

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, April 27, 2021, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

By Webinar and Teleconference Only

ATTENDEES

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

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF)

Facilitation Team: Brett Brownscombe (Oregon Consensus), Sylvia Ciborowski and Erin Bothwell (Kearns & West), Mike Wilson (ODF)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West, reviewed the agenda which included: 1) Agency updates and stakeholder engagement updates, 2) Habitat conservation plan (HCP) Update on the NEPA process, 3) Overview of the Administrative Draft HCP, 4) Updates on Forest Management Plan (FMP) Process, 5) Steering Committee (SC) direction to the Scoping Team (ST), and 6) Approach going forward and next steps.

AGENCY UPDATES AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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

- **ODF:** Brian Pew has officially become the Eastern Oregon Director in the Dalles office. Mike Wilson is the acting Deputy Chief of Policy until the position is filled. Three Board of Forestry member positions have been filled and the Governor continues to work to fill the remaining vacant position.
- **United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):** Has received emails from different stakeholders around alternatives for NEPA which are being reviewed by the federal services.
- **Department of State Lands (DSL):** The agency is mostly focused on the Elliott HCP right now. DSL had an advisory committee meeting last week as part of the Elliott HCP process.

- **NOAA Fisheries:** Kim Kratz will be less available until a vacant position at the agency is filled.
- **Oregon Consensus:** Stakeholder comments related to riparian issues, steep slopes and head wall have come up a lot as part of the Elliott HCP, and continues to be important have stated that it will be important to address those issues in the forthcoming Elliott FMP process. **DEQ:** Leah is back from leave. DEQ has received some positive notes from DEQ staff about the Scoping Team and direction.
- **ODFW:** Has received a few inquiries about the NEPA process, asking if ODFW is providing comment. ODFW has received more questions about the private forest accord than the HCP or FMP lately.

Sylvia provided an update on public and stakeholder engagement effort. Kearns & West is conducting interviews with stakeholders and the Counties to kick off the FMP update effort. Stakeholders and the Counties have had questions about how the timing of the FMP process aligns with the NEPA process.

Discussion

Members provided the following comments and questions related to member updates:

- ODF commented that the agency will want to have a full package in front of Board of Forestry in February 2023 which includes the FMP and Implementation Plans (IPs) modelled out. The agency must show what the outcomes of the HCP will be, along with the FMP and IPs, and seek Board direction on all elements together, so that it is not making decisions on planning processes in a silo.
 - The current FMP is 20 years old. It was revised in 2010 but has generally been the same since 2001.
 - ODF would like to have more clarity around typical production goals and what that looks like and include a full description of conservation strategies.
- A meeting Open to the Public meeting is scheduled for May 6.
- Tribal Engagement: ODF met with tribal representatives recently and had a very productive conversation. The tribes have interest in restoration work as they have been acquiring key title lands. ODF intends to continue tribal engagement going forward.

UPDATE ON NEPA PROCESS

Tere O'Rourke, NOAA Fisheries, provided an update on the NEPA process. Key topics of the presentation included:

- There are four segments of this process– 1) Notice of Intent (NOI) and Scoping, 2) Public Draft EIS/Response to Comments, 3) Final EIS, 4) Decision regarding ITP issuance.
- The NOI/Scoping is complete. NOAA received 44 comments (one with hundreds of letters attached to it), which are available for viewing at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

- NOAA is now focusing on alternatives development and screening criteria. ODF is assisting in providing input on whether alternatives are technically feasible and NOAA is working with FWS to determine if the alternatives meet the Purpose & Need.
- There were not many questions during the meeting Open to the Public in March.
- Tribal Consultation has occurred. Some of the tribes want to continue to be involved in the process with one-on-one meetings. NOAA will continue to seek input from the tribes going forward.
- The NEPA process is currently on schedule, though there is always potential that a need for new modelling, staffing shortages, or other issues could influence the schedule.

Discussion

Members provided the following comments and questions about the NEPA process:

- When will NOAA Fisheries select alternatives? When might a decision be made?
 - The alternatives as well as screening criteria will be made public when the draft EIS is made public. ODF is helping with screening to ensure alternatives are technically/operationally feasible.
 - The Purpose and Needs statement was published in the NOI in the Federal Register.
 - Those who submitted alternatives will know which alternatives were included for analysis in the NEPA document when the public draft EIS is released for public comment. It is expected that anywhere from 2-5 alternatives may be analyzed in the NEPA process.

OVERVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE DRAFT HCP

Troy Rahmig, ICF, reviewed the HCP progress and schedule.

- The overall schedule has not changed. Things are essentially dormant on the HCP right now. Most activity is in the NEPA process and the FMP process is getting underway. Despite the extended public scoping period, the schedule is still on track.
- Changes from the October 2020 to the March 2021 HCP draft include:
 - Added a cover, executive summary, appendices, information about limiting factors in covered fish species, a memo on buffers related to temperature protection, and appendix I on process used for unstable slopes.
 - All of the HCP chapters are fully built out now.
 - Added detail on management in HCAs, retention standards outside of HCAs, and monitoring and adaptive management.
 - Updated some staffing costs and assumptions about revenue over time.

- ICF put a three-page document together on the ODF website that goes through chapter by chapter changes from the October HCP draft here: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/board/Documents/fmp-hcp/w-or-state-forests-hcp-ad-update-summary.pdf>
- ODF is not required as part of NEPA process to share the administrative draft of the HCP with the public, but did so to respond to public requests and for transparency.
- ODF expects to get questions on the HCP draft that is on the website. The ICF/ODF team is cataloguing all comments and collecting them, but will not make changes to the draft HCP until the public draft HCP is released. Any changes would likely be clarifications or more detailed information, not substantive changes to the HCP.
- Moving forward, the intent is to use the monthly meetings with the Scoping Team as needed as a sounding board for comments that come up related to the HCP. Closer to the release of the public draft EIS, we may engage the ST more frequently and especially to discuss any potential changes to the HCP that will appear in the public draft HCP.

UPDATE ON FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN (FMP) PROCESS

Mike Wilson provided an update on the FMP process. The project kicked off with the Core Team meeting last week. The Core Team is getting aligned on how they will work together. ODF will lead a series of HCP knowledge equalization workshops, so that ODF staff understand why the HCP looks the way it does. The first FMP deliverable will be a detailed work plan with an aggressive timeline. The team is still working with Kearns & West on the public engagement plan. Kearns & West continues to conduct stakeholder interviews.

The project is organized with a sponsor, a Steering Committee, and a Leadership Group to provide direction to the Core Team on side boards for designing strategy. Sarah Lathrop is the project manager. Kate Skinner is also helping with coordination. The Core Team will also use the Operational Advisory Group, ODF subject matter experts, partner agencies and contractors/consultants as needed for support.

The ST will continue to meet the first Tuesday of every month, with some meetings focused on state agency engagement in the FMP and some focused on comments coming in on the HCP. Nick Palazzotto will be the key touch point for that group while Mike is covering for Brian.

The initial work on IPs will ramp up in July with lots of data prep for the autumnal modeling work. We will understand more of the outcomes of HCP/IP when that work is done.

STEERING COMMITTEE DIRECTION TO SCOPING TEAM

Sylvia reminded the SC the next ST meeting is May 4. The agenda will focus on FMP, NEPA and HCP updates. The SC encouraged the ST to keep up the good work.

NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

The next Meeting Open to the Public is scheduled for May 6, at 2 pm.

A BOF check in is scheduled for June 9.

Upcoming SC meetings in 2021 are scheduled for: June 22, August 24, October 25, and December 14.