

MEETING NOTES

Wallowa-Whitman Field Trip

October 14, 2005

Baker City, Oregon



Meeting Facilitator: Martha Bean
Meeting Recorder: Judy Wing
Meeting Participants: 28 participants signed in

Meeting Summary/Objectives:

1. How to apply the vision and desired conditions we have developed together.
2. Management to move toward the desired conditions.
3. Suitable uses and the criteria that should be used to determine suitable uses.
4. Discuss measures of social, ecological, and economic sustainability."

Handouts:

1. Forest Plan Revision Field Trip Agenda
2. Map – Collaborative Field Trip
3. Desired Conditions for Field Trip Stops
4. Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Draft Chapter 1: The Vision
5. Sustainability Framework
6. Components of a Forest Plan
7. What a Plan Does and Does Not Do
8. How to Contact Us
9. Collaborative Field Trip Evaluation

Stop One: *Anthony Lakes Ski Area*

Martha went over the agenda/objectives (above) and all of the participants introduced themselves. Dave Schmitt, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Leader, reviewed the following (see handouts):

- Components of a Forest Plan
- Sustainability Framework
- DRAFT Forest Plan Chapter 1 – Vision (comments on vision due by end of January)

Discussion:

Q: Who decides "desired condition"?

A: We have been working on the developing the desired conditions with the public since our first round of workshops in June of 2004. We are using existing data, and may not have all the information. Historic range is a reference point.

Q: What is the difference between "considering" and/or "within" a desired condition?

A: Considering means that we look at all desired conditions and not just consider the problem from one view.

Q: What does Goal 6 of the Forest Services Strategic Plan for FY2004-2008 mean?

A: Examples are hurricane recovery, law enforcement, and financial management.

Q: In the documents you are preparing, is there a chapter on the Forests' current status?

A: The current status will not be a not part of the revised Forest Plans; however in the Plan set of documents there will be a "comprehensive evaluation report" which will include the current conditions and will cover analysis of effects on the ground.

Q: How will fire and the wild-urban interface be addressed in the revised forest plans?

A: The plan will look at desired condition for those areas, based on fuel loading and fire risk, and provide general direction for potential appropriate different levels of management.

Elaine, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team social scientist/economist, provided an overview of the sense of place and economic factors related to the ski area. One reason for picking Anthony Lakes as a field trip stop was to bring the context to the local area and show how economic, ecological and social values relate to ecological conditions.

Scott Kaden, Pacific Northwest Ski Association, provided an overview of the ski industry/developed recreation sites.

Bruce Countryman, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Vegetation Specialist explained the biophysical setting for the area as well as past large wildfires

Bob Mason, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Biologist, explained how the biophysical setting relates to the desired conditions and fish at Anthony Lake.

Trish Callaghan, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Recreation Specialist explained that Anthony Lake has a very diverse variety of recreational uses: trails, wilderness, scenic byway, recreational homes, ATVs, and snowmobiles.

Q: Where are cultural issues addressed in the vision?

A: Criteria 1.4.4 and 1.2.4

Q: What about connecting ecosystems for wildlife?

A: Criteria 2.2.5 in the vision looks at landscape patterns biological setting, size and relates to desired condition.

Q: Concerning the level of Forest Service funding, is the plan predicting or setting number of outputs per year and is it based on budget projections?

A: Projected outputs will be based on expected funding. The revised forest plans will set priorities to direct funding. This direction will be in the revised forest plans.

Q: What focal species will be used in the plan?

A: Currently indicator species, except elk, are based on old growth. We are working to find more representative species for each biophysical setting. We are also developing criteria for listed species and determining if they should be the focal species in the plan.

Stop Two: North Fork John Day Campground

Discussion:

Elaine provided an overview of how the desired conditions in the vision relate to traditional values.

Bruce described the biophysical setting as being cool/moist with historic large scale disturbances from fire and insects.

Bob Gecy, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team hydrologist, provided an overview of the hydrologic (stream and streamside area) function at this site.

Bob Mason discussed that the N Fk. John Day River is important fisheries and aquatic habitat area, and fisheries link to aquatic and upland management.

Trish discussed the challenges of having a campground in a Wild and Scenic corridor and how to maintain all values of congressional designation as the forest plan is developed.

Q: If FS is moving toward letting fires burn as a natural disturbance, why not let insects do their thing?

A: FS recognizes disturbance is natural part of system. The challenge is how much can the FS afford to do vs. what happens naturally.

Q: How will the FS measure the relationship between flow and standing biomass and is there enough vegetation to protect the area?

A: The goal is management of vegetation. Bob Gecy is trying to find indicators of stream health as they relate to vegetation.

Q: About 65% of moisture in a closed canopy reaches the ground – how can we get more to the ground?
Canopy cover % must be appropriate for best hydrologic system.

A: Not sure the information is available to determine optimum canopy cover. We will be looking at canopy cover closure in the biophysical settings and in the range of desirable conditions for sustainable forest system.

Q: How will upland meadow habitats be addressed?

A: FS is looking at flow and other variables including State water rights. Special-use permits are also part of the evaluation.

Q: Will the plan include pastoral livestock management?

A: The FS manages for stream flow and has strategic and regulatory obligations. FS is looking for more information about pastoral livestock management. We could include pastoral livestock management in the strategy section.

Q: What about natural disturbance in streams; the current fire plan just addresses human-ignited fires?

A: The revised plans will look at all variables. Flow regime plays a role.

Q: How do we know whether data was from during a wet or dry cycle?

A: We look at long-term climate studies, tree rings, and stream flow.

Q: How is climate change being incorporated into the plan?

A: The FS Region 6 Regional Office is working on climate change language and it will be incorporated.

Q: What is the difference between a clearcut and a wildfire to a watershed? Could the watershed be better managed through management as opposed to natural events?

A: It really depends on the site.

Comment: We need to understand that woody biomass is a resource. We need to recognize the value of the salvage trees in the plan. Include information about BTU's and the high value of small ring count wood.

Q: What is the scale of measure?

A: The total range of watershed size.

Q: Regarding criteria 2.1.3 productive capacity, will the FS clarify what “maintain” and “restore” really means in the Forest Plan documents? When will we use maintain and when will we use restore?

A: The desired conditions will be specific. If we are achieving the desired condition we will maintain it; if we are not at desired conditions, then we will select management that moves toward restoring them.

Stop Three: Mowich Loop

Discussion:

Elaine pointed about values such as gold mining and timber harvesting and ATV trails

Bob Mason noted the wildlife viewing area

Bruce described the different biophysical setting

Trish discussed the array and value of developed sites

Comment: The burned area across the lake is a good example of the need for management.

Comment: Grazing shouldn't be allowed in lake bed.

Q: Why are recreation cabins not available to the average American?

A: Recreation cabins are a unique FS legacy. No new recreation residences are being permitted.

Q: The political process does not match the ecological process. Will the new forest plan improve this?

A: A broadly supported plan will help this; fewer appeals because it is supported, could result in more management to meet ecological desired conditions.

Comment: We need to find and identify the things we can all agree on. It would be cheaper and the situation would change. We need to be working together toward success.

What was learned today?? Comments from participants:

The timber industry is too tired to come today

Timber industry feels FS isn't interested. Need to get back to basics.

FS is not getting enough timber out to support the mills. "FS needs to do their job". Like 50 years ago.

Appellant should pay for loss of timber revenue

The revised plans can meet all types of needs, but they may not meet everyone single need. Need to focus on outcomes, not outputs, restoration with biomass and fish passage. Plans need to show what public can count on (outcomes). Field trips are good. Talking about the good old days doesn't help.

We need to know, as a community, what is going to come off the forest. FS will need to provide on a sustainable basis so infrastructure can be put in place.

Dave Schmitt closed by agreeing that folks want to know what comes off forest. Need to have broadly supported plan with outcomes. Dave offered to come talk to groups about the revised forest plans.