

Bill outlined that the purpose of this meeting is to assist National Forest staff in developing the Winter Fire Rehabilitation project by:

- 1) investigating areas of uncertainty and
- 2) collaborating to develop a treatment alternative that is acceptable to the RAC, meets the needs of the land, and is responsive to public demands.

The role of RAC in the Inter Disciplinary Team (IDT) process: working in an environment of compromise, knowing that there are no alternatives that are best for *all resources*. There are management areas for big game habitat, timber and forage, and scenic quality, all treated differently. A good IDTeam meet the needs of the total management of the ground. The NEPA triangle was shown to present the steps involved in the NEPA process. In the process there are action alternatives and a no action alternative. The no action alternative is used to compare as a baseline; it can make a case where it is the best alternative, but does take up a lot of time. For example: we could wait on Winter Rim and, 200 years from now, it could all come back. Would we want to wait that long? The area is managed for timber and big game habitat. There needs to be a motivation behind a no action alternative. There is an economic effect of no action: heavy fuel loading left with trees falling down; an accumulation of fire fuels/heavy fuels which carry fire.

There are specific areas to focus on:

- snag management
- old growth management area
- salvage: where and how
- planting: where and how w/affect to timber harvest

Overview of the Proposed Action Statement and a review of the Winter Fire tour were presented by Margaret Bailey. She stated that the Proposed Action was fairly general and needed to become more precise. Purpose and need for the project are:

- capturing commercial saw timber value
- managing wildlife habitat and snag management
- reestablish conifers to meet management objectives
- maintenance of water quality
- control spread of noxious weeds

Data is being gathered to be more specific. The scoping period for comments is through November 25, 2002. Comments that have come in are concerns for snags, capturing of commercial value of timber, timber sales that smaller timber contractors would be able to get contracts for, plus a comment on meeting location.

A map of the boundaries of the analysis area was shown (*see page 6 of Proposed Action Statement*) and an explanation on the different management areas (*see page 5 of Proposed Action Statement*).

Gary Johnson brought up a concern with timber in Management Area (MA) 9C. Acres of well-forested flat ground area adjacent to privately owned land was burned. The private landowner harvested their timber and is now required to reforest the land. If we leave our area alone, what effect will it have on their forested ground? The concern is with the amount of fuel left on the ground, and what would happen if another fire came through and damaged the reforested area. Gary pointed out that it would be a minor harvest area (in MA 9C) with no new roads required (roads already exist) and it would be a ground-

based operation; the area should be an exception for harvest under an emergency plan. Clair asked if this would enter into an EIS as opposed to an EA plan. DFO Aney pointed out that it would raise flags to go into this area. Margaret added that Forest Guidelines state that MA 9C is not a timber management area; vegetative management may occur to enhance the backcountry character of the area. The concern is if we do meet the objectives for management to maintain or enhance the area, it would be hard politically; we are going to be scrutinized for all we do. Chuck would like to pursue the idea more. He also had questions regarding MA9C: How severely was it hit? What does the area contribute to the landscape? Does it now? Is there anyway to provide mitigation on other land? Would the plan allow removal of some timber, leaving a plot or two to see if there would be any difference over time? What are alternatives to what Gary recommended? Amy pointed out that going into 9C was not in the proposed action. Would this mean a need for a new one? There is a timeline, and this would mean a delay of the timeline. The proposed action touched upon management areas included within the analysis area. Margaret suggested that an update including the MA9C be sent out, but to continue the process and not hold it up.

Salvage and Reforestation

Norm Michaels, Silviculturist, discussed different issues with timber salvage and reforestation. We are looking at removing merchantable trees from as much of the area as possible. Issues for this are suitability, capability, and unsuitability.

Suitability

- good ground for merchantable timber removal and reforestation
- area reforesting in a reasonable amount of time
- reforestation on suitable ground with a goal of 100 trees per acre in 5 years. Planting between 200-300 trees per acre to get the 100 trees per acre living and growing.

Capability

- can we grow trees at minimum stocking
- can we physically salvage and reforest

Unsuitable

- rocky ground
- reforestation would not occur within 5-10 years
- provide other habitat benefits, not for harvest, such as winter range, wildlife or a seed source.
- reforestation on unsuitable ground plants 30-50 trees per acre, with a 5-10 tree per acre survival goal
- areas too rough, with no trees, will not be planted

Helicopter Logging

- Agreed that the majority of the area would need to be helicopter logged
- Some of the area could be ground based logged
- **Pros of helicopter logging:**
 - Ø No new roads
 - Ø Minimum disturbance
 - Ø No opposition from Lakeview Stewardship Group, Environmental Groups

- **Cons of helicopter logging:**

- ∅ Will take away from local job opportunities; logging is contracted out of the area including trucks. Exclusive of the local sawmill, dollars will be spent on outside resources
- ∅ Large areas required for decking and loading

Suggested alternatives:

- Using ground based logging in conjunction with helicopter logging; allow resource specialist to look at land, slope, equipment, and economics.
- Shared landings between helicopter and land based operations

Snag and Old growth management

Amy Markus, Wildlife Biologist, presented information regarding snag management in the Winter Fire area. Her information is based on the most recent science and opinion of the leading research biologists who have conducted research on the effects of post-fire salvage on wildlife.

Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) Direction

- All sale activities (including regeneration, select cutting, thinning, or salvage) will maintain snags and green replacement/roost trees of ≥ 15 inches dbh at 100% potential population levels of primary cavity excavators.
- ∇ 100% population is the greatest number of a wildlife species that can occur if the constraints of food, cover, and water are removed. This is the maximum number of cavity nesting birds an area can hold considering snag density and size requirement, and territory size.

Managing for numbers recommended for green stand conditions

- This is not the recommended method for managing for snags in post-fire condition.
- The type of species and structure after a fire are different and require different snag retention levels than in green forests.
- There are species, such as the black-backed woodpecker that have evolved with fire, and require much different snag levels in green forests versus post-fire conditions.
- If you consider 4 snags (the current LRMP direction for green stands) amongst a green forest, versus 4 snags standing alone in a post-fire area, the environment is completely different. In the green stands, woodpeckers have the surrounding green trees to provide foraging areas, protection from predators, and cover from the elements. Four snags standing alone do not provide for these elements. Even when you leave an average of 4 snags per acre and leave them in small clumps, generally there are not enough trees to provide the foraging base the birds need.
- Research conducted in Montana demonstrated that when only a couple of snags per acre on average are left, there is little use by cavity nesters.
- It is suggested that you cannot use green forest standards for snags and expect use by cavity nesters after fire.
- If this method is used, clumping is preferred to individual snags.

Managing for a percent of area logged and unlogged, as recommended by Decayed Wood Advisor (DecAID) (*see handout*)

- Based on the idea that if you manage for black-back and Lewis woodpeckers, each at the opposite end of the spectrum in regards to habitat requirements in post-fire conditions, you'll be managing for the entire assemblage of cavity nesters.
- Black-backs require
 - Large unlogged clumps
 - High densities of smaller trees
 - Patch size ranges from 80-120 acres
 - High canopy closure pre-fire
 - Benefit most from post-fire conditions
 - Negatively affected by salvage logging

Black-backs have evolved with fire, and fires are critical for their long-term persistence or viability because they have higher nesting success and productivity in burned areas. Fires are an ephemeral source of habitat and use, and nest success will decline after about 4 years.

- Lewis' require
 - Small clumps 10-16 acres
 - Show positive response to salvage logging
 - Need large open spaced ponderosa pine trees
 - Low to moderate canopy closure pre-fire

Not shown in the literature is how many of these clumps are needed across the landscape. Also not in the literature is what to do in between the clumps. Woodpeckers are generally not strong fliers and fly from tree to tree to get from one place to another. Also, the area outside the clumps is often used for foraging, which could influence the use within the clumps.

Items to consider:

- Retaining clumps for black-backs and then managing for green levels, or 4 snags per acre in between the clumps
- Logging in Lewis areas, if leaving enough trees as recommended in DecAid
- Some areas may drop out through the IDT process, so depending upon where the locations are, it may not be practical to leave large areas for black-backs
- Some areas within analysis area could be left unlogged (unsuitable areas). Consider entire landscape, not just salvage area; area above rim where no logging to occur has potential to provide habitat.
- Placing the black-backs within the areas that have the least amount of volume and also meet the canopy closure requirement. Look at areas that overlap; areas good for nesting, unsuitable for harvesting.
- **Long-term habitat.** Large snags will last longer than small snags, but eventually they will fall down. Is the short-term habitat value worth the loss in economic value received from the timber?

Old Growth—Forest Plan Direction

- Enhance or maintain areas functioning as old growth
- Enough mortality on the north end so as to not function as old growth

- South end had small enough areas burned as to function as old growth
- MA 14 (*see proposed action statement*) is for old growth dependent species habitat
- Looking at areas to replace the now non-functioning old growth areas; areas around Slide Lake and Withers Lake.
- Functioning old growth areas will have no harvesting in the area.
- Non-functioning areas will be considered for salvage.

RAC Discussion

- Leave habitat for woodpeckers. Environmental Assessment needs to state that we are managing for woodpeckers within the management area, or it could be opposed.
- In order to make it economical, approach setting aside areas deemed unsuitable and with the least amount of volume. Looking at 300 acres within 3200 acres to be harvested.
- Uncertain about salvage areas; map is rough. Would still like to explore areas, but we do want to salvage the area.
- Would like to look at alternative action for area 9C. Let the Forest Service determine if alternative is feasible.

Public Comments

Mike Garrett

- ☐ Interest is in Fremont trail #160, 170 miles of trail. Would like to see something done with that section of the Fremont Recreation Trail. Perhaps hire kids to help come and clear the trails.
- ☐ Asked how Forest Service came up with the size of area for salvage, and why not do two projects at one time. Margaret explained that the area above the rim falls into the Klamath Basin watershed, whereas below is the Summer Lake watershed. Keeping it as simple as possible to try and ensure it to be as successful as possible. The F.S. has a process to go through to accomplish these projects, as opposed to private landowners and companies that have already harvested their timber. RAC's involvement is to bring diverse interests together in trying to get sales out unappealed.

Diana Adams

- ☐ Concerned that she did not see landowners in attendance. She would like to see a meeting in Paisley, with landowners getting personally invited to attend. She would like the RAC meetings well publicized, and well in advance of the meeting date.

Marty Demaris

- ☐ Would like to see this project produce jobs for the local area.

Jerry Jones

- ☐ Would like to have asked questions of Amy before she left the meeting; wanted to know the management direction on providing for woodpecker

management. Clair responded that we are managing for habitat and not numbers.

- ☐ Has concern that the proposed logging process does not provide for smaller operators. He also felt if we would harvest dead trees within 200 feet of open roads, then there wouldn't be a need for the NEPA process. Gary Johnson stated he thought more things needed to be covered by NEPA documents. Jerry feels this would be better for the smaller operators. Margaret said that they used to do more projects under categorical exclusion, to balance out the projects; things that could be accomplished at the district level.

Kerry Hart

- ☐ Thanked the group for making efforts. Relayed that speed is of the essence; timber value is what the mills are trying to protect.

Wrap Up

Forest Service will have a meeting in Paisley with RAC members invited.

Meeting adjourned