

Coeur d'Alene GA Workgroup Meeting Notes
Kellogg, ID
01/08/04

Attendance: Forest Service – Joe Stringer, Linda McFaddan, Carolyn Upton, Rick Patten, Rob Davies, Ed Lider, Mike Dearborn and Sherri Lionberger. DEQ – Geoff Harvey. Idaho Fish & Game – Chip Corsi. Public – Duane Adams, John Cantamessa, Earl Castleberry, Tom Crimmins, Larry and Jo Darling, Mike Dunn, Bob Finlay, James Finlay, Jim Hagenbruger, Lee Haynes, Larry Jennings, Keith and Diane Jutila, Wayne Koski, Wendell and Twila Little, Mark McFaddan, Chris McLaughin, Roger Oestmann, Mike Reynolds, Ron Roizen, Terry Smith, Gary Stanley, Robin Stanley, Fred Traxler, Larry Yergler,

Introduction

(by Joe Stringer)

Objective of this meeting is to provide information on watershed and fisheries that may be considered in the process of Forest Planning revision.

Presentations

Rick Patten, Hydrologist for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (power point presentation provided)

Rick's presentation reviewed the legacy of streams in north Idaho and looked at what changes have occurred since the 1987 Forest Plan. The slides identified the terms properly functioning, functioning at risk, and not properly functioning. Slides also displayed the historic range of bull trout / cutthroat trout as well as the current reduced range.

Question: What percent of the drainages are at risk?

Between 60 and 70 percent of the drainages are either functioning at risk or not properly functioning.

Question: What year was the historic range given in the slide? Are you trying to imply we need to go back to that range?

Year is approximately early 1900's, and no, we aren't implying we should or can return to that. We need to consider trade-offs for any and all resources.

Question: What data do we have that identifies the impact of the 1910 fire or other fires since then?

Obviously there was impact, but after probably 5-6 years the streams re-adjusted fairly well because they were resilient. The fact that streams get ugly for a little while doesn't mean the system is broke...the resilient systems will heal fairly quickly as far as the physical side of the water. Rick didn't know about the biological or fish side.

Rick gave an explanation of the 303(d) listed streams, TMDL's (total maximum daily load), and the changed in listed species.

Question: According to neighbors, Wolf Lodge and Blue Creek used to have more water and more salmon moving in them. Why has that changed?

Wolf Lodge creek is a good example of a stream that is functioning at risk – the high bedload is moving down the drainage and water is now going through those rocks instead of over them. It's the same water amount. Salmon were introduced into the lake and there are still spawners in Wolf Lodge.

Geoff Harvey, Department of Environmental Quality

Geoff discussed the Clean Water Act that led to many of our streams being listed as impaired. The list of impaired waters within Idaho is 162. The Act mandates either Idaho or EPA to develop a TMDL, which is a plan that gets us from one place that isn't supporting beneficial uses (swimmable and fishable) to a place that fully support those uses. Segments of streams can be listed for three reasons; temperature, metals, and sediment. Sediment is our most common reason. We have to come up with some level of impact that still allows us to meet beneficial uses...and realize we can't going back to historic or pre-settlement conditions. A TMDL doesn't say how you have to get through the sediment reduction, but it gives you guidelines. Encroaching road segments are some of the highest contributors to the problem and the model will point to moving those roads out of the riparian area. The solution of how to reach those goals is up to the Forest Service.

Question: How far does the road have to be away form the stream to not affect it?

At least out of the flood plain; a short way up on the hillside.

Comment: You (Geoff) met with the science committee and implied this was a thing to remove roads, that logging didn't impact it as much. The sediment model is conservative, has not been validated and there wasn't funding to develop a better model.

The model is state of the art for broad watersheds, there has been validation, and they expect the Forest Service to further validate as they work in those listed streams.

Chip Corsi, Regional Supervisor for Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Coeur d'Alene Office

Streams in north Idaho (and therefore fisheries) have been having impacts for over the last 100 years. We have legacies from mining, logging, blister rust eradication and fisheries biologists cleaning large woody debris from streams because that was the current science. In other words, there is lots of blame to go around for our current condition. This area is now a very important recreational resource as well as important for fisheries.

There was a petition to list the west slope cutthroat trout with the USFW. The states of ID, MT, Ore and WA had information and practices in place to preclude listing them.

There is good hard science that says roads are a problem for water quality. Not every road is bad, but we need to figure out where we can meet recreational needs, motorized access needs as well as water quality needs.

Streams in this area evolved with fire impacts. When you consider the impacts of fire on streams now, the more impaired the watershed is the less resilient it is and the higher the impact from the fire.

Question: Concerning roads next to stream beds; don't some of those naturally recover over time and only certain sections need attention as opposed to the whole road? Yes, often nature takes care of some things, but you may have a higher cost to maintain such a road in a poor location.

Question: Two speakers have talked about past activities that we did and the experts said it was appropriate at the time... why do we think we're right this time around? We thought we could improve on nature back then, but we didn't account for how the natural system wants to operate. We have more research and science behind us now than we did in the 1950's.

Question: Is the existence of a road the problem, or the use of the road? For water quality, it is the existence of the road. Chip said that trout are very susceptible to fishing, so that impacts it.

Question: You referred to culverts as time bombs. Why open up a bunch of roads to dig up a culvert? Why not let it go? We have lots of experience that tells us pulling culverts is our best way to reduce sediment into streams.

Question: Wouldn't it be an equal effect of sediment when a stream runs along a steep hillside that is eroding naturally? Yes, there is certainly natural sediment entering the streams, but where you add man-caused sediment you need to recognize what you can and cannot control.

Question: In the old days, roads were built with small culverts over shallow fills, then the FS required engineered roads with large fills and culverts. Wouldn't a better solution be to fix the big creek crossings and leave the rest of the road in place? Even brushed in roads can be a problem by putting water into the creeks faster. Often the roads the FS wants to close are these brushed in roads that aren't accessible anyway.

Comment: It doesn't seem like the roads or trails are being maintained. True.

Comment: The new bottomless arch on road 534 was good, but all the woody debris placed above it was not anchored and won't stay. The placement of woody debris has been very effective and stayed in place over the last several years.

Rob Davies – Hydrologist for Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District (power point presentation provided)

Rob presented numerous slides on different methods of road and culvert restoration.

Comment: The FS discusses roads as only a way to get from point A to point B. We must recognize these are recreation facilities and when you can get to point A from another direction, you lose sight that the facility is a recreation use. We do consider ways to keep part of the roads open to trail use, although maybe not full vehicle use, and we are trying to work closer with our public users through our projects.

Question: Wouldn't it be cheaper to rip rap or gabian along a road instead of pulling the road fill out of the flood plain? Yes, if we can't relocate a road we can protect it. However, now the stream is straightened, has increased velocity, and there is an effect downstream. **Comment:** If we move all the roads away from the streams all the old guys can't get there to fish. We aren't talking about removing all of them or moving them way far away - just out of the floodplain.

Question: You showed a map of the Tepee area with lots of roads and culverts. You've been fixing lots of culverts in that area for years, so when do we get to see them removed from the map and you get credit for fixing them? Good point and we do need to do that. We have a map showing the work that's been accomplished so far, but it wasn't in the slide show.

Comment: People were happy with the work done in Two Mile working on roads and access.

Ed Lider – Fisheries Biologist for Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District (power point presentation)

Ed gave a review on species of fish present, pictures of poor fish habitat and good fish habitat.

Question: What kind of help does Joe get from congress to fund restoration work? By the time we get our budget, it comes tied to very specific things and we can't switch our pots of money around. We don't get a lot and we continue to look for funding from the RAC and grants.

Question: National Park Service says they lose 40% of their budget to lawsuits. What is your rate? Appeals probably take about 5% and litigation jumps probably to 15% of our "timber" dollars.

Comment: There are lots of wildlife species in the woods and roads can lead to adverse disturbance. It is well and good to recreate in the forest but don't ruin it by making it like a town.

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 22 in Coeur d'Alene. It was noted that this working group should move on with its task. There have been presentations on wildlife and aquatics, however vegetation is a key component and it would be beneficial to cover that before the group moves on. Decision was made to spend the first part of the meeting on silviculture, and then develop a process to move on.

Carolyn Upton noted that the forest team does have some framework from other groups that she could bring that to help get going.

Question: At what point do we say “This is what I like and I’m speaking for 75% of the Silver Valley?”

This is not a voting process. The Forest Supervisor will make the decision and she won’t be making it based on how many people say something. Her latitude for decision is based on laws and sound resource management. This group needs to work within the sideboards and understand that we do have limitations. Work on this and come up with community options – that will be more important than 5000 post cards supporting something.

Comment – the group needs to know what is expected from them to best utilize our time. Yes, but other groups have said they don’t want to be boxed in either.

Question: I’ve been going to meetings for several years and was under the general impression that water quality was on an improving trend since the 1910 fire era, and that there are more species of fish, etc. Then I come here and it seems like things are going to hell in a handbag. Was I wrong that it is improving?

Geoff – if you are looking at the South Fork for example, it is definitely improving since 1968 and the mining closed up. If you are talking about sediment, some may show improvement, but not nearly as dramatic due to the legacy issues. We fixed the most obvious problems with the mines, but we’ve done little with all the legacy of roads and sediment.

**Meeting date is Thursday January 22 at 7:00 pm
Forest Supervisors office on Kathleen Avenue**