

Dungeness Watershed Action Plan Field Trip Notes
July 29, 2011

List of Participants:

- Stop 1: Forest Service Road 2877-050
 - Scott – Representative of road decommissioning proposal. This road goes for a couple of miles then ends at our northern forest boundary where it turns into DNR lands. This has been a favorite tie-through road of the OHV community and other members of the public that ties into the Lost Mountain road. We completed our access and travel management planning in 2003, and this road system was designated to be decommissioned. This road going out this way was to be a Level 2 road. *Explanation of different road levels.* Over the years as our road maintenance budget has declined, many of our roads are in the Level 2 category. This has been a Level 2 road but we've had continued problems with erosion and have had trouble maintaining it. Recently, this has become a safety issue and we put a closure on it. The DNR has now decided that they will log a section of their lands and will not need this system for access (will use Lost Mountain Road). This area has problems with erosion and water quality issues. Our objective today is to show some representative projects that can come out of this process.
 - Question 1: You mentioned erosion, is that what would tie in with soil science?
A: Yes, especially erosion that leads to sedimentation in streams and threatens aquatic habitat. This area is in a high category as far as our resource priorities.
 - Q2: On the 040 road it showed on the grid as a potential convert to trail but the 050 doesn't. Is there a reason for that? Wouldn't we want a contiguous system?
A (Dean): While we do have resource concerns, what's changed with the situation is that we thought we would use this road in the future with cooperative access with the DNR. But the DNR is choosing to access their lands through Lost Mountain Road. Their plans are no longer to utilize this road so we don't have to keep this road at Level 2 status. They have asked us to close this road so as to restrict road access to their lands. From a starting point perspective we know there are going to be a lot of concerns about these proposals but we want to hear what the public is saying.
 - Q3: Do you have any culverts that are going to be pulled out of this section?
A (Scott): Yes, that's part of why it's a higher rating because we have erosion on both sides of the culverts.
 - Kurt – Some of the sideboards that we have to operate within involve the type of land allocation. The ones that are relevant to this effort involve LSR or AMA. These will frame the discussion of what we want to do and what we can do. *Description of LSR and AMA.* LSR are areas that are managed for the protection of old-growth forest habitat. These are areas that provide habitat for species like the spotted owl or marbled murrelet. Typically we do not allow logging, but commercial thinning may take place in stands that are 40-70 years old with the idea of creating some diversity. We can also do pre-commercial thinning or young stand thinning in stands that are under 30 years old. That you can see in young stands with a high density of trees. By thinning those out you're allowing more growth and resources for the remaining trees. From a wildlife perspective that can be very beneficial. Deciduous trees can be very beneficial because of the

presence of a high abundance of insects. In addition, commercial thinning can be used to garner revenue for other restoration projects.

AMA areas have a slightly different focus. These can be managed for social values as well as economic values. There is more of a timber harvest component in AMA areas where appropriate and this is an important consideration when thinking about access. We need to think about these opportunities when considering timing of things and different activities.

- Susan – We have identified areas of young stand thinning opportunities on the map.
- Q4: Isn't that an issue down here with the discussion of the construction of an expanded biomass plant in the area?

A (Scott): We also can consider this prior to decommissioning the road. (Dean): The woody biomass and how we fit into the discussion doesn't really have an answer. Need to look at the Forest Plan – may not be a significant impact.

- Q5: Could you give us an example of the purpose of commercial thinning? Where do the smaller logs go? How about individual cutters?

A: We design our prescription to meet the landscape. The value of those trees traditionally go into the Treasury, but in contracting the value goes back to the forest. (Kurt) Most of our commercial thinning goes into dimensional lumber/boards. Individual cutters are limited to distance from FS roads and the timber needs to be already down.

~ *Walk to another location* ~

- Scott – When we were evaluating this area for the stewardship project we identified some serious safety issues so we put in this earth berm, which is supposed to stop vehicles but hasn't. This erosion is all natural. At the time we were going to keep this open for the DNR. We have some unstable soils in this area, relic glacial lakes that deposited sand, silt and clays. This has caused deep seated instability and landslides. The ability to maintain roads in this area requires quite a bit of investment. Need to evaluate the expenses of keeping a road open versus what it would cost to decommission or store a road. An OHV trail along here would still require removing the culverts, revegetation, rocks, that meets water quality standards.
- Q6: Whats the length? 1.5 miles
- Susie – Some of the things we want to consider with trail conversions are who the users will be (trail design), what the trail will contribute to the overall FS system, maintenance costs, signing, etc. As we're looking at the actual design roadways are usually hard packed, have a memory of the tracks, and are designed to be insloped. Usually if the ditchlines aren't taken care of it will be a nightmare for maintenance. Will be looking at a smaller pathway, outslowing. We want people to take these factors into consideration.
- Susan – Cost of implementation of road-to-trail conversion can be very wide-ranging.
- Dean – This is a really excellent discussion as we have different user groups. We are having a hard time maintaining what we have right now and struggle with maintaining trails. Taking on these activities will require strong support from the public. Funding sources will have to be in place before we take on these projects. ATVs are appropriate use on FS lands but we are going to need to work together on achieving our goals.
- Audience Member: We do have an inventory of trails but they don't get a lot of use because that's not what users are looking for. Front-country users want loop trails, and

in the Cascades those trails have waiting lists. We don't have that here. We're hoping to develop more of those.

- Dean – this group provides us the forum for those discussions.
- Q7: Under a trail conversion would have to be several significant water crossings. A recreational trail with ORVs would need to have some elevated crossing, right? This would be a significant investment, almost to the point of rebuilding a road?

A: These streams are intermittent and dry in the summer. There would need to be some significant erosion control, fabric and rock to minimize the fines and erosion. It would definitely be an investment and may have some other concerns.

- Stop 2: 2875-040

- Scott – for those that have the map and the spreadsheet we are at the other end of the 2875-040. The whole length of the 040 road is an old CCC road that wasn't constructed to the current standard. This spreadsheet is both internal and external from our public meetings in Sequim and e-mail. The end of August is when we will take other recommendations and proposals. A lot of the FS proposals have come from the in depth watershed analyses in 2002-03. We're basically trying to capture all the moderate-high priority projects. *Explanation of Spreadsheet layout.* We strongly encourage folks to add comments and then in September the group will meet and develop an overall priority to be put in the Watershed Action Plan. After the approval of the RO we can begin to pursue funding for projects (either the FS or other groups). Firewood thefts in certain areas have become a bigger issue. Certain culverts are eroding (discussing a specific road on the map) leading to greater concerns about water quality.
- Susan – Discussion of noxious weeds. The CC WCB do a lot of our weed treatments and we also have private contracts. We do extensive weed work out here but we have a lot of inventory. This year we got national funds to do an inventory of weeds and dispersed recreation sites in our wilderness areas.

- Stop 3: Slab Camp Pit

- Dean – Over the last several years we have put a lot of work into this site. The idea is to change the use patterns that are occurring here, which is a real challenge. One of the recreational activities was to bring a vehicle up here and torch it, flip it...Here's an area that everyone has a suggestion of what can be done. It's a large area that will require a lot of planning to maintain/change use patterns. And it does look a lot better than what it has in the past.
- Dave – I've seen the change in this site over the last 2.5 years. When I first showed up we had a couple cars in the pit that have subsequently been removed. The rocks were placed to prevent other cars from being pulled down there and we have had to improve the placement and stability of the rocks to prevent them from being moved. I've also seen a bit of a shift with the use. It's a very popular area for shooting. Because of the rocks we've deterred some of the larger gatherings and pushed it to other areas.
- Q1: There's definitely a demand to use this area. Is one of the proposals to turn this into an official shooting area?

A: Its not an official proposal. We would need to have someone to manage it since we don't have the capacity. By default these areas become places where people shoot because the FS has criteria to limit where people can shoot. These rock pits, landings, borrow pits by default then become where these areas occur.

- Q2: How many of these areas are there in the watershed (from Susan)?
A: The three biggest areas for shooting are this area, the area where we just saw those people shooting, and the intersection of the 2870 and the 2878. The 2870 area is becoming the primo spot for recreational shooters because you can still drive there. There are some other random spots that people shoot, but daily we have shooters at one of these three pits.
- Q3: As far as garbage, what are you seeing in the watershed with regard to dumping?
A: In the FS its an ongoing battle. Large-scale dumping definitely occurs and these places here definitely get used as dump areas. We get everything from household garbage to debris to vegetative material. How we've been addressing that is through the CC Chain Gang, with much of the funding coming from Title 2. They'll do a pretty good job at cleaning these things up. That's not a secure funding source though and we do not have the capability to clean up the trash ourselves. There is self-policing with the recreational users, encouraging people to not bring any materials up there to shoot up. Most people are on board. The chain gang has hit all these areas several times over the last year. Want to emphasize that the users do a great job of cleaning up after themselves and other users, but there's always a few that don't.
- Q4: *unintelligible*
A: It's been a challenge of managing the junk and the metals and how we sort that at Louella. I would hate to encourage more people bringing materials there. We would probably bring the chain gang out to help with that situation.
- Q5: With concentrated areas like this, do you monitor the soils and surrounding wetlands? Is that something that could be done through this process?
A: I think it could be considered as a project. It can be identified as a project that we want to undertake. The question is 'how do we implement it?'
- Q6: Do you see any evidence of paintball activity? Concern about birds...
A: We definitely have folks who do that. My understanding is most of the paint dissolves but not sure about the containers. That would definitely be a concern, but we do not have it at a large scale as of yet.
- Q7: Do you have any idea how much garbage gets taken out of here each year?
A: I do not.
- Q8: Do you have any problems with theft of metal or vandalism? The DNR has had such issues.
A: Mostly we're dealing with timber theft. We haven't had reports of that taking place.
- Q9: Could you elaborate on special forest products and some of the theft of maple wood, etc.
A: This drainage in particular gets hit fairly hard with maple wood theft, which is used in musical instruments. They'll cut down a maple tree to see if the wood's good and then take blocks to sell. Just off the hatchery road there are several sites that we've been monitoring. The other thing we have in this area is wood theft for firewood. We've had a lot of standing trees cut down for this, which is a quick profit. That happens pretty regularly and we have some areas that get targeted repeatedly.
- Q10: Do we have long-term campers in this area?
A: On the Forest we've come across occasional long term camps but compared to other forests we do not have an extensive problem.

- Q11: Have you had any luck with catching some of these timber thieves? What's the advisable protocol if you see someone harvesting?

A: We've had some success with prosecuting some folks, but it's a difficult process to ID a suspect and get enough evidence to win it. You can cut firewood year round with permit, but no permit allows you to cut down a standing tree. Gather as much information as you can safely and then report it to Quilcene. If it's a large and active threat you can call 911. This might not get a high priority but it does get relayed to me and we can still do follow up with the information provided.

- Q12: Is theft a problem with salal?

A: Its not a problem here, but we do have designated areas to pick near Forks. In Hood Canal, it runs from Mt. Walker south.

- Stop 4: Deer Ridge/Slab Camp Trailhead

- Susie – There was an old campground, a road that went down and around, which has been closed off for year. There were really no defined areas to park and the campground was a really big party area. People were driving through the wetlands. The road extended two miles or so through a beautiful area, but people were dumping. You have two trailheads here and really no organization. The goal was to block off this area and make a defined parking area, and trails to keep people out of the wetlands. This was all planted and it's like a whole new site. We left an open area that people can go down and dispersed camp, but the main campground has been closed. We've had some problems with this bulletin board with it being so visible. It's been shot and signs have disappeared. We're performing upkeep with the knowledge that we'll have to replace it later.
- Scott – The funding for this project came about through the Dungeness Stewardship Project, which was another collaborative process. They were the ones who selected the stands we wanted to thin and the projects to undertake. The receipts from the timber sale were used to carry out this project. One of the priorities for the group was decommissioning this road and revegetating this trailhead area.
- Kurt – The plants that were put in here were generated from hardwood cuttings that were grown in pots.

~ *Walk to another location* ~

- Scott – Okay, we're looking out at this wetland area and the outsloping on the old 2875. There were a lot of waytrails in the area. We heard from a lot of people that this decommission would add distance to the hike, but with the vehicles down in the wetland and wilderness area and trash we thought it was best.
- Susan – We did bring in a landscape architect to look at this design. We sent them pictures of the parking area and they gave us some ideas. Later our regional LA came up to meet our staff. Actually we had a couple small trees in the area and he said to take them out so as not to disrupt the view of the mountains from the trailhead. This is a great example where we had the fire crew, biologist, siculture, engineers, volunteers, etc. all helping us create a successful project.
- Q1: How does this compare to other restoration areas in gateway recreation sites?
A: We haven't really seen projects like this that involve reconfiguring a trailhead. With the Pine Lake trailhead we're trying to do something similar.

~ *Walk to another location* ~

- Susie - This trail was repaired and replaced, but we have some winter damage. The idea of a turnpike is that we allow the continued flow and motion of the wetlands without interference. This was a pretty successful venture with replacing the rotten logs. We also have a puncheon which is more like a boardwalk that still allows the water to flow with fewer obstructions than a turnpike. We've got some of these structures needed on the lower Dungeness, so we're hoping that the group will take on those projects.

~ *Walk to another location* ~

- Marc – A project type that is being proposed is to correct fish passage barriers and culverts that were put in place in the 60's and 70's. In 2000 we did a culvert survey and created a list of priorities for the forest. In the Dungeness there are a number of trout barriers. In the last few years we've done three barrier corrections – two on Gold Creek and one on Sleepy Hollow that reconnect about 5 miles of habitat. Right now there are 5 or 6 barriers in this watershed varying from 2 miles to 1/3 mile up. We do need to verify the amount of habitat that is cut off from these culverts. We would have to analyze for a number of the crossings what the best structure is to correct the stream channel within the culvert. There is one stream crossing off of Silver Creek that is connected to a potential decommissioning project. The higher price tag for these is around \$400-500k and can go down to ~\$100k.
- Scott – One restoration project that goes along with are the road and culvert upgrading projects. Similarly, a lot of the cost is how much fill goes on top of these culverts. These are on the mainline roads where we have a lot of perennial stream crossings with culverts that are 30-40 years old. These culverts are undersized and deteriorating. We're in the process of inventorying them and prioritizing those. Proximity to fish habitat will really be a determinant of what has a higher priority. When these culverts get plugged up they can really impact water quality and fish habitat.
- Marc – Another project that's being proposed is looking at dispersed campsites along streams. We want to get a sense of the impacts these sites have to streams, particularly involving trash.
- Q1: Is there currently a 50-ft setback for camping along streams? How are dispersed campsites different?
A: There are no setbacks. Dispersed sites are generally campsites that people traditionally camped in. In the Forest there are no requirements as to where you can camp, but our Motor Vehicle map prevents people from taking their vehicle more than 150 feet off a designated road. We did leave one walk in site down by the river because that's what's desirable. There are some engineering things we can do when we have problems in a certain area.
- Kurt – As we drive down to the next stop we will be driving past some spurs that are proposed for decommissioning. But also notice the invasive P-vine that is along the road and impacting a number of things. Before we pull out of roads we need to be sure to do the proper invasive species treatments. As we get down on the 2870-050 you'll notice a lot of the areas with illegal wood cutting.
- Stop 5 – 2870-050 (?)
 - Kurt – It's always easier to start with an existing ecological value – something you can work from rather than start from scratch. Secondly, I've learned that things are going to come up and we might need to adjust and come at projects from a different angle to

achieve objectives. Thirdly, we need to look at partnerships and where each group really fits in so as to maximize funding and efficiency. These units were created in 1999 in what was a young timber stand to create a high forage area for elk. The goal was to draw the elk out of Sequim and back into the forest. This was done in concert with efforts on other lands as well. We used prescribed fire and seeding. Down the road is the Cranberry Bog botanical area which has a lot of botanical value and value for wildlife. It's been invaded by a variety of invasive plant species and now there's active restoration going on to replant native plants. In addition, I wanted to maximize a bigger functional area for other animals. For that we looked at how much pre-commercial thinning was available. We've completed approximately 100 acres of thinning and have plans for more. We're standing in the elk meadow here, which is about 5 acres in total size. With the thinning and in some cases hand piling we've created habitat for other species. That is pretty labor intensive so we tend to focus that in areas that are big game centric. A road decommissioning was also done in this area expressly to increase the security for big game animals and reduce disturbances. There are also historic spotted owl areas within 1-2 miles of us. The thinning also benefits this habitat. Through all that we're doing revegetating with native plant techniques at both small and large scales. That allows us to get things out on the landscape that have forage value and prevent the spread of weeds. Some of these techniques in combination or alone can be applied to other areas of the watershed.

Notes recorded and transcribed by Rebecca Hammegren, Olympic National Forest