

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

By Webinar/Video Conference

ATTENDEES

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

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

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West, welcomed members. Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West, reviewed the features of the GoTo Meetings platform. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Deb reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency updates and report out on the Board of Forestry (BOF) Meeting and stakeholder engagement, 2) Review the conservation strategy chapter of the HCP, 3) Conservation fund update, 4) Habitat Conservation Area (HCA) refinement update 5) Changes in habitat quality and quantity over time, 6) Confirm topics for Steering Committee (SC) update, and 7) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

Deb and Cindy Kolomechuk, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), noted that we are in a critical time for development of the Western Oregon HCP. Scoping Team (ST) members are asked to devote substantial time to review and discuss the chapters.

AGENCY UPDATES AND REPORT OUT ON THE BOF MEETING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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

ODF: A meeting open to the public was held on July 13 and a BOF meeting was held on July 22. The meetings were well received and the BOF made a lot of comments on the timber harvest estimates. Conservation groups are interested in seeing more details on areas within HCAs.

NOAA Fisheries: The agency has issued national leadership awards. Ken Phippen was nominated and won a national NOAA Fisheries leadership award.

Department of State Lands: There has been progress in the development of the Elliott State Forests HCP. The agency may provide more information at a future ST meeting to make sure all members understand the differences between the HCPs.

Update on Stakeholder Engagement: Deb reported out on the July 13 meeting open to the public and noted it was well attended. Stakeholders provided good questions and comments. A joint stakeholder meeting will be held on August 6.

CONSERVATION STRATEGY CHAPTER

Troy Rahmig, ICF, reviewed the key chapters of the HCP, the process and timing for ST review on each, and whether the information is needed for the comparative analysis. The timeline and upcoming chapters for ST review includes:

- The conservation strategy chapter will be sent to the ST for review later this week.
- Next week, the monitoring and adaptive management chapter will be available for ST review.
- The following week the effects analysis chapter will be available for ST review.
- The cost and funding chapter has been reviewed by ODF and will be sent to the ST for review next week.
- Additional chapters with topics on assurances, implementation, and alternatives to take may be discussed after the October Board meeting.

ICF will send the active SharePoint link to ensure that ST members have access to the most up to date information for their review. During the ST review, the desire is to hear whether the chapters are good enough for now. Some work on the chapters will need occur after the October BOF meeting.

Troy then reviewed the conservation strategy chapter of the HCP. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Provided a brief outline of what the chapter includes.
- Noted that when ST members review the chapter, they will likely see content that represents what the ST has been discussing over the past months. If anything seems

missing, does not accurately capture what the ST has been discussing, or otherwise causes concern, ST members were encouraged to let ICF and ODF know.

- As ST members make comments on the chapter, it will be important to identify which comments are critical to resolve prior to the October BOF meeting, what comments can wait until after the BOF meeting, and how to message the changes to the chapter going forward.
- The ST will have a two-week period to review the conservation strategy chapter and submit any comments or feedback. It is important to flag comments that might change the course of action in the HCP, and to indicate more minor comments that could be addressed after the BOF meeting.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the upcoming HCP chapters for review and provided the following questions and comments:

- Will all chapters for ST review be included in SharePoint?
 - Yes, all chapters for review will be in SharePoint. When a chapter is not in SharePoint, it is because ICF has pulled it out for editing. Only the live versions are in SharePoint, for version control.
- Members generally accepted a two-week review period for the conservation strategy chapter.
- Members noted that it would be useful to have a final package with all the chapters together for final review before the chapters go to the BOF. ST members requested a review timeline so that they can schedule their time accordingly.
- There was a brief discussion on inclusion of coastal marten within the HCP.

CONSERVATION FUND UPDATE

Troy and Brian Pew, ODF provided an update on the conservation fund. Key points of the presentation included:

- Reminded members that the conservation fund is included in the HCP as a conservation action and the intent is that it could be used for upland and aquatic restoration activities, barred owl removal, and potentially other activities.
- The proposal is to take an amount of each timber sale to contribute to the fund. The approach for the conservation fund is evolving.
- The benefit of attaching the conservation fund contribution to timber sales tracks well with making sure that funding keeps up with conservation need. Attaching the

conservation fund to timber volume is also more predictable than attaching it to a percentage of timber sales, which can fluctuate over the years.

- It is likely that in-kind services would not be included as part of the conservation fund approach, to assure a more stable fund amount.
- Criteria have been developed for how the funds will be spent on a year to year basis.
- It is likely that significant funding would go towards barred owl removal in the earlier years of the permit term in order to get the best benefit from that management strategy.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the conservation fund and provided the following questions and comments:

- Who would pay the amount of each timber sale for the conservation fund?
 - The expectation is that the purchaser (i.e., the timber mill) would pay the amount.
- Where will the money for the conservation fund be held? Is the intent to spend all of the money every year, or can funds sit in an account, earning interest over time, to fund larger projects later on?
 - The funds would be held in an agency subaccount, but by law it cannot earn interest. The intent is not to spend the fund every year, and instead accumulate funds to fund projects as they arise.
- Suggestion to account for inflation to allow for a larger dollar amount per thousand board feet later in the permit term. ODF suggested adjusting the price every five years based on the consumer price index.
- Would activities funded by the fund all be within the permit area or outside of it? Would all actions be conducted on state forest lands or also on private lands?
 - Funding would be spent primarily on ODF lands within permit areas, but not exclusively. If projects are outside of those lands but benefit the species, those projects could be funded through the fund, but likely only through some additional coordination with NOAA Fisheries and USFWS.
- Members discussed whether the proposed conservation fund amount is enough and what kinds of project should be funded.
 - Members asked how does the amount relates to the current conservation funding, and whether the conservation fund would be the sole source of funding for conservation actions. ODF staff noted that currently, ODF spends millions of dollars each year on surveys. Under the HCP, funding would not be spent on surveys and could instead go toward beneficial actions for the species.

- ODF is committed to paying for the conservation fund and the HCP.
- To consider the cost for the needed activities, suggest looking at the effects analysis, consider what is left to mitigate, and calculate that amount.
- Discussion on whether the conservation fund inadvertently creates competition for funding for aquatic and terrestrial projects.
 - Members noted that currently, the activities in the HCP are slanted more toward aquatics projects.
 - Suggestion to explore Oregon State University's (OSU) Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Managed Forest Program which has a model for how to dedicate funds to projects.
 - Aquatic and terrestrial species benefit from both HCAs and Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs). It is important to look across the permit area, evaluate needs and opportunities, and prioritize projects and efforts.
 - What kind of terrestrial projects might the fund support?
 - The fund can used to improve habitat (i.e., site restorations) or for other needs. Biologists will help decide what the most beneficial projects are for terrestrial species.
- Troy summarized the discussion and added a few thoughts:
 - The topics brought up today can be included in the conservation strategy chapter.
 - Allocation of funding: There are criteria for funding restoration projects within the HCP. There will be an annual report describing how funds were spent, and how the expenditures benefit the covered species.
 - The funds will be spent in a way that benefits the covered species and offsets impacts on species within the permit area. Thus, the funds are likely to spent mostly within the permit area to achieve that goal.

HCA REFINEMENT UPDATE

Troy briefly noted that a small group meeting was held with Rich, Rod, and Ryan to refine the HCAs. Work continues on the HCAs. Members reported out updates on HCA refinements as part of the next topic.

CHANGES IN HABITAT QUALITY AND QUANTITY OVER TIME

Troy discussed changes in habitat quality and quantity over time. He began by providing the following context:

- The ST has been interested in hearing what is happening inside of HCAs versus outside of HCAs. There is also interest in understanding how does habitat quality and quantity improve over the 70-year permit term.
- The habitat models were developed to be able to show that habitat quality and quantity improve over the permit term.
- ODF and ICF have updated information and are able to present what the modeling outputs are beginning to show. These outputs will help inform many aspects of the HCP.

Northern Spotted Owl

Mike Wilson, ODF, provided information on what the modeling is showing for northern spotted owl habitat over time. Key topics of the presentation included:

- The model shows how much suitable and highly suitable habitat is projected to grow over the permit term, as well as how much habitat would be harvested over the permit term. Within northern spotted owl habitat, the model shows significant regenerative harvesting over the first decades of the permit term, and this decreases over time. Over time, more thinning is anticipated.
- Inside of HCAs, the model shows that the total suitable northern spotted owl habitat increases over time. Most suitable and highly suitable habitat growth occurs inside of HCAs over time, rather than outside of HCAs. There are some regional differences, but this pattern is roughly similar throughout all regions.
- Stand age: The model shows that at the beginning of the permit term, many stands are in younger stand categories. Throughout the permit term, stands become older. By the end of the permit term, most of the older stands are projected to be within HCAs and there are some inoperable areas where stands have become older as well. In some cases, although stands have become older, they are not necessarily suitable habitat for northern spotted owl.
- The model shows that habitat continues to develop even outside of HCAs. The scale of harvest of northern spotted owl habitat is higher at the beginning, and then over time drops off relative to the amount of habitat on the landscape.

Discussion

ST members discussed habitat quality and quantity over time for northern spotted owl and provided the following questions and comments:

- The graphs and charts will be vetted internally and then sent to the ST for review in a few days.

- A similar analysis of changes in habitat and harvest over time for the Forest Management Plan (FMP) option will be made available soon. The same graphics for the current FMP will be produced in the next few days.
- The term “suitable” in the models correlates with how old forest structure is defined. The HCP uses a high bar when classifying habitat as suitable. It may be important to look at the marginal suitable land to understand what is happening there.
- Tying the habitat model to the harvest model has the benefit of showing how habitat is affected over time by harvest. Suggestion to fill in the acres of increased habitat quantity and quality as a commitment in the HCP. This commitment will likely be an amount that is somewhere between the level of harvest expected, and the maximum habitat shown in the model.
- What are the silvicultural prescription assumptions that went into the model outputs? For example, why would we want to be harvesting any highly suitable northern spotted owl stands? It would be helpful to have a clearer understanding of the silvicultural practices that were plugged into the model to better understand the model outputs.
 - The prescriptions and assumptions are included in the workbook that was reviewed at a past ST meeting.
 - Request to provide a simple list of the functions and silvicultural regimes that went into the growth modeling.
 - ODF can circle back on the model rule set and connect the dots between what the rule set says, and what these charts are showing.
 - Next steps: A small group meeting will be scheduled to review the model rules relevant silvicultural practices, and assumptions/prescriptions in the model, and discuss how these connect to the data outputs.
- Is there any additional information on age regulation?
 - There is not much more information and we likely will not have time to provide information at a finer scale before the October BOF meeting.
- Request to provide age class breakdowns to help understand the suitability of the stands.
- A member suggested making the bar colors consistent across the graphs and would like to see overall acres harvested over time.
- Are there restrictions to harvesting owl core areas? Are the identified core areas the same as what are identified in the FMP? Are you proposing to conduct conservation measures outside of HCAs in areas where owls are identified outside of HCAs?

- To compare the HCP with the current FMP, light thinning in owl anchor areas was modeled. This was to differentiate between active management and ecological forestry.
- A member advocated for protection of owl nest sites outside of HCAs, and for protection of marbled murrelet occupancy outside of HCAs.
- Both inside and outside of HCAs, there is mention of using ecological forestry principles. If that informed the harvest modeling or prescriptions, wouldn't it be helpful to have a better understanding of how any ecological forest practices are defined, and how they are implemented inside of and outside of HCAs?
 - The ecological forestry principles are not included in the modeling. The intent is to implement those prescriptions inside of HCAs. This is captured in the conservation strategy chapter.
- Troy noted that we are able to show age class distribution and how that changes over time (by decade) between inside and outside of HCAs. The information shows that over time, age classes are older inside of HCAs.
 - Members asked whether these age class assumptions be included in the HCP.
 - It is likely that they will be included but this is just one part of the story on what we are trying to demonstrate for the species.
- Troy asked the group to consider whether the information presented today is helpful in clarifying the pace and scale of management actions inside of HCAs.
 - Members noted that the tabular and temporal information is helpful to understand the pace and scale of management actions inside HCAs. It would also be helpful to have spatial changes over time as well.
 - ST members were encouraged to consider and provide any suggestions on what information should be displayed to better capture the pace and scale of management activities inside HCAs during their review.

Marbled Murrelet

Troy provided information on what the modeling is showing for marbled murrelet habitat over time. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Information on what is happening inside the permit area overall.
- Information on marbled murrelet management inside of HCAs. The model shows little management until much later in the permit term.
 - A member noted that there are some model rules that need to be updated, which may change this information. The model run did not take into account the allowance for regional harvest in HCAs for swiss needle cast and alder, because that allowance is only allowed in marginal and non-suitable stands.

- The habitat suitability rule was adjusted to accumulate acres over the suitability threshold (rather than working off of an average), and that has not yet been reflected in these charts. This will be adjusted for the final model runs.
- Charts can be generated to show harvest inside of marginal and unsuitable stands.
- As we look at these charts, the scale matters and the fact that we are presenting data in five-year increments matters. It will be important to message that the harvest areas are a very small fraction of the overall HCA acreage.

Other Species

Troy noted that the trends described for northern spotted owl and for marbled murrelet are similar for the other terrestrial species.

Discussion

ST members generally discussed habitat quality and quantity and provided the following questions and comments:

- A member stated the work so far has been great and expressed appreciation for receiving the information within the timeline.
- The project team will make revisions to the materials based on ST comments provided during today's meeting. After the information is distributed, ST members were encouraged to reach out to the project team with any additional topics for the small group meeting or before it.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next SC meeting is scheduled for July 30. During the SC meeting, the intent is to debrief the meeting open to the public and the BOF meeting, provide an update on the conservation fund including ST comments on the fund, and review the changes to habitat quality and quantity over time. The meeting will also include an overview of the forest management modeling and a conversation on the HCAs.

ST members provided the following comments and suggestions regarding the SC meeting topics:

- Assume that SC members will be very interested in the conservation fund as the SC will likely have thoughts on lessons learned from past HCPs.

Deb noted that there have also been small group meetings with the federal agencies to check-in on the HCP process and development of the HCP. If other agencies are interested in individual check-ins, please reach out to the project team.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Deb thanked ST members for their participation. The next ST meeting is scheduled for August 4. Members were encouraged to provide proposed agenda topics or feedback on the agenda in order to be sure the ST meetings focus on the topics that are most important to members.

She reminded the ST there is a joint stakeholder meeting scheduled for August 6 and the next meeting open to the public meeting is scheduled for September 16 at 1pm.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- ICF: Send the active SharePoint link to ensure that ST members have access to the HCP chapters and the most up to date information.
- ST members: Review the conservation strategy chapter and submit any edits or comments within two weeks.
- KW/ODF: Schedule small group meeting to discuss the model rules and relevant silvicultural practices.
- ST members: Reach out to the project team with any additional topics for the small group meeting.
- ST members: Consider and provide any suggestions on what information should be displayed to better capture the pace and scale of management activities inside HCAs.