

**HFQLG
Project Evaluation Form
For
Pre-Treatment Site Visit**

Project Name: Gray's Peak Project Project Type: DFPZ and Group Selection

Forest: Lassen Ranger District: Almanor RD Date: 2 Oct 2008

Attendance: 30 people

Agency – Tom McCubbins, Tehama County Resource Conservation District

Public- Dennis and June Bebensee, local land owners, residents of Shingletown; John Forno, Sierra Pacific Industries; Brian Wayland, Sierra Pacific Industries; Frank Stewart, QLG and Counties Forester; Mike Yost, QLG.

USFS- Al Vazquez, Almanor District Ranger; Dave Evans, Lassen Forest Silviculturist; John Zarlengo, District Silviculturist; Mark Williams, District Wildlife Biologist; Kaley Phillips, Wildlife Biologist; Ryan Foote, Fisheries Biologist; Ken Roby, Fisheries Biologist; Rick Atwell, Almanor RD; Matt Cerney, District Fuels Officer; Laura Corral, Silviculturist; Dave Oliver, Almanor Assistant Culturist; Ron Perry, Timber Sale Prep; Brenda Barton, Sale Administration; Blair Halbrooks, NEPA Planner; Emily Fudge, District Hydrologist; Dave Wood, HFQLG Implementation Team Leader; Colin Dillingham, HFQLG Monitoring Team Leader; Renee Wimer, HFQLG Public Information Officer; Solomon Everta, LNF Information Receptionist; John Yembu, HFQLG GIS Volunteer from Cameroon; Michael Donald, Mt Hough District Ranger; Maria Garcia, Plumas NF Deputy Forest Supervisor; Tracy Totten, Supervisory Civil Engineer, Lassen NF.

Type of Treatment:

The 600-acre Grays Peak DFPZ project is planned to create a Defensible Fuel Profile Zone through mechanical thinning as well as group selection, gap selection (shrub recruitment islands) and untreated leave islands of shrubs. The Grays Peak DFPZ project Environmental Assessment was written under the 1999 HFQLG FEIS as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. This is the first project to be sold on the Almanor RD under Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) authority. The sale is expected to be sold in 2008; there were no appeals on the project.

Resource Area	Attribute	Objective	Source of Objective	Objective achieved?	Comments
Silviculture	Stand Density	Reduce tree stocking to improve growth and vigor.	HFQLG EIS	N/A	Project proposes to thin stands to create healthy stands post-treatment.
Silviculture	Group Selections	Remove conifers with poor live crown ratios, narrow crown widths, trees with insect or disease. Areas with high white fir composition. Retain 5 trees per acre	Silviculture prescription	N/A	Areas marked on ground appear to match objective
Fuels	DFPZ	Reduce fuel loading, ladder fuels and canopy cover	HFQLG EIS	N/A	Plan to open up stands and thin from below.
Wildlife	Shrub Habitat	Provide well distributed shrub habitat to provide for diversity for wildlife	Project EA	N/A	Untreated areas and Gap selection areas planned to provide for long-term shrub habitat

Discussion Topics:

Al Vazquez, Almanor District Ranger, introduced the project at the first site in Grays Peak Unit 46. Grays Peak was the first project on the Almanor Ranger District with group selection and the first project planned under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). It was explained that part of the reason group selection is going to be implemented at this site is to gain structural diversity at the stand level. Currently Unit 46 is a single storied stand (Figure 1) and implementation of group selections will provide for a second age class to develop within this stand. Priority areas for groups include areas with sugar pine blister rust and other diseases as well as overstocked areas that are experiencing mortality. Brian Wayland and John Forno from Sierra Pacific Industries, Frank Stewart, County Forester and Dennis Bebensee, adjacent landowner, questioned why the Forest Service would regenerate a plantation at such a young age, before the economic value of the plantation investments could be realized. They suggested a commercial thinning from below as the most advisable prescription. Most people on the field trip recognized that the best place for group selections was on the opposite side of the road from the plantation, a stand with dense white fir heavily overstocked. Al Vazquez explained that the white fir stands were planned for group selection and DFPZ treatments in the next project, called the Minnow Project.



Figure 1. Field trip participants discussing Grays Peak Unit 46 pine plantation proposed for treatment.

John Zarlengo, District Silviculturist, discussed the Defensible Fuel Profile Zone (DFPZ) prescription. The stands proposed for treatment in this project are predominantly at or above critical stand density and mortality from insects, disease and fire is imminent. The district plans to thin smaller suppressed and intermediate and some codominant trees (Figure 2) to a desired residual basal area of 90 square feet per acre to maintain stand health and vigor. Both saw logs and biomass would be removed. Residual oak trees and predominant trees left during previous forest management would have special radial release to preserve these rare components within the stand.

The previous entry into Unit 46 included scraping the brush, slash and some of the “A” horizon soils into “wind rows”. This project plans to redistribute these “wind rows” for soil enrichment.

Frank Stewart, Counties Forester discussed the need for US Forest Service, Industrial timber lands, Resource Conservation Districts, private non-industrial timber lands and Fire Safe Councils to work together to create interagency fire plans.

John Zarlengo and the District Wildlife Biologist (Mark Williams) introduced the concept of gap selections, which are shrub recruitment islands. Gap selection areas constitute approximately 5% of the stand area, and are planned for management as shrub habitat. Mark Williams explained that as the stands reach 40% canopy cover the understory shrub component in the stand dies and the associated wildlife is lost. Much of our forest management is aimed at conserving late-seral species. Mark explained why it is also important to manage for the early seral wildlife species as well.

Participants walked down the road to an area with more extensive white fir. The group discussed the pros and cons of leaving white fir trees within the planned group selection area. Trees greater than 30 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) are retained because of Sierra Nevada Forest Plan amendment 2004 requirements. In addition, the silvicultural prescription called for 5 trees per acre to be retained in group selections, including trees less than 30 inches DBH. White fir retention in group selections is expected to provide a seed source and partially shaded environments more favorable for white fir regeneration than pine regeneration.



Figure 2. Grays Peak Unit 46 pine plantation with encroaching understory of white fir planned for removal. Orange painted tree is a proposed leave tree.

Ryan Foote, Fisheries Biologist, explained that the riparian zones within the project would have limited treatment for riparian enhancement. There would be limited zones of no treatment adjacent to the stream to prevent damage and potential erosion from impacting the stream.

Ken Roby, Fisheries Biologist, presented the seasonal closure of FS road 28N88 project which was completed in fall 2008. He explained why road work to prevent sediment input to the streams with runs of anadromous fish is so important. Roads not designed for wet-season use can become rutted. These ruts reduce effectiveness of road drainage structures. Ruts and rainfall runoff increase erosion and sediment delivery. Road maintenance costs are increased. The project included addition of 20 dips and cross drains to remove water from the road surface and replacement of several culverts with low-water crossings.

Shortcomings and Successes:

Retaining white fir leave trees in group selections will likely result in reduced pine regeneration as well as provide a seed source and preferred partially shaded environment for white fir regeneration. It is unlikely that the goal of regenerating pine will be as effective when white fir trees are retained.

Follow-up Actions:

During collaboration efforts, bring up two items for discussion.

For silvicultural reasons, consider enlarging maximum group size up to 4 acres so that more flexibility in prescriptions can be written. This larger group size would be better to achieve increased growth rates on pine regeneration. The larger group size would also allow for shrub growth in patch size large enough to accommodate shrub nesting species.

Consider entering some areas currently considered "deferred" in the HFQLG Act. Specifically, it would be desirable to protect the Mill Creek and Deer Creek watersheds with anadromous fish would be desirable to protect from catastrophic wildfire.

Notes prepared by: /s/ Colin Dillingham Date: 6 Oct 2008
HFQLG Monitoring Team Leader

Reviewed by: /s/ Al Vazquez Date: 30 Oct 2008
Almanor District Ranger