

# Bankhead Liaison Panel

## Meeting Summary

### March 8, 2003

American Legion Hall – Double Springs, AL

APPROVED (For general distribution) 4/17/03

#### Attendance

*\*denotes Alternate Member*

#### Liaison Panel Members:

Charles Borden, *Resident, Recreationist, and Wild Alabama Board member*

\*Allen Cantrell, *Chickamauga Cherokee of Ala. Ron Eakes, Ala. Dept. of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries; Area Manager, Black Warrior WMA*

Randy Feltman, *Logger and Local Resident*

\*Gene Johnson, *Echota Cherokee of Alabama*

Mike Henshaw, *Winston Co. Forest Planning Committee (Alabama Cooperative Extension)*

Quinton Humphries, *Winston Co. Commission*

\*Rob Hurt, *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*

Randall Lou Allen, *Lawrence Co. Commission*

Lamar Marshall, *Wild Alabama*

Mary Lee Ratliff, *Recreation*

Bill Snoddy, *Treasure Forest Landowner*

Keith Tassin, *The Nature Conservancy*

Johnny Dean Warren, *Resident*

\*Faron Weeks, *Bankhead Cultural and Historical Society*

#### USFS Personnel:

Tom Counts, *Bankhead District*

Glen Gaines, *District Ranger*

Kathy Wallace, *Bankhead District*

#### Interested People/ Other Attendees:

Rory Fraser, *Alabama A&M University*

Anthony Hood, ?

Jim Hughes, *Retired District Ranger*

\*Vince Meleski (Alternate), *Wild Alabama*

Pam Mittelholzer

\*Jeff Still (Alternate), *Local Recreational Interests*

#### Technical Resource People (Guests)

Dale Brockway, *USFS, Southern Research Station*

Jonathan Evans, *Sewanee, the University of the South*

Callie Schweitzer, *USFS, Southern Research Station*

#### Facilitation Staff:

Mary Lou Addor, *Natural Resources Leadership Institute*

Juliana Birkhoff, *RESOLVE*

Bill Sanford, *Natural Resources Leadership Institute*

#### March 8, 2003 Meeting Agenda

9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

1. Welcome and Review Meeting Agenda and Objectives
2. Communication and Negotiation Training
3. Bankhead Natural History and Ecology
4. Identify Next Set of Information Needs
5. Develop Action Plan

#### Handouts Provided

1. Meeting Agenda: March 8
2. Levels of Consensus
3. Training materials (2 packets)
4. Draft Meeting Summary: Feb. 11



### Decisions/Agreements Made:

1. Liaison Panel will provide a charge at the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting to each of the respective working groups.
2. Determine when to return to the discussion of health concerns associated with burns.
3. Determine when to return to the discussion on aesthetic concerns.

### Action Items:

- Mary Lou will work with Jean Allan to develop a panel presentation on potential impacts of the restoration initiative to cultural resources (also discuss with Margaret, Gene, and Faron).
- Juliana will coordinate wildlife presentation and conference call.
- Glen set up respective meeting locations for future meetings (done).
- Bill distributes approved meeting summaries to Liaison Panel members and USFS.

### Format Key:

Questions (Q), Response (R), Comment (C), Discussion (D) & Action (A)

## I. WELCOME, AGENDA, AND MEETING GROUND RULES

### A. Welcome/Purpose

Bill, Juliana, and Mary Lou welcomed the Liaison Panel members and other guests to the March 8<sup>th</sup> Educational Forum.

### B. Agenda

Following review of the agenda, four objectives were identified for the meeting:

- Familiarize Liaison Panel with Basic Communication and Negotiation Concepts and Practice Communication and Negotiation skills
- Learn about Forest Community Types and Cumberland Plateau Ecology
- Identify Next Set of Priority Information Needs
- Develop Work Plan and Approach for the March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup> Liaison Panel Meetings.

### C. Ground Rules

The Liaison Panel members represent the interests of different stakeholder groups, and will be asked for respective input prior to opening up the forum for input from others present.

Panel members are requested to stand their name card on end to signal when they wish to speak to the group.

### D. Approval of February 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting Summary

The Panel approved the February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting summary with minor changes. Meeting summaries capture the highlights and decisions made in order to support overall “group memory”.

### E. Contact List

Please review the Liaison Panel Contact List for corrections and/or additions, including adding the name and contact information for alternate membership.

## II. COMMUNICATION AND NEGOTIATION TRAINING

### A. Purpose of Communication for Agreement Training:

- To enhance and/or develop **tools for effective communication**
- To enhance and/or develop **means to negotiate effectively.**

The Liaison Panel examined the nature of conflict and its role in developing an effective group. They also explored three basic tools for effective communication:

- Listening
- Balancing Advocacy with Inquiry
- Reframing

To enhance and/or develop means to negotiate effectively, the Liaison Panel explored the interest-based negotiation as identified by Fisher and Ury in their book, "Getting to Yes".

#### Principles of Negotiation

- Work the problem, not the people.
- Focus on interests, not on positions.
- Invent options for mutual gain.
- Use objective criteria.

Original handouts from the training will be available at the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **III. BANKHEAD NATURAL HISTORY AND ECOLOGY**

#### **A. Goals of Educational Discussion**

Focus on questions generated by the Liaison Panel during the February meeting to narrow the level of overall uncertainty:

- To understand a perspective of science and technical resource in addressing questions on the Bankhead's natural history and ecology including forestry composition and the role of fire in this composition.
- To understand what can be known but is not known yet.
- To learn what science and technical may not be able to respond to.

*Questions posed by the Liaison Panel are:*

- 1) What were the fire disturbances on the Bankhead Forest previously? Pre-settlement?
- 2) What were the historic forest community types on the Bankhead? Pre-settlement?

3) What do we know about the ecology, pest and pathogen vulnerability, and sustainability of "natural" forests versus restored forests?

4) What are the projected impacts from each proposed alternative (different forest community types) on threatened and endangered species?

5) What will be the impact of the forest health and restoration initiative on indigenous wildlife? What do we know about ways to increase indigenous wildlife?

6) What will the positive effects be from each alternative on the soils, water quality, watershed health, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species from each alternative in the forest health and restoration initiative?

7) What are the effects of overuse, whether from logging, hiking, horseback riding, or whatever, on forest health? Does the forest health and restoration initiative address any of these effects?

8) How might the forest health and restoration initiative affect landowners? Negative and positive effects? Aesthetics, access, private forest health? How does the forest health initiative address these impacts or mitigate any negative impacts?

#### **B. Discussion Format**

Three scientists have generously offered to spend time with the Liaison Panel and the public on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup> in order to assist the panel in addressing several of their questions pertaining to forest ecology. Each of the scientists acknowledged their appreciation and admiration to the Liaison Panel for the time and effort in working with the USFS to develop recommendations for the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

The Liaison Panel is encouraged to listen for, ask about, and consider:

*How do we know about what ought to be on the Bankhead?*

The three scientists will provide information about the kinds of research that has been done on the Bankhead or similar sites; research that is particular to the questions being posed on the Bankhead; and current studies that may help learn more about the Bankhead later.

■ **Dale Brockway**

Ecologist and Soil Scientist: specialty is ecology and management of longleaf pine.  
Southern Research Station, Auburn Alabama

■ **Callie Schweitzer**

Research forester and field scientist: specialty is silviculture of upland hardwoods  
Southern Research Station, Huntsville, AL,

■ **Jonathan Evans**

Associate Professor of Biology: specialty in forest changes southern US and introduction of species.  
The University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn.

### **Critical Keep-in-Minds**

The scientists offered several critical keep-in-minds for the discussion as it moved forward:

#### **Science is -**

- **Dynamic** – continual learning process.
- **Based on hypotheses and best judgment** - interpretation of previous historical events.
- **Requires more science and time.** Even “top” scientists cannot respond to every detail posed in the questions generated by the Liaison Panel, only to pieces of the questions. The Bankhead is huge so scale and scope is a large consideration in response to some of these questions and the fact that often scientific study can create a need for further study in responding to questions that could not be addressed and the need for more time to conduct the study.
- **Not exacting in predicting future conditions.** Forests are constantly changing. Too much has happened and will happen on this planet. Chaos theory suggests science cannot look forward

knowledge about the chance events are unknown.

### **Roles of other variables in Science**

- **Climate** has a significant role in the natural process: governs change in use; role of use; change in soils; and the potential of soils.
- **Other Knowledge:** though there is room for more data to narrow the level of uncertainty, some questions may simply not be understood from a scientific perspective.

### **Science in the Bankhead and other considerations**

■ **Restoration to what and how:**

Typically, the goal of restoration is to improve and sustain the health of the ecosystem. Restoration has become popular in last 10-15 years. People think it means turning back the clock to 1492 which may be attractive but a lot has changed since then: some species are extinct, new ones are here; climate has changed (1350-1850 “little ice age” cooler than today and historically) and continues to change; land usage has changed with the type of settlements (use of fire by native peoples) and climatic events (natural lightning fires and prevalence; storms; etc....) that have occurred; and thus it is likely impossible to change it back to the way it was.

There is a role of land surveys in guiding forest restoration and the need to be careful with the use of them. The surveys may show distribution but not quantity.

#### **Some ecological considerations to Bankhead restoration are:**

- Role of pollen layers in providing historical information: oak/hickory predominant layer in Cumberland Plateau with less pine. There are areas of pine domination (further south) that required fire such as shortleaf, long, loblolly – moist sites. The role of 1818 survey tells what kind of tree species but not the percentage that prevailed, nor the diameter of the species, or distribution.

- Key is to try to **match vegetation to type of soil**, physiographic and topographic setting.

- Mesospheric – not really dry or wet; cove sites. Wouldn't plant it where it's dry.
- Xeric – really dry-loving

- **Understand role of natural processes in improving and sustaining a forest composition.** For instance, the shortleaf (blue stem) and longleaf (blue stem) require fire to sustain their habitat usually once every 2-10 years.

- **Understand the role of natural processes in destroying forest composition. Understand the role of natural processes in destroying forest composition in response to management practices.**

-there are dramatic tensions between fire/pine and insect/pine beetle .

-competition of oak hickory with pine

- some hardwoods experience infestations such as the gypsy moth and the balsam wooly adelgid.

- some pines due to density and bark composition provide a food source for beetle infestation especially when grown in areas these species may not be appropriate for. Other pines, for instance the longleaf, may be more resistant to beetle infestation.

- **Relationship of Forest Management Plan and Restoration Initiative:** consider the relationship of the Forest Restoration Initiative to the overall Bankhead Forest Management Plan which is found in cultural heritage, wilderness restoration, and recreation...

- Look at natural potentials and usage
- **Forest is very heterogeneous** and the continuation of the heterogeneous is unpredictable, based on influences such as fire and wind.

#### **Some social considerations to restoration are:**

- Private Landowner/Inholders: will private landowners stand for fire and smoke (across highways, etc.)
- Many other grass species are suitable for carrying surface fires in these ecosystems. The bluestem group of grasses (Andropogon spp) and Schizachyrium scoparium) along with several other grass species are much more common and important than wiregrass in that part of Alabama.
- Cultural and historical sites: what is the impact of restoration on these sites.
- Recreational sites and use: what is the impact of restoration on these sites.

### **IV. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **A. Health and Regulatory Factors Associated with Burns**

Q With high ozone concentrations, outdoor burning is banned in Winston County (perhaps Lawrence County also) yet the ban does not apply to the US Forest Service. This raises questions about the use of prescribed burns and its impacts on public health.

R High ozone concentrations do not result from forest fire, but more from vehicles and power plants (west and northwest of the Bankhead brought in by wind).

Health and safety concerns from prescribed fire are: particulate matter and its impact on weakened respiratory systems, and obstructing vision on roads.

USFS bans fires as result of dry conditions and then intensity of the fuel load. USFS publicizes upcoming burns so those with respiratory conditions can take protection.

- Q Who regulates ozone?  
 R EPA delegates its regulatory authority to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

*Summary:*  
*Health Concerns with Burns are:*

- driving/obscure view
- no issue w/ozone band
- particulate matter
- “risks” associated with fire –fear
- take precautions/respiratory smoke mgt.

**B. Historical Info from Pollen Layers for Restoration Decision-Making**

Don’t know settlement patterns for 10k years. Not much agriculture in northern parts. Susceptibility to fire is determined by natural landscape such as whether there is a wet forest, canyons, the amount of fuel load, when it there is fire (summer, spring, etc.). Can look at the nature of communities who were here through the “fossil record” of pollen layers to see what kinds of pollen were in the air then (to see what plants were in forest then). On the Cumberland plateau layer tells a story of predominantly oak/hickory; less pine 10-15% here and may never have been a pine-dominated composition on the plateau.

- Q Does erosion affect pollen layered studies?  
 R No.

*Summary:*  
*Pollen Layer can be a key to forest composition.*

**C. Info from Land Surveys in Restoration Decision-making.**

- Q Have scientists looked at 1818 forest survey(s) plotting out what was there? Think this is a significant baseline...  
 R Data does have relevance in telling about the presence/absence of what the surveyors knew. It is a starting point for presence and absence but does not tell proportion of each, or diameter distribution. Surveys were done for

non-scientific purpose though getting better at using that data.

*Summary:*  
*Land surveys can also provide info on the what species is absent or present but not other characteristics.*

**D. Forest Composition and Soil**

- Q: Currently, plateau is hardwood-dominated region, w/o as frequent fire. Now about 50/50 pine/hardwood, shooting for 80% deciduous; 10-20% fire dependent long and/or short leaf - is that supportable?

R: That sounds reasonable. Doubt it was ever 50/50 here.

- C: When hardwoods cannot replace themselves, conifers, etc. come up – would develop mixture over time as pine would persist –but to maintain pine types, need fire. Fire necessary for effective regeneration of oaks, also.

We know what can grow together but what should the recipe be and where? E.g. if we want hickory, what grows with it?

Hardwood Planting: probably won’t be planting much. Little history of direct planting of hardwoods in restoration in uplands (some in bottom-lands). Too much understory competition to establish hardwoods. However, if you remove pines, hardwoods can grow.

- Q: How can we get back to hardwoods and chestnut? What’s the reality of doing that sort of restoration? Costs? Feasibility? What’s been done at other sites?

R: Do not anticipate much problem with restoring to oak/hickory (others agree).

- Q Which alternative would be the easiest to restore?

R Since areas do not go back to the starting point, manipulation of current species

already there will promote a desired condition (not disturbance, to allow for exotics to come in). Like surgery, you carefully reconstruct. Outcome uncertain.

- C USFS is responsible for restoration of beetle spots. As for hardwood restoration, on most sites, little work will be done. May be some burning, depending on the area #. Will not plant. Some acres of manipulation may favor oak/hickory, but will get others (maple, black gum, etc.) too. Probably least amount of work, but most amount of acres.
- C There is a concern to make area look good. Need to have some issues explained to assist in choosing among these alternatives.

Keep in mind:

- o Understory restoration is more important than overstory.
- o If you build it, will they come? Maybe in 200 years. The plans made today will not be realized for years – keep expectations clear as this will take patience.
- o This isn't the only place people are wrestling with these issues. Even in Europe they are having varying degrees of success. Need patience and optimism.

## E. Infestations

In this landscape - pine bark beetle and fire go way back (one supports establishment, one takes it away). Competition with hardwoods also takes away pine. Mixed stands more resistant over time. Beetle will never go away – been there for 1000s of years. Every 10-12 years. Will hit hardest where food source is most concentrated.

Pine beetle is bark crazy because of pine plantations. When you put in uplands, it is stressed – invites the beetles. Longleaf Pine is quite beetle-resistant; others are not.

Keep in mind there are no sacred species: diseases and insects affect hardwoods, too.

(Gypsy moths, etc.). Location of species is key – locate in appropriate places so there is less stress on the species and they grow more resistance to pests (species matched to soil)

## F. Questions on Alternative Areas and Short-Leaf Pine

- **Best Alternative:** The alternatives posed divide the northern region into 2 sections, with different treatment proposals: how do we know which is best?

There is a need to make sense of the natural processes, historically and scientifically, but the lines of understanding are often historically-based and derived, not necessarily ecologically based. (e.g. around prevalence of fire).

- Alternative 3 is the “rolling” alternative right now but all alternatives are viable, being researched, and considered.
- Area 2: proposal for high burn frequency is not ecological justification for restoration of short-stem to the extent in preferred alternative. The shortleaf is an ephemeral species. There is no evidence to support that there were large stands of shortleaf.

"Shortleaf should only be put in longleaf areas as it is a fire-dependent community." While someone may have suggested this, it creates the erroneous impression that shortleaf pine communities and longleaf pine communities are interchangeable. In fact, they are not. Rather, within the southern zone of the forest, specific areas should be identified for shortleaf pine restoration that are separate and distinct from those for longleaf pine restoration.

- There is an agreement that the forest in general is “patchy with pine.”, without any large expanse of any one type of tree.
  - a) Trying to figure out what has been there (was fire regime active enough to engage pine development)?

b) Role of disturbance regiments on game and non-game species?

**Regarding Alternatives #3 & #6** - 83% is deciduous; dry/Mesic (little fire?); 7% is shortleaf pine woodlands; 3% is longleaf and where we can burn every 2-3 years, not every acre/landscape; oak woodlands 2%. Is this reasonable? Alternative 4 is 92% and Alternative 5 moves some fire dependent communities into the Black Warrior management area.

Q. Is the short-leaf pine native to the southern Cumberland plateau??

R: Yes but do not know how much. No one knows exact %s. It was a component but not dominant. Need to consider if it is introduced, how it would act even if planted in appropriate soils. Therefore, need a framework to implement, maintain, and sustain. It was in particular areas for particular reasons previously but cannot tell if it would work in the areas you have available. Could create habitat for game and non-game species.

We'll never know what should be where. What you do will probably be determined by current soil properties. Can't go back to the beginning.

**Theme: Need mgt frameworks that are sustainable.** Match ecology to land to mimic nature and reduce overall costs. Creates habitats for wide range of organisms. Quail in these open spaces. Also non-game species ... variety of types, age mature/old-growth forests (old trees), mature trees, young forests coming on, recently disturbed areas, and openings ("permanent grassy openings" – for deer, turkeys, etc.). If blue stem oak leaf near hickory would have range of habitats; full range of age classes and types.

C Disagree slightly – will never have complete cover of canopy in the south because of inholdings. Landscape permanently skewed to early successional habitats, and that will only increase. Look at greater region. Managing for

anything that is later successional is tiny minority of what is happening in the region.

C May need to set % for early, mature, etc....

C Yes, have to decide how much to "put blinders on" about non-managed areas...

C Basing it on soils is a good start. Moisture and fertility are so subjectively measured in surveys... must consider slope, slope position, length of slope... not sure how to incorporate that, but there are ways to do that.

### **G: Kinds of plants and wildlife affected by fire management**

C There is the potential for economic opportunity down the line. The plateau is one of the few places you can do quality deer-herd management. People would come from all over to hunt. Can be promoted by restoring hardwood forests in Areas #1 & 2.

C: Wild turkey need open spaces, early herbaceous habitat for turkey brood management. 10-12%, including the southern pine beetle areas. If early successional habitat is not supplied, wild turkey and most game species cannot thrive.

C: Wildlife species present will depend on the normal home range size of each specific species and the habitat types needed to meet their life needs (i.e, food, cover, & water). Many species require multiple habitat types of survival, including early successional habitat. Fire will help create an early successional herbaceous habitat component.

Lack of fire will allow a larger component of mature hardwood and hard mast production – for deer and adult turkey.

Increasing mature hardwood component would increase hard mast production but would not necessarily improve conditions for wildlife. Current hard mast production in years of normal production is sufficient to meet wildlife needs. However, in years with

limited to no hard mast production (1 to 2 years out of every 5) there is an insufficient secondary food source to make up for a lack of hard mast production. A great deal of the shortfall can be made up with secondary food sources from early habitats which can be created by fire. The concern here is the need for early successional habitat for wild turkey and other wildlife species – although others may differ with this.

- C USFS tried to label soil areas. Historically, tried to create mosaic of areas. Future: thinking of sustainable forest; closed canopy, that there will always be some breaks in canopy.

### H: Management of Exotics

- Q What to look out for regarding invasive and alien species when disturbance starts to occur because of the restoration?
- R Heavily disturbed areas (soil disturbance) may be susceptible. Exotics can capture sites. Depends on to what extent they are in the area now.

#### **Management Methods: to reduce/prevent/protect from evasive species.**

- reduce food sources – patchy areas
- recognize timing of treatment
- disturb soils can increase exotics (campgrounds, along roads, ...).

*Note: the weedy species that come up during some disturbances is not an exotic, is only around temporarily (two years max) and serves as a food source for wildlife.*

### I: Management of Loblolly Areas:

- Q In areas infested with southern pine beetle, how can the 68k acres be restored?
- R Opinion: Several options.
- Let 'lobs go but would be a fire risk
  - Thin some (in patterns)
  - Take 'them all off

Research on red pine plantations [TN colleague]. Created ½-acre to 2-acre holes to ameliorated the climate to help hardwoods to grow in these gaps. Then, can create new gaps or peel back over time. Was costly process: individual planting – but had protection of other pines. May want to try several approaches and see what works best.

Don't know about uneven aged management. If get hardwood pockets going, then add more, not sure how to manage to get the next generation of trees. Spent 30-40 years researching it, but we don't know how to apply it, to get next generation. May work well for 60 years, then we don't know what would happen.

### J: Fire Ecology on Pine, Wildlife, and Plant

Always use care when using fire to manipulate or disturb the forest – it is unpredictable, and can be dangerous to life, property, and ecosystems. Most dangerous point in time is when forests have been long unburned as the tree roots grow into the “litter.” Without small fires clearing that away, hot fires can kill the roots and tree dies about a year later (delayed). Use burns in dormant season when it is cool. Condition it with cool, gentle fires. Roots will hopefully turn back into the soil. Don't over-burn. Just do what is necessary to achieve goals.

Fire research has been done in the Bankhead in 1970s - Gene McGee. Study suggests each fire has different impact on vegetation. There is a huge body of literature on fire ecology – applicable to Bankhead.

- Q What's the impact off fire on understory?
- R Probably get lots of grasses (good for quail, etc.) and flush of nutrients.
- Q What about shortleaf pines?
- R Short-leaf pine blue stem system thrives on surface fires. Hot fires you probably won't

need/want. Typically prescribed fires are surface fires - Delete: "only, and try to develop midstories." This only adds confusion to the main idea expressed. Read research reports of John Stanturf, Jim Guldin, etc.

Q What do you consider "small" areas (that could be managed this way...)?

C Not geometric shapes, tend to be linear and also not long-term residents of the spots, without hot fires; hardwoods will crowd them out.

Q Where is short-leaf pine now?

R Short-leaf pine is currently scattered across dry uplands.

C Could probably design however you want, as long as it is consistent with soils and cultural patterns. **This is a big adaptive-management experiment** –may need to adjust over time. It is an art supported by science, ecology, sociology and other considerations matter. Remember minds can be changed to stop burning a site as hardwoods will come right back.

Q Sounds like different way of getting to historical frequencies of fire regimes?

R No specific dates. Uplands: 2-10 years is ballpark/average, but may have taken 15 in some areas. It is a range. As it depends upon the specific area. If the whole area burned < 1/10 years, this would be pine – and it's not. Do not think short-leaf savannahs were here.

If there was enough fire to maintain it every 2-5 years, that is long-leaf. Gradient of low probability in the north, higher in the south.

C 83% is deciduous in Bankhead. Studies saying short-leaf on Bankhead is important and endangered.

R Keep in mind forest types are always in flux, moving around the landscape. If you do not want long-leaf, there may not be a push for it.

Range maps are not too precise; no firm edges, but transition zones. Any time something is at the edge of its range, it is at the edge of its capability and more susceptible to bugs, etc. So, if you want long-leaf grass system, it might work in the SE corner and elsewhere as a geometric shape. It's a management decision. There will always be a shifting mosaic – all different ages and stages will shift according to disturbances. Some shift to a discussion of the condition of fuel bed, rather than by the calendar.

C Think frequency of 1/3 years is too often and no more than 1/5 years, and 10 might be enough. Also need to know conditions of the stands as they must be vigorous. May want to consider:

- Burn more often initially, then back off.
- Not to burn the same spots every time.
- Could quantify, spell out the conditions under which to burn.
- Could say frequency is enough when "x tons per acre have been burned" This is measurable.

Q What about getting vegetation for wildlife, even if not enough fuel? Trees are only part of the equation.

R Yes, there are special circumstances. 3 considerations: Keep fuel down; maintain habitat; \_\_\_\_\_.

C And there is a need to burn for some plants, too.

R Yes, these are broad brushstrokes. Can categorize types and set up specifics...

Q What's in alternatives now: large blocks of short-leaf pine along ridges, or what?

C Sounds like lobbied to choose between large blocks of blue stem whereas Alternative 4 is more like if nature would take its course.

#### **K: Aesthetics Criteria**

Q What does "look good" mean? Think we need some "ugly" areas to sustain wildlife.

(Like b'rer rabbit.)

- R Now huge areas of dead pine trees and these areas are considered ugly by some people.

### **L: Priorities**

Q What's really important? What do we need to focus on? What are the priorities?

- R Can only do what the system can sustain. Need good underpinning of scientific understanding.

Q Which of these alternative sound best?

- R Would want to be as conservative as possible. Do not want to force too many things at once, nor see reason for high frequency of burning. So suggest start with Alternative 4, if feasible, and look to modify.

- R All alternatives are feasible. The question is whether the alternatives can be defended scientifically. Have heard that the fire-dependent component belongs here. If it doesn't, does not need to be planted. Previously heard it did so key decision is the desired future conditions – to preserve all the native communities on Cumberland Plateau – such as short and long leaf. Getting mixed signals as to whether restoration of short-leaf it is scientifically valid.

- R **Focus on zoning the landscape – the % is up for management to decide.** As far as woodland communities, long and short leaf, and oak probably were components. How large is uncertain. Experiment to determine if these can be maintained and managed. If feasible, then may have something unique in this part of the world. May become reservoirs for diversity (“If you build it...”) To use a little fire is not completely out of line. Would have scientific value to do so. Size of each patch? Not sure. More than 2-5 acres to be viable systems. Might try spread of sizes, just to experiment. Adaptive management/ ecosystem management. There is no peer-reviewed scientific study of what existed here. So what's next?

- C Sounds like some of the earlier assumptions on forest composition were off. USFS agreed to take the Liaison Panel's opinion and to find an alternative, one with diversity. Will not put something in Bankhead that does not belong there.

- R May be able to look at landscape and reconstruct fire paths.

- C Expect to start with systems that are open. Moving loblollies to short-leaf probably would not be even-aged system. Will have to decide down the road.

- R May have to burn frequently for awhile to keep loblollies from growing back in underneath.

Q What's most feasible, manageable? Go back 200 years?

- R Easiest is to just stop plantations and let it “go back.” But what are the desired states? What do you want it to come back to? If you stop management, it will come back to something so need to determine desired future conditions.

- C Hate to see the plantations go, because it will look just like the wilderness area. If it goes to “big forest” it would be bad for wildlife as we need a variety of landscapes for a variety of animals.

- R How did we get the animals we have/had (w/o plantations)?

- C Let's discuss at the next meeting.

### **M. How much more information do you need to know, and how will you get that, and what information do you need to share?**

Q How much more do you need to know?

- R How to manage/maintain wildlife and wildlife habitat? What are the different things that can be done and how will the alternatives affect them? Want to see good deer and turkey here. Plus, other species to meet non-game and game interests.

Need more information on impact to culture, historical sites. Perhaps Jean Allan from the USFS can work with the Liaison Panel on this question.

- Culture/history
- Treatment methods (impact analysis and ways to overcome)

Maybe begin to look at each Alternative and discuss our respective interests and see how far off we are.

## **V. GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS TO ASSIST WITH RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. ASSUMPTIONS (CRITERIA)**

- Do what system allows.
- Have variety as this system allows this.
  
- Monitor – broad sense - all factors: soil, aesthetic, water, air, wildlife, human cultural, economic, and all various issues that people bring into discussion.
  
- Focus on understory not overstory. Approach with conservatism is necessary: use pilot projects (short-term and often reversible change) and then decide on long-term change, which may be harder change. For instance, maybe it is moderation in burning versus a high frequency of burning.
  
- Improbable if not impossible to return to old growth cover
  - too many inholdings
  - currently dominated early successional
  - % mature % early successional
  - manage in greater context and specific
  
- Soils: percentage of moisture and fertility is subjective. Need to tighten this criteria.
  
- Recognize there are a lot options and need to be methodical about it. Great opportunity to learn. Could study multiple options.
  
- Great opportunity to involve scientific community, to test different approaches, even in monitoring (given funding). Wealth of expertise to draw on. If seen as cutting-edge

experiment, could get lots of scientific involvement. Be sure to include some replication, too. Do it scientifically so there is good data (1) to make sure this works and (2) for other regions/areas.

- For monitoring, can involve community people to collect data (participatory research).
  
- Other Criteria
  - Costs?
  - Means?
  - Means?
  - Precedents?
  - Banners?
  - Location?

## **VI. WORK GROUPS**

- Work groups are a way for the Panel to pursue issues in depth between meetings, especially the kinds of questions generate in February. Made up of a small group of Panel members and others, work groups can take an issue and pursue it in depth between meetings – through discussion, walking the land, conducting research, or other ways. Then they can report their learnings to the Panel. This is a more efficient approach than having everyone on the Panel learn about everything in greater detail.

Panel decided to form work groups on the following topics:

- Plants and animals (including threatened and endangered species, locally rare and sensitive species, and non-T/E wildlife and plants)
- Cultural and historic resources
- Desired future forest conditions
- Impacts on recreation

## **VI: PROPOSED NEXT SET OF MEETINGS**

## A. March 27th

Next Liaison Panel meeting will be March 27<sup>th</sup> in Moulton, Alabama (5-9pm) at the Moulton Parks and Recreation Center. This session will focus on additional educational concerns.

## B. Future Meeting Dates

The schedule for the remaining meetings:

- April 17, 5-9pm  
Moulton Parks and Recreation Ctr.  
Develop Criteria for Mutual Options Gain
- May 6, 5-9pm  
Double Springs Traders/Farmers Bank  
Develop Mutual Options/Inclusive  
Solutions
- May 29, 5-9pm  
Moulton Parks and Recreation Ctr.  
Recommendations to USFS

In case we are unable to meet on one the regularly scheduled dates, a *back-up date has been set aside so please mark your calendars with this date:*

- June 24, 5-9pm  
Double Springs - Traders and Farmers  
Bank

## VIII: NEW MEMBERSHIP AND OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

### A. Membership:

Liaison Panel believes they are too far into the Forest Restoration Initiative discussions to add new members to the existing panel (4 meetings to provide recommendations).

However, the panel will work with “working groups” and/or other technical resources to assist in better decision-making and developing recommendations for the USFS on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

## B. Other Announcements

Rory Fraser invited people to Alabama’s A&M University March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> facilitated discussions on minorities in forestry.

## C. Staying In Touch

Please contact the facilitators with any comments, questions, or concerns –before the meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.