

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, October 27, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

By Webinar/Video Conference

ATTENDEES

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

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

Facilitation Team: Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West), Michelle Bardini (Kearns & West)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West, welcomed members. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Sylvia reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency Updates, 2) Relationship Between the HCP and Companion Forest Management Plan (FMP), 3) Forest Management Prior to HCP Approval, 4) Discuss Path Forward for Herbicides, 5) Strategic Aquatic Management Actions, 6) Low Flow Modeling Results, 7) Terrestrial Habitat Modeling Proposed Approach, 8) Confirm Topics for Steering Committee (SC) Update, and 9) Approach Going Forward, Next Steps, and Summary.

AGENCY UPDATES

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

- **Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF):** 1) The agency is moving forward with the HCP as directed by the Board of Forestry (BOF) during the October 6 meeting. 2) ODF is focusing on post-fire recovery in the Santiam State Forest. 3) The agency is working to update the timber sales program as we move into the HCP.
- **NOAA Fisheries:** 1) The agency is working internally to prepare for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process including meeting with United State Fish and

Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 2) NOAA Fisheries has been conducting outreach with tribal contacts to give an update on the HCP. 3) The agency is working on several HCPs, including the Elliott State Forest HCP, and noted the importance of clear messaging. 4) The agency has been providing emergency consultation regarding the recent wildfires and provided an update on post-fire recovery efforts in the Umpqua, North Creek, and Medford.

- **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW):** 1) The agency has been engaged in post-fire recovery efforts and coordination. 2) The marbled murrelet reclassification has been postponed. The Commission will have until July 31, 2021 to make a decision.
- **Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):** 1) The agency has been working on fire recovery related to hazardous waste, stormwater, and drinking water.

Cindy recapped the October 14 meeting to debrief the October 6 BOF meeting. The BOF decision to move forward with the HCP was largely due to the hard work of the Scoping Team (ST) in developing the technical elements and the way we engaged with our stakeholders.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HCP AND COMPANION FMP

Brian Pew, ODF, discussed the relationship between the HCP and companion FMP as well as the next steps for the development of the FMP. The HCP is the keystone of FMP and the FMP will include more detail on overall forest management. ODF will bring in another project manager for the FMP development process in January. The two project managers will work together to jointly manage the two efforts.

The intent is to keep the ST together through the NEPA process and until the completion of the HCP. ODF will provide an update on the development of the FMP at each ST meeting and will inform the ST on the nexus of the FMP with covered species. ODF will continue to need technical support and input from the agencies during the development of the FMP. There will likely be a larger role for state agencies during this process. Meetings to develop the FMP are expected to begin in March, after the first administrative draft of the HCP is submitted and we transition into NEPA.

ODF plans to use the structure of the current FMP and the key elements of the HCP to develop the companion FMP. This process involves less technical work and focuses on how to connect the key elements of the plans together. The FMP will include public engagement opportunities and will move into a rulemaking process in March 2022. The Board will be asked to approve the companion FMP in Summer 2022. The HCP will come through NEPA process at the same time and it is expected that implementation will begin in summer 2022.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the companion FMP and provided the following questions and comments:

- A member noted that developing the HCP and FMP alongside each other is a good approach. It will be important to ensure consistent language between the two plans and that there are no discrepancies.
 - ODF added that the goal of the two documents is to complement each other and not contradict. However, it is important to not duplicate language in the plans because if a change is made to the HCP, then ODF would have to change Oregon administrative rule to update the FMP. The ST can help provide input on how to not overly burden the process to make changes.
- A member noted that it was their understanding that the FMP was being developed simultaneously alongside the HCP. Is the intent to redraft the FMP to reflect the HCP?
 - It was clarified that ODF has been working on a separate take avoidance strategy and submitted it to the BOF. The strategy was intentionally written at a broad level so the agency could write policies underneath it. The BOF directed ODF to move forward with the HCP so instead of writing internal policies for take avoidance, the agency will look toward the HCP.
- A member reminded the team that during past ST meetings, members have identified several items to include in the FMP.
- Along with the long-term FMP, there will also be more short-term implementation plans (i.e. a 10-year plan) that are more detailed and outline how the FMP will look on the landscape. What is the timing and process to develop these implementation plans?
 - ODF is still discussing the implementation plans and timing. Ideally, ODF will develop the implementation plans alongside the FMP, however, this may not be possible due to capacity. It is helpful to develop the FMP and implementation plans jointly because together they will show the vision and help ensure the intent of the HCP is actually implemented on the ground.
 - Moving forward, there will be annual plans for each sub-area, rather than for each district.
- ICF has been developing a graphical representation of the HCP and FMP to better communicate the relationship between the two plans and to show the workplan/schedule. This will be presented to the ST for feedback shortly.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRIOR TO HCP APPROVAL

Brian reviewed the proposal for forest management prior to HCP approval. ODF will provide an update to the BOF in June 2021 and will present the final draft of the FMP & HCP in June 2022. The next few years will be a transition into the HCP. The FMP will be implemented in a manner that aligns with the goals and objectives of the HCP. During this transition period, there will be refinements to the timber sales program to meet the HCP goals and objectives while also

achieving Greatest Permanent Value (GPV) objectives and meeting volume and revenue targets.

ST was encouraged to connect with Colleen Kiser, Planning Unit Manager at ODF, with any questions or for more information on the interim forest management plan or the timber sale program. Sylvia will send Colleen's contact information to the group as well as the interim forest management plan.

Discussion:

Members discussed the interim forest management approach and provided the following comments:

- A member expressed interest to arrive at a place with more clarity. There seems to still be a lot of moving parts and uncertainties.
- There was interest in further discussion of forest management for older age classes.
- The final HCAs will allow us to see the actual timber sale revenues.

Robbie Lefebvre, ODF, provided an update on reforestation in the Santiam Forest. He explained that some areas have more opportunity to experiment due to terrain, weather, slopes, etc. whereas others are more inflexible regarding management. He noted the HCAs will be the areas where ODF will create habitat. The district offices will be involved in this effort.

A member noted that ODF will be operating with a universal policy under an HCP and decisions would not be made independently at the district level as they had been previously. It is important to inform and engage the districts as we move into an HCP so they can implement the HCP in their area.

Robbie then provided an update on post-fire recovery in the Santiam State Forest. Key topics of the presentation included:

- 275 million board feet and 3000 acres of stands under 30 years old were lost in the fire.
- There are public safety concerns related to the roads in the fire footprint and ODF is evaluating the safety and connectivity of the roads.
- Salvage is still being determined and strategies are still being considered. If ODF does salvage, it will need to be done in the next 18 months.
- Currently, the agency is conducting an assessment to gather information to inform two stages of the project: 1) Immediate and intermediate needs (i.e. salvage, public safety, management in HCAs, etc.) and 2) Long term planning (i.e. restoration, research and monitoring, etc.)
 - The plan is to form a workplan for the district over the next few years that aims to build a working forest.

- Landowners and other agencies will help with long-term research questions. This event is a learning opportunity and will require monitoring and research efforts.
- The Santiam is a healthy working forest that makes up a large portion of the HCAs. ODF is looking at active management opportunities to rebuild habitat on the landscape.

Discussion:

Members discussed the post-fire recovery efforts and provided the following questions and comments:

- ODFW expressed interest in being involved in the assessment and monitoring of the Santiam moving forward and offered to support ODF in this effort. Is there an opportunity for cross agency collaboration and ODFW involvement?
 - The short-term efforts will be at the district level. There could be a role for ODFW during the research and monitoring phase and it would be also helpful to collaborate on ideas for restoration. As ODF starts developing plans internally, there will be an opportunity for ODFW to be involved.
- Salvage has been discussed in the context of the HCAs before the wildfires. This could be an opportunity to apply salvage to the HCAs over the long term at both the stand level and landscape level.
- Suggestion to include this topic on the future ST agendas to continuously provide the ST updates on the efforts.

DISCUSS PATH FORWARD FOR HERBICIDES

Troy Rahmig, ICF, provided an update on the path forward for herbicides use as a covered activity under the HCP. He noted the project team met with USFWS to discuss the terms and conditions for herbicide use but further conversations are needed.

Troy suggested scheduling a focused meeting with USFWS and NOAA Fisheries to discuss herbicide coverage and the regulatory and permitting options. The project team will come back to the ST with a proposal for review and feedback.

USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and the ST found the proposed approach to be reasonable. USFWS noted the agency treats herbicides like any other covered activity unless there is an adverse effect on a covered species and therefore would need to show how any uncertainty is monitored and mitigated.

STRATEGIC AQUATIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Troy presented on strategic aquatic management actions that could be considered under the HCP conservation fund. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Some aquatic conservation actions may not be fully defined prior to HCP approval.
- Proposed to include new strategic aquatic conservation actions in the HCP's conservation fund that create flexibility in how the funding is utilized, similarly to what the ST developed for the terrestrial species. This would allow for parallel spending on aquatic conservation actions beyond the identified conservation actions.
- Suggested strategic aquatic conservation actions include:
 - Beaver management
 - Restoration actions outside the permit area
 - Funding of efforts by partners that will benefit the covered species
- There is interest in hearing from the ST on their ideas for how to use the conservation fund to pay for actions that would have a benefit to aquatic species.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the strategic aquatic management actions and conservation fund and provided the following questions and comments:

- A member expressed concern with funding efforts outside the permit area. In the past, selecting projects outside of the permit area often benefits other efforts, like agriculture, rather than the covered species. There are plenty of important projects within the permit area that can be prioritized.
- Others noted it is important to allow for flexibility to address and fund key projects or outstanding issues that are outside the permit area as the HCP is a 70-year permit and it's hard to predict the needs in the future. Suggestion to include language in the HCP that states projects inside the permit area will be prioritized, while allowing flexibility for exceptional projects outside of the permit area.
- How do we balance the allocation of the conservation fund across projects for both wildlife and fish?
 - ODF will track expenditures and make sure they are being utilized fairly and proportionally to the effects; however, the timeframe for the tracking has not yet been determined. There will be conversations about how much money will be spent and what projects will be funded. We will still need to develop language that describes this.
 - Because several projects are multiple years long, a member suggested using the timeframe of a decade to evaluate the conservation fund and make sure the funds are being spent in a balanced way.

- If an invasive species moves into the area, is there an emergency response or immediate action that is included in the FMP?
 - In the FMP, ODF is required by law to handle a plant invasive species. Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) takes lead on eradicating invasive insects. ODF would likely work with ODFW on addressing aquatic invasive species.
 - ODF will work to eradicate major invasive threats it as part of its management for overall health of the forest. Thresholds are included in the unforeseen circumstances chapter. This provides flexibility for ODF to address potential invasive species that are a threat to covered species.

LOW FLOW MODELING RESULTS

Melissa Klungle, ICF, presented on the low flow modeling results and analysis. She noted the ST had previously mentioned the need to discuss harvest effects on the watershed and low flows. There is little research available to set thresholds or determine metrics but it is important for the ST to talk through the analysis and point to any available data or research. Key topics of the presentation included:

- There is interest in completing a watershed analysis for the fast-growing trees in the “thirsty stage” and evaluate the low flow effects.
- It is important to identify: 1) The appropriate age classes for the analysis and 2) The watershed threshold for low flow effects.
- Presented data for forest modeling in the permit area and the larger forest.
- Presented TerrainWorks modeling data showing summer low flows and projected change in flow throughout the permit term as part of the climate analysis. The model shows areas most susceptible to changes in flow due to changing precipitation patterns.

Melissa framed the discussion asking if the ST thinks a qualitative analysis is needed. If so, how does the ST want to handle the analysis and age bracketing? What metrics and thresholds should be used? How should the ST address the limited information and research available?

Discussion:

The ST discussed the low flow analysis and provided the following questions and comments:

- This is an area of emerging science but there is not yet sufficient information about where the threshold is. There is data that young forests do transpire more and decrease stream flow. A member suggested that the ST work to address this to the extent possible. Stream quality and quantity is important to discuss with aquatic species due to climate change.

- There is a need to be conservative in our estimates and actions due to the limited research. If we under cut trees, more trees can be cut the next day. However, if we over cut trees, it will take 50 years for the mistake to be corrected.
- An appropriate age class is 20 years for the start of an effect; however, the end of the effect is unknown. The effect is also dependent on replant density. While thresholds might not be determined at this time, it is important to acknowledge this is an effect.
- Suggestion to have a discussion of density management and reforestation in clear cut areas. It is also important to have species diversity in reforestation post-harvest.
- The type of vegetation and management practices also can influence low flows. We need to ensure our actions do not lead to unintended consequences (i.e. management actions that benefits aquatic species but hurts terrestrial species).
- A member stated that there is emerging science that will influence forest practices over time. However, considering the limitations at this time, it is unclear how much NOAA Fisheries will use this type of information in the next year during the NEPA process or in their permit findings.
- A member noted we need more specific data about cause and effect. When looking at HUCs, we are looking at the causal effects of water quality as well as of low flows. It will be helpful to have data that shows this relationship.
- There is more science on the effects of stream temperature that we can use to help determine thresholds. There may be some other effects in terms of livable space. In approaching this issue, it would help to tease out the key elements.
- To address this in the HCP, we can provide this information qualitatively and rely on more up to date information as the HCP permit term progresses.
- Suggestion to use modeling to project the effects that management actions might have on the landscape.
- Members noted it would be helpful to review the literature and research that was evaluated.
 - Melissa will send out the list of literature and research to the ST.

Troy recapped the discussion and reviewed next steps. The ST will move forward with a qualitative discussion to acknowledge a potential effect of low flows, identify key issues, and be conservative in our actions in the HCP. It will be useful to rely on the monitoring program that will be established under the HCP. It was suggested to monitor key HUCs throughout the permit term and modify as needed. The places ODF is monitoring for temperature might also be where ODF monitors for water quantity to address concerns about flows in the future.

A member suggested discussing this topic at a future meeting to link the research to clear cuts and flows, to check in on level of alignment, and discuss next steps.

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT MODELING PROPOSED APPROACH

Troy provided a proposal for the terrestrial habitat modeling approach. He framed the conversation and noted that the ST previously identified the need to look at terrestrial habitat changes over the permit term, including discussing how many acres are expected to be gained and lost and finding a balance. Today will be an opportunity to revisit this topic and discuss what is considered habitat under the HCP. Key topics of the presentation included:

- There is interest in determining whether to adjust habitat quality thresholds that will be used to:
 - Determine what is considered habitat loss and what is not.
 - Determine how habitat quality changes over time.
 - Serve as a trigger for management decisions in HCAs.
- Reviewed habitat suitability categories of highly suitable, suitable, marginal, and not habitat.
- Presented habitat suitability index tables for marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl that shows the number of stands that fit under each parameter.
- Reviewed where we are currently in the process. This included reviewing the data, identifying the known occurrences, and determining how it relates to habitat suitability index data.
- The outcome of the process will be to: 1) Develop criteria to determine what is and is not considered habitat, 2) Evaluate the habitat suitability index for each species, 3) Determine if there is value in maintaining the habitat suitability categories, and 4) Consider ways to demonstrate that we are improving habitat suitability over time.
- Determinations about what is habitat will influence calculations about habitat loss and gain.
- Habitat suitability could ultimately be used as a guide for prioritizing management actions. All management decisions will be made in the field through adaptive management.
- The project team will have more to share at a future ST meeting and will be having offline conversations with members as needed.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the terrestrial habitat modeling approach and provided the following questions and comments:

- It was clarified that the work of revising the harvest model involves applying a new threshold to suitability. The focus should be on reassessing the numbers that come from the harvest model and how to reclassify habitat suitability.
- It would be helpful to review the actual model for each species to better understand how it was categorized.
- In addition to potentially using the models to target where management may occur, the models could also anticipate what the management aims to do. The model variables and parameters can be a useful guide to reach suitability and inform how to groom key attributes to achieve a better outcome and improve habitat suitability.
- It is important to not just rely on the habitat suitability model but to also look at species occurrence.
- If the timber inventory does not capture some of the important variables utilized in the habitat suitability index, then more emphasis should be made on specific variables on HCAs.
- The goal is to increase habitat suitability over time. Therefore, stands with a lower habitat suitability index should be targeted rather than a stand with a higher habitat suitability index.
- A member suggested that for marbled murrelet distribution, the cut off for habitat suitability should be .3 based on the raw numbers.

Troy will circulate information on habitat suitability thresholds and the data to the ST.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next SC meeting is scheduled for October 28 from 1-3:30 pm. Troy reviewed key agenda topics for the meeting.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Sylvia thanked members for their participation and reviewed upcoming meetings. The next ST meeting is scheduled for November 3. For the rest of the year, there is will be one ST meeting a month. We will resume with two ST meetings a month in 2021. The first draft of the HCP is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Members discuss the schedule and provided the following comments:

- It will be important to identify and discuss outstanding issues before heading into the NEPA process and do so in a timely fashion.

- It was clarified that the project team aims to have a final draft of the HCP for ST review by the end of the year. The ST will review and discuss the updated draft HCP early next year. The hope is to begin the NEPA process in March, but ODF will not move into NEPA until the HCP is completed. The March timeline aims to put sideboards on the process and maintain progress, but it is not a hard deadline. There will be no substantial changes to the HCP after we move into the NEPA process.
- An effect analysis, a biological opinion, and the implementations plans will still need to be completed.
- The ST was encouraged to let the project team know as soon as possible if there are any outstanding issues that are not being resolved so they can be addressed in the coming months.
 - A member noted that it will be important to discuss any blanks and placeholders that need to be filled in.
 - Monitoring and adaptive management will be very important especially for the less studied species. This is an area of the HCP that the ST needs to focus on.
 - Troy will circulate a list of key issues to be addressed. Members were encouraged to review the list and identify any additional remaining issues.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- KW: Distribute Interim Direction on the Implementation of the Forest Management Plan to ST for review.
- KW: Send out contact information for Colleen Kiser, Planning Unit Manager at ODF, so the ST can reach out with any questions or for more information on the interim forest management plan or the timber sale program.
- Project team: Schedule a focused meeting with USFWS and NOAA Fisheries to discuss herbicide coverage.
- Melissa: Send out the list of literature and research on low flows and effects to the ST.
- Troy: Circulate information on habitat suitability thresholds and the data to the ST.
- Troy: Circulate a list of key issues to be addressed.
- ST: Review the list of key issues and identify any additional remaining issues to be resolved.