

Southern Appalachian Restoration Meeting

July 9, 2010

Attendees: Mary Noel, Candace Wyman, Steve Lohr, Marisue Hilliard, John Crockett, Allen Ratzlaff, Heather Luczak, Ben Prater, Steve Novak, Josh Kelly, Bob Gale, Mark Shelley, DJ Gerken, Bennie Riddle, Jim Phillips, Michelle Aldridge, Ruth Berner, Kate Warner, Hugh Irwin

Phone -David Ray, Squeak Smith, Tina Tilley, Judy Francis

Candace – Introductions

Marisue gave some history of the Restoration effort in NC, and how we got to this point in time.

- Restoration effort was initiated by Region 8 (southern region) in December 2007
- Recognition of participants on the NC Restoration Steering Committee
- Main efforts of steering committee in the last 2 years – HWA suppression, Southern App. Weed Cooperative, early successional habitat – Steve Lohr (Cheoah District) leading an effort to design a project with an emphasis on wildlife habitat improvement
- Regional Forester convened a Restoration meeting in Knoxville in June 2010 – many of today's meeting attendees participated in the Knoxville meeting
- The intent of today's meeting is to follow up on the Knoxville meeting and decide how to move forward with our efforts in NC

Feedback from the Knoxville Restoration Meeting

- Individuals were impressed by the emphasis the FS placed on collaboration among numerous stakeholders.
- There is a need to identify **landscape level** restoration goals.
- Recognized the need for a forum to discuss restoration initiatives at a broader landscape – SAMAB a possibility to serve as a forum for doing this. What would be the most useful topics to provide at SAMAB?
- There is a real willingness of stakeholders to work together (field trips). Those efforts in the field really build trust among groups.
- The Forest needs to focus more on actual collaboration rather than the *process* of collaboration.
- Agreement that field visits are essential.
- There are successful examples of **community based collaboration** from other forests.
- Need to identify areas that are most departed from desired condition and focus on inventorying those areas.

- Wildlaw is very interested in working with the FS for developing some projects for FY 2011 CFLRP proposals (Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects).
- Reference was made to the successful collaborative efforts of the Bankhead NF.
- Something missing from the conversation in Knoxville was the importance of monitoring in the process, adaptive management.
- NC needs to have a commitment to have more discussions on early successional habitat, particularly in regards to the upcoming Forest revision
- Recognized the success of independent facilitation.
- There is a need to regain momentum with some of the ongoing restoration efforts.
- Discouraged to see very little movement with on the ground work.
- Concern that the lack of timber harvest and early successional habitat has led to the decline in wildlife in WNC.
- Disappointed with the amount of time spent on science of collaboration.
- Stakeholders need to have a better understanding of agency challenges (budgetary) in order to successfully move forward with restoration.
- Workshop highlighted that there is consensus on additional projects that NC can move forward on.
- Needs to be a collaborative process to build that consensus.
- SAMAB is a good potential venue for those types of discussions.
- Point brought up at Knoxville meeting that collaboration is already ongoing within some groups – Wild Turkey Foundation stewardship projects. There is successful collaboration but at a smaller scale, not involving all parties. Need to ‘broaden consensus of collaboration.’
- Frustration regarding progress towards a goal of implementing projects.
- No real discussion of budgetary process of the Forest and how money is used on the forest to emphasize restoration.

NC Success Stories – Mary presented a Powerpoint outlining the accomplishments of the NC Restoration effort over the last 2 years.

- 2008 July and August public meetings – identified 6 restoration topics and associated actions
- Restoration steering team of representative stakeholders identified to meet regularly
- Recovery projects (Candace) – monitoring to extend through 2015
- The Forest did submit a CFLRP proposal for the Croatan this year

Ideas for Improving Future Restoration Efforts

Is a Charter needed?

- The steering team drafted a charter in summer 2009 which identified short term and long term goals. Specifics regarding the goals of individual working groups stalled the charter process. Recommendation is that the charter not focus on individual working groups but rather on main goals and objectives.
- Charter would be more useful for defining and framing the collaborative process, establishing liaison group, (the Bankhead was given as an example)
- Charter is a necessity so everyone understands goals, objectives, priorities, and who is responsible for what.
- Reference was made to a list of 10 questions regarding the items that should be in a charter. A copy of this will be distributed.
- Looked at Setting Clear Expectations and Commitments – The Charter for Collaboration
- The charter would serve the forest well to have something to point to when we applying for grants. It is a specific document that shows there are a lot of interested stakeholders involved in restoration on the National Forest.
- There would be benefit in broadening the group beyond the steering committee in the development of the charter.
- The charter should be applicable to implementing projects. How can the charter be used to leverage funding and move projects forward?
- There is a need to emphasize the importance of field trips in the charter.
- Draft charter will be sent to group for feedback.

What is the best way to work together and move forward?

- Recognition that we need to do a better job at getting information out to the broader audience – including website updates. We may also look at creating a feedback mechanism to involve people that are not already involved.
- Field visits need to be purposeful. We need to set priorities for what our objectives are prior to going in the field.
- There may be a possibility for getting out in the field on the Cheoah's wildlife project.
- August 11th – Stewardship mtg. in Asheville. We will be looking at projects that we already have planning completed on and how to use receipts for stewardship projects. We'll also look at future management opportunities for stewardship.
- Successful project development depends on stakeholders involvement in the rapid assessment process that feeds into projects.
- Watershed Assessment/ rapid assessment is a good process but loses sight of the fact that the collaborative approach can also help get the work accomplished on the ground.

- There should be more emphasis being placed on actual stream restoration efforts to deal with climate control/global warming and the potential for carbon sequestration initiatives within the NFs as a 'main priority'.
- The Rapid Assessment process is not always accessible both in time and location. Stakeholders need a window for input early and often.
- 2011 Rapid Assessment areas should be posted on the web.

Collaboration

- Recognition that adjacent landowners play a role in restoration efforts.
- The forest should prioritize areas by those most in need of restoration.
- Is there an opportunity to involve collaborative group in identifying 2012 project areas?
- Need to ensure that recreationists are involved in this process in some capacity.
- A number of people mentioned having a third party facilitator would be preferable.
- Western NC Quality Deer Management will be hosting a field trip on August 13th to visit a recent clearcut on private property that represents early successional wildlife habitat.

Steering Team

- The steering team may be a little small. There should be opportunity for more individuals to participate.
- There should be a commitment from the steering team to finalize the existing Charter– set a deadline.
- The steering team will meet on Aug 3rd.

How do individuals and stakeholder groups want to be involved and engaged in this process?

- Most of the group expressed interest in reviewing the charter.
- A number of people expressed interest in being involved as much as possible – rapid assessments, charter development, stewardship meeting, field trips.