



Taylor Park Vegetation Treatment EA Public Meeting Q&A Notes

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Question: What is the ratio of lodgepole to other tree species in Taylor Park? How much of that is infested with Dwarf Mistletoe?

Answer: ~41% of the planning area (shown on page 4 of the power point presentation) is lodgepole pine. On the Gunnison Ranger District, 52% of the lodgepole pine forest type area is infected with dwarf mistletoe; however, the infestation is higher in the Taylor Park Area. District Silviculturist estimates the infestation is somewhere around 66%.

Question: Why are 20 acre clear cuts needed for treatment if the dwarf mistletoe seeds, at most, only shoot 60ft from the host tree?

Answer: 60ft is only the initial invasion of the cut area. The infestation then continues to leapfrog into the area. For this reason, assuming the treatment area edges are infested and you are not going to do the donut treatment 10 years later, cut patches should be a minimum of 20 acres. The basis for this is found in various management guides.

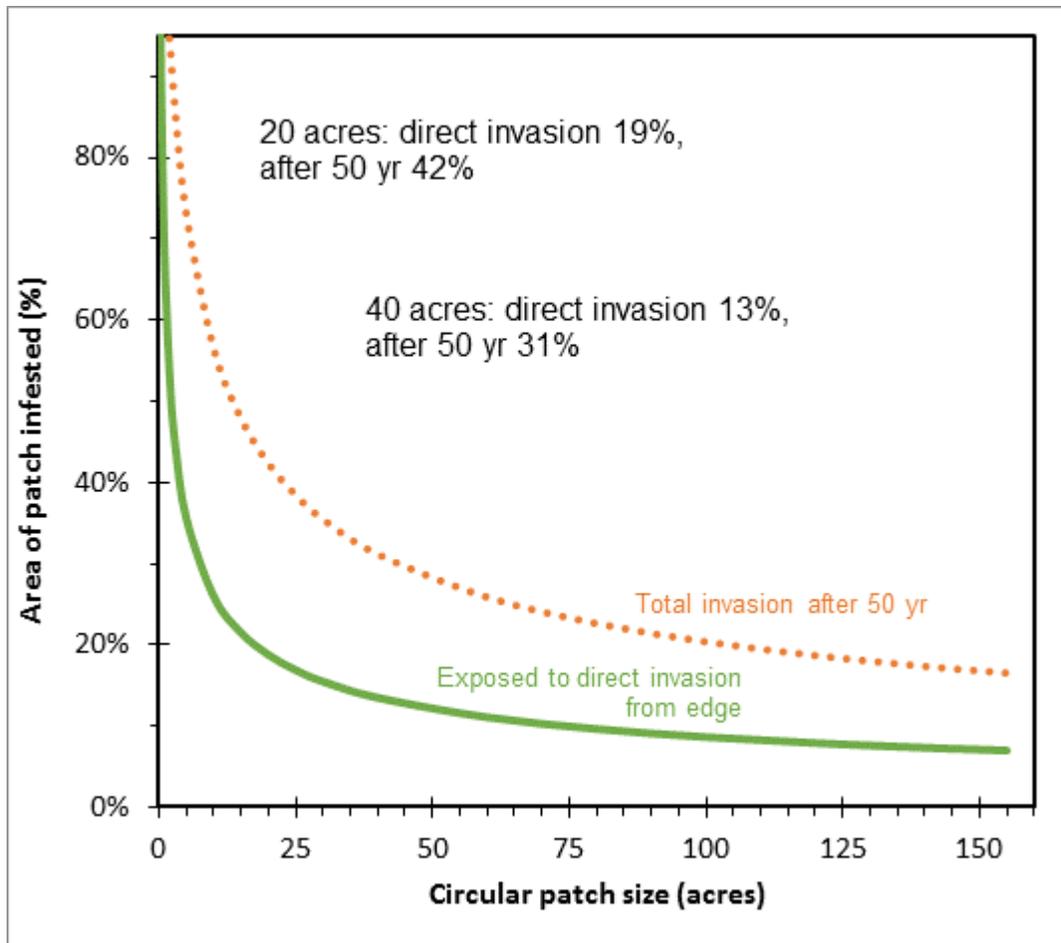
Additional information contributed post meeting: Management Guide

Hawksworth FG, Johnson DW. 1989. **Biology and management of dwarf mistletoe in lodgepole pine in the Rocky Mountains**. General Technical Report RM-169. April, 1989. Fort Collins, CO: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station. 38 p.

On page 27 is the statement,

“Clearcuts in infested stands should have as large an area/perimeter ratio as allowable to minimize reinvasion from infected trees along bordering stands. Narrow strips should be avoided. Cutting units should be no less than 20 acres (8 ha) to minimize the edge effect (fig. 24).”

Below is a graph that shows more detail than fig. 24 referenced above. It shows the proportion of a circular, treated area exposed to direct inoculum of dwarf mistletoe from the edge at the maximum dispersal distance (16 m or 52 ft), used because plants in tall trees are showering seed on regeneration. Also shown is the additional effect of lateral spread for 50 years, assuming lateral spread rate for a single-storied stand of 0.5 m (1.5 ft) per year. This spread rate is the average estimated for lodgepole pine dwarf mistletoe (Hawksworth & Dooling 1984). Note that any shape other than a circle would lead to more rapid invasion.



Question: Studies have shown that dwarf mistletoe is important for avian species. How will the project affect this?

Answer: The studies cited on birds and dwarf mistletoe were analyzed for ponderosa pine mistletoe stands. That is a different host, different dwarf mistletoe, and very different habitat. The results may not apply to lodgepole pine dwarf mistletoe. Additionally, when you look at the data in the Bennetts study there are some discrepancies between the data and the conclusions in the abstract.

Additional information contributed post meeting:

To the extent there is any benefit to birds from lodgepole pine dwarf mistletoe, we are only treating 7.7% of the infested stands on the District, leaving 92% to provide any possible benefit.

Question: Does dwarf mistletoe kill the tree?

Answer: It does, however not that quickly. The tree has to be heavily infected. In heavily infested stands, mortality increases by 8% per decade.

Question: Are there any other treatment options for dwarf mistletoe? Chemicals?

Answer: The only known chemical treatment is ethylene. This only kills the fruiting shoots. It does not kill the mistletoe organism within the tree. Essentially it disrupts seed production temporarily.

Question: What is the standard for determining infestation?

Answer: The FS uses a 0-6 crown rating system. We then target treatments in stands with ratings greater than 1.

Question: Can general public be involved in the Adaptive Management Group (AMG)?

Answer: The Gunnison Ranger District is presenting this as something that locals could form to guide Taylor Park EA. The FS can guide this formation of a local AMG if there is interest.

Question: What authority does the AMG have to hold the FS accountable?

Answer: The AMG group is there to hold use accountable. If we don't do what we said we would they would call us out and we would look bad. We don't want that. Additionally, we try to be as responsive as possible within the purpose and need, but we do not rehash the NEPA decision.

Statement: Putting emphasis on an AMG seems pre-decisional and assumes that the populace accepts the project.

Response: We are still in the NEPA process. People are welcome to provide input about the size and scope of the project, but it needs to meet the purpose and need.

Question: What is the quota for timber production?

Answer: We are a multi-use agency. We get targets each year for production. This is high right now due to salvage from beetle kill. However, we can only do commercial logging in our suitable forest base areas, which is about 7%. Of that 7% only half is allowable for commercial logging.

Question: Are the temp roads closed at the end of the sale/within five years? This has not been done in the past in this area. Will the temp roads be open to the public to utilize will the sale is going on and/or during the five years after the sale?

Answer: Yes, the temp roads will be effectively closed. No, the temp roads will not be open to public motorized use at any time.

Statement: It looks like emphasis is on areas that have been treated before. This represents only a fraction of the forest in Taylor Park. This lead to intense treatments in limited areas.

Response: We do place emphasis in continuing treatment in these areas treated in the past.

Statement: This leaves vast areas untreated.

Response: Much of the untreated areas are within Colorado Roadless area, Wilderness, on steep slopes, etc. This limits what areas can be treated.

Statement: Concern that the proposed treatments won't help much with a catastrophic fire.

Response: Fire breaks are proposed in an effort to address this.

Questions: What about cleanup of logging actions? Standards leave too much slash on the ground for areas to be passable by hikers or wildlife.

Answer: Current practices use whole tree skidding to landing sites which moves more slash to the landing areas. The requirement is that slash is within 24" of the ground prior to close of sale (and return of deposit).

Statement: I'm staggered that the FS vision is so different from mine...what is proposed is way too big.

Response: We need to build in natural processes. Fire has been a driver of disturbance, but has not been allowed now as in the past.

Follow up statement: I would prefer the risk of fire to large clearcuts.

Question: Who do I talk to about specific concerns regard fuel treatments?

Answer: Pat Medina, Assistant Fire Management Officer

Statement: There was no one on the Science Team that represents cultural resources.

Response: Every project/treatment will have to be surveyed by an archeologist and State Historic Preservation Office will have to be consulted.

Question: Who makes the decision and when?

Answer: The District Ranger (Matt McCombs). We are aiming to have a decision by March 2019.

Question: Will there be an opportunity for public input?

Answer: A draft decision will go out with a 30 day Objection Period. Additionally, we will take comments at any time that will inform our project; however, comments received outside the official scoping period will not give standing to object.

Statement: The Healthy Forest Restoration Act hamstrings opportunity for public input. Folks who didn't comment during scoping would benefit from an additional comment period.

Response: We welcome comments at any time, but we do not plan to have another formal comment period.

Statement: SBEADMR worked because the forest slowed down and did more public involvement. This would help here too.

Response: The District Ranger will be consulted about this. Ultimately this is up to him.

Statement: There is a public perception that the FS has made up its mind and will not listen. Is there still room for the proposed action to change?

Response: We do not plan to add an alternative to the analysis, but some changes to the proposed action could change in response to input as long as we continue to meet the purpose and need.

Question: I sent in a forest plan comment and got a response back that it was received. I sent in a comment on Taylor Park EA and didn't get a response. How do I know if you received my comment?

Answer: On the project webpage is a Comment Public Reading Room where you can see all the comment letters received during the official scoping period.

Statement: I never received a notice of the project or process, but I am a landowner. So I won't have standing if I comment, but I was never contacted.

Response: We do our best to reach out to everyone, but ultimately we do miss some people. We sent roughly 600 letters to inform people of the project.

Additional information contributed post meeting:

Scoping Effort Details...

- Approximately 209 postal letters were mailed out on April 17th, 2018
- Approximately 319 emails were sent to unique email addresses on April 18th, 2018
- News Release was posted on the GMUG website, Facebook and Twitter accounts on April 17th, 2018
- News Release and Legal Notice was published in the Gunnison Times on April 19th, 2018

Questions: What percentage of activities will be commercial versus non-commercial?

Answer: The pre-commercial thinning is all non-commercial. And about ½ of the fuels treatments area expected to be noncommercial too.

Follow up question: But isn't the pre-commercial stuff for future commercial use?

Follow up answer: The intent is to achieve better growth. We may have a commercial cut in the future in these areas, but this is not being approved under this decision. That would require a new decision.

Statement: I was recently in the Breckenridge area where I saw a crown fire. The crown fire was stopped by fuel breaks that had been previously implemented.

Response: We are trying to do similar fuel breaks here.

Question: The emphasis has been on mistletoe, but have you considered fuel breaks around Tincup and other private property?

Answer: Yes we have. Fuel breaks are part of the proposed project. Please see the project maps for more details.

Question: Would there be clear cuts in the fuel breaks prescriptions around Rainbow Subdivision?

Answer: Lodgepole pine infested with mistletoes would be removed. Any spruce would be left.

Question: I am not convinced that mistletoe is so horrible. Is the science team receptive to not believing that mistletoes is bad?

Answer: The Science Team is diverse. We have a landscape ecologist on the team that is concerned about the landscape and not so much on tree health. Other team members are concerned about timber production. However it should be noted that the Science Team is advisory, we listen to them, but are not bound to do everything they request.

Question: What is the process for creating an AMG for this project (not SBEADMR)?

Answer: We could use Public Lands Partnership (like we did for SBEADMR) or maybe Western State Colorado University to help facilitate bringing an AMG together for this project.

Follow up statement: You need to get this started now and not post decision.

Follow up response: If anyone is interested in being on an AMG for this project, either add that information to the sign-in sheet or let Pamela King (prking@fs.fed.us) know.

Question: Will alternative proposed be added?

Answer: No new action alternative are planned; however the proposed action may have some changes to include comments. Alternatives presented in scoping have been considered, but preliminarily have been determined to not meet the purpose and need.

Statement: I would like to see this done under the “normal NEPA process” not the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. We want a second opportunity to comment.

Response: We welcome comments at any time, but we do not plan to have another formal comment period. But we will discuss this further with the District Ranger.

Question: Can you put the slides from this meeting on the webpage?

Answer: Yes. We will also get more information about AMGs on the website too.