

Colville National Forest
Meeting with Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition
June 16, 2016

Attending

NEWFC members and board including: Maurice Williamson, Dick Dunton, Cody Desautel, Gloria Flora, Curtis Vaagen, Tim Coleman, Tiana Luke, Leah VanderStoep, Bart George, Matt Scott, Dave Werntz, and others.

Forest Service:

Amy Dillon, Forest Plan Revision Team Lead; Jon Day, Forest Silviculturist and Forest Plan Revision Vegetation Lead; Kathleen Ward, Natural Resources Staff Officer; Karen Honeycutt, Forest Natural Resources Program Manager and Forest Plan Revision Lead for Fisheries; and Marcy Rumelhart (notes).

The meeting was held at the Tri-County Economic Development District office in Colville, WA. This was a Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC) meeting and the Forest Service was invited to provide additional clarification and understanding of certain items in the draft plan. The forest plan revision discussion started at 11:30.

Gloria asked Amy if there was any possibility of an extension of the comment period. She stated they are finding opportunities for collaboration with other groups and would like to have more time to work through issues with them.

Amy stated that the request is being discussed by the Forest Supervisor and the Regional Forester. She gave a short synopsis of the kinds of comments received so far. She expects to receive more comments during the last week of the comment period. All comments are on the forest plan website and available for public viewing.

Gloria provided a list of discussion topics to Amy prior to the meeting that are still generating a lot of discussion with NEWFC members, including:

- **Alternatives – representation of NEWFC Blueprint (B) and Summit (O), at what point did those alternatives change from what was originally presented by NEWFC? For instance, the NEWFC Blueprint originally included 80 mmbf of timber output but in the draft plan it is 30 mmbf. That is very different than what was originally presented and is reflecting poorly on NEWFC.**
- **Forest Mgmt/Forest Health –amounts of land in various structural stages, volumes and treatment acres fall short of need using non-declining even-flow, lack of feasibility of “other” harvest methods.**

Amy – alternative B didn't change. It proposes Management Areas defined by NEWFC and continuation of the Eastside Screens, none of that changed from what was presented at the meetings. All of the alternatives were modelled the same way, but not based on accelerated output.

Jon – the difference in volume outputs is due to the Eastside Screens. Volume of 80 mmbf and use of the screens, it's not compatible. The planning requirements for developing the numbers doesn't look at a 20-year time span. There are several laws that require the FS to model for sustained flow.

Maurice – presumably Churchill did the modelling for the Blueprint using the screens.

Jon – part of the screens is we can't manage a stand with 8 trees per acre greater than 21 inches diameter. Basically that stand is off limits if using the screens, but there are variables. In the dry Doug-fir type, if it is a late-closed structure stand we could manage it to move to late-open structure. But we don't have that much late-closed, dry Doug-fir type on the Forest. It is driven by desired conditions and based on the historical range of variability, and moving the whole forest toward that.

Matt – it is hard to understand why there is zero volume projected in the draft plan for the restoration zone. Why doesn't it account for the restoration zone?

Jon – the restoration zone is not in scheduled timber production areas, so that land base is not included. He explained that scheduled timber harvest is the key, which is not the intent of the restoration zone.

Maurice stated that Derek Churchill's thought on the restoration zone is that it is not intended for a one time only treatment, which is a departure from NEWFCs original sideboards. NEWFC hasn't recognized that yet.

Gloria – if the restoration zone acres were included in scheduled timber harvest, what would that look like?

Jon – then alternative B might be a more viable alternative (related to timber volume). Could say the restoration zone should be in scheduled status, and seriously consider the screens given the desired conditions. With the screens in place, it will restrict volume.

Dave – the forest is lacking large old trees in many forest types, think about whether we can have that over 20 years, is it really a constraint?

Jon – there aren't enough large trees on the landscape now and there won't be in 20 years, that's why volumes are low. For most of the late-old structure types, won't reach desired conditions for 50-60 years.

Curtis – to say we should drop the screens is not viable, unless we have another option.

Jon – it is more than just the diameter limit, there are wildlife concerns too, like travel corridors. If it is late-old structure it's off the table for management.

Maurice –feels the 21-inch diameter limit is not appropriate.

Gloria – how did you factor in climate change?

Jon – for this area and these vegetation types, there is no consistent information on what's going to happen. Most of the mortality in the data he has seen is due to overstocking. The species out there now aren't drought tolerant.

- **Post Disturbance Restoration – scope, scale and techniques.**

Gloria – is it addressed in the plan?

Jon – no, it is better addressed at the project scale, but there is nothing in the draft plan that prohibits it.

- **Roads – effects on wildlife (we're not in full agreement w/in NEWFC).**

Although on the original list of questions, this topic was not brought up during this meeting.

- **Wilderness Recommendations – or lack thereof.**

Gloria – under impression if an area is suitable for wilderness but not recommended in the draft plan it is off the table for wilderness consideration in the future. Are you familiar with any situation where land that is not recommended suddenly becomes recommended in the next planning cycle?

Amy – everything in the draft plan is new since the last planning cycle. The FS is required to look at areas for wilderness consideration with every planning cycle. We look at it every time and do the public engagement and social analysis every time.

Gloria – is there anything in the interim to protect the areas from losing their wilderness characteristics?

Amy – it depends. Some areas are back country nonmotorized and not on the schedule for timber harvest. It is addressed differently in each alternative.

Matt – in alternative P the recommended wilderness would be managed as it is today, correct?

Amy – yes, the existing mechanized uses would continue. Understand that most of the recommended wilderness boundaries are over inventoried roadless areas, but the recommended wilderness is slightly larger than the inventoried roadless area boundary on the Stevens County side for Abercrombie-Hooknose.

Tim – comment about the FS upsetting the Mtn biking community by stating in the draft plan some trails would be lost if recommended wilderness is designated by Congress. Creating fear and turning that group into an adversary. It bothers him because the FS is suggesting that Congress would do something specific to mountain bike use, but doesn't mention that Congress could make rule related to any type of designation. Feels the Forest Service highlighted mountain bike use over other possible uses which created artificial fears.

Amy – the FS is required to do full disclosure. If an area is recommended wilderness, it has the potential to become wilderness at some point, if brought to the attention of Congress. We can't presume that but we have to state what the process is and how we'll manage the area in the interim. One of the possible outcomes is congressional designation.

- **Special Interest Areas – number, location and purposes.**

Tim – (Calispell SIA) get a sense the FS doesn't like the special interest area being developed on the east side of the forest.

Amy – haven't seen anything you've worked on, did see some broad notes from a meeting about a Calispell SIA. Based on current direction, a special interest area must be based on existing features. There can be some discussion about being able to authorize routes, as long as the public doesn't expect specific route changes in the draft plan.

Dick – how much detail is needed to support that (special interest area proposal)? We have come up with the Calispell Special Interest Area, we have maps, and Mike Manus is supportive. The Pend Oreille County GIS people are doing all the work.

Amy – as much detail as you want. It is an overlay of an existing management area. Need documentation of special features on the ground, and what is special about it. Would it be more restrictive than the underlying management area? Because most of that area is timber ground.

Dick – the focus is recreation.

Tim – understand the forest plan provides framework for project level work, and seems that counties are coming around to these special interest areas. Do we need to provide the specific details now? What (the draft plan) doesn't say is a collaborative group can propose a special interest area.

Amy – the management plan for the special interest area could be developed now and included in the final plan, but if it doesn't happen before the Record of Decision it would be an amendment to the plan.

- **Social Economic – Adequacy of broad data to specific locale. Inclusion of recent Tri-County analysis. Recreation values.**

Matt – he asked a question on the economic webinar about economic output/timber receipts and they (Forest Service specialists) couldn't answer it, didn't have a handle on it. Disappointed they couldn't answer that.

Gloria – concerned that the data was so broad it didn't apply to more localized data and situations. Any thought to refining the broader social/economic analysis with some of the data that came from the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project monitoring? For all three counties?

Amy – we can look at it, since it came out after release of the draft plan. Couldn't tell you if it's useful or not, not having seen it.

Dick – Charley McKetta's input had a list of concerns. Don't see value of timber harvest, and no forest receipts numbers in the draft plan. Page 501 in the DEIS.

Maurice – have problems with commissioners not recognizing the forest as income generating. In your listing of cooperators and consultants there is no listing of any private landowners, but Stevens County has the most nonindustrial private landowners west of the Mississippi. Think they would say FS should do more to protect private and protect infrastructure. Would be nice to have it acknowledged in the draft plan.

- **Collaboration as a tool to interpret/resolve issues post-comment period. A role for NEWFC?**

Gloria asked for advice on how NEWFC can be helpful with comments or who they connect with. We had talked about if there was a way that NEWFC could help post comment period, but prior to releasing the final, in resolving controversy. She suggested reaching out to groups with disparate comments and bringing them to the table to get their comments moving in a direction toward agreement, like a trouble-shooter squad. She said NEWFC is willing to help facilitate resolution for disparate opinions.

Amy – Since we don't have all the comments, and don't have a good idea of all the issues that will come in, really don't have a good answer.

NEWFC member – heard from county commissioners they are not happy with parts of the draft plan. If we had a plan that captured people's opinions, funneled through NEWFC, could help the FS create a document the majority of people in the three counties could live with. Big part is feeling connected, part of a community, and the draft forest plan has brought a lot of special interests together.

General discussion

Gloria – concern that in dryer weather patterns, riparian areas become fire channels. Do you foresee any changes in kinds of regulations we have or attention we might pay to riparian areas based on concerns they are becoming fire channels?

Karen – the regional office wanted to be clear that riparian areas are not buffers, they are management zones where we want to be able to treat. That would happen at the project level. We do want to avoid these areas becoming fire channels and is a documented problem that when a buffer is left along a stream it burns. We are struggling with that on the Forest, but we are working on it.

Follow-up items

**Dick – in the Fire Management section it states the Forest will follow the County Wildfire Protection Plans and the Stevens County Wildfire Protection Plan states it will follow the Forest’s fire management plan. Where is the fire management plan? Can’t find it in the documents.

**Tiana asked for clarification of how the Forest is defining the Wildland Urban Interface and whether the Forest is following the County Wildfire Protection Plans.

This portion of the meeting concluded at 1:00.

A list of acronyms used in the meeting discussion can be found on the Colville Forest Plan Revision web page:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/colville/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3824594>