

Deputy Team Field Review
Colville NF and Spokane BLM District Wenatchee Field Office
June 8 – 11, 2009

Field Review Team Members

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Review Team Members:

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Don Martin	EPA
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Other Participants:

Joe Kelly	BLM Wenatchee
Rick Brazell	Colville NF
Karen Kelleher	BLM Wenatchee
Robert Towne	BLM Spokane
Don Gonzales	Colville NF
Travis Fletcher	Colville NF
Justin Yeager	NOAA
Diane Driscoll	NOAA
Linda Fee	Colville NF

General Field Review Objectives

1. Determine if the Biological Opinions have been implemented in accordance with the mechanisms, terms and conditions.
2. Determine if on-the-ground management decisions are consistent with the Biological Opinions, and PACFISH and INFISH Goals and Objectives.
3. Determine if PACFISH and INFISH Standards and Guides have been correctly interpreted and implemented on the ground.
4. Determine if grazing implementation monitoring activities have been evaluated to eliminate duplication between the PACFISH/INFISH Grazing Implementation Monitoring Module and other grazing implementation monitoring activities
5. Improve communication and coordination between agencies. Strengthen interagency commitment to watershed management under the management direction of PACFISH/INFISH.

FINDINGS

Colville NF June 8, 2009

GENERAL COMMENDATIONS:

There was excellent line officer and staff attendance and participation.

The forest is currently taking PIBO monitoring seriously. They are asking good questions and committed to completing the PIBO assignments. Past lack of continuity over time has made the current task more difficult.

The IM and EM DMAs were located at the same place, thus meeting PIBO monitoring requirements.

The homework write-up provided by the forest was well done.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

The forest's questions concerning PIBO monitoring were answered with the second day follow-up conversations with Eric Archer (via conference call) and forest staff. This conversation clarified some of the confusion the forest was having regarding the PIBO EM program.

There seemed to be a lack of communication between some of the key players responsible for implementing PIBO requirements on the forest.

There seems to be a need for more hands on training and computer training for key staff and managers regarding PIBO monitoring requirements and usage.

There seems to be some misunderstanding with the applicability of appropriate locations of establishing a DMA and the protocol for doing MIM.

According to the Forest, the ftp site from Eric A. needs clarification. It appears that the spring meetings between the IM/EM are needed to occur in person, at least in the short term, until some of the newer employees are up to speed.

The Review team felt that the 12 mile DMA site was appropriately located. Eric A. clarified that "INFISH" **does** apply to all watersheds with native species and this monitoring is appropriate here, for at least monitoring water quality even if fish are not in the stream.

There seems to be some duplication of collecting trend data by the EM team and the field unit doing the IM; specifically the MIM (11 indicators were collected).

During the field trip, an orientation to the DMA site and associated background data would have helped to set the context. A map of the allotment with pastures would have been helpful to understand the setting.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

The key forest staff responsible for PIBO implementation should attend MIM and PIBO training to assure understanding of the DMA site selection process.

Clarify the role and identity of the forest PIBO coordinator. This position is the conduit between line/staff and must actively engage with the EM coordinator to relay the information and assignments to the field folks. This will clarify key information such as determining what are the Category 1 and Category 2 pastures. It will also clarify whether the 6th field HUC is even appropriate for a DMA.

-DMA Audit-

All 11 indicators were being monitored here, but all may not be needed. This creates some duplication with Eric's team, as discussed above. All of these may be needed for the IM/DMA's, but where there is also an EM/DMA this is a duplication of effort. Where the forest just has the IM/DMA locations, it is appropriate to have at least 3 indicators monitored (stubble height, stream bank alteration, and woody browse utilization (if browse is available).

The unit can use further clarification on DMA site selection, MIM protocol, and 6th field HUC location appropriateness. They also need to be clear on where to send data after inputting it.

Spokane BLM – Wenatchee Field Office June 9, 2009

-Commendations

The BLM demonstrated maturation of the partnerships previously displayed in the 2002 PACFISH/INFISH field review. Great progress!

The Spokane District has made and maintained significant accomplishments in their land exchange program that has been particularly beneficial for resource management.

The team further recognizes that the district has kept up with managing the small tracts, implementing PIBO and associated management changes.

The handouts and maps were most helpful in displaying compliance with PIBO.

The agency coordination with multiple partners and the Colville tribe contributed to the success of the fish ladder (Lower Salmon Cr.) diversion.

-Observations

Some questions were raised by the district staff regarding monitoring of DMAs and MIM.

-Recommendations

The district folks involved with riparian monitoring should go to the MIM training.

-DMA Audit

Livestock have access primarily to a short section of the east side of the creek. In this pasture fencing and topography allow cattle access to only a very short section of the stream for watering. The DMA is located where cattle can access the stream and is monitored by the district at the same location as the reach monitored by the EM team. The DMA was established using the appropriate protocol.

Only one indicator, stubble height, is being monitored at this DMA. Bank alteration and woody browse utilization also need to be collected on the green-line as per the deputy direction letters. Monitoring indicator is not being measured on the greenline but is being monitored on both sides of the channel. The district should use the MIM protocol at all PIBO EM DMAs as directed in the annual directive.

IM compliance data is being entered into the database appropriately. Endpoint monitoring data is being entered and no non-compliance has occurred. Electronic reports are not being produced. It is not clear if any IM data is being used for any local ESA consultation. The district has just started to write a new LUP and will use PIBO EM and IM data to develop that.

Spokane District Office BLM, June 10, 2009 Liberty Campground @ Williams Creek

Observations

Comparisons were made at the Liberty campground site visit to the observations and recommendations made during the 2002 field review. The district has completed most of those recommendations. They have accomplished the following restoration projects:

- obliterated and blocked the road closest to the creek.
- eliminated the mining claim mess/debris
- changed traffic patterns and eliminated several creek crossings.
- adjusted and eliminated dispersed and/or developed recreation, thus complying with RM-2.
- Restored the site with willows and aspen.
- They were creative in obtaining and finding the funds to do this work.

After a conversation with a local sheep herder nearby, and comparing this conversation to requirements expected by BLM, it seemed there may be confusion as to where the sheep were supposed to water and be contained. It was unclear to us as to whether the BLM, NOAA, and the permittee (especially the herder) were all on the same page and needed a clearer understanding of this.

The culvert replacement (on Forest Service land) is functioning; however it appears that this may have some downstream effects during high flows to the downstream (BLM) portions of the creek.

From the 2002 visit we (the Team) recommended several monitoring methods the district could implement to put into place here, and it was good to see the photo point established along with a DMA.

Recommendations

The team recommends closing and rehabilitating the remaining stream/side channel crossing in the campground.

The team recommends assessing and monitoring the downstream circumstances with the culvert to assure impacts are not occurring and if they are, appropriate adjustments can be made. NOAA offered to have their engineers look at the pictures and respond back to the BLM.

Assure the range staff in both the FS and BLM discuss the sheep permit requirements and meet as needed with the herder to assure compliance.

Spokane District June 10, 2009 - Ringer Site

Commendations

Spokane District, Wenatchee Resource Area has really made the successful effort to rehab this site considering that heavy historical livestock use here had caused significant bank erosion as viewed in 2002. Since this site visit in 2002, the team was pleased to see the efforts with the willow establishment and placement of logs. Restoration has been remarkable here.

Recommendations

Consider making this site a location to make and measure DMA parameters as a reference for a restored site from a highly managed one.

Spokane District June 10, 2009 – Big Pines Rec Site Yakima River

Commendations

They have successfully applied the RM-2 standard for rehabilitation and restoration of a dispersed recreation site. This site has also improved remarkably since 2002 due to management changes and administration.

Observations

Campers were gathering firewood from around the area, where wood and riparian vegetation is rather scarce.

The boat ramp was improved for ADA accessibility.

Large rock placement, designated parking and other management actions were implemented to restrict dispersed campers to stay outside of the RHCA.

Recommendations

Monitor the project implementation and the camping use here to verify meeting RM-2.

Wood gathering restrictions or solutions may be needed.

Spokane Distr. June 10, 2009 –Burbank Creek road crossing

Commendations

It was good to see the elimination of the culvert and the hardening of the crossing which eliminated the effects from the cattle trampling that was observed in 2002.

Observations

The barb wired fence just above the new crossing could potentially have problems during high flows with debris collection.

Recommendations

Continue to monitor this site to see if fish are trapped during low flows or have access across this crossing.

Consider using a removable wire panel or a wire gate that could be wired closed when the cattle are moving through on the road, and then wired it back open when the cattle are off the allotment just above the crossing. This requirement could be put into the permittee's operating plan instructions.

General closeout comments for Spokane district:

This district has worked diligently to assure compliance with Pacfish/Infish and the BO and the PIBO monitoring requirements in spite of the dispersed land pattern.

Excellent handouts with maps and information at each site, however the team did not receive the homework form back.

The two key staff currently working on this compliance and largely responsible for its success expect to retire within the next year. This work is complex, dispersed across hundreds of miles, requires delicate coordination with multiple agencies and landowners and requires journeyman level credentials and experience. It would be wise to consider replacements that meet these qualifications and hire them with enough overlap of time to facilitate training and orientation. This would insure continuity of these important programs and continued compliance with PIBO requirements.

Recommendations for the Deputy Team

Future reviews of Washington forests and BLM should have the Spokane District BLM in association with the Wenatchee National Forest, and considering doing the Colville by itself to assure adequate review time and attention.

Consider revamping the questions asked and expectations during the DT reviews. This could be done by requiring the units reviewed to provide a larger picture of what is happening in the 6th field HUC to provide a fuller context as to how these projects comply with PIBO. This would require different preparation from the units. They would need to demonstrate to the team through their data, monitoring and project implementation how they have implemented PIBO and the subsequent response of the resource to this management strategy.

As more and more units are revising Land Use Plans and Resource Management Plans, the DT should consider whether further guidance is needed to clarify expectations for the replacement of the PIBO strategy.

Future DT Field reviews would need to be designed to assess these replacement strategies. If we plan to do this, the DT will need a revised field review approach. One way to do this would be to use the questions asked during the Idaho, Payette NF review this year.