Oregon HCP process, on the other hand, did not start with a wood recruitment percentage in mind when developing the buffer strategy.
- **Temperature Analysis:** TerrainWorks helped to identify areas on the landscape that may be vulnerable to temperature increases over time. The modeling shows that less than 1% of coho streams, roughly 67 stream miles, are susceptible to warming over time. All of those streams are buffered by 120'. Additional analysis will be conducted on non-fish bearing streams. This analysis will illustrate whether there are any additional areas of concern and we can consider how to address those.

## Discussion

SC members discussed the riparian strategy and provided the following questions and comments:

- SC members noted they found the TPZ acceptable and were comfortable presenting it to the public as described today.
  - NOAA Fisheries expressed appreciation of the conversations and coming to this TPZ outcome.
  - ODF thanked NOAA Fisheries for their patience in developing the TPZ. It took some time to get the harvest model running well enough so that ODF could make a decision. It was also noted that the ST has been very collaborative and effective in coming to this outcome.
- SC members discussed the temperature analysis:
  - Is this the temperature analysis the work of Gordon Reeves? This is a question that will likely be asked by the BOF.
  - Are temperature refuges being considered?
    - Temperature refuges are likely included in the zones that are protected under the HCP.
  - Are there any areas of groundwater intrusion that would be worth further protection?

- Additional modeling on groundwater intrusion will not be conducted; however, the HCP does acknowledge that it is an area of great variability. The TPZ strategy is conservative enough to address that concern.
  - Do the stream temperature treatments result in providing habitat needs of amphibians?
    - Yes, the treatments address temperature, sediment, and in-stream habitat that generally has benefits for aquatic amphibians.
- It will be important to have clear messaging around the differences in wood recruitment for the Elliott HCP and the Western Oregon HCP, as well as the other ways the HCP processes are different.

## **POLICY-LEVEL TIMBER HARVEST MODELING**

Troy presented on the policy-level timber harvest modeling. Key topics of the presentation included:

- **Results of Calibration Run:** We have gone through one iteration of the harvest model; it was a calibration run to confirm that the model was working. The model did not apply silvicultural actions as expected within the HCAs, so model refinements had to be made prior to the second model run. This model run allowed ODF to examine economic tradeoffs and better understand the timber harvest levels.
- **Second Model Run:** Timber harvest model refinements have been made and we are now in the middle of the second timber harvest model run. HCA refinements are being made to optimize habitat quality inside of the HCAs while balancing management costs. Additionally, boundaries and silvicultural prescriptions are being revised based on feedback from the ST and District staff. The intent is to develop the optimal strategy that would lead to the best habitat growth over time, while being economically viable.
- **Next Steps:** The model revision should be complete in early July and will be discussed at the July 7 ST meeting. The intent is to share ranges of the model outputs with the public and BOF in July.

## **PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE HCAs AND RCAs**

Liz provided context on what will be presented at the July 13 meeting open to the public and the July 22 BOF meeting. The intent would be to provide a range of acreage percentages that could be included in the HCAs, with recognition that there may be a shift in these ranges based on the findings of the next round of modeling. The intent is to present the RCAs with the proposed specific buffer numbers. Stakeholders have great interest in hearing the specificity of the substance of the HCP, rather than hearing information at the conceptual level.

## **Discussion**

The SC discussed the public presentation of the HCAs and the RCAs. They expressed they were comfortable with the approach to presenting the HCAs and the RCAs.

## **UPCOMING BOARD OF FORESTRY MEETINGS**

Liz provided an update on the upcoming BOF meetings. Key topics of the presentation included:

### **July BOF meeting:**

- The July 22 BOF meeting will include an update on the HCP. ODF will present on the HCAs, RCAs, and an estimated harvest volume. The BOF will also hear about the stakeholder and partner engagement.
- ODF will explain and set up the decision that the BOF will be asked to make in October. ODF will provide an overview of the comparative analysis that would be presented in October to help the BOF make the decision on whether to move forward with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that includes an HCP as an alternative. As a reminder, the forest goals and objectives will be included in the companion FMP.
- The hope is to have Kim Kratz, NOAA Fisheries, and Paul Henson, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), join as part of the panel to kick off the agenda item. The SC is welcome to attend.

### **September BOF meeting:**

- The September BOF meeting will include time to review the draft FMP as well as include discussion on the assumptions that would be included in the comparative analysis between the HCP and FMP. The BOF will need to decide how much detail to include in the companion FMP.
- The meeting may also include discussion on the structured decision making as an adaptive management framework.

### **October BOF meeting:**

- The October BOF meeting will include a full-day agenda item to review the HCP and the comparative analysis. The comparative analysis will be used as the key piece to help the BOF decide whether to move forward with the HCP.
- ODF will present the HCP and the anticipated results that would come out of the HCP.
- ODF is working with the Board coordinator to structure the agenda for the day.
- The expectation is that this meeting would include a robust policy discussion.

## **Discussion**

The SC discussed the upcoming BOF meetings and provided the following comments:

- Kim and Paul noted they were comfortable with the approach of being part of the panel at the July 22 BOF meeting.
- Liz, Kim, and Paul will meet to confirm the presentation and talking points for the July 22 BOF meeting.
- SC members were asked to let Cindy Kolomechuk know if they plan to attend the July 22 BOF meeting so ODF knows who to present and can coordinate with the Board Coordinator.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE DIRECTION TO SCOPING TEAM**

The project team will report out to the ST on what was discussed during today's meeting. SC members were encouraged to have ongoing conversations with ST members to stay informed and ensure alignment within the agencies.

The SC expressed appreciation for the great, hard work of the ST and commended the ST in making science-driven decisions without having to elevate a lot of topics to the SC. This shows the ST's effectiveness and collaboration. The technical work of the HCP has been impressive.

## **NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY**

Liz thanked participants for their time and efforts and closed the meeting.

The next SC meeting will be held on Thursday, July 30 from 1-4pm. Members should assume the meeting will be virtual.

It was noted that as we potentially move into the NEPA process, NOAA Fisheries will be identifying NEPA coordinating agencies. It would be valuable to talk to a subset of the SC about what would be appropriate.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- Project team: Develop frequently asked questions or some other document explaining what is included in the HCP as compared to other plans, such as the Forest Management Plan. Add as a topic for future SC meeting.
- Liz, Kim, and Paul: Meet to confirm the presentation and talking points for the July 22 BOF meeting.
- SC members: Let Cindy Kolomechuk know if you plan to attend the July 22 BOF meeting.
- Project team/Kim: Meet with a subset of the SC to discuss and identify NEPA coordinating agencies as we move into the NEPA process.