

Restoration Steering Team

May 2, 2011

1:00 – 4:15

Attendees: Terry Seyden, David Ray, Marisue Hilliard, Dave Casey, Sue Cameron, Ruth Berner, Heather Luczak, Steven Henson, Hugh Irwin, Judy Francis, Gary Kauffman, Dale Remington, Chris Frisbee

HWA Working Group – Dave Casey

- 775 acres treated this year
- ~48,000 beetles released, ~7000 stems treated with chemicals
- Nantahala crew will be on for another 3 wks
- Pisgah – there has been a lot of turnover with the treatment crew. Crew will be working primarily on Carolina hemlock sites and will likely be on through Sept.
- Next fiscal year –
 - shift into maintenance mode on Nantahala district
 - On other districts (Tusq/Cheoah and Pisgah districts) will still be treating new sites
 - Would like to have crews on next year as well – may be a funding issue
- SAFC working under NFF grant to do assessment - Hugh
 - Have visited most of original sites
 - Some of sites on Pisgah are not worth treating
 - Some Carolina sites are still looking good, it is unclear which of those have been treated or are yet to be treated
 - Dobson Knob, Hawksbill, ? Linville site – high priority sites, remarkable condition, healthy trees, possibility of expanding the treatment on these sites
 - Would be good to compare notes with the data keeping (i.e. which sites have already been treated, what areas to focus on next?) Dave Casey is handling the data management again
 - Hugh shared the site recon site ranking criteria
 - Anticipate that Laricobius beetles will be more effective than the pseudoscymnus
 - Will likely get ~100,000 pseudoscymnus beetles this year
 - Hugh will be submitting a report to NFF in hopes of getting a renewal on the grant
 - When was the last time we had media coverage on this – last fall? There is a need to highlight our efforts with the public again
 - SAFC has 3 hikes planned – Linville gorge, Brevard wildlife trg center, presentation at REI, Hugh spoke with a reporter last week. (Ginnie Pressley)

Wildlife Working Group -Gordon

- Kendrick Weeks, Chris Kelly, and Gordon met with Casey and Lohr to discuss golden winged warbler (gww) restoration on the Franks Creek project- All present agreed to proceed with gww plans in the project
- Habitat working group to meet with ID Team on May 5th to begin the planning process

- Area with very erodible soils, likely there will be no additional roads
- There are sites with good potential for restoration activities including fire
- Stands with poor structural diversity
- Areas of agreement for silvicultural activities

Invasive Species Working Group

- MOU is being circulated for signature.
- NPS – Parkway is also interested in signing it, NC Forest Service has signed it, ATC has signed
- MOU will enable us to treat more acres and across boundaries
- This year we'll be treating 30% more acres on the National Forest
- Treating in Linville area as well as along the Cheoah River
- Forest is working on completing an EA for treatment in wilderness areas
- NC State Extension doing 6 or 7 workshops on invasive species – still in the planning process, Susan Moore is the contact. Target audience is the general public. Will include a link to this on our website. Will report out next meeting on how extension workshops went.

Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network– David Ray

- Meeting on May 24-26 in Del Rio Tennessee – Cherokee NF will be hosting
 - Agenda items include: ECAP methodology for modeling fire associated communities
- Large scale landscape assessment on the Cherokee NF
- Using ecological zone modeling as a gauge of 'what should we be restoring to'
- Mapping of desired future condition in terms of fire use
 - Grandfather RD doing this to map burn priorities
 - Idea that we'd be able to get more done on the ground if we did a larger scale NEPA document ~20,000 acres
 - Based on ecological, logistical, and proximity to communities
 - May 18th presentation by Josh Kelly
 - Ruth will be attending May 18th mtg on Grandfather to discuss this process
 - Modeling process has been adopted for the other mountain ranger districts by end of the fiscal year – prioritized by % of district that is in high priority fire areas
 - Model would inform the process for NEPA to be done in next fiscal year
 - Refining desired future condition mapping

Stewardship Update – Dale

- Stewardship workshop went well, invites went out to 300-400 people, attendance was about 30 people
- Issues - Bidding process for stewardship contract is much more cumbersome and time consuming, A lot more moving parts and complexity to completing the contract
- Feedback was that people who had done stewardship contracts had liked them and would be interested in more

- Opportunities for stewardship: Stream restoration work, invasive treatment, site prep
- Use of subcontractor to help handle to contract – SPA's (subcontractor partnership agreement)
- List of contractors was provided to attendees
- Individuals will still have the opportunity to compete for bids
- Issue of having to compete against non-profits
- Working on how to best package these stewardship contracts so they appeal to the contractors
- Possibility of doing a stewardship contracting meeting on the coast
- Workshop was very successful at opening up lines of collaboration
- Opportunity to get an MOU with TNC – doing a stewardship contract without the sale of timber
- This year sales - Bear Creek as a possible stewardship contract, Kit Springs and Roses Creek

Using stewardship contracts to maintain restoration projects in light of budget cuts – Marisue

- Stewardship agreements as a funding mechanism
- There is a possibility that wildlife, timber, and watershed money will be combined into an integrated resource restoration (IRR) pot
- What role can the steering team play in assisting the stewardship effort and guiding restoration projects
- An integrated team needs to identify what the high need restoration priorities are in a given area
- Stewardship contracting authority expires in 2013 but will likely be reauthorized
- Under stewardship contracting there is no 25% of receipts going back to the local community
- 2 internal barriers to stewardship contracts
 - Funding of employee salaries needs to be planned out year
 - Integrated targets are a new way of accomplishing projects
- Look at Cherokee NF as a model of how to approach restoration opportunities
- There are no clear goal statements regarding restoration – there needs to be a shared vision for restoration and desired conditions going into integrated resource assessments

Criteria for NF Collaborative Restoration Priorities – David Ray

- What is the need – integrating resource restoration goals
- Developed a procedure that would integrate resources in an analysis area
- Recommendations:
 - Delineate highest priority examples of restoration activities for each restoration focus area; creating a list for on the ground staff
 - Need for a FS employee that would lead a collaborative effort to develop list examples for each restoration goal (10-15 items to address)
 - Implement procedure for creating projects
 - Opportunity to build partnerships with non-FS employees to identify restoration activities for the 6 focal areas
 - Use of photographs for reference conditions

- Invite the public to comment at a point where they are able give informed input
 - Ex. Okanogan-Wenatchee NF Restoration Strategy
- Not a concern that timber targets would be met from implementing restoration projects
 - There may actually be a need for harvesting more timber in order to meet restoration objectives
- What is the primary difference between this strategy and the rapid assessment process?
 - The initial proposal comes from the integrated resource team rather than the resource specialists responding to the timber proposal
 - Focus should be shifted away from the timber project and towards the restoration project – may need to incorporate timber sale from other areas to help fund the restoration projects
 - Timber order-of-entry typically drives these project areas, but maybe we need to look instead at fire prioritization areas
- Combine the What and the Where to **create a new order of entry map**:
 - Possibility of addressing the where in terms of fire adapted ecosystems
 - Have recently completed the priority watershed assessment
 - Overlay with the areas of rare communities, invasive plants
- USFWS developing map of priority emphasis areas for T&E management that we should coordinate with
- Challenge of how to report integrated targets

Next Steps: Follow Up Actions Needed

Collaborative Restoration Priorities

- Share the ‘criteria’ paper with EFF staff to get feedback – what would it take to develop the goals for the 6 restoration focus areas – this would need to be a collaborative approach with our partners and stakeholders. If agreement on need and approach within EFF staff, then designate six FS leads who would then initiate collaborative approach to develop bulleted list of ten or 15 high priority example opportunities for addressing specific restoration focus areas in the integrated assessment process (note from facilitator: what other vetting of “criteria paper” is needed internally to get buy in and help move process forward?)
- Use the BIG Restoration mailing list to identify possible additional participants for each of the six restoration focus area groups. Identify SRS employees who might serve as resources for each group.
- Report back results of this collaborative effort to develop list of specific opportunities for each restoration focus area at the next Restoration Collaborative steering team meeting (August)
- Map out landscape (forest) restoration needs for number of resource areas to help prioritize needs and use this information to develop a new order of entry to replace the current timber driven order of entry for determining where new integrated assessments will occur. Resource maps could include fire, T&E; invasives, watershed condition, wildlife etc. Developing a new

approach to order of entry could take one to two years to complete. (There is currently a Line item in 2012 budget for a Nant/Pisgah Assessment)

- In interim, use more of a “gut level” analysis to pick one integrated resource area to test out new approach using the bulleted opportunity lists for each restoration focus area as major driver. Consider area on Grandfather District since fire mapping has already been done. (What is the timeframe for choosing an area?)

Other suggested follow up actions:

- Pursue additional media coverage about HWA work including success of collaborative efforts.
- Work to secure additional funding for HWA work both within FS and through NFF grants and other sources
- Finalize signatures on invasives (Cooperative Weed Board) MOU and decide who on steering team would serve as liaison to this initiative.

Next Meeting August 1st

Agenda items for next meeting:

- *Report out on NC State invasive species workshops*
- *Presentation on national watershed assessment process*
- *Report out from 6 restoration focus area groups*
- *Sue Cameron to share info from USFWS prioritization model*
- *Brainstorm possible topics for the upcoming General Management Review on the forest*