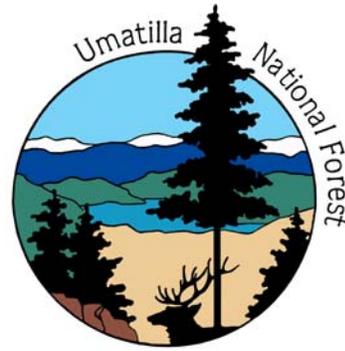


MEETING NOTES

Tollgate Working Group Meeting

May 21, 2009 Tollgate, OR



Meeting Recorder: Joani Bosworth

Participants:

Forest Service: Mike Rassbach, Kimpton Cooper, Brett Thomas, Tyson Albrecht, Joani Bosworth,
Oregon Department of Forestry: David King
Group Participants: Rod Morrow, Marcella Morrow, Mary Louise Chapman, Bernard Chapman,
Tom Insko, Dino Graham, Frank Kaminski, Cheryl Graham

Agenda Topic: *Introductions*

Discussion: Group went around the table and introduced themselves and their interest in the project. Mike covered the history of the past three meetings and how we got to where we are today.

Agenda Topic: *NEPA and HFRA Review*

Discussion: Kimpton Cooper reviewed the NEPA process and how it differs under the HFRA Authority. The group was given time to ask any questions that they had from the previous meetings.

Agenda Topic: *Update from Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)*

Discussion: David King gave an update from the ODF; discussed the status of Fire Plan and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants. They are still waiting to hear. He expressed concern about the timing of the notification and the ability to accomplish work as we get farther into the field season. David explained the process on how to get involved. This is a great opportunity to work with neighbors to meet common goals in fuels reduction on PVT, State and Federal lands.

Agenda Topic: *Review Previous Treatment Themes*

Discussion: Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to present the powerpoint presentation. Instead, Kimpton Cooper went over the treatment themes exercise completed by the group at the January meeting. Kimpton developed a [treatment theme table](#) to display participant's treatment theme priorities. He explained how this information will be considered when developing the proposed action.

Mike Rassbach thought this table was good visual representation of the group's preferences toward various management themes. He also explained that the Forest Service is still in the early scoping phase of the project. Project timelines are being stretched because the snow pack has hampered our ability to complete necessary fieldwork.

Some themes introduced by the groups, such as a recreation related theme, do not fall under the scope of this particular analysis but will be very useful for upcoming recreation analysis for the Tollgate area.

Treatment Toolbox: The types of treatments that *may* be used to accomplish the project objectives.

- Pre-commercial or non-commercial thinning
- Mechanical thinning
- Hand piling and burning
- Timber Sales
- Clearing and planting of fire resistant tree species
- Prescribed underburns

Frank Kaminski: Will there be associated road improvement projects? County roads in the area (Coyote, McDougal, etc) are in poor shape and would require significant improvements before large equipment use or hauling could take place.

Mike Rassbach: At this time we have not moved far enough into our process to determine what treatment methods (from the toolbox above) would be employed. However, it is possible that commercial harvest may be used and that may result in some road improvement work.

Agenda Topic: Treatment Concepts

Discussion: Brett Thomas shared a map of the analysis area. Map does not include GIS data from the ODF. He explained that fuels, fire, wildlife and silviculture employees helped develop the map displaying fuels concepts, pinch points, problem areas and the rind concept.

The Tollgate area is unique in that the higher elevation areas are largely private land parcels with National Forest lands below. Typically you would see this reversed with private lands below leading to higher elevation National Forest lands.

There is a 20,000 acre wilderness area to the SW as well as other large sections of roadless area surrounding Tollgate.

Fire's path is driven by wind direction and terrain. We typically see a wind push from the SW, giving us a better focus for areas of treatment. In steep terrain, such as the South Fork Walla Walla, we tend to see fire push up timbered strings regardless of wind direction.

In know where are focus areas are, it gives us the opportunity to work with neighbors to identify areas of mutual work.

Mike Rassbach discussed the next steps in the analysis. The district Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) will look at these emphasis areas and analyze treatment types using the project objectives:

- Protection of public health, safety and private property,
- Reduction of hazardous fuels,
- Improvement of stand health and vigor, and
- Provide for firefighter safety

Dino Graham: Will there be adequate funding to implement the project if the project analysis is completed this year?

Brett Thomas: This project has local, Forest Service, ODF and political support. I believe this project will compete very well for funding. We do not expect the project analysis to be completed this year due to process timeframes, workforce capacity, and weather constraints.

Brett then explained the Forest's annual fuels treatment accomplishments, usually treat 16,000 acres annually, 50%+ is prescribed burn, 33% is mechanical.

David King: Fires can and are likely to come from private land. Most fires in the Tollgate are human caused and can be held liable for suppression costs and loss of property.

Bernard Chapman: You'll find that the private land owner is the best fire marshal we have. We have and will continue to let you know when we see a problem.

He was also interested to know the thinning activity taking place near Lugar Springs. Will the thinned Ponderosa Pine be left on the ground or removed?

Brett Thomas: We focus limited funding on the priority areas that surround private lands, cultural resources, recreation sites, etc. That particular area has on of the highest snow load and decay rates on the forest. It's also way out there and of less threat to areas of concern.

Mike Rassbach: I am a proponent of thinning. Accomplishing this involves some prioritization of the level of treatment applied to each stand. Some places further away from people, homes, and other sensitive resources, may not receive as high a level of slash treatment as stands that are in closer proximity to those resources mentioned earlier. This risk is part of the calculation undertaken to treat as many acres as possible with limited dollars. It is a risk I willing to take to accomplish as much thinning as possible. We need to be preparing these stands for future health.

Agenda Topic: Project Timeline

Discussion: Brett Thomas went over the project timeline.

***Tollgate Fuels Reduction Project
Schedule presented at May 22nd Collaborative Meeting***

- *Field Work: Summer 2009*
- *Public Scoping: Mid to late August 2009*
- *Analysis Document ready for public review: Spring 2010*
- *Decision: Summer 2010*
- *Implementation: Fall 2010 and beyond*

Kimpton Cooper asked the group if they understood the need to provide individual written comment to have a standing in the objection process. The group did not have any questions.

Tom Insko: Is there talk of stimulus funding to be available to offset road improvement cost and increase sale viability?

Mike Rassbach: Our ARRA proposals have included thinning, fuels reduction, recreation and road maintenance projects. We have not heard what all has been funded yet. Hope to hear soon.

Mary Louise Chapman: Who will make the decision, the District Ranger or the Forest Supervisor?

Mike Rassbach: That will depend if the decision requires a Forest Plan Amendment. If the decision requires a Forest Plan Amendment it will be signed by Forest Supervisor Kevin Martin. If not, I will sign the decision.

Bernard Chapman: What logging operations will take place in the Tollgate area this summer?

Brett Thomas: There may be a small amount of work on the Loon Timber Sale near Balloon Tree and some final work on the Jubilee Lake Hazard Tree Removal project.

Agenda Topic: *Evaluation of the Collaborative Process*

Discussion: Joani Bosworth asked the group for some feed back on how this collaborative process has worked for them? Did this experience meet their expectations? She explained that we've spent some time sharing information and expertise. Next steps will move us into the more structure NEPA process with set timelines and comment periods.

We are in the beginning stages of a similar process at the Heppner Ranger District and would like to use your comments to improve this process for future collaborative processes. We'd like your input on what worked well, what might have left you frustrated, what was missing, what would be more helpful to have known more about?

Tom Insko: Though I understand the need, we spent a lot of time at each meeting reviewing the collaborative process, HFRA, NEPA and guidelines. However, due to the nature of the collaborative process there may not be a way to work around it.

Joani Bosworth: This being our first HFRA project, we may have been more cautious in working people through the processes. We'll try to cut down the review time in future projects.

The group was thankful for the opportunity. Pleased with the process. Appreciated everyone's time.

Mike Rassbach: Closed the meeting with words of thanks to everyone for their time. Big thanks to the Tollgate Trail Finder's Club for letting us use the facility. We look forward to working with everyone again in the future. We'll see you all at the next meeting to roll out the proposed action.