

Talking Points

Talking Points-Chetco Bar Fire Recovery Efforts

June 27, 2018

Area Salvage

- The Chetco Bar Fire was the largest fire on the Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest in 2017, burning 191,197 acres of which 170,321 acres were on National Forest System lands. The Kalmiopsis Wilderness and other administratively withdrawn land management allocations comprise 94,447 acres or 55% of the acres burned.
- The purpose of the Chetco Bar Fire Salvage project is to capture timber value by harvesting dead, dying and/or damaged trees resulting from the 2017 Chetco Bar Fire. As time progresses, these fire-killed trees lose economic value due to insects, staining, and checking. By late spring or early summer of 2019, up to 30% of the economic value of the trees could be lost.
- In order to identify areas that are suitable for salvage logging, the Forest Service must abide by a complex set of requirements and regulations as identified in the Land Management Resource Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. The Record of Decision for the Siskiyou National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan states that the Forest-wide goal is to “Provide a balance of resource management that will maintain a healthy Forest ecosystem and help to supply local, regional and national social economic needs.”
- Approximately 85% of the National Forest System lands that burned within the Chetco Bar Fire occurred within lands where management allocations either prohibit post-fire salvage or have requirements for additional analysis to show ecological beneficial effects of treatments to aid in post-fire ecosystem recovery. The remaining 15 percent (25,386 acres) of the fire on NFS lands occurred on lands designated as “Matrix” within the Northwest Forest Plan. Within these acres, approximately 13,000 acres incurred a 50-100% basal area loss associated with moderate to high severity burns.
- Within the 13,000 acres, further evaluation for feasibility of treatments was required, considering riparian reserves, Northern Spotted Owl habitat, Inventoried Roadless Areas, removing units lacking economically viable products and considering logging systems operability and accessibility, etc. These considerations further restrict the areas suitable to conduct salvage operations in a timely manner.
- Based on these considerations, we further refined the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) to a 4,090-acre area, or 2.5% of the Chetco Bar Fire footprint, with a rough estimate of 71 million board feet of proposed timber salvage harvest.



for the greatest good

TALKING POINTS - (continued)

- A Draft Environmental Assessment was released for a 30-day public comment period on April 16, 2018. None of the alternatives include any actions within the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless areas, the Chetco Wild and Scenic River Corridor, and have no effects to water quality, aquatic species or recreation opportunities along the Chetco Wild and Scenic River Corridor. The project area is located in Curry County approximately 11 miles NE of the city of Brookings, OR and approximately 12 miles SE of the city of Gold Beach.
- The public comment period for the EA ended at midnight on May 16, 2018. Approximately 3574 public comments were received; with 117 unique comments and 3141 form letters that are addressed in the project documentation.

Decision Notice/ Environmental Assessment

- The Chetco Bar Salvage EA project Decision Notice/ Environmental Assessment was recently signed by Rouge River-Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor Merv George Jr.
- Alternative 2 best met the need of the project to capture timber value in the matrix land allocations by harvesting dead, dying and/or damaged trees resulting from the 2017 Chetco Bar fire where timber harvest is a reasonable and expected land management activity.
- Alternative 2 will treat up to 4,090 acres and is expected to produce about 71 million board feet of saw logs over the next few years.
- The intent of this project is to expeditiously harvest fire-killed timber and dying trees resulting from the Chetco Bar fire and to recover the economic value in the timber prior to deterioration.
- With timely salvage, the value of the dead trees would pay for their removal from the forest and potentially pay for other future restoration treatments such as reforestation, road improvements, and other restoration type projects.
- The majority of the fire area providing early seral complex habitat would be left to natural recovery.

Danger Tree Removal

- Work has been completed to remove imminent danger trees using emergency authorizations to reopen public access along a high use corridor that accesses private property/residences and popular river access.
- 115 miles of Forest Service roads remain temporarily closed, due to high severity fire effects and large amounts of danger trees, steep slopes, road conditions and other post-fire hazards identified.
- The first roadside danger tree sale (Packer) was sold to CLR Timber Holdings (South Coast Lumber) for \$1,523,158 for 9.1 MMBF (million board feet) of timber on May 15, 2018. Part of the proceeds of the sale, \$500,000, will be utilized for forest restoration work. The primary purpose of this project is to ensure public safety.
- The second Chetco Bar danger tree sale (Snaketooth) to remove roadside danger trees had no bidders on June 19, 2018. Snaketooth was advertised on June 4, 2018 as a small business set-aside sale. The sale contained approximately 3.9 MMBF with at an advertised price of \$105.87 per MBF (thousand board feet). Since no self-certifying small business concern made bid, the Forest Service will repackage and advertise this sale without restrictions on bidder size.

Public Safety

- Only those areas with a high level of public safety concern were closed to the public until logging and road repair could be completed. This closure area includes roads 1917, 1909, and a portion of 1376 north of Steel Bridge.

TALKING POINTS - *(continued)*

- Imminent Danger Tree clearing has begun and more log traffic and falling trees will be occurring as contracts are awarded. There will continue to be a mixture of log trucks, residential, and recreational traffic on road 1376 (Chetco River road).
- As other danger tree work is started, other sections of road will be closed for public safety during active logging operations.

Trails/Recreation

- Public access has been provided to popular campgrounds along the Chetco River after hazard trees were felled.
- Further recreation site hazard tree work will be occurring in the campgrounds, Packer's Cabin, and high use trailhead areas.
- We are working with trail partners (Siskiyou Mountain Club) on Kalmiopsis Wilderness trails and will be working with local trail partners (Curry Citizens for Public Land Access) to maintain or reconstruct critical features along other forest trails impacted by the fire.
- Implementation of new fees at several recreation sites (Winchuck Group Site, Snow Camp Lookout, Little Redwood Campground, Ludlum House, and Packers Cabin) within the Chetco Fire burn has been delayed.

Additional Funding

- The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has been notified that Congress authorized supplemental disaster funding for Chetco Bar Fire for post-fire infrastructure needs. The \$3.3 million in funding will be for addressing post-fire conditions and rebuilding of facilities, roads, and trails.
- The earliest work has focused primarily on recreation and trail assets to ensure they are operable and safe for public use during the summer recreation season.
- Designs are being developed for several major projects:
 - Repaving Chetco River Road/surface rock roads (8 mi./6 mi. - \$1.8 million)
 - Renovating Chetco River Bridge (deck, guardrails, middle pier - \$500,000)
 - Replacing culverts (8 total - \$200,000)
 - Rehabilitating recreation sites (Hazard tree removal, toilet repairs, etc. - \$50,000)
 - Repairing damaged trails (Mileage dependent on conditions - \$267,000)
- Some of this work is already underway utilizing partners and Forest staff. The earliest work has focused primarily on recreation and trail assets to ensure they are operable and safe for public use during the summer recreation season.

Good Neighbor Authority

- Recognizing the amount of the work associated with Chetco Bar Fire is greater than the capacity of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, the Forest has been working with Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to implement an agreement under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) that would provide for ODF to implement some of the salvage and recovery work. The Good Neighbor Authority allows for States to perform restoration work on the National Forest. Additionally, it would strengthen the relationships and partnership between the FS and ODF to continue to expand our forestry work together.

TALKING POINTS - *(continued)*

Reforestation

- Approximately 40% (76,000 acres) of the Chetco Bar fire burned in moderate to high severity (>50% basal area loss).
- Natural regeneration is expected in most areas. There are some large high severity areas with limited seed sources that will result in highly variable natural regeneration, and regeneration is expected to be slow in areas far from seed sources. Hardwoods like tanoak, Pacific madrone, alder, and big leaf maple usually vigorously resprout after fire.
- Planting conifers in areas to be salvage logged will occur to meet requirements. Planting may be needed in other non-salvaged locations in order to meet land management objectives and priorities, as informed by restoration needs.
- In order to meet land management and ecological objectives in all land use designations, we are planning to plant Douglas-fir, redwood, and disease resistant stock of western white pine, sugar pine, and Port-Orford-cedar. These will be planted in appropriate locations, densities, and mixture of species.
- There is no shortage of seedlings for Forest Service reforestation projects currently however, planning ahead is critical to maintaining the supply.
- Federal regulations prohibit sale of material grown in Forest Service nurseries to non-government entities unless the material has been deemed surplus to the government's needs. Annual surplus nursery material lists are distributed internally initially. A list of remaining materials is then distributed to externals that have expressed interest in receiving surplus material information.
- Opportunities exist to follow the partnership example implemented by the Forest Service nursery in Placerville, CA. The nursery entered into an agreement with a state conservation district to grow seedlings; and the conservation district subsequently provided the seedlings to private land owners.

Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Efforts

- The objective of Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER), is to identify imminent post-wildfire threats to human life and safety, property, and critical natural or cultural resources on National Forest System lands and take immediate actions, as appropriate, to manage unacceptable risks.
- Authorized BAER Treatments include a variety of natural resource, forest road, recreation hazard tree, noxious weed and hazard mitigations associated with Chetco Bar Fire Recovery.

Water Quality and Fisheries

- The Forest Service has conducted field visits to severely burned areas and conducted visual monitoring in 3 intermittent streams draining into the Chetco River.
- There has been no evidence of wide ranging soil erosion, such as hillslope failures or debris flows.
- Forest Service staff are working closely with the National Weather Service to monitor weather conditions and implement proactive measures to reduce sedimentation in streams and rivers.
- Staff are working closely with private timber interests to increase mitigation measures associated with logging operations if needed in advance of storm events.
- Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife conducted spawning surveys during the fall of 2017. ODFW plans to conduct post-fire juvenile steelhead surveys during low flows on the Chetco River this summer.