

**Provincial Advisory Committee
Forest Plan Revision Workshop – April 10, 2006
Vegetation Sub-Group Meeting Notes**

Attendees: PAC representatives: Liz Tanke, Arnie Arneson, Jen Watkins, Albert Roberts, Steve Buck, Scott King. Forest Service representatives: Paul Hart, Phil Jahns, Rick Acosta, Barbara Fish

AGENDA

- ✓ Forest Service to share examples of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) resource layers and other information assembled by IDT to date. Review sample watershed and overlaying GIS layers.
- ✓ Identify incremental steps or preliminary questions
- ✓ Propose process on how PAC will answer questions
- ✓ Describe products
- ✓ ID any other needed information

Introduction by Rick Acosta, Forest Plan Information Officer

Objectives of the small group as defined by the PAC:

1. Where should vegetation treatments occur to address wildland urban issues?
2. Where should treatments occur with high risk areas?
3. What are the desired conditions for dry late successional forests?

Presentation of current GIS data by Phil Jahns, Forest Plan Vegetation Lead

Objective – to present summary data of what forest looks like to help small group get a feel for tools that are available.

Handouts:

- Acreages of different forest groups. How much exists and where does it exist.
- Historic Ranger of Variability (HRV) Table – Current and desired values.
- List of GIS coverages

-Matrix

General Discussion:

Q: Scott- Need to know what parts of these acreages that the work group can work with.

A: Phil- Information is to give idea of what is out there on the landscape – more of background. The forest plan is designed to manage forest at 10,000 foot level.

Q: Liz: for late seral it seems there's a general lesser amount. Surprised to see (from table) that there is too much late seral multi-story. Need to categorize this to show how much is required to meet needs.

Q: Scott – referring to in-balance and out-of-balance – where does that come from?

A: Phil - lots of fire history data from studies. Jim Agee published a 2004 paper that we use to produce this information. Colville, we used East Side Screens. Both data sets nested very well.

Q: Arnie- late single and late multiple process is quite different right?

A: Phil - yes. They get there different ways.

Discussion on GIS Coverages:

Phil explained there are about 200 different GIS coverages to answer a variety of management questions. (List of all GIS coverages - handed out by Rick). However, probably 5 coverages is sufficient. The data we have for these coverages are the best we can produce at this time. The white space is where we have our concerns. The rest represent special areas such as RNAs, scenic byways, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, etc. Congress and executive orders have told us what the management of these areas is supposed to be. We refer to these as our hard lines on the coverages.

Coverage examples shown and presentation by Phil:

Dry Mesic Forest Coverage – this is where we really want to concentrate our work for ecological sustainability and where we need to do treatment to meet our over all objectives. Also showing are the areas where we wouldn't meet our objectives.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Coverage - 1.5 miles was considered an appropriate distance for wildland urban interface. This coverage shows where wildland urban interface and dry forest intersect.

Inventoried Roadless Areas Coverage –We already have public input on this information. Here we have layered this on top of dry forest. Classic case of where we need help in describing what kind of management is needed. For instance, the roadless area along Lake Chelan - do we want access, what kind of access? What kinds of trade-offs are there?

Group Discussion:

Q: Albert - Don't we need to get more specific about what areas of the roadless areas need to be treated?

A: Phil- We don't need that level of detail. Need to define the management areas that you need to access, where it is most important.

Q: Liz - Couldn't we describe more of a prescription for the area?

A: Phil - Yes, that could be done. Where that is important is in the analysis at the district level and that the product shouldn't befuddle the implementer.

Q: Arnie – Do you have a map layer for risk rating for insects? Phil not aware of one, but we know they correspond with the dry forest. We can produce a map if needed.

Phil explains that we cannot salvage everywhere on a forest. Wilderness, etc.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Coverage. Shows what forest managers thought would be appropriate for recreation. Not cast in stone. The boundaries of the dry forest are, but these are judgement calls by the districts. In forest planning we might find there is a conflict that is unresolvable. But this is an indication what the forest thought the dominant recreation level would be.

Group Discussion:

Q: Jan - correct to say an end goal is ecological management?

A: Phil - yes, as much as possible. May not be possible socially to work near someone's back yard for instance. Amount of smoke limits us to what we can do as well.

Q: Jan - may be a built-in assumption that much of the work will be done mechanically.

A: Phil, yes.

Q: Albert - why do people think that you shouldn't have logging and thinning near where people are? Could demonstrate this is a necessity to show this is a goal.

Matrices of draft proposed management areas presented by Phil.

This is another tool the group can use.

Group Discussion:

Paul: Some things I heard – like what can be done in wilderness. We may be focused on the white area, but if you see something that doesn't make sense outside those areas, you as a group need to let us know.

Q: Arnie - Perception that you want us to focus on specific management areas. Not comfortable with this at is a humongous job. May want to focus on criteria, or priorities.

A: Paul - Pick the approach that makes this exercise valid.

Q: Albert – This is a balancing act of all activities, while generating money and saving money on suppression and firefighting. Also, enhancement of recreation and reduction of

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risks. Need to define the goal. How that's done should be the task of the district. We are just giving a direction.

Q: Jan - Are we also defining priorities?

A: Rick - Yes, you could validate or go on a different track.

A: Phil - You could put a high priority on LSRs in general for instance, but not that 20 acres on the Methow.

Q: Liz - Seems like the criteria would be more helpful than lines on a map. What would help us make a decision would be what's on the land – a list of criteria that describes what we can do in those areas. There will be gaps that are undefined but you could get around the problems by criteria rather than a map.

Q: Jan - Project lines don't always seem to fall within just the white areas. Makes more sense to have a set of criteria.

Q: Arnie - Most projects don't cover an entire watershed. I think one thing that would help me focus is what is the scale or capability of what your budget is – the limitations.

A: Phil – We are looking at 12 – 13 thousand acres a year including prescribed fire, timber etc.- that's our best guess today. But this doesn't get you to solving the problems.

Q: Liz - Gives you the opportunity to increase your capability and increase your knowledge and efficiency.

AFTERNOON

Rick refocuses the time on the objective of reporting back to the large group. What are the products and processes

Group Discussion:

- Scott: With that big of a group it was cumbersome at first but everyone had a full expression of what they thought was important. I think these categories you have defined in the matrix look good. What I think you need is the definition – these will dictate your guidelines. We could come up with good definitions of the green areas. Such as wildlife for example. What are the current guidelines, and then what do you want. Your vegetation will come into play and be the limitation of how, say elk, need to be managed. Each person will have their area of emphasis and suggest how to be managed. All of these in the green on the matrices is mind boggling. I think if each person could identify their interests it allows the full chance for them to be involved and express and bring that to the table.

- Liz: Need to simplify the concept of different management areas beyond the hard lines. Look at general ecological and social goals for vegetation on the forest using sustain and restore approach with economics as a by-product. Do this within a monitoring and

adaptive management feedback loop. This is more of a process. Consider the risks and prioritize jobs on the ground.

- Scott: You could develop guidelines that would lead to allocations. Each person at the table should be able to make a presentation about the area they are interested in.

- Liz: Could we simply define the allocation areas with an adaptive management feedback loop? We could identify a simple outline with social, ecological and economic goals. The lab or some of people in the science arena might have already identified some.

- Jen: with the way our PAC is – it would be good to set up some clear products. What are the desired conditions? The next product would be guidelines, etc. We would have a goal that we would arrive at the end of the day. Then move into the guideline statement – how do we define (either with a map or whatever).

- Arnie: I'm product oriented. Let's focus on getting something. Helpful to the forest would be some guidance on how to work through the value maze. Take some of these green things (resources on the Matrix) and focus on those and look at priorities for applying some of these various activities under a set of conditions. Vegetation management and WUIs seem to be the priorities. Recognizing the forest is going to be limited on what they can do.

- Scott: I appreciated the maps today – it gives the picture of what areas we can focus on. The mandated areas, we really have no option. Showed what areas we could focus on. Took the immensity of the area down to the practical area. Fire, vegetation, and budget are key to every area. The group can set up a management plan – with a fire, things can change for instance.

- Jen: Where do we have common ground. At our PAC we don't have a lot of disagreement that areas need to be restored. But then there's all the "well- but's." These can turn out to be the guidelines. Start with common ground for the PAC.

- Steve: We pretty much have desired conditions. We should say what should happen – how are we going to manage for the desired condition. I don't think we should have the matrix at the meeting, otherwise we'd go around and around. We need to just focus on the treatment areas. Bring a starting point to the PAC. Should we think our resources should go to the WUI's and dry forest? Maybe if we do it with a revolving feedback.

- Liz: The lab could come up with the framework for the product. We would come up with ways to set priorities. I wouldn't want to say just one or two things is all that's important. Don't be too narrow of focus. We can continue to gather information in some areas of less priority.

- Phil: we can do some narrowing and focusing without tying the hands of the people to get the project done.

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- Jen: two priorities - WUI and landscape scale fuel breaks. Strategic landscape scale planning. Make it less about boundaries and more on a landscape scale. We would like the forest to mimic what they used to with plenty of “well-buts.”

- Albert: need to think of intensity of fires and not so much on the acreages.

- Liz: guideline and consideration for picking projects. Fuel reduction within a desired area. Strategically locate fuel reduction.

- Jen: spotted owl habitat – you might not just want to restore but to maintain habitat for this particular resource. Maybe we should use historic range of variability (HRV) as goal noting there are exceptions.

Q: Scott - is getting back to historic range a policy?

A: Phil - no, came out of the 90s. The concept may be flawed because of climate change and we'll never get there, but sets us a direction. It's the best we have right now.

- Liz: resiliency is the term I was thinking rather than restoration.

- Scott: that is a basic concept that there are some areas that won't go there historically – practicality says resiliency might be more appropriate.

- Phil: there are areas where we can operate outside the historic condition. There is an ecological social need to maintain some areas outside the HRV.

- Arnie: doesn't need to be an exception. Protect WUIs and protect owls – not 100 foot pines.

Processes and Products – what the team needs to get back to the PAC.

Group Discussion Points

Identify desired condition for late successional dry forest. What do we want and how do we think we'll get there. Everyone needs to be able to express their opinion.

Focus in on the national forest closest to private lands.

Greater detail in subcommittee, the less time required for the larger group.

Here are the focus areas, desired conditions, historic range

Get buy-in's then come up with the but-ifs, which would generate guidelines.
Take the feedback from the PAC.

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Use the green list for the individuals to work with. Maybe some who want no logging.

Get on board with how F.S. operates – the green areas define areas of concern.

Propose to the PAC that we create a sub committee for veg. the broad agreement. Even if not a sub committee, put down feedback either vocally or on paper on broad terms.

Surface any disagreements

Authorize subcommittee to deal with these – hash these out and search for common ground to bring back to the PAC.

Important to do some degree of percentages for agreement and non agreement. Minorities still need to be well represented.

Maximize the PAC'S time. Small group is open to anyone. But has the authority of the PAC. Presenting to the PAC alternatives/recommendations for the PAC to choose.

Rick is the point person for additional feedback.

There is a recreation group – what this group does will hopefully be compatible with them. The agenda isn't designed. Each of the sub groups will need time.

Team will need spokespeople of who will present back to the PAC.

Need to identify the green areas that fall under our charge. Another tool. (team recommended the following areas:

- Prescribed fire
- Road construction
- Timber production and timber harvest
- Veg mgt. projects
- Pest mgt. projects
- wildland fire use (fits into maintenance)

Flesh this out and give more detail in a narrative. The PAC could give these areas more detail. The yellow areas need to be defined as well by the FS. These four may covered for the PAC, what area needs aren't met could fall into another mgt. area.

Identifying common ground/broad based agreement

The team reviewed discussion items that were captured on flip charts and identified which of these fit into the following categories:

- Process

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Tool

Product – an achievement for PAC to strive for

Action item

Introductory Information

Propose that we form a subgroup to deal with the vegetation management issue. We would present our broad scale agreements for PAC review. Get feedback from the larger PAC on if we are going the direction they want to go. Process and intro of the proposal.

The small group will be open to anybody that wants to join, but they will do staff work and make proposals to the PAC.

Additional how to's discussed. The PAC sub group would do a narrative giving more detail on the objectives for the "Green" areas of management on the matrix. FS should present rationale for the yellow areas on the matrix and the PAC will validate.

A lot of the process items will be leading to products.

Process:

You could develop guidelines that would lead to allocations

Each person at the table should be able to make a presentation about the area they are interested in (process and common ground)

Could we simplify the definition of the allocation areas? Build in adaptive management feed back loop. Identify a simple outline

The lab or others in science are may have identified some kind of approach.

Get an agreement on what are the products we want to get out of the process e.g. desired condition.

Some guidance on priority (from PAC) on how to work through the value maze. Priority time on WUI and dry forest? Or should some of the time be spent on mesic?

Need to identify process of where common ground is

Development of guidelines would allow us to identify priorities for managing areas. (process leading to product).

Mechanical treatment may be necessary to get the fuels to the point where we can do prescribed burning. What do we want, and how do we get there? (process and common ground)

Is it a problem if: (collecting opportunities and concerns from the larger PAC)

Process will be a search for common ground.

Common Ground:

Bring a starting point to the PAC- emphasis should go to the WUI's and dry forest areas.

Lab/forest planning team/PAC could come up with some process for monitoring and adaptive mgt. we could focus on WUI and dry forest areas, but that doesn't mean we should ignore other areas completely. There may be a need for prescription fire in high elevation areas.

WUI areas and landscape scale areas that may be necessary to break up fuels but are not in WUI. – Could we look at getting the actual fire sizes closer to the historic level. Might be more the historic intensities rather than size. (common ground starting point)

Primary focus on the white area that is not in areas where there are rules that won't allow much management.

Strategically locate fuel reduction projects to better interrupt the large scale fires.

Generally say what we need to do.

Shouldn't lose site for the need for monitoring and adaptive mgt.

Take the general area recommendations to the full PAC. Get feedback and then have follow up meeting to further address specifics. Could look at each of the mgt. topics and get feed back. (Common ground and process).

Use the historic range of variability, but account for the need for some localized differences, like the need to manage for spotted owls. Near development (WUI) (common ground and process).

Resiliency is the word. How can we do things to make the forest the most resilient to adapt to climate changes, etc.

Product:

Say where treatments should occur and why. Identify types of areas.

Identify desired conditions for late successional dry forest.

We will present decisions via consensus, but will recognize differences of opinion.

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What's NEXT

Rick will work with facilitators to take sub group findings to package it for the PAC. We will have a period of time where this group presents findings. Also from the recreation group.

Phil suggested maybe we should be thinking about how we are going to integrate the rec and the veg sub group proposal.

Next vegetation sub group meeting: April 25, 10 – 3.