

June 13, 2012 Canopy Cover Meeting with commentors

Present: Sharon Galbreath – Sierra Club, Bob Davis – FS-RO, Mark Nigrelli- 4FRI, Bill Pell – ASNFs, Todd Schulke – CBD, Pat Jackson, FS-RO, Tom Osen – Coconino NF, Sara Reif – ADGF, Taylor McKinnon – CBD, Marcus Selig – GCT (via phone), Ethan Aumack – GCT, Neil McCusker-4FRI, Dick Fleishmann – 4FRI, Henry Provencio – 4FRI, Paula Cote – 4FRI

At last meeting – 4Fri stated we would measure canopy cover in VSS 4 to 6 at the group level AND using transects, tally BA across stands to provide canopy cover as an average/acre (and aggregate up as needed)

What has changed since last meeting: measuring canopy cover will only occur in VSS 4-6 at the group level (including interspace within the group) and the amendment will reflect this. Only measurements in VSS 4-6 at group level will be used to demonstrate compliance with forest plans. Algorithm that was going to be used for evaluating canopy cover outside of groups has been eliminated as it may have over-projected canopy cover. For monitoring purposes, to gauge movement towards DC from treatments, will still use the transect method and evaluate BA across all points in a given scale (including interspace) – may not meet CC in VSS 4-6 when using this method – purpose is to gauge movement towards DC

Q1: Where does regeneration openings come from?

A1: Would apply to 15 % of the area with openings ranging from 3 to 8/10's of an acre

Q2: In a 40-55 UEA, area the regeneration openings included within the % openings or is it really in addition to the openings that would occur post treatment with a UEA 40-55?

A2: Regeneration openings are in addition to the interspace.

Q3 – Are the regeneration openings part of groups?

A3 – Regeneration openings are considered a VSS group

Q4: Do regeneration openings occur in VSS 4-6?

A4: There are situations where regeneration openings would be established within areas dominated by VSS 4-6 size class trees. However, the Old Tree Retention Strategy (applies to all action alternatives) applies to VSS 5 and 6 that have old growth characteristics. The project area has a large percent of even-aged stands. Mid-aged trees are > 18" dbh. Project would retain those trees (large, young trees) that have the ability to grow into VSS 5-6. Large Tree Implementation Strategy would be part of Alternative C. In addition, the purpose and need recognizes the project area is deficit in VSS 5 and 6 (and VSS 1 and VSS 2). The implementation guide will display decision process that will be provided to markers.

Whether regeneration openings would be within groups would depend on the size of the group. If VSS 1 or VSS 2 are already in a group it would not make sense to cut them out. If group was one-acre in size it would not be feasible to put in a regeneration openings as the group would be entirely comprised of openings.

Q5: Regeneration openings are not equivalent to restoration (ADGF) – why do we need to create regeneration openings when we know that we will have rapid growth? Why not get rid of all regeneration openings and count the regeneration that would occur around the groups? Clarify the difference between canopy cover and the % open by scales (UEA 40-55) – as its confusing – many folks think 60% open equates to 40% canopy cover in a group. The project area is deficit in VSS 1-2. To move towards 10-10-20-20-20 (forest plan) project is designed to use VSS 1 as future VSS 2s.

A5 – More detail will be provided in the silvicultural analysis.

Q6: The worse-case scenario would be to implement a 40-55 UEA that equates to 55% open, has an additional 20% VSS 1-2 which really equates to the landscape having 75% or 90% open-ness.

A6: It is not possible to end up with 75% to 90% open-ness when the target BA is 50%

For clarification – stocking guidelines represent post-treatment conditions – not future DC

Group Recommendations: (1) Provide 15% regeneration openings by using the regrowth that occurs around tree groups and omit any regeneration openings; (2) increase group size average – what is right size? Unknown –needs review as what is the “correct” group size will not be found in the literature would have to be assessed from looking at what specific wildlife use (3) Provide a range of BAs so that the minimum is not always what is implemented – expand the BA range and add this to the stocking guidelines – for silvicultural effects add examples of where BA is likely to be higher than the minimum displayed in the stocking guidelines and describe how design features (like OTRS) influence the minimum – translate that the minimum can be exceeded (and where its desirable) in the stocking guidelines, marking plan and make sure it gets translated into the silvicultural prescription (4) Clarify approach for providing bridge habitat for closed canopy dependent species, (5) Clarify if we are designing a system that is regulated by fire versus silviculture, (6) Stocking guidelines don’t translate into the dense conditions on the density map – how does stocking guidelines translate to the smaller scales (100 acres, 1,000 acres) – map shows distribution but doesn’t address the issue that 2/3 is moderately to very open- regardless that we may be departed from HRV, the fact is that species have adjusted and are using the dense condition forest, (7) Description of interlocking and nearly interlocking is lacking, (8) Add more detail to creating interspace – create interspace from VSS 13, regarding VSS 4, if there are trees on the lower end of VSS 4 this would be a good place to create interspace – see grassland language in LTRS – add more information on using tree structure characteristics to keep those trees that can serve as surrogates for large trees, (9) Nothing specific that says young large trees would be cut but it is covered by the fact that they are deficit across the project area – add direction in implementation plan so the DC is translated into something that can be implemented at all scales, (10) Ensure that if UEA 40-55’s abut, add a design feature that doesn’t treat the boundaries the same –if more dense sites are encountered along the boundary go towards a minimum treatment, if less dense site is encountered along the boundary, go towards a more intense treatment, and, (11) VSS 5-6 – There is nothing specific that says young large trees would not be cut but it is covered by the fact that they are deficit across the project area – add direction in implementation plan so the DC is translated into something that can be implemented

FS Thoughts: (1) Need to follow the science in terms of groups and gaps. We have the flexibility to have larger sized groups. In the short term, there would be more open-ness and a response in the grass, forbs, shrubs. In the long term it would be less open with reduced grass, shrubs, and forbs; (2) Regarding large, young trees – we want big, young trees that can function and provide the benefits that old trees do.

Re Desired Conditions – RO is very open to collaborating on DCs – may not be in time for this analysis but we should be well-poised for the next analysis and for more landscape restoration efforts

Neil - For clarification – BA is a density metric –not a canopy cover metric – Re: group size –currently have 40 treatment types – in those with less open-ness – group size would be larger, if you increase group size in UEA 10% won't be able to discern interspace from openings – group and opening size is supposed to be variable for heterogeneity

Re HRV – important as its where the DC are derived