

## Restoration Steering Team Quarterly Meeting

November 7, 2011

1:00-4:30 Supervisor's Office

**Attendees:** Sue Cameron, Lee Thornhill, Dale Remington, Jason Rodrigue, David Ray, Diane Rubiaco, Marisue Hilliard, Sheryl Bryan, John Crockett, Mary Noel, Steven Westcott, Steve Henson, Terry Seyden, Heather Luczak, Gary Kauffman, Susan Fox, Gordon Warburton, Hugh Irwin, Judy Francis

During introductions, Hugh Irwin informed the group that he would be transitioning to the Wilderness Society. Marisue Hilliard also announced her retirement.

Meeting Objectives (Marisue) – To give more discussion time to the working groups in order to review FY 2011 accomplishments and get a clear perspective of FY 2012 priorities.

### *Restoration Opportunity Checklist for Integrated Resource Assessments*

- The intent of this list is to delineate the highest priority examples of restoration activities for each of the six restoration focus areas.
- This list exists as a product of the collaborative process with the public and through revision by the restoration steering committee.
- The intent is that this list will be used during the early planning stages of project development
- Upcoming Integrated Resource Assessments for FY 2012 include – Buckwheat on the Nantahala District and Armstrong Creek on the Grandfather District
  - The Armstrong Creek project was selected based primarily on the Watershed Condition Framework process that was guided by national direction to focus on restoring imperiled watersheds on the forest.
- The list has been edited to reflect input from the Wildlife Resources Commission, the USFWS, and Forest Service resource specialists.
- As we transition to a new Forest Supervisor, Marisue has emphasized that Restoration will continue to be a priority from leadership in the Forest Service. Ecological Restoration continues to be a priority at the Regional level as well.

#### ***Checklist Follow up:***

- *Heather and Terry will complete edits to the restoration opportunity checklist and send out to the steering team and resource specialists - second week in December*

### *Working Group Report Out*

#### **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (Jason Rodrigue. for Dave Casey)**

- HWA Suppression efforts during the 2011 fiscal year included many new treatment areas and represented a major effort in bringing previously untreated hemlocks under a treatment regime.
- The extensive reconnaissance performed during FY 11 by FS personnel and conservation groups indicate that the majority of untreated hemlock is no longer viable for treatment, but there are still important areas of viable hemlocks worth treating.

- Great strides were made in setting up permanent monitoring plots, data collection protocols, developing forest-wide treatment direction.

FY 2011 Insecticide Treatments	
Category	Acres(FHP)
New	212
Expanded	124
Existing	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>

Biological Treatments	
Category	Acres(FHP)
New	280
Existing	224
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>

- Availability of *Laricobius* beetles is expected to increase in FY 2012
- The primary focus during FY 12 will be to increase the number of areas being treated (particularly Carolina hemlock) and to treat and monitor existing treatment areas.
- Treatments will utilize the HWA Working Group rankings especially across the Pisgah Zone.
- A reduced amount of reconnaissance and an overall reduction in the new treatment areas is expected. Based on the state of our hemlock resource we are rapidly shifting towards a monitoring and maintenance program.
- Hugh – Based on experience of Park Service which is treating year round, we will be expanding our treatment windows as well, to treat in the winter months.
- *Laricobius* beetles show more promise for being successful and aggressive over time.
- Likely have ~50,000 acres of post hemlock acres to restore.
- Suggestion to evolve the working group into one that focuses on ‘what do we do next?’ in the aftermath of hemlock mortality.
- While much of overstory is gone, there are many sites with *understory hemlock cohort* that may have the potential to maintain in the long-term.

**HWA Follow up:** Convene a working group meeting in Dec/Jan to review priorities for FY 2012 and address some of the longer term objectives of the group – continued monitoring of treatment effectiveness, site rehab, grant opportunities to continue the use of volunteers.

### Wildlife Working Group (Gordon)

- The group is working to implement some of the Appalachian Mountain Joint Ventures (AMJV) objectives for the Golden Winged Warbler in the Franks Creek Project on the Cheoah
- Franks Creek project is due to be scoped this Nov/Dec and the wildlife working group is waiting for the results of the Franks Creek scoping comments to be received in order to proceed in that project area
- Working group has also incorporated management for cerulean warbler into the Franks Crk Project
- On Wednesday Nov 9<sup>th</sup> there will be a regional meeting on golden winged warbler management – engaging the Cherokee NF
- AMJV is in the process of developing cerulean warbler focus areas
- 2012 – look at management on a landscape scale, managing for multiple bird species
- 2012 – NC Wildlife Action Plan revision to occur, Wildlife Resources Commission will be looking for input from the steering group

- Sheryl – 2011 accomplishments – overachieved wildlife restoration goals
  - 18,800 acres of terrestrial and wetland wildlife habitat on Nant/Pisg
  - 753 acres of permanent grass habitat maintained

**Wildlife Follow up:** *Convene a meeting to review comments on Frank's Creek scoping. Ensure that Sue Cameron is added to the wildlife working group contact list.*

### **Invasive Species**

- SACWMP 2011- Six projects that treated invasive plants were accomplished on National Forest lands (25 acres) .
- Working to prioritize 2012 areas for invasives treatment.
- Garlic mustard is becoming a much bigger problem that will affect natural areas
  - Treatment includes early spring spraying with glyphosate.
- *Miscanthus giganteus* (grass species) is being proposed for planting in the Piedmont and coastal plain by the USDA Farm Services Agency, to be used as a biofuel.
- There is a need to work with cooperators as much as possible for weed management
  - There may be opportunities to work with adjacent landowners through Weyden agreements to treat invasives on private land bordering the national forest.
- Next meeting for SACWMP will be in January.
- Cheoah River treatment along nine mile stretch to protect two federally listed species and one endangered species. Was completed last week for this year (75 acres). Work will be ongoing for two more years, through 2014.

**Invasives Follow up:** *Opportunity to model a weed management group after an RC&D in order to have a dedicated staff. Judy and Gary will follow up on the topic of recruiting SAMAB's help to expand efforts of SACWMP.*

### **Prescribed Fire (David Ray)**

- May 15-17<sup>th</sup> 2012 there will be a Fire Learning Network (FLN) workshop at Lake Logan – will be looking at high elevation red oak burning. Let David know if you want to be on the mailing list for this meeting.
- Dec 6<sup>th</sup> – there will be a midyear meeting of the FLN here in Asheville.
- FY 2011 burns – total of 11,523 acres in mountains
- FY 2012 – planning 5,000-7,000 acres this fall
- Fire Prioritization Models (based largely on potential natural vegetation)– have met with the Tusq. and Cheoah. Model development is ongoing with the districts.
- Linville Wilderness burning and herbicide EA – scoping should be complete in the next couple of months for the invasives treatment. Burning in the wilderness will take Chief's approval which will likely extend the time to complete the NEPA
- Update on CFLRP funding
  - Still waiting to hear on funding levels for FY 2012
  - The Grandfather District proposal is in the second tier of submitted proposals
- The Region is exploring opportunities for collaborative all lands approaches to restoration in the Southern Appalachians.

**Fire Follow up:** Complete the burn prioritization models for each ranger district. Complete the logistics and social components of the burn prioritization model. Incorporate the burn prioritization models in the Integrated Resource Assessment. Complete scoping for burning in the Linville Gorge Wilderness

### **Expanding Role of SRS in Collaboration (Susan Fox)**

- There is a need to increase communication between the working groups and research.
  - Ask working groups what specific questions they need from research.
- Susan provided some handouts and information on recent SRS research including:
  - American Chestnut Restoration
  - Prescribed Fire Effects at Bent Creek
  - Air pollution impacts on Class I Wilderness areas
  - Riparian zone effectiveness
  - Regional oak study
  - Ridgetop pine communities
  - Fire surrogate study
  - Fuels classification
  - Recreation impacts at Bent Creek
  - HWA biological control
- Western NC Report Card was published in October:  
<http://www.wncforestreportcard.org/>
- Sustaining Young Forest Communities: Ecology and Management of Early Successional Habitats in the Central Hardwood Region, USA.  
<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/ja/sustainingyoung/>
- Explore increased technology transfer through website linkages
- Invite scientists to the integrated resource assessment field trips during project planning.
- The Southern Forests Future Project was completed in 2011 and a report focusing on the Southern Appalachian Forests is forthcoming.

**Follow up:** Susan will provide Heather with links of existing SRS restoration research to link from the NFsNC website.

### **Looking Ahead – Working Group Priorities**

Marisue, Terry, and Susan will work as a team to develop trigger questions for each working group to help focus efforts to move forward in FY 2012.

#### **HWA Working Group**

- Need to convene next meeting and decide whether the group needs to evolve the focus to maintenance/monitoring phase
- Focus next steps on restoration in the aftermath of hemlock mortality
- Emphasize maintenance of treatments in conservation areas
- Define/redefine long term strategies

### **Wildlife Working Group**

- How do we move from single species management to the landscape approach focusing on groups of species
- Follow up on Franks Creek scoping comments
- Integrate Wildlife Action Plan

### **Invasives**

- How do we increase the capacity of SACWMP?
- Potential to engage the help of SAMAB
- Still need to clarify focus of invasive species control work; whether it should be targeted to specific local areas or be a broader geographic scope.

### **Prescribed Fire**

- Continue liaison with Fire Learning Network, with David Ray as steering team representative. The role of fire in project development will be addressed in integrated resource assessment working group.

### **Do we need additional working groups?**

- Decision was made to establish an **Integrated Resource Assessment working group** to assist NFsNC in developing a new approach to scheduling and implementing integrated resource assessments and project planning.
  - Judy Francis (chair), Susan Fox, Hugh Irwin, John Crockett, David Ray, Dale Remington, Zone NEPA coordinator

***Follow up:** This group will convene in Dec/Jan and report out progress at the next steering team meeting.*

### ***Next Meeting Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-3:00 (Note earlier start time.)***

Possible agenda items:

- Consider designating one person (FS?) to serve in a leadership, coordination, and support role to the N/P NF restoration collaborative to improve follow up and ensure continuity between quarterly meetings.
- Discuss the need for more working groups for the other restoration goals
- Report on the new integrated resource assessment working group
- Reports from recent meetings of HWA and wildlife working groups
- Status of invasive species and fire initiatives
- Review status of regional and national restoration initiatives and how they might relate to Nant/Pisg
- Follow up on better utilizing and integrating research into restoration opportunities.