

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, September 22, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

By Webinar/Video Conference

ATTENDEES

Participants: Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Rod Krahmer (ODFW), Ryan Singleton (DSL), Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Tere O'Rourke (NOAA Fisheries), Mike Wilson (ODF), Julie Firman (ODFW), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Josh Seeds (DEQ)

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Aaron Gabbe (ICF), Corey Grinnell (ODF), Rob Lefebvre (ODF)

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

Deb reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency updates and updates on the impacts of wildfires, 2) Update on public and stakeholder engagement, 3) Review HCA maps and summary statistics, 4) Discuss management in HCAs, 5) Overview of materials for October 6 Board of Forestry (BOF) meeting, 6) Key areas of focus post BOF- meeting, 7) Confirm topics for Steering Committee (SC) update and 7) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

AGENCY UPDATES AND UPDATES ON IMPACTS OF WILDFIRES

Update on Impacts of Wildfires

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) provided an update on the impacts of wildfires. Many acres were burned in the Santiam Forest (about half the forest in the North Cascades) but the agency still doesn't know the extent of the damage. ODF encourages the Scoping Team (ST) to consider how management might change in HCAs in light of disturbance. The ultimate goal is to restore the areas, not to salvage the areas, even though we know salvage will be part of the conversation.

Discussion

Members discussed and provided the following comments and questions:

- What role would ST play in considering the future of the fire-affected areas?
 - ODF noted that we might anticipate ST discussion over the next few months on the conservation actions and thresholds for salvage in HCAs, and young stand management and reforestation in HCAs. It might also be interesting to think about forming a technical team during HCP implementation to talk through questions as issues and future disturbances arise.
- How is the forest impact seedling supply?
 - ODF has acquired many more seedlings right away so this is likely not a concern at this time for ODF or for large landowners. However, small woodland owners may not be able to acquire seedlings for many years, and ODF is considering how to get seedlings to them.
- What is the timing for operations inside and outside of HCAs in terms of removal of wood and replanting? Will ODF be looking at natural restoration opportunities or enhanced restoration?
 - ODF responded that timing for operations will likely begin this winter. The timing for entering and salvaging timber depends on the nature of the burn severity. Natural regeneration is being considered and ODF will bring in as many different species as it can.

Agency Updates

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

- **ODF:** 1) The BOF appointees will not be moving forward. When the next opportunity for BOF appointments come around there may be four new appointees. The current Board will likely keep its current makeup until December. 2) Provided an update on how many ODF staff are engaged in the wildfire containment and the support from other agencies and groups. 3) The fire impact was also felt in the Tillamook Forest.
- **DSL:** About 1,200 acres of land managed by DSL was damaged by fire, and the severity is yet to be determined. This includes some Common School Fund (CSF) lands.
- **ODFW:** 1) The agency's Northwest Watershed District staff have been reaching out to others regarding post-fire monitoring and restoration, looking into tree replacement projects concurrent with salvage operations, and working to prioritize restoration and monitoring in the wake of the fires. 2) Some hatcheries were damaged due to the wildfires. The agency is still assessing the impacts to hatcheries, fish and wildlife.

- **NOAA Fisheries:** 1) The agency has been doing a lot of emergency consultations and technical assistance during the fires. The fires have illuminated the great impact of toxic smoke and what that is doing to the ecosystem and species. 2) The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) has sent a FOIA request to NOAA Fisheries. 3) The agency has received permission to join Zoom meetings. 4) The agency staff is very busy working on wildfire issues and wildfire response teams.
- **DEQ:** 1) The agency has been busy with wildlife response, particularly regarding emergency response, drinking water impacts, and solids and hazardous waste. 2) The agency has been dealing with harmful algae blooms.

UPDATE ON PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Deb noted that a meeting open to the public was held on September 16 and over a hundred members of the public participated.

A stakeholder meeting is scheduled for 9/24. ST members should let Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West know if they are interested in attending the stakeholder meetings and she will send calendar invites.

HCA MAPS AND SUMMARY STATISTICS

Troy provided an update on HCA maps and statistics that included:

- Noted the team shared maps of the Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) with the public at the recent meeting open to the public. He shared those maps with the ST. The HCP includes a series of maps as an attachment that provide a finer level of detail, and those are available on the website.
- Provided a summary of draft HCAs, including HCA size and distribution that are included in the draft of the HCP. Across the permit area, 275,000 acres (or 43%) is included in HCAs.
- Showed a breakdown of acreage within HCAs and Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs). 317,000 acres of the permit area (or 50%) is included inside of HCAs and RCAs combined. There is an expectation that there will be active management within HCAs at a certain level.

Discussion

ST members discussed and provided the following comments:

- Why are the HCAs being presented as specific numbers rather than ranges, when there may be changes to the HCP after the Board meeting? There are some outstanding issues that might tweak the HCA acreage. ODF responded that in terms of the HCA acreage, operational adjustments and other adjustments can still be made. This is a

draft HCP and changes are still okay. It was important to correct any speculation around the ranges that were presented before, which is why ODF chose to present numbers rather than ranges. Additionally, numbers were needed for the comparative analysis. ODF reminded members that the team walked through the process that brought us from ranges to these numbers with the ST in the past, prior to providing the numbers to the public.

MANAGEMENT IN HCAs

Troy framed the topic. He noted that the HCP draft includes very general language around management in the HCAs, recognizing that this is an issue that still needs further discussion.

Mike Wilson, ODF and Nick Palazzotto, ODF provided an update on recent internal conversations and conversations with some ST members on management in HCAs. Key points included:

- Presented a sample decision-tree on what making decisions within the HCP might look like. The tree describes how to make management decisions depending on habitat suitability, stand age, and other factors. Agreement would lead to management direction in the HCAs.
- Provided more detail on management activities in HCAs, young stand management in HCAs, and conservation actions outside of HCAs.
- Management activities inside of HCAs:
 - Management activities inside HCAs will differ depending on whether the area is healthy conifer, swiss needle cast infested areas, and alder dominated stands.
 - Healthy conifer stands within HCAs: There is a proposed process for identifying candidate acres for management. Various prescriptions could be used within those areas where management is permissible. Provided an understanding of circumstances under which light thinning, moderate thinning, heavy thinning, variable density thinning, and single tree removal could occur.
 - Swiss needle cast stands within HCAs: Reviewed the process for identifying candidate areas, as well as the various prescriptions and proposed pace and scale of management activities in swiss needle cast stands.
 - Alder stands: Reviewed the process for identifying candidate areas, as well as the various prescriptions and proposed pace and scale of management activities in alder stands. Retention harvest and modified clear cut would be the main type of management in these stands.

- Young stand management in HCAs: Reviewed measures that could be taken in HCAs to focus on habitat outcomes for young stands. Reviewed limits to the amount of spraying, planting densities, types of species to plant, and other elements.
- Areas outside of HCAs: Listed management strategies outside of HCAs that ODF would commit to, including legacy retention and decadence management (leave strategies). There would be additional protection of active nest sites, and a commitment to maintaining a certain percentage of dispersal habitat outside of HCAs.

Troy added that this has been a work in progress. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has also provided input on their understanding, and it has been an iterative process. It will be important to translate the management strategies into expected biological outcomes for the covered species.

Discussion

ST members discussed management in HCAs and provided the following questions and comments:

- Clarification on proposal for how many acres would be treated overall, and over what timeframe. ODF clarified that the intent would be to have defined management for the first 30 years of the HCP, and then future discussions would need to occur on how to continue management after the first few decades of the HCP, based on success of management to date.
- The decision-making tree will be very helpful. This will be the kind of document that people are drawn to in the HCP, and it helps simplify the HCP. We should consider doing something similar for RCAs, to make it very clear what the expectation is for decision-making within RCAs.

OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS FOR OCTOBER 6 BOF MEETING

October Board Meeting

Cindy Kolomechuk, ODF provided an overview of expectations and materials for the October BOF meeting. She noted:

- Thanked ST members for their collaborative effort and hard work over the past years to develop the draft HCP.
- The Board will be asked to decide whether it is in the best interest of the state to pursue a draft HCP, which means to move the HCP into the NEPA process. The decision is not on whether to approve the draft HCP.
- Reviewed the Board meeting agenda. ST members are all encouraged to participate. The agenda includes a review of the key pieces of the HCP, review of the comparative analysis, a presentation on county and stakeholder engagement, testimony from the

Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee (FTLAC) and county commissioners along with invited testimony and public testimony. The day will end with Board deliberation and a decision on whether or not to complete the draft .

- HCP related materials are up on the ODF website. The “Resources” section includes the most recent work that is being presented. It includes presentations to the public from July and September 2020. The “Work Products” section includes the Draft HCP, summary of the Draft HCP, Comparative Analysis executive summary, and Comparative Analysis full report. These will be the focus of conversations with stakeholders and the Board.

Comparative Analysis

Mike walked through the Comparative Analysis that Mark Buckley, ECONorthwest will present to the Board. The presentation includes:

- Purpose of the comparative analysis, and its link to the Business Case analysis
- Comparative analysis process
- Description of the scenarios for analysis (current FMP, draft FMP, and HCP)
- Variables for analysis, including conservation, economic and social variables
- Description of the policy level forest management model, including key model assumptions
- Review of key outcomes of the comparative analysis for the three scenarios, including:
 - Description of the conservation areas
 - Forest stand age class distribution and conservation protections
 - Habitat suitability over time for the covered terrestrial species
 - Riparian age class condition by the end of the HCP permit term
 - Average annual harvest volume over 15-year periods throughout the HCP permit term
 - Average annual ESA compliance costs, showing cost 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 stock volume,

- Review of risk management benefits under the HCP scenario
- Final scenario rankings for the three scenarios, across all conservation, economic, and social variables
- Key findings of the comparative analysis

Discussion

Members discussed the Board of Forestry meeting and comparative analysis and provided the following comments:

- A member asked whether the Board will need some background on NEPA to help make their decision? ODF noted that there will be an HCP update to the Board in June 2021, which could be a good time to provide a briefing on the NEPA process.
- A member asked whether the analysis concludes that the HCP provides the greatest permanent value (GPV)? ODF noted that the GPV conversation is more fully appropriate when there is a companion FMP to support the HCP, but it is likely that the HCP plus the companion FMP would provide the greatest permanent value.
- Members felt the presentation and assumptions under the comparative analysis seems clear.
- Some of the differences between the three scenarios seem minor and may not be very significant. ODF noted that because there is not a true sensitivity analysis as part of the comparative analysis, it is difficult to fully measure statistical significance. The results and presented qualitatively instead of quantitatively.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS POST BOF-MEETING

Troy recognized that the ST will be engaged in additional discussions after the October BOF meeting to continue to work through issues to resolve and to refine the draft HCP. The ODF/ICF team will continue to work with the ST to develop a full list of issues, topics, and analyses that still need to occur, and the ODF/ICF team will also go through past ST comments on chapters to double check that nothing is missing.

Troy recommended creating the next base version of the HCP chapters to work from after the Board meeting, to clean up tracked changes and comments so that the group is working from a clean version.

Discussion

Members discussed the and provided the following comments

- ST members appreciated the effort to pull together a list of issues remaining for discussion and developing a workplan to move forward.

- It will be important to prioritize the most important issues for ST discussion, to make sure we are focusing effort on the most important topics in the time we have and to think through timing of discussions.
- How might public comments and FTLAC comments on the HCP be forthcoming in writing and will they have the potential to influence the content of the HCP? ODF and ICF responded that we can think as a group how to make sure ST members see all comments. If stakeholder comments suggest changes to the HCP, the ODF/ICF team would not make those changes without first bringing the ideas to the ST for consideration.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next SC meeting is scheduled for September 29 from 1- 4 pm.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Deb thanked members for their participation and reviewed upcoming meetings:

- Joint stakeholder meeting on Sep 24
- The next SC meeting is scheduled for September 29 from 1- 4 pm
- The BOF meeting is on October 6.

There is a need to schedule additional ST meetings after October should the BOF decide to continue working on the development of an HCP.

Deb suggested a debrief from the October BOF on October 14, and a full ST meeting on October 27. Monthly ST meetings would then occur in November and December before we switch to meeting twice a month in January, February and March 2021.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- KW: Schedule additional ST meetings after October (if BOF approves HCP)
- KW: Schedule an October BOF debrief, full ST meeting on October 27