

**Alesea Stewardship Group
Summer Field Trip Notes
August 8, 2012**

Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Ross Holloway	ASG Facilitator	Dan Segotta	SNF
Marty Bray	SNF	Eric Werner	SNF
Jack Sleeper	SNF	Justin Fenton	SNF
Margaret Hamilton	SNF	Kirk Shimeall	Cascade Pacific RC&D
Andy Kittel	AWC	Kelly Kittel	AWC
Chandra LeGue	Oregon Wild	Helen Sheppard	Oregon Wild
Mike Kennedy	Siletz Tribe	Tom Davis	AWC
Norman Unger	Self	Joe Rohleder	AWC
Elmer Ostling	AWC	Paul Engelmeier	Audubon
Katie Duzik	OPRD	Gary Chapman	C2C Trail Partnership
Eric Horvath	Landowner	Claire Smith	Landowner

Field trip participants met at the Central Coast RD office in Waldport. The field trip began with a round of introductions, and an agenda overview by Dan Segotta. Vans departed for OPRD's Beaver Creek Natural Area at about 9:00.

The group made the following stops along the way:

- Beaver Creek Natural Area – Stop 1
- North Fork Beaver Creek - Stop 2
- Stand 505004 (USFS) - Stop 3
- 1000 Line/Corvallis to Sea Trail Location (USFS) – Stop 4

Beaver Creek Natural Area - Stop 1:

Katie Duzik handed out two displays showing land ownership in the area, and described past land acquisitions and additional parcels OPRD would like to acquire. Acquisitions in the area began over 12 years ago. The intent is to connect State land and Wetlands Conservancy land to make a contiguous block. The parcels acquired are appraised using standard appraisal practices to determine a fair price.



Beaver Creek Natural Area

Annual maintenance costs are included as part of South Beach State Park's budget at this time, and include one full time and two part time positions at Beaver Creek. No users fees are

anticipated for this area. The management plan for the area is expected to be finalized this fall and taken before the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval by the end of the year.

The area was identified as key area in ODFW's Oregon Conservation Strategy. Joe Rohleder shared that Beaver Creek has historically been a key contributor to coho production. The system produces about 10,000 adult coho per year. Jack Sleeper commented that this system did well when coho populations dropped along the Oregon coast, and it appears to be a stronghold or refuge for coho. Beaver Creek also has a strong sea run cutthroat population.

The estuary here experiences high salinity levels, which may be related to periods of low flow, combined with high tide surges. There is a study underway to better understand how salinity changes and the factors at play.



Field Trip Group at Beaver Creek Natural Area

The marsh in this area was formerly grazed, and the vegetation is now changing, with native vegetation doing better. The future management of these grazed areas will be determined by the final management plan. Spruce die off near the beach may be related to rising ocean levels and increased salinity

Paul Engelmeyer stressed the connection between this area and the USFS lands upstream, and the need for partnerships and coordination between all the landowners in the basin.

The recently acquired Forest Capital Partners lands on the west side of the area presents some forest management issues. Shore pine in the area is not doing well, and Douglas fir is infected with Swiss needle cast. This area also gets a lot of OHV use. Forest management direction will also be established through the approved management plan.

North Fork Beaver Creek - Stop 2:

Eric Horvath and Claire Smith, landowners, joined the group at this stop. Jack Sleeper provided an overview of land ownership in the area, and the FS planning process for the Mill-Wright-Beaver Landscape Management Plan. The goal for the plan is to restore late-seral conditions, primarily through heavy thinning in existing plantation stands.



North Fork Beaver Creek Project Area

Jack described the project here in 2007 to place large wood in this stream. Mature trees were cut and placed. Planning process will look at the need for additional wood placement.



**Eric Horvath at North Beaver Creek
Log Placement Site**

Eric Horvath reviewed the history of land management since acquiring the land from Roseburg Forest Products in 2000. One lesson learned was to plant large cedar stock and protect the young trees from beaver. They also completed a project to place 35 logs by helicopter, which has resulted in the creation of log jams and pools, and more diverse habitat. A recent survey located 130 adult coho in one mile of stream. Jack explained how wood placement creates different stream substrate conditions that benefit salmonids.

The group viewed an “off-channel” area where a landslide in 1997 deposited large wood, and also a log jam created by large wood placement which subsequently trapped additional wood and sediment. The jam has survived several high flows and become more complex as additional material is trapped.

Stand 505004 on USFS Land - Stop 3:

Eric Werner, Central Coast Ranger District Silviculturalist described the stands visible on either side of the road. One stand is a 57 year old plantation, with about 240 trees per acre, averaging 14” in diameter. It was probably planted at a 10x10 spacing after a site prep burn. The stand was pre-commercially thinned in ~1992, which was probably too late to continue good crown development in the residual trees. This, combined with high density and the presence of Swiss needle cast has resulted in stagnated conditions. The proposed prescription for this stand is a heavy thinning, down to ~40 trees per acre, creation of large gaps, and planting with large stock of shade tolerant conifer species (hemlock, spruce, cedar).



**Eric Werner and Marty Bray discuss wildlife
and silviculture issues with group**

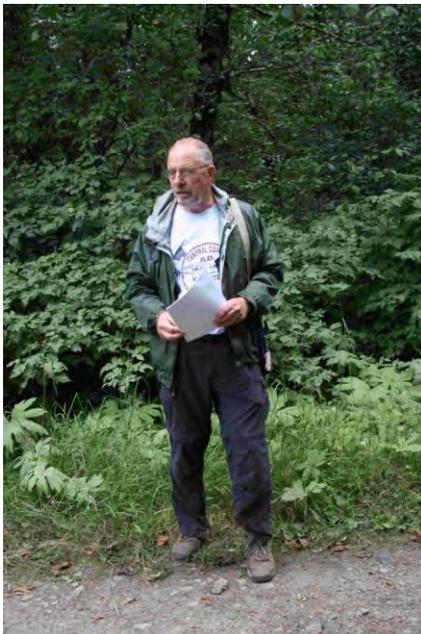
The other side of the road is a 200 year old Douglas fir stand with late-seral characteristics. Many of the gaps in these older stands have early-seral characteristics. Research shows that these types of stands developed through very low conifer densities. In response to a question about marbled murrelets, Marty Bray, District Wildlife Biologist stated that the stand would be considered occupied habitat, and would likely require seasonal restrictions on activity in the adjacent stand (within 100 yards). There may also be northern spotted owls present in the stand.

Marty explained that the USFS conducts a general assessment in consultation with USFWS every three years to assess activities that may impact habitat. Each stand is analyzed and USFWS provides a biological opinion. Paul Engelmeyer stated the importance of buffering the limited amount of late-seral interior stands in this area to minimize risk of increased predation.

Eric cited recent research that suggests that ~65% of the coastal landscape was in old-growth conditions over time. In response to a question about how we know that what we are doing will create late-seral stands, Eric stated that it is not a certainty, but that doing nothing in these young plantation stands will certainly result in a long timeframe to reach those conditions.

1000 Line – Corvallis to Sea Trail - Stop 4:

Gary Chapman of the Corvallis to Sea Trail Partnership reviewed the history of ideas and plans to create a trail connecting the Willamette Valley and the Coast. In the early 1990's, both the USFS and the BLM were involved in planning a route, but the effort was eventually dropped.



In 2003, a group met in Corvallis and formed the current partnership. Over 20,000 hours have been volunteered since then. In 2009, the last landowner agreement was acquired, and in 2010 a formal proposal was submitted to the USFS. The USFS is currently working on the EA for the proposed route. The plan is for the Partnership, which is a 501(C)(3) to build and maintain the trail under a special use permit issued by the USFS. One trail terminus is at the Benton County Fairgrounds and the other at Ona Beach State Park. It is intended to be a non-motorized trail, primarily for hiking, with some portions open to horses and/or mountain bikes. The total route is ~60 miles in length.

Gary Chapman shares information on the proposed Corvallis to Sea Trail

Other key points about the trail that came up in discussion include:

- The NEPA process is separate from the Mill-Wright-Beaver Landscape Management Plan process.

- The route relies primarily on existing trails, roads, or decommissioned roads, with ~7 miles of new trail construction.
- New trail construction would cost \$8-10,000 per mile if contracted out, but a lot can be done with volunteers.
- The NEPA review is focused on “Phase 1”, which is a viable route. A future proposal, “Phase 2” may proposed additional new trail to move the route off of roads where possible.
- Stream crossings are the most difficult EA issue, especially with bike and horse use.
- Landowner agreements are pretty consistent in terms of requirements, with no camping, no fires and no motorized use the most common restrictions.
- There will be a major expense and effort initially to provide signage on the route.

The group returned to Waldport and the field trip concluded at about 2:45 P.M.