

Bear Face Timber Sale September 14, 2011

Attendees: Pattie Soucek, Bob Giles, Lisa Klinger, Ana Egnew, Whitey Rehberg, Jane Cropp, Susan Miller, Laura Pramuk, Mike Beckwith, Jeremy Greenwood, Lynn Wilson, Russ Richards, Tim Kerrigan, Peggy Conway, Melanie Vining, Paul Klasner, Rob Ryan, Marti Wegner, Sue Dixon

NEPA and Forest Plan Monitoring Field Review Questions

Background – the Bear Face timber sale is one of five timber sales planned to implement the 2005 Meadows Slope Wildland Fire Project ROD. The Meadows Slope project was developed to respond to direction from the National Fire Plan and is designed to protect both private and National Forest lands (Wildland Urban Interface). An objection to the decision was filed and negotiations lead to staggered implementation of the timber sale portion of the project. The Bear Face timber sale is the third sale to be offered.

Required Questions -NEPA and Project Implementation

1) How well did the project meet its objectives?

List project objectives that were met.

The project is meeting the objectives of the National Fire Plan in the following manner:

1. Change the overall Condition Class towards Class 1 or 2 – the units visited are being thinned using a “Free Thinning” prescription to reduce stand densities, mechanical thinning of the understory to reduce ladder fuels, followed by prescribed broadcast burning to reduce fine fuels. This combination of treatments is resulting in the desired changes to Condition Class.
2. Reducing the danger and costs of fighting forest fire on the National Forest and adjacent private property, and increasing resource protection.

For objectives not met or not fully met, quantify or describe shortfalls, if possible. Identify causes for objectives not being met or knowledge/data gaps that caused analysis to fail to predict effects.

2) Were the effects to other resources within the expected range?

List main resources with effects in the expected range.

- Recreation – coordination between the District Sale Administrator, the logger, the District Ranger and the public has kept effects to recreation within acceptable limits;
- Riparian – riparian buffers have been protected during the mechanical treatment;
- Wildlife Habitat – in areas with a higher percentage of grand fir, stand densities after treatment no longer provide great gray owl nesting habitat, however, sufficient habitat

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remains surrounding the meadows, and future treatments are being adjusted to protect habitat characteristics;

- Soil Productivity – harvesting methods are very light on the land and have been timed so that little soil compaction has occurred due to the mechanical harvest;
- Snags & Coarse Wood For wildlife habitat & soil productivity – An adequate mix of fine and large woody debris has been left to allow for enough fuel to carry the post treatment prescribed fire yet retain the snags and coarse woody debris loading at desired levels.
- Vegetation treatments – the treatments have resulted in a vegetation pattern that meets both current Appendix A direction, and would still fall within Appendix A direction if it is amended for the Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- Forage utilization levels – dependent upon where the sheep have been grazed.

Where resource effects were outside the expected range, identify causes or knowledge/data gaps that caused analysis to fail to predict effects.

3) Was the project design and mitigation effective? (See attached NEPA document synopsis for management requirements and mitigations).

List unique project design features and mitigation measures which were effective. Discuss the cost / benefit relationship of the effective design features and mitigation.

Wildlife Habitat – Maintain or restore each PVG in each watershed (5th field hydrologic unit) to provide at least 20 percent of the forest vegetation in the large tree size class (Forest Plan III-26, WBST01).

Wildlife Habitat - Mitigate management actions within known nesting or denning sites of MIS or Sensitive species if those actions would disrupt the reproductive success of those sites during the nesting or denning period (Forest Plan p. III-27, WIST03)

Vegetation – Maintain or restore desired plant community components, including species composition, size classes, canopy closures, structure, snags, and coarse woody debris as described in Appendix A (Forest Plan p. III-30, VEGO01).

TES Plants – Management actions that occur within occupied sensitive plant species habitat must incorporate measures to ensure habitat is maintained where it is within desired conditions, or restored where degraded (Forest Plan p. III-33, BTST01).

Where project design features and mitigation measures were ineffective, note specific instances where they made it difficult to meet project objectives or resulted in resource effects outside the expected range. Identify causes or knowledge/data gaps.

None noted this trip

** Note where special design or mitigation may have been unnecessary.*

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Sale administrator will prepare a summary of unused mitigation measures after completion of the project.

Required Questions -Forest Plan Monitoring

4) Management Actions: Are proposed actions and associated effects being adequately disclosed in NEPA documents?

Incorporate the findings on project objectives, resource effects, project design and mitigation from questions 1-3 into Forest Plan monitoring of "management actions".

5) Project Implementation: Have prescriptions, projects, and activities been implemented as designed and in compliance with the Forest Plan?

Incorporate the above findings on project objectives, resource effects, project design and mitigation from questions 1-3 into Forest Plan monitoring of "Project implementation": Where project implementation does not comply with the Forest Plan, identify causes or knowledge/data gaps. Note whether or not failure to comply with the Forest Plan causes a noticeable or measurable adverse effect to resources.

Project implementation appears to be in compliance with Forest Plan.

6) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Inventory: Are management activities changing the ROS settings?

Review project and determine whether project implementation changed the ROS settings. Update the inventory if needed as part of Forest Plan monitoring.

7) Potential Impacts to visual resources: Are Forest management actions being designed and implemented to meet Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs)?

Look at project implementation from sensitive viewpoints and determine whether VQOs were met.

8) Riparian Condition: Are Forest management activities adequately designed (including delineation of RCA's) to maintain or improve riparian functions and ecological processes important to furthering Forest Plan goals and objectives?

Inspect project activities within the RCAs.

Riparian buffers were monitored on this visit and met the design criteria for intermittent streams (120' buffer).

9) Habitat for terrestrial MIS and both plant and animal: Are management actions providing for or moving toward the extent of vegetation components necessary to meet the needs of MIS and TEPC species?

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Inspect known species habitats and note whether the effects of project activities were within the expected range. Note changes in habitat acres.

The group visited several treatment areas within great gray owl habitat range. The area has known great gray owl nesting sites. The first treatment area visited was lower in density (canopy closure) than needed to provide nesting habitat for great gray owls. This is due to the high component of grand fir in the pre-treatment stand. Currently there is enough remaining nesting habitat surrounding the Bear Basin meadow. Two additional vegetation management projects are planned in the area – Brundage Bear Basin and Rocky Bear. The Forest and District wildlife biologists are working with the IDT for these two projects to design treatments to protect great gray owl nesting habitat.

10) Soil Productivity: Are management actions and forest plan direction effectively maintaining or restoring long-term soil productivity?

Field review activities and note amount of area in non-detrimentally disturbed condition and Total Soil Resource Commitment (TSRC). Note whether analysis estimated detrimental disturbance and TSRC within an acceptable range.

Activities are still in progress so a final estimate of TSRC cannot be made at this time. Existing skid trails and landings appear to be designed to meet mitigation measures to ensure DD and TSRC are within LRMP limits.

11) Snags and coarse wood for wildlife habitat and soil productivity: Are snags and coarse woody debris at, or moving toward, desired conditions as described in Appendix A of the Forest Plan?

Field review snags and coarse woody debris by size class. Estimate number of snags or tons of coarse woody debris by size class for each PVG in activity areas.

Ocular estimate indicates post treatment snags and woody debris meet LRMP standards.

12) Watershed restoration and conservation activities: Have restoration and conservation activities been focused in priority watersheds identified by the WARS process?

Review amount of restoration activity in high priority vs. other 6th field watersheds.

Not applicable to this project (Check)

13) Vegetation treatments: Are planned vegetation treatments being implemented and is live vegetation moving towards desired conditions as described in Appendix A of the Forest Plan

Field review project level activities for acres treated and mix of size classes, canopy closures, species composition and their spatial patterns by forested PVG and non-forest cover types.

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Yes – once implementation of the Meadows Slope project is complete (all 5 timber sales) area will be evaluated for compliance with Appendix A. Mid-project assessment indicates Appendix A compliance.

14) Forage Utilization Levels: Are established utilization levels providing for desired ground cover, soil stability, plant vigor and composition?

Review active allotment utilization.

Optional Questions -Forest Plan Monitoring

Select based on project type, project history, and Forest Plan monitoring requirements:

15) Perception of management activities on the Forest: Are consulting agencies part of the process, and are concerns being raised about implementation of the Forest Plan?

Review history of consultation process, noting especially where more or less mitigation was requested by consulting agency via Level 1, State 303(d) and permitting reviews.

16) Protection of historic properties during project implementation: Are historic properties being affected by project activities?

Do a field inspection of historic properties and determine if they were affected by the project.

17) Botanical species of concern, Watch species or Sensitive species: Are Forest management actions affecting known Sensitive species or Watch species habitats at the project level?

Inspect known occupied species habitats within project activity areas. Determine acres of disturbed known occupied habitat.

One sensitive plant species was found in the Bear Face timber sale area – Swamp onion. All activities are designed to avoid this plant and it's habitat.

18) Water Quality and beneficial use status: Are management actions maintaining or restoring water quality to fully support beneficial uses, and native and desired non-native fish species and their habitats over multiple spatial scales?

Review project activities for macro-invertebrate tolerance measures, water quality indicators (temperature, pH, turbidity) to determine whether water quality is being maintained or restored.

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19) Noxious weed control and eradication: Are Forest management strategies effective in controlling or eradicating targeted populations of noxious weeds?

*Survey known infestation areas in project area where the strategy is to eradicate the infestation.
Estimate change in acres and density.*