

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Oregon Department of Forestry, 2600 State St, Salem, OR

ATTENDEES

Participants: Julie Firman (ODFW), Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Mark Meleason (ODF), Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Brian Pew (ODF), Ryan Singleton (DSL), Josh Seeds (DEQ) – *by phone*

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Melissa Klungle (ICF) – *by phone*, Randy Smith (ODF), Mike Wilson (ODF)

Facilitation Team: Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Debra Nudelman (Kearns & West), Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

Deb reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency updates from Scoping Team (ST) members, 2) Update on stakeholder engagement, 3) Review and discuss Chapter 2 of the HCP, 4) Update on status of Chapters 1 & 3, 5) Introduction to Riparian Buffer Strategy, 6) Review stakeholder feedback on Biological Goals and Objectives (BGOs), 7) Confirm topics for Steering Committee (SC) update, and 8) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF) reflected on the past ST meeting. At the last meeting, ST members debriefed the field trip to the Tillamook Forest, reviewed the forest goals and objectives, reviewed the framework for the riparian strategy, and heard a high-level synopsis of feedback on the BGOs. Today, the group will see more detailed feedback on the BGOs; the goal is to reach greater confirmation of the BGOs.

AGENCY UPDATES

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

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF): 1) The Linn County trial is in its final phase.

2) A Board of Forestry (BOF) meeting was held on November 6. The Board Decision on the HCP will likely be made in October rather than September. This will include a full-day Board session that will include an opportunity to walk through the full HCP. ST and SC members are encouraged to attend to show their support.

3) The BOF changed the Forest Management Plan (FMP) approach: instead of voting on the FMP in April 2020, the FMP will just be an informational item in April 2020. The change in FMP approach means that ODF does not need to do comparative analysis in modeling between HCP and the FMP for the April meeting,. The April meeting will also include an update on the HCP; ST and SC members are encouraged to attend this April meeting as well to show their support.

NOAA Fisheries: 1) NOAA Fisheries will fill the Branch Chief position by January 2020. Jim Muck will continue to participate in the ST, and the new Branch Chief may be engaged at a later time. Deb added that at some point, it would be helpful to understand the organizational framework and leadership structure of each agency to help understand where in the agency decisions will be made.

2) NOAA Fisheries accepted the petition of Spring Chinook and is currently conducting a stock status. The agency is also conducting a stock status review on all species as a regular part of the 5-year review cycle.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): The marten listing decision is delayed and will not be made in December.

REVIEW AND DISCUSS CHAPTER 2 OF THE HCP

Troy Rahmig (ICF) presented Chapter 2 of the HCP. Chapter 2 is the Environmental Setting and includes: history of the forest divided by eco-region, physical setting including at the eco-region level, and forest structure.

Troy reviewed ST comments on Chapter 2 of the HCP that were submitted electronically over the past several weeks. Highlights include:

- Greater consistency in how the chapter is organized (i.e., consistent organization by eco-region instead of by topic area.)
- Table 2-1a: Suggest developing a similar chart broken down by covered species.
- Table 2-X [new table]- Summary of Physical Setting: Suggest a similar summary for some other information in the document, to make it easier for the lay reader to quickly understand the information.
- Suggestions to update some data and citations.
- Summary of stream types: Large perennial non-fish bearing streams exist in the permit area so this stream type should be included.

- Comment from Rod Kraemer on section that describes intensive and selective forest management: Suggestion to summarize timber harvest over the years because timber harvest has influenced the ecological setting.
 - Troy noted that the team attempted to summarize timber harvest's influence on the ecological setting but wasn't able to do so in a meaningful way. The team is open to other ways to summarize this information. ODF noted that there is good data on volume and acreage of timber harvest over the years, but not sure how this is relevant to age structure and how it has changed over time. Troy noted that they may be able to summarize this information at a gross level. The ICF/ODF team will follow up with Rod Kraemer to understand why he felt it would be important to include this information.

- In the forest structure section with descriptions of early, mid and late seral structure, there were comments and question submitted around: Are the early, mid and late seral categories too broad to say anything meaningful about covered species? Members discussed this topic and their discussion is as follows:
 - A member asked: In the mid-seral structure category class, it is hard to distinguish between the complex categories. How would ODF place the acres in these various categories? The simple structure categories make more sense; but the complex categories are difficult.
 - To use the categories for species modeling would be a challenge. It will be difficult to use the categories structure to explain how habitat for individual species changes over time because the categories are so broad.
 - ODF clarified that there are measurable criteria around each category. There are concerns about the use of the five categories in the Plan Area, but it provides an opportunity to be more flexible, and to try a new approach. It is still a work in progress, as this is a new approach that's different from what ODF has been doing.
 - ODF added that it is difficult to describe the classes, particularly for the mid-seral class. ODF is also changing the way ODF does inventory. The idea is that in the future, ODF will describe structure in these seral class categories.
 - It is important that the classification method used be valuable and provide the needed information.
 - Members discussed how the categorization method applies to the treatment of forests during the first 0-30 years after clear cut (early-seral stage). There are more options during the 30-120-year stage (mid-seral stage). The HCP should relate the management of forests to the seral stage that the forest is in.

- It is important to consider the sub-stages within each seral stage, and whether it is simple or complex. Young stand management is dependent on the goal for the stand.
- Troy summarized the following changes to the forest structure section of Chapter 2:
 - Add information about how to set the forest into a trajectory to meet the goal for that stand within each seral stage.
 - In describing the species habitat modeling process, link back to the seral stages. Chapter 2 can tell the reader that more information will be provided later in the chapter.
 - Be consistent in the mid, early, and later seral stages language between the FMP and HCP documents.
- Suggestion to be more specific about what is being presented when data is provided as acres and percentages.

Next Steps: Troy noted that ICF will continue to update the chapter. Updated versions of Chapters 1, 2 and 3 will be provided to the ST for their reference in early 2020. These will then become the first administrative draft of the HCP in late spring/early summer 2020.

Members asked about the overall workplan. Troy noted that the team will be updating the workplan and will send an updated version to the ST. The schedule of some tasks has shifted, but the overall end date of the HCP is still on track.

In October 2020, ODF plans to draft the companion FMP, which would be a hybrid of what is in the current FMP and what is in the HCP.

UPDATE ON STATUS OF CHAPTERS 1 & 3

Troy noted that some updates have been made to the Covered Activities Chapter. A revised version of this chapter will be ready in early January and shared with the ST.

The SharePoint site includes a folder titled “Work Products.” All current versions of the documents are saved there. Members can also email Troy if they need any documents.

INTRODUCTION TO RIPARIAN BUFFER STRATEGY

Troy explained that at the last ST meeting, members were provided with a high-level overview of the process to develop the riparian strategy. Determining riparian management areas is one part of the larger riparian strategy. The framework for the riparian management areas contemplates a varied buffer width depending on a number of factors (perennial versus

seasonal streams, fish bearing versus non-fish bearing streams, stream size, and location relative to important characteristics).

The ODF/ICF team has been meeting with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and NOAA Fisheries to develop a discussion draft of the riparian buffer strategy. The discussion draft includes definition of terms, and proposed riparian buffer widths.

Discussion

ST members discussed the riparian buffer strategy framework and made the following comments and questions:

- Question about what “average annual flow” means under the definition for “medium” sized streams.
- Question about in which cases equipment would be allowed on the ground. There are limitations on equipment in some riparian areas to avoid ground disturbance.
- There are several transition zones. The table shows only one transition zone, but operationally, ODF observes two other transition zones. Members suggested including a footnote that explains transition zones will occur and describes those transition zones. ODF noted that they will be making drawings to describe these zones, as well.
- Are there caveats for non-forest management activities or harvest activities? For example, allowance for putting in cables or other types of activities. There should be an opportunity for foresters to choose options that are less intrusive and make sense economically. There are also management directions and best management practices (BMPs) that should be taken into account and clarified.
 - Troy noted that the team can describe these caveats and allowances better in the section on covered activities.
- NOAA Fisheries had a question about the Type F stream: seasonal stream with fish. The high energy and landslide potential includes a lot of seasonal streams. What doesn't qualify for high energy and landslide potential? Where are those streams and what is the risk of picking up sediment? How do these differ from perennial streams? NOAA Fisheries requested discussing this topic at the next ST meeting.

Next steps: Troy explained the team is working on definitions, providing more detail on horizontal versus slope distance for measuring buffer width, summarizing stream miles by type and location to better understand which buffers have the most influence on the landscape, and developing graphics to show how buffers would be applied in various situations and how the aquatic zone is interpreted. Information will need to be shared with stakeholders and the BOF; the graphics will help communicate this information.

The ICF/ODF team will likely be in touch with ST members to move forward on these items.

Deb explained there is a lot of work needed to develop the aquatic and terrestrial strategies. The project team suggested increasing the frequency of ST meetings to two ST meetings a month for January through April and proposed having ST meetings the first and third Tuesday of the month. Some meetings may become phone calls, webinars, or small group meetings, as appropriate. Members agreed with this approach.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON BIOLOGICAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Troy provided a tracked-changes version of the BGOs table, including stakeholder feedback in comment bubbles. He reminded members that the SC members reviewed the BGOs in their August meeting, and then the ST updated the BGOs. The conceptual BGOs were then presented to industry stakeholders, conservation stakeholders, and the general public. The project team provided a high-level summary of stakeholder comments at the November BOF meetings. Internal ODF staff also provided their comments.

Troy then reviewed the public and stakeholders' comments on the BGOs and asked the ST to make decisions about how to incorporate the feedback. The SC will then receive an updated version of the BGOs for their review at the December 6 SC meeting. The goal is to have a final draft version of the BGOs at that time to continue developing the conservation strategy chapter.

Key comments made by the public and stakeholders include:

- Stakeholders had comments and questions about the definitions. The project team recommends some changes to the definitions of “maintain” and “enhance” and suggested adding a definition for “persist.”

Members discussed and had the following comments:

- Concern that the public may feel that “maintain” is not very robust. Suggest updating “maintain” to include “that enables favorable habitat conditions.”
- “Enhance” implies current habitat projects. “Restore” is the long-term vision of the riparian management plan: to grow large trees that provide for long-term recruitment. It is about restoring ecological function.
- Why not include a definition for “restore?” ODF staff noted that restoration is one of a suite of mitigation practices and has different meanings to different people. “Restore” is included in the rule language. “Enhance” captures the spirit of “restore,” and will have the language in the FMP be more consistent with the language in the greatest permanent value (GPV).
- There is not a term that addresses *creating* habitat. Do we need to define a term that describes actions leading to habitat creation? Troy noted that the wildlife objectives speak to increasing the amount of habitat, which seems to cover habitat creation.
- Suggestion to reorder the definitions.

- Comments/changes to Goal 1: There were various edits, with the intent of clarifying the language. Suggestion to remove some language that seems to more related to the objectives and actions rather than the goal.
- Comments/changes to Objective 1.1: There was a comment about addressing the encroachment of invasive plants or talking about the vegetation of the riparian areas. Members discussed how to address this:
 - ODF asked whether this is covered in the covered activities or in the conservation actions? Troy noted that this topic could be included in the conservation strategy discussion on management of the riparian zone.
 - This might be an issue for the FMP.
 - Members were okay with including riparian vegetation in the conservation strategies.
 - Members suggested adding a metric to address nonnative species to the language of Objective 1.1.
 - Suggest changing “long-term trends” to “long-term counts.”
 - Suggest changing “riparian forest metrics” to “riparian forest structure.” And suggest removing the metrics that follow the statement, and instead include them in the table for each population.
- Comments/changes to Objective 1.2: Stakeholders suggested adding more detail to describe where to find information about what “limiting factors” mean. Members discussed and had the following comments:
 - Suggest not referencing the ODFW Aquatic Inventories Project, because there are many other sources provided.
 - In some way, it will be important to describe what “limiting factors” are for audiences that are not familiar with the term.
 - Suggest mentioning how we measure stream channel complexity as a way to respond to stakeholders’ desire to include the measurement.
- Comments/changes to Objective 1.3: Stakeholders had questions about how to measure water quantity and quality. The team suggest moving/changing language to talk about maintaining water quantity and maintaining or enhancing water quality. There is also additional language about measuring water quality in basins where ODF is the majority landowner. Members discussed and had the following comments:
 - Surprised that we are trying to tackle water quantity. Water quantity is driven by many factors other than forest management and is very difficult to measure.

- Why remove “quantity” out of maintain and enhance? Water quantity is important for fish, and there are things that forest management can do to maintain and enhance water quantity.
- The word “majority” might not be the right word. The intent is to include those areas where ODF’s actions can make a significant contribution.
- ODF noted that in areas where ODF has only a small land base, ODF’s actions will not be able to affect water quantity and quality significantly and will not be able to monitor it well.
- Troy asked whether the intent is to improve water quality and quantity primarily through a sufficient riparian buffer strategy. Members responded that many things beyond the riparian strategy could impact water quality and quantity. There is a lot that can be done upland of the riparian area to impact water quality and quantity. How water is delivered matters: water can be better metered out when there is canopy cover. What ODF would do to maintain water quantity is important; but what ODF *doesn’t do* is important as well.
 - Suggest a subsequent table that addresses water quantity, but without tying it to the monitoring program.
- Water quantity is difficult to measure; however, the HCP can explain that there is a climate change effect to consider. There is no mechanism to measure ODF’s contributions to increases or decreases in water quantity, so it is difficult to include it as an objective.
- Outcome: After discussion, ST members agreed to the following changes:
 - Change the language to: “Maintain or enhance water quality and quantity...”
 - Change “in basins where ODF is majority landowner” to “on ODF-managed lands.”
- Goals 2 and 3 and their objectives: Troy reviewed stakeholder comments and suggested changes.
 - Members agreed with the suggested changes.
- Goal 4 and its objectives: Troy reviewed stakeholder comments and suggested changes. There were questions about the metrics included, and ICF suggested changes to Objective 4.2 to respond to these questions. Members discussed and had the following comments:
 - Objective 4.2 is the only objective where the language “ensure” is used. Suggest instead saying “maintain and enhance recruitment of” instead of “ensure recruitment of...”

- Suggest removing “decayed” from the list of wood types.
- Suggestion to include more specific information about large live trees such as how big, how many, and to what extent is there creation as opposed to retaining.
- Suggest defining “large” to clarify “large live trees.” This can also be defined in the actions; the overall desire is to clarify the term in some way.
- ODF and ICF requested working on Objective 4.2 offline. The changes will then go to the full ST for their consideration this week.
- Objective 6.2: There was a stakeholder suggestion to include “quantity and quality” of nesting habitat, not just quality.
 - Members agree with this change.
- Overall comment: There should be general consistency among the goals and objectives in terms of how specific they are.

Next Steps: The project team will provide the SC with a clean version of the updated BGOs, and the project team will verbally walk through the stakeholder comments and how the document has changed. The SC will be asked if there are any additional issues with the BGOs to address.

ST members were asked to submit any additional comments on the BGOs to the project team this week for full ST consideration before the BGOs go to the SC on November 26.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

ST members identified the following topics for the December 6 SC meeting:

- Updated BGOs and stakeholder comments on the document
- Who is lead for the NEPA scoping process?
- Update on riparian and terrestrial strategy
- Brief update on timber modeling
- Update on stakeholder outreach and engagement
- Status of Chapters 1, 2, and 3

NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

- The next ST meetings are scheduled for:
 - December 3, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Salem. The majority of the December meeting will focus on the riparian strategy and will include a presentation on the TerrainWorks modeling.
 - The project team will work to schedule twice-a-month meetings for January through April.
- The next Steering Committee is scheduled for December 6.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

HCP Chapters:

- ICF/ODF – Follow up with Rod Kraemer to understand his suggestion to summarize timber harvest and show the influence of timber harvest on the ecological setting in Chapter 2.
- ICF – Share updated Chapters 1, 2, and 3 with the ST in early 2020.

BGOs:

- ODF and ICF – Update Objective 4.2 and send the changes to the full ST for their consideration this week.
- ST Members – Submit any additional comments on the BGOs to the project team this week for full ST consideration before the BGOs go to the SC on November 26.

HCP Workplan:

- HCP Project Team – Update the workplan and send an updated version to the ST.

BOF Meetings:

- HCP Project Team – Add April 23 and October 6&7 BOF dates to the project team's calendar. The HCP topic will be discussed at these meetings and the project team is to attend.

Additional ST Meetings:

- HCP Project Team – Schedule twice-a-month ST meetings for January through April.