

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, September 29, 2020, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

By Webinar and Teleconference Only

ATTENDEES

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

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), David Zippin (ICF), Mark Buckley (ECONorthwest)

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Liz Dent, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), welcomed Steering Committee (SC) members and opened the meeting. She thanked everyone for their time and dedication. She framed the decision that the Board of Forestry (BOF) will be asked to make in October, which is simply whether or not to continue with the HCP and eventually move into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The BOF will not be asked to decide whether the HCP is the right approach and will not be asked to approve or recommend any particular harvest level.

Liz also acknowledged the impact of the wildfires on Oregon and the agency.

Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West, reviewed the agenda. The key agenda topics included: 1) Agency updates and updates on stakeholder engagement, 2) Prepare for the BOF meeting, 3) Updates on HCP development, 4) Comparative Analysis, 5) NEPA update, 6) SC direction to the Scoping Team (ST), and 7) Approach going forward and next steps.

AGENCY UPDATES

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

- **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW):** Noted that the decision on marbled murrelet status review will be postponed. The hearing was originally scheduled for November 2020, but now will be rescheduled for May 2021 or later.

- **Department of State Lands (DSL):** An advisory committee meeting was held on the Elliott State Research Forest HCP recently. The Land Board will be asked to make a decision on the Oregon State University research forest concept in December, and there will be a lot of work to do to make that deadline and to respond to requests for more information.
- **Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF):** 1) Much of the BOF membership will change later this year, but the decision on the HCP will be made by current BOF members. Chair Imeson and two other members are terming out, and it is unclear whether the Governor will ask them to extend their term until replacements can be appointed.
- **United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS):** Wildfires have resulted in shifting workload priorities for USFWS.
- **Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):** Echoed support for ODF's ongoing work, particularly in the midst of the pandemic and wildfires.

REPORT OUT ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Deb reported out that a meeting open to the public was held on September 16, which was attended by over a hundred people. A meeting with stakeholders was also held on September 24, and was attended by over 40 stakeholders. Additionally, a meeting was held with the State Forests Advisory Committee (SFAC) on September 17 and the committee considered messaging for the BOF meeting. The meetings have been valuable to hear feedback, understand the range of perspectives, and to provide a level field of information to the public.

Liz added ODF also held a meeting with conservation stakeholders with the State Forester on September 28. Participants were supportive of moving the HCP forward into the NEPA process.

PREPARE FOR BOARD OF FORESTRY MEETING

Liz reviewed the agenda for the October Board of Forestry meeting. Key agenda topics included:

- The meeting will begin with an executive session, and then move into the key topic for the day which is review of the Western Oregon State Forests HCP and Comparative Analysis.
- The HCP portion of the agenda will include reviewing the draft HCP overview, the Comparative Analysis, the county and stakeholder engagement process, Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee (FTLAC) testimony, invited testimony, public testimony, and a BOF discussion and decision.
- The invited testimony portion will provide a broad range of perspectives on the HCP and will include statements from individuals from various groups including the conservation community, industry, recreation community, environmental justice, and tribes, among others.

- Public testimony has a limited duration, and the goal is to hear from individuals that support, do not support, and have mixed support for the HCP.

Cindy Kolomechuk, ODF, shared the Western Oregon State Forests HCP website and explained where people can find HCP documents.

Brett Brownscombe, Oregon Consensus, invited members to consider how best to structure the five-minute segment for invited testimony from the SC. NOAA Fisheries and USFWS will be providing separate testimony from the federal services perspectives. The invited testimony portion of the BOF agenda is from 1:30 to 2:15 p.m.

Discussion

SC members discussed the BOF meeting and provided the following questions and comments:

- A member asked how the Habitat Conservation Area (HCA) maps portray the Common School Fund (CSF) lands. Troy Rahmig, ICF, clarified that CSF lands are included as part of the HCP Permit Area (ODF Managed Lands).
- Members discussed the proposed approach to SC invited testimony for the BOF meeting and agreed with the approach. Members planned to coordinate talking points so members are not duplicating one another and are communicating all needed messages. Members participating in the invited testimony should try to attend the meeting from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm.
- Brett and Cindy will coordinate with Hilary Olivos-Rood, ODF, on Zoom logistics for SC members who are speaking at the meeting.

HCP DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Troy presented the most up-to-date information related to the HCP. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Reviewed of the HCP development timeline.
- Reviewed the HCA maps. These maps were shared with stakeholders and the public at the September meetings and are currently on the ODF project website.
- Provided a summary of the size and distribution of HCAs in the draft HCP.
- Provided a summary of the total combined HCAs and Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) across the landscape
- Next steps if the BOF decides to move the HCP forward include:
 - The ST would meet monthly through the end of 2020, and then twice a month in early 2021. The team would organize more time for small groups and focused discussions. The ST is currently developing a list of key topics left for discussion to help with sequencing of discussions throughout those meetings.

- Moving forward, the team would integrate recommendations and revisions received in the last review of the draft HCP and continue to refine the HCP document.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Cindy reminded members that ECONorthwest previously completed a Business Case Analysis (BCA). That BCA included a lot of assumptions, and its intent was to help highlight whether it makes sense to pursue an HCP from a business perspective.

The Comparative Analysis (CA) has also been completed by ECONorthwest and is meant to be used as a decision-making tool for the BOF to understand the differences and trends across the three forest management planning scenarios. The CA looks at potential conservation, economic, and social outcomes.

Mark Buckley, ECONorthwest, presented the CA. Key points of his presentation included:

- The purpose of the CA is to compare the expected outcomes of the three scenarios: current FMP (cFMP), revised draft of the FMP (dFMP), and Western Oregon HCP (HCP).
- Reviewed the process for conducting the CA.
- Provided a description of the scenarios for analysis (cFMP, dFMP, and HCP) and noted that the analysis looked over a 75-year timeframe.
- Presented the variables for the CA, including conservation, economic, and social variables.
- Conservation variables include habitat quality and quantity, species monitoring and management, and habitat fragmentation.
- Economic variables include timber harvest volume, harvest revenue and costs, revenue distributions, ODF net operating income, and timber inventory.
- Social variables include carbon sequestration and recreational and cultural activities.
- Provided a description of the policy level forest management model, including key model assumptions.
- Provided a description of the conservation areas.
- Reviewed key outcomes of the CA for the three scenarios, which included:
 - Forest stand age class distribution and conservation protections.
 - Habitat suitability on the landscape over time for the covered terrestrial species.

- Riparian age class condition by the end of the HCP permit term.
 - Timber prices (average pond value) for harvest for the three scenarios.
 - Per unit harvest costs for the three scenarios.
 - Average annual harvest revenue over 15-year periods throughout the HCP permit term and revenue distributed to counties.
 - Average annual Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance costs, including costs for ESA administration and species management.
 - Comparison of non-harvest costs.
 - Comparison of net operating income after payments to counties.
 - Comparison of social variables for the three scenarios, including comparison of carbon storage, recreation outcomes, and cultural outcomes.
 - Carbon stock volumes across the three scenarios.
 - Risk management benefits under the HCP scenario.
- Presented final scenario rankings for the three scenarios across all conservation, economic, and social variables.
 - Reviewed key findings of the CA.

Mark will present the CA results at the BOF meeting and then Brian Pew, ODF, will provide ODF's perspective and reflections on the CA. ODF will be prepared to answer questions around financial viability for the agency.

Discussion:

SC members discussed the CA and provided the following questions and comments:

- The financial outcomes do not look as strong under the CA as they did under the BCA. The CA used a single set of relatively conservative constraints that were run through the model. The objective was to evaluate the risk management and assurance of the HCP.
 - The BCA included broad estimates, while the CA is based on habitat models that can make better predictions about the future. The HCP did not apply restrictions related to red tree vole until ten years into the HCP permit term. ODF is still trying to understand how red tree vole is using the forest. If red tree vole were to become a listed species, it would take time to understand what this means for the forest.
- There may be state savings and efficiencies under an HCP that would not be available under the Forest Management Plan (FMP) take-avoidance scenarios.

- Mark clarified that the CA analysis of ESA administration cost does not include those costs, but rather focuses on costs borne directly by ODF and that affect its bottom line.
- Members noted that it may be interesting to understand the overall costs to the public and other agencies under an HCP as compared to the FMP take-avoidance scenarios. Combining this with net revenue analysis could help provide a greater holistic understanding of efficiencies and cost sharing across Oregon and to Oregonians as a whole.

NEPA UPDATE

Tere O'Rourke, NOAA Fisheries, provided an update on the NEPA process. The agency is learning about the new NEPA regulations and has met internally and with the agency's new attorney to coordinate. NOAA Fisheries has also met with USFWS to discuss how the agencies could work together.

Deb encouraged members to consider whether it would be of value to bring in the attorneys, perhaps at a joint SC-ST meeting that includes a NEPA training.

STEERING COMMITTEE DIRECTION TO SCOPING TEAM

The SC expressed appreciation for the ST members' hard work to date and collaborative effort.

NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

The next SC meeting will be held on October 28, 1– 4 pm.

SC members are also invited to an informal meeting to debrief after the October BOF meeting. The debrief will be held October 14 from 10 – 11:30 am.

Cindy thanked participants for their time and efforts and closed the meeting. SC members will also receive instructions from Hilary on logistics for how to participate in the Zoom BOF meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- ODF: Coordinate with Hilary on Zoom logistics for SC members who are providing testimony during the BOF meeting.