

Restoration Steering Team Meeting Notes

August 1, 2011

Attendees: Brady Dodd, Michael Crump, David Ray, Dale Remington, Marisue Hilliard, John Crockett, Steve Henson, Mark Endries, Gary Kauffman, Heather Luczak, Gordon Warburton, Stevin Westcott, Hugh Irwin, Judy Francis, Nathan Horn, Josh Martin, Mary Noel, Susan Fox, Terry Seyden (facilitator)

New Order of Entry Process

- Project planning on the Grandfather RD – an attempt to coordinate multiple resource assessments that are ongoing across the forest in order to prioritize areas for management.
- Looking for feedback from the Restoration Steering Team regarding the process of area selection
- **Watershed Condition Framework overview** – see briefing paper for more detail
 - Provides the FS with an outcome-based performance measure for documenting improvements to watershed condition
 - 6 step process from classification, implementation to monitoring and verification
 - 12 indicators to quantify watersheds into 3 watershed condition classes (green, yellow, and red)
 - The Forest has selected 2 priority watersheds to develop watershed action plans – Curtis Creek and Mackey Creek (both of which have NEPA initiated to some extent).
 - Action plans will be implemented in 2012
 - Judy's question - What's the best way to prioritize restoration areas?
 - Gordon – How do we tease out differences within the [yellow rated watersheds]?
 - Additional terrestrial criteria to classify watersheds– should be complete early FY2012
 - How were non-FS lands considered in the WCF? – this process addressed only Forest Service lands
- **USFWS Strategic Plan**
 - Use of benefit layers and threat layers which were prioritized on a 1-10 scale
 - GIS datasets are available to help prioritize areas in western NC
 - Current work includes a predictive habitat maps for 146 different aquatic species
 - Provides a coarse-scale look at potential stream suitability for aquatic sp.
 - We have full reports on this process that can be shared with the group
- **Burn Prioritization Model**
 - Developed an ecological model to prioritize areas on the district for prescribed fire
 - Grandfather RD was divided into burn units which were then scored according to a list of ecological criteria (weighted)
 - 42 potential burn units identified totaling 95,133 acres – these were identified as fire adapted or fire dependent ecosystems.
 - 70% of Grandfather RD is fire adapted based on the ecological model
- **Minimum Roads Analysis**
 - Process to assess the need for roads on the forest

- Needs to be complete for all of NC by 2016
- Will incorporate public involvement as part of the process
- Will road risk be considered in the TAP process?
- **Forest wide Trails Assessment**
 - The Forest has completed the data collection and will be moving into the public involvement phase in next fiscal year

Discussion

- How do we determine which priorities will drive the selection of an area for management?
 - One option includes the use of 3 primary prioritizations to decide where to go and then once we've selected an area we can consider the scope of proposed actions that would be considered in the area.
- There may be a potential to develop another working group – 'an integration working group' that would actively engage in the selection of areas across the forest.
- Hugh – every watershed has restoration potential and maybe it doesn't depend on where you start but just that we take a systematic approach to addressing all watersheds over time.
- David, Gordon and Judy will continue to be engaged in the prioritization of area selection on the Grandfather RD.

Restoration Opportunity Checklist

- Need 5-10 action items for each restoration goal
- Will have feedback from steering team by August 30th
- Will work with forest specialists to do the same
- Terry and Heather will work together to consolidate this and share back with the steering team

General Management Review

- Regional Office Staff will be on the Forest week of August 22nd for the GMR
- Intent is to highlight where the forest is excelling and identify areas where we could use more help
- Will be highlighting the accomplishments of the Restoration Steering Team

Round Robin

- Hugh – Hemlock assessment, working on a road risk assessment
- Steve – cosponsoring tree farm workshop in Brasstown, NC – Sept 15
- Judy – DENR has had huge budget cut and lost about 1000 positions. May be closing regional offices in the future.
- Marisue – The forest is currently in a hiring 'pause'. We will likely be operating under the 2008 budget in 2012.
- Gordon – WRC held wildlife action plan public meetings. No longer in the business of land acquisition.

- David – Recently completed Forest Block Analysis for Southern Blue Ridge ecoregion which looks at how forest systems will sustain over long periods of time. Will be utilized to prioritize conservation opportunities. Will present this approach at the SAMAB conference.
- Susan – SAMAB conference – ‘How can you make your forest lands work for you, in a sustainable manner’. *Nov 15-17 in Asheville*
- John Crockett, Marisue, Mary Noel and Stevin Westcott will be meeting on Aug. 5th with WildSouth and other interested individuals to discuss the Grandfather Scenic Area proposal. Will be initiating public sensing to get public feedback which will inform the subsequent Nant/Pisgah Plan Revision.

Working Group Update

- HWA – handouts, will try and have an HWA mtg in Sept to reassess next year’s treatments
- Wildlife – Kendrick Weeks, Dave Casey, Gordon, Steve Lohr and Lauren met on golden winged warbler back in May. Devised a golden-winged warbler prescription for the Franks Creek Project. Will be monitoring in the area post implementation.
- Invasives – SACWMP.org – now has website. SACWMP has done ~1000 hours of work in the last year. Huge problem with garlic mustard on the Appalachian RD. Success on Roan Mtn treating colt’s foot. Lindsay Major is the contact for SACWMP. Nonnative invasive plant workshops being sponsored across the state (www.ncsu-feop.org/NNI).
- Fire Learning Network – (handout) – attended mtg on Cherokee NF. NC Prescribed Fire council meeting August 16-17th in Wilkesboro.

Next Restoration Steering Team Meeting Nov. 7th 2011.