

Willamette National Forest Roads System Transportation Stakeholder Team

Meeting Three -- Meeting Notes

The third meeting of the Willamette National Forest (WNF) Roads System Transportation Stakeholder Team took place on Thursday 01 November from 1230 PM to 330 PM at the Willamette National Forest Supervisor's Office in Springfield, Oregon.

Participants: Meg Mitchell (WNF), Matt Peterson (WNF), Matt Ehrman (WNF), Brian Wolfer (ODFW), Alan Henning (EPA), Will Tucker (Linn County Commissioner), Faye Stewart (Lane County Commissioner), Greg Wagenblast (ODF), Elmer Ward (Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs), Steve Wilson (ODF), Shari Flanders (City of Detroit), Pamela Wright (DEQ), Johan Hogervorst (WNF), Judy McHugh (PAO, WNF), Julie Watson (Walker Consulting & OSU), Miriah Russo Kelly (Walker Consulting & OSU), and Gregg Walker (Walker Consulting & OSU).

Notes prepared by: Walker, Russo-Kelly, and Watson

Part One – Status Report (Project Update)

Meg Mitchell, WNF Forest Supervisor, observed that the WNF couldn't be happier and more pleased with the contributions the Transportation Stakeholder Team (TST) has made. She noted that the group has done great work thinking about the roads project as an investment strategy. "We wanted to frame it that way," Meg remarked, and "You have taken it and added bells and whistles to it." Meg also commented that the group's ideas about roads management from a landscape scale have been important. "The WNF can focus on watersheds where the most impact is likely -- coarse screen and fine screen -- you have us thinking about criteria we hadn't considered."

Matt Peterson, roads interdisciplinary team (IDT) leader, reported on the IDT's work. At a recent team meeting Peterson shared the work that the Intergovernmental Team had been doing. The IDT has been developing these metrics that are very road-focused, and the IDT got excited about considering roads at the landscape and watershed scale.

Matt noted that the IDT talked briefly about the watershed conditions framework. "We did that process in the WNF a year ago," he observed. "We identified watersheds in good shape, not so good shape. Now, we are thinking about how to use that to help us make decisions about roads. That integration will start pretty soon."

Matt commented on terrestrial forest health, impacts of disease, and fire. "We had that discussion last week," he explained. "It fits really well with another 'terrestrial assessment' coming down the pipe in the Forest Service. We are interested in weeds and fire and such. That might also help us analyze roads." Matt concluded that the Intergovernmental Team's ideas and questions can help the WNF determine where it can make the biggest difference with its roads decisions. The IDT members are very excited about those ideas the TST has introduced.

The status report was followed by a question. A member inquired if there had been discussion about protection vs. restoration. He asked: "Should we be protecting the ones that are in really good condition, or do we just try to rehabilitate the ones in bad condition?"

Matt replied: "We will have to talk about that. You raise a good point. Our idea is to focus on the ones where we can make the most difference. In terms of protecting already good watersheds, we will have to talk about that."

Meg remarked that the WNF does not necessarily want to focus just on the roads that show up "red." In some cases the WNF may want to invest in the "yellow" roads or others. She added: "Remember that we might also identify other criteria outside the watershed and terrestrial assessments. For instance, I am really excited about the cultural criteria."

Part Two – Criteria

After receiving the Roads Project updates from Meg and Matt, the TST members discussed criteria for evaluating a roads management strategy and their recommendations.

A member raised the issue of legal requirements. He asked if there are other roads that legally will be there no matter what the circumstance. He commented: "What are our legal sideboards we need to be aware of?" If a road was built for a legal purpose, we may not be able to do much there. If the road was built for a mining purpose that is no longer there, then we probably have more flexibility."

Gregg Walker, TST facilitator, replied that legal requirements can be added to the criteria list.

Matt replied that the WNF is only looking at roads under Forest Service jurisdiction, so roads like US Highway 20 are not part of the management strategy. Among the roads the WNF is examining, some will get attention because they are high value. The WNF may invest in some roads because of legal obligations to do so. The WNF is in the process of identifying those. That being said, we still want to analyze those roads, because we want to know their impact (even though we might keep the road). For those roads, we might do something else to mitigate. We want to apply these criteria to every road regardless of legal obligations to figure out impact.

A member asked if there were any roads that could be taken off the table; roads that would impact the investment strategy. That would help define the scope.

Matt replied that the WNF is only looking at Forest Service roads over which it has jurisdiction over. Roads such as Oregon 126 and county roads, although they go through the Forest, are not in the roads, and such are not in the WNF system. He added that easements and special use permits obligations (e.g., energy investments/corridors) may influence the WNF investments because of legal agreements.

The member wondered if there are there legal obligations to maintenance levels. Such obligations would limit decision space. Matt was not sure, but agreed with the point that legal obligations might limit how much the WNF could or would do in certain areas.

A member commented that he understood Matt to say that the WNF would not attend to state and county roads. He questioned that decision, given that those roads cross WNF lands and could hurt the fish system via runoff, culverts, etc. Consequently, the WNF should talk to the counties about how to improve specific roads to enhance the entire watershed. It gets difficult, but that's why you don't take it off the table. Legal obligations need to be recognized, but the WNF can work on partnerships to achieve other goals in those cases.

A member told the group that he was ranking biological stuff higher than social. Given his area of expertise, it makes more sense to look at these criteria within those groupings.

A member commented that he has worked on research where everything is ranked and evaluated quantitatively. It is hard. Putting environment vs. economics vs. social can be very contentious, but having people try to rank within categories can help create more agreement. Ranking means that people don't have to pick one against another (like forest health vs. a job).

Walker observed that looking within each category might help the group pick out critical issues that are "most critical" for the team's investment strategy.

A member pointed out that the multi-use piece is important. It's not all one value, but the combination of values that makes the forest great. In some areas of the forest, a certain value will be more important than in others. But the TST members need to think about how those values impact one another. For example, if a certain part of recreation is just destroying fish habitat in a critical area, that is an area where the group needs to discuss how to balance the two.

Meg responded that she heard the member saying that some forest issues reflect very place-based values. Other issues have more options available about how to make improvements such as water quality. The WNF might be able to do something on five other roads to make water quality better, whereas people can only get to Fish Lake on one specific road.

A member surmised that some issues or elements are more sensitive than others. Some things are particularly sensitive or irreversible, such as water quality and cultural resources. If they are screwed up, the Forest won't ever get them back.

A member commented that another member used the term "absolute." He recommended legal requirements as an "absolute." He would also label that the WNF needs to have certain essential resources as an absolute or high priority.

Julie Watson asked: "Do you need any of these to achieve other ones?"

A member noted that there needs to water quality to achieve recreation in places like Waldo Lake.

A member noted that if water quality and water quantity are mismanaged, there will be a cultural impact. Such mismanagement affects where cultural plants will grow.

Walker observed that water issues should therefore be will be foundational.

A member remarked that, on a related note, if you can't prevent fire, water quality isn't going to matter, because the forest resources will be destroyed.

Meg pointed out that when fire concerns are addressed, they are very place based. She commented that "we can show where we get fires and how they move. Roads right on the edge of these areas are very important. This fit the 'sensitivity' criteria. In some areas, it's critically important, in other areas, as long as you have a little reasonable access, that's all you need."

A member added that what is considered place-based is temporal; tied to seasons or times of the year.

Meg responded that if people could be kept out of certain areas of the forest during specific times, that could make a huge difference for how problems are addressed (and could create new problems).

These ideas suggested the importance of thinking about both spatial scale and temporal scale when applying criteria.

Meg asked the group to discuss the social criteria. What do TST members think they are?

A member replied that everyone has different opinions. A member remarked that he saw the social lending itself to the biological. He stated: "Like solitude, if you have a healthy forest, then you will create cultural and social values, solitude.... You are relying on forest health to achieve the social goals. Social is tightly connected with biological (forest health)."

A member proposed that safety is really critical...and for him that rises to the top above all these other social values. A member added that economics are important, too. Harvesting and promoting crops and the resource base. The question can be asked: Is this action supporting jobs?

Meg made a note to revisit this investment strategy, observing that there are jobs in this investment strategy, as well.

A member pointed out that, in Detroit, a lot of people come for Christmas trees and other forest benefits, such as firewood. The WNF needs to provide access for people to be able to do that.

A member stated that "We have these communities; ones where the forest has had a critical influence on their survival. In Eugene, it's more about water quality and recreation, but for these small communities, the economic job opportunities really matter."

A member added that there is a lot of waste. The Forest could use the resources of its communities rather than trucking rocks in from somewhere else.

Meg replied that this group could have a third purpose of working on that investment strategy.

A member asked: What is the nature of the timber industry today on the WNF?

Meg replied that the WNF produces about 70 million board feet of timber annually. This is well within a sustainable level of timber production, although very different from years ago where the harvest was almost "a billion or bust."

Walker added that people like certainty and predictability in where jobs and economic issues are involved.

Part Three – Recommendation Groups

During the last half of the November meeting, TST members formed two groups. The groups had the same task: to generate recommendations to the WNF leadership regarding a roads investment strategy and next steps. The groups were asked to generate recommendations regarding substantive issues (e.g., water quality, vegetation management) and procedural matters, such as public involvement activities.

The recommendations from the two groups appear in a separate document.

Part Four: Wrap Up and Next Steps

Matt told the TST members that they have already had a significant impact and that the roads management planning effort would stay the course. Members were invited to email Matt for more information about watershed framework.

Meg proposed that the group re-engage the roads issues after the holidays and meet at least one more time and perhaps more. She suggested bringing some additional people/groups into the process, perhaps as observers via a fishbowl approach.

Possible next steps include a watershed analysis meeting, a terrestrial analysis meeting, and a social analysis meeting. The Roads ID team would work with the Intergovernmental Team at this point. A final meeting would refine ideas for next phases of public engagement.

Meg, Matt, and Gregg thanked all the TST members for their involvement and productivity and wished for everyone to have a happy holiday season.

TST Recommendations

The Willamette National Forest's Transportation Stakeholder Team, an intergovernmental team, met for the third time on Thursday 01 November 2012. The TST was convened to assist the WNF with the development of its road management strategy.

During the 01 November meeting two groups formed to generate and discuss roads management recommendations for the Willamette National Forest's leadership and planning teams to consider. These recommendations related to both matters of substance and procedure.

Group One (facilitated by Miriah Russo Kelly)

Recommendations related to Substance

1. Consider economic factors and impacts when make roads investment decisions.
 - a. What are the impacts on jobs? Will road maintenance provide employment?
 - b. Will certain roads investments limit economic benefits?
2. Make different funds available for specific actions – allocate funds according to the use or utility of the road. Align the road investments with management priorities and road use, such as fire suppression or safety.
3. Management strategies should vary according to different road types and uses (e.g., a public road vs. a timber road).
 - a. Evaluate the maintenance plans for roads based on their use.
 - b. Develop standards that are specific to different road types.
4. Build and maintain roads for areas that need them.
5. Consider seasonality as a factor when determining roads investments.
 - a. Do risks change with time of year?
 - b. Do costs vary according to season?
 - c. Enforce closures (seasonal and year-road) more.
6. Maximize forest health overall and integrate the health priority with the multiple use mission.
 - a. Identify mutual gains options that address the needs to multiple users and road types.
 - b. Prioritize sustainable resource uses.

7. Provide education and research opportunities as part of the roads investment strategy.
8. Development an adaptive management plan for roads.

Recommendations related to Procedure

1. Develop a “knowledge set;” essential information about roads that can be shared with the public – perhaps a “roads primer”
2. Keep the planning process open to ensure meaningful public participation. Present options or alternatives for the public to consider.
3. Work with the Forest communities.
 - a. Include in any assessment how the community will be affected by roads investments – how investments will impact the community.
 - b. Ask community members to identify and prioritize their concerns.
 - c. Provide community members with access and voice; opportunities to participate alongside professionals.
 - d. Allow participation space for venting.
 - e. Provide “micro-examples” and cases that stakeholders can discuss.
 - f. Check in with the public to see if the WNF and TST are overlooking any items or issues.
4. Communicate clearly the decision space in the roads investment planning effort. Let the public know where their ideas matter; were they can influence the work. Be upfront about the sidebars.
5. Regarding the role of the TST (Intergovernmental Team):
 - a. The Team would like to be present at public events when possible.
 - b. The TST would like to meet after the public engagement process but before alternatives are finalized and decisions made.
 - c. The TST would like to be presented as a collaborative partner with the WNF in this effort.
 - d. The WNF needs to be transparent about the relationship of the TST to the WNF.
6. Regarding who the WNF should engage as part of the public involvement effort:
 - a. Go out to the community rather than expecting the community to come to the WNF.
 - b. The TST might have a table or booth at public involvement events such as a Outdoor Sports show.
 - c. Groups to engage include miners, Rotary clubs, environmental groups like Oregon Wild, watershed councils, wildlife organizations (e.g., Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), hunters’ associations and clubs, non-motorized recreationists (e.g., mountain bikers and hikers), off-road vehicle groups

(ORRV/OHV), anglers, winter recreationists (e.g., snowmobilers and cross country skiers), and tourism groups (e.g., bed and breakfast owners, outfitters and guides).

7. Interact with private property owners and adjacent owners as well as parties with in holdings (these people should be sent a personalized letter).
8. Involve key government and non-government organizations
 - a. County and state agencies, such as parks departments and roads departments.
 - b. Law enforcement departments; county sheriffs, offices of search and rescue, emergency planners, and forest patrols.
 - c. Industrial foresters such as Weyerhaeuser
 - d. Key community leaders; opinion leaders and the local and state level
9. Education and awareness
 - a. Develop a fun, interactive website
 - b. Get the word out early.
 - c. Develop a long-term education program – more involvement with the community to build credibility.
 - d. Post information where people go and gather; local newsletters, coffee houses, etc.

Group Two (facilitated by Julie Elkins Watson)

Recommendations related to Substance

1. In the Detroit area (Upper Santiam) – prioritize recreation, water quality, and economics. They are all interrelated and are high priorities there.
2. Water quality is a priority throughout, and it is closely tied to road conditions.
3. There is a need for a sensitivity analysis (point source) and density analysis (watershed condition).
4. Plan in a way that considers local resources and efficiency (cost effectiveness—how to engage/employ locals).
5. Practice early intervention- proactive maintenance to prevent bigger problems later.
6. Include an economic evaluation of road “services.”
7. Address three key social criteria -- give high importance to safety, economics (jobs), and culture.

8. Culture and native resources are a legal obligation- anadromous fish, cultural sites, first foods, sacred sites, gathering places, cedar grove protection need attention.
9. Focus on maintaining stream health and function at the watershed scale.
10. Recognize that there is a value to maintaining a wide variety of diverse uses.
11. Bring in a wide array of people and activities.
12. Consider that more people/users increases fire risk, which affects timber profits.

Recommendations related to Procedure

1. Engage communities, cities, towns that rely on drinking water and the forest.
2. Get ideas from the public about wise use of funds and local capacity.
3. Don't assume public wants 'better' roads.
4. Gather local knowledge.
5. Conduct public field trips and education activities about roads to promote learning and understanding; show processes (maintenance, culverts, etc.)
6. Go to communities and Ranger Districts to host discussions and take surveys.
7. Involve the public **early, before** decisions.
8. Engage the public after the decision and provide more education.
9. Host information sessions, comment sessions, or engagement sessions. By engaging the public (rather than informing and taking comments only) and working with the user groups, the WNF will get more buy in. Work arm in arm with the communities.
10. Use groups already formed -- engage watershed councils, equestrian, trail, snowmobile groups/clubs. These groups have diverse membership and will bring in more people when the WNF does the official engagement process with the general public.
11. Engage stakeholder groups and government representatives first, get buy in -- then spread the word about the public engagement sessions.

12. Continue the ongoing engagement of the Intergovernmental Team (IG or TST) before the public process to do more focused analysis.
 - a. Coarse scale watershed, terrestrial, and social analysis and maps to help define the decision space and interactions.
 - b. This could help provide some perspective (basic prioritization) so the public could focus their input rather than trying to deal with the whole forest at once. Provide a better base level analysis to facilitate understanding and knowledgeable dialogue.
 - c. Consider three more suggested meetings with government team, including interaction with the ID team.
13. Start engaging forest-wide stakeholders as observers of the Intergovernmental Team discussions (allowing for interaction and comments- fishbowl style).
14. Develop an Edward Tufte style poster (or web infographic) to provide information. Open government and transparency are important. Print the poster and send it around as a conversation piece.
15. We (government team) should learn more about transparent and open government. Perhaps hear a talk by someone like Ed Weber at OSU?