

Lindenberg Peninsula and Mitkof Island Stewardship Workshop #1

Meeting Notes

May 3, 2012 6:30 pm

Petersburg Ranger District Conference Room

Attendees: Brian Paust, David Randrup, Chris Cotta, Jason Anderson (FS District Ranger), Tom Parker (FS Planning Staff), Marina Whitacre (FS Writer/Editor), Matt Lichtenstein (KFSK), Ben Case, David Beebe, Becky Knight, Mike Bell, Liz Cabrera (Petersburg Economic Council), Herald Medalen, Suzanne West, Eric Lee, Karin McCollough, Mike Stainbrook, one unknown; conference line (no one called in)

Maps displayed: PRD Managed Stands and NEPA Cleared Units, Collaboration Place Map showing planned and past thinning, Tonka Selected Alternative Map

Summary

Tonight Jason talked a lot about the process of coming up with projects as a group to have funded by returned receipts from timber sales. This led to almost 2 hours of questions, answers and discussions. Much of that is captured below, following this summary.

Highlights:

- It was agreed that the 6 meeting agreements (ground rules) for healthy discourse would be revisited at the beginning of each meeting. If changes or clarifications are needed, they can be discussed by the group at that time.
- Group agreed to use Wildlife Analysis Areas¹ (WAAs) as a starting point for the area of interest with the understanding that the delineation may change as projects develop. This includes WAA 2007 (Mitkof Island) and WAA 5138 (Lindenberg Peninsula).
- The group agreed that 6 weeks to come up with stewardship projects for the Tonka project area is not much time, but a concerted effort should be made. To do this, the group will try to meet every week to come up with best value contracting criteria that can be written into a timber sale contract. Anderson will locate examples of best value contracting criteria that have worked in other projects. He will also send out links to similar efforts to give the group more background information about how the process works and where these workshops are going.

¹ Wildlife Management Areas (WAAs) are subdivisions of Game Management Units (GMUs), geographical areas defined by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to manage wildlife populations, and are used by ADF&G for data collection purposes and to report community harvests of selected wildlife species. The Tonka project area includes a majority of WAA 5138. The direct, indirect and cumulative effects for wildlife resources for this project are generally analyzed at the WAA 5138 level.

Things for the Forest Service to bring to the next meeting:

- Map of WAAs
- Examples of Best Value Contracting Criteria
- Information about the Central Kupreanof Stewardship Collaborative Group and its formation
- Stewardship handbook direction
- Explanation of the relationship between Secure School Rural funds and Stewardship.

Description of Workshop Process and Outcomes *(discussed by Jason but summary presented below is from the agenda from tonight's meeting)*

These workshops are a public forum in which to discuss what people want from the Tongass NF lands that most immediately surround them. There is value in discussing the types of outcomes people want to see from their public lands, and learning about the various tools that can help get us there. Managing public lands is a complex process, which poses some challenging questions to which there are no easy answers. These workshops can help participants understand the sociopolitical constraints of the decision-making process and ultimately, the trade-offs being made with each decision. More specifically, this kind of communication effort can help define the types, locations and scale of possible or desirable activities that can take place on the landscape. It can further inform the Forest Service, and the community, on how best to craft projects for maximum local benefit on a trajectory that seeks to implement current policy and public interest. Given the complexity of the situation, the values present and the details involved, it is most likely that multiple workshops will be used to explore possible outcomes.

The outcome will be a report to the Forest Service that outlines the most important types of projects in order of preference and the Best Value Contracting criteria desired for use in the selection of funded projects.

Define Agreements, Roles; Purpose and Sideboards

- J. Anderson expressed the importance of sideboards to keep the groups' discussions focused. Various roles in the process include stakeholders, technical experts, facilitators, conveners, recorder, decision maker and interests not present.
- Six agreements (or ground rules) were presented (see agenda) for healthy social discourse. It was agreed that the group should revisit these at the beginning of every meeting so they can be clarified, if needed. Also, any changes to the agreements can be brought forth and discussed at the beginning of a meeting by the group.

Description of Existing Conditions

- Group didn't get into this tonight.

Area of Interest

What does the group think about the current area defined - Lindenberg Peninsula and Mitkof Island?

- B. Case asked why Thomas Bay is not included. Response by J. Anderson: By including only Lindenberg and Mitkof, it keeps the discussion more focused. When the size and scale increase so does the length of the discussion.
- D. Randrup proposed to discuss by WAA (Wildlife Analysis Areas) since it is the analysis area for wildlife.
- Mitkof is one WAA (2007) and Lindenberg Peninsula is another (5138). It was incorrectly stated by Whitacre that the southern portion of Lindenberg is another WAA; rather, the southern tip is not part of the Tonka project area.
- B. Knight is uncomfortable with constraining the focus to the WAA; it's too small of an area.
- B. Paust likes the idea of looking at WAAs but also interested in looking at other land delineations.
- J. Anderson suggests starting with the WAA as the area to look at, with the understanding that the delineation may change as we look at different projects.

Discussion of Stewardship Contracting Authority (and general questions and comments about the process)

- The Authority came about around 1995. It's a new tool to this region; receipts from timber can be used for stewardship projects – money stays local rather than going to the Treasury.
- Group asked about other projects that have used stewardship. J. Anderson: There have been 2 integrated resource timber contracts – Hecata and Frenchy, which will have retained receipts. Most of the stewardship projects associated with Central Kupreanof will not have retained receipts as the value of the service items is greater than the timber receipts generated.
- Can money from other projects be used in our area? J. Anderson: Yes. Areas determined to receive the highest and greatest benefits with the use of those funds get the money. How retained receipts are allocated is still under discussion on the Tongass. At present, there is a proposal for considering a distribution of retained receipts for maximum resource benefit balanced with commensurate investments for the stakeholder groups that work on these efforts. It has been proposed that where a project generates retained receipts up to \$150k, all of those receipts can be used wholly within the District where it was generated². If receipts are between \$ 150K – 299K is generated, \$150K stays on the District, the remaining goes into a Regional pot; over \$300K in retained receipts, 50% stays while the other 50% goes to the Regional pot. The Regional Forester makes all decisions on stewardship projects and where those funds can be spent. The districts generating the funds would still compete for the funds put in the regional pot, and the intent is to maximize the resource work that could be accomplished with the retained receipts generated.
- In the Hecata Young Growth Thinning project (100% export) service items used much of the timber proceeds so they were left with approximately \$150K, which in theory the Thorne Ranger District can keep (however, the Regional Forester is the decision maker on all stewardship projects).

² If the Forest Service finds meaningful work within the area all the money can stay on the District, otherwise the money will go to the Regional pot from which Districts will compete for the funds.

- Frenchy – 50/50 export; generated \$500 – 600K in retained receipts, so 50% will stay on the Wrangell District (again, pending RF discretion).
- Stewardship dollars cannot be spent on NEPA – can be spent to meet land management objectives, monitoring (with stakeholders), thinning in beach buffers, removal of red pipes, closing roads, and other land management activities, etc. – agency policy on allowed activities will be provided.
- Do stewardship funds take away dollars from the Secure Rural School funds? J. Anderson will talk to Su Alexander about this, but stated that from previous discussions with Sue Alexander, the calculation of dollars to the SRS RACs’ relies very little on timber receipts and would therefore have little impact. See <http://www.fs.usda.gov/pts/>.
- How does the use of stewardship funds affect Knutson-Vanderberg (K-V) funds? J. Anderson and B. Case respond: K-V funds are used for the maintenance, restoration or improvement of the productivity of existing resources and for the mitigation of adverse impacts that cannot be avoided (FSH 2409.19) – replanting after harvest to promote forest diversity. J. Anderson will look into this and is admittedly not a stewardship expert.
- Who will get the work? J. Anderson: Depends who can bid and the size of project.
- D. Randrup mentioned that if the borough goes through and timber is logged within the borough, it will want some of the proceeds?
- Can stewardship funding be used to thin an area the same size as a recent harvest? J. Anderson: Yes. Stewardship money can also be used to treat areas that aren’t for timber production, such as beach buffers or within OGRs.
- D. Randrup - Wildlife habitat considered a problem with every timber sale – but nothing changes. J. Anderson recognizes that this is a concern.
- K. McCollough stated she would like a summary or notes of tonight’s conversation and if it’s possible for her to give comments in writing. She and M. Stainbrook had to leave, but still has questions about what the area is the group is talking about. She would like information posted on the web.
- In J. Anderson’s experience, POW collaborative groups were unwilling to see the stewardship money go to another area, which may necessitate the identification of enough service work within a project area to limit the amount of retained receipts being generated.
- S. West asked about the timber cut on South Lindy that is still on the ground rotting. Would stewardship dollars be used for removing this timber and cleaning up the equipment left on the site? Response by J. Anderson and T. Parker: The contractor, Viking, is still responsible for that timber and responsible for all its subcontractors (subcontractor went out of business); if a contractor fails to come back, clean-up is covered by a performance bond. Viking has received several extensions and still plans to remove the timber.
- Discussion on how deer respond to clearcuts – participant has seen numerous deer in clearcuts; J. Anderson pointed out that a lack of snow interception due to clearcuts is what can be a problem for deer; the effect of timber harvest on deer populations is a complex story with many unknowns.

- L. Cabrera would like to see examples of best value contracting criteria that have been successful down south brought to the next meeting. J. Anderson will gather information from Big Thorne and Central Kupreanof and find some information from projects down south.
- B. Knight - FACA questions – who established the Kake collaborative group, how was it defined as a relative community group? How will it be defined for this group? J. Anderson: For the Central Kupreanof collaborative group, representatives of Kake asked the FS and others to participate. Since Anderson was not the Ranger when this was going on, he will ask around and report back.
- Is there a minority contracting preference? Examples, Native owned, women-owned. J. Anderson can bring a contracting officer to a future meeting to answer those kind of questions.
- Those who would like to see information on the Staney Creek process can go to <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/staney-creek/>. The collaborative group came up with desired future conditions but Forest Service may not be able to implement all projects proposed due to Forest Service policies. Staney Creek was a 2 year process.
- D. Beebe asked if stewardship funds replace dollars that have been given in the past for thinning. And who has made the decision to give money for thinning in the past? Response by B. Case and J. Anderson: Money for thinning projects has come from appropriated funds decided by the Washington Office (WO). Stewardship funds will be in addition to the WO dollars and will come with more flexibility on where and how they can be used.
- E. Lee would like the conversation to continue about the Tonka sale in future meetings; he would like to see restoration contracts go to the local community and see restoration money coming from some place other than timber receipts.
- S. West asked who would have the authority to carry out a project decided by the group. J. Anderson would be authorized to make decisions, such as a 2,600 acre thinning project; however, decisions on the bigger projects with more anticipated environmental effects (designation of large sales, larger road building project, etc.) move higher up the chain and the group would have less control over the implementation.
- Question posed to the group by J. Anderson – do we chase Tonka to get a thinning project wrapped up in implementation, or work on developing projects to use the receipts elsewhere?
- Everyone is trying to preserve their livelihood – foresters, forest service employees, deer hunters – there is no easy answer to making land management decisions.
- M. Bell would like to see more discussion and ideas on small local operations – the key has always been consistency; operators can't work one year and go hungry the next; he would like to see those against timber sales bring some ideas to the table.
- Everyone gets something, but no one gets everything. Have to recognize everyone's values around the table.
- M. Bell would like to see improved marine access at Tonka – suggests putting a couple big logs in the water (low tech dock improvements).
- L. Cabrera asked when the group would need to have to best value contracting criteria in place to get it tied into the Tonka implementation. J. Anderson thinks by end of June to make time for projects like red pipe removal and thinning objectives to get NEPA cleared. Any money that is left over could sit in an account and be used for projects not tied to Tonka implementation.

Correction on when implementation of Tonka could begin – not mid-September as estimated at the meeting, but mid-August.

- B. Knight noted that stewardship for Tonka was only mentioned in the public news releases, not in the DEIS or FEIS. She feels that stewardship opportunities should have been discussed earlier; now we only have 6 weeks. Group feels it is a short time, but it is worth trying. B. Knight agrees. A reason Mitkof Island was also included discussion is to have more time to get ideas before the NEPA for the Mitkof roadside small sales project gets started.
- B. Knight asked if people can participate from a distance – yes. Can set up a conference call or can participate via video if a person can get to a Forest Service office (video-conferencing only works internally).
- J. Anderson was asked to define “stewardship.” It is the management of natural resources; whereas the stewardship authority is a law.
- B. Paust – it’s a shame that the district does not have an established public interface such as a public affairs officer to make the waters less murky.
- Can we get best value criteria written into Tonka timber sale contract? How can we improve the chance that the contracting officer and contractors will include best value criteria options? Options have to be put in contract and contractors have to bid – craft a project that a contractor will bid on. This is why L. Cabrera would like to successful best value contracts so the group is not spending its limited time trying to projects in place that don’t go through.
- M. Bell – local hire is limited. It would be impossible to get a whole crew together, but there are options for subcontracting road work and moving stuff across the water.
- B. Knight - how much does it cost to replace a red pipe? Response by J. Anderson and T. Parker: Costs ranges widely based on complexity – the minimum cost is approximately \$75,000 to fix a red pipe on class I or II stream
- B. Case suggested visiting Tonka as a group to talk about what to do on the ground – possible thinning areas, for example.
- <http://lomakatsi.org/> - collaborative group that’s worked really well down south; it is a convening body with no baggage.

Next meeting

Next week – Friday, May 11 at 6:30 p.m.