

MEETING NOTES

Umatilla Field Trip

October 21, 2005 – Tollgate, Oregon



Meeting Facilitator: Susan Hayman
Meeting Recorder: Donna Scheibe
Meeting Participants: 54 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

Field Trip Introduction: Tollgate Trailfinder's Clubhouse

Susan went over the agenda/objectives (above) and all of the participants introduced themselves

Stop One: Bald Mtn Overlook

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)

Trish Callaghan, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Recreation Specialist, discussed the recreation uses in this setting as well as the adjacent wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas. She also provided an overview of the sense of place and economic factors related to the site.

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 for fish and wildlife. There are bull trout, steelhead and salmon in this watershed. He also discussed lynx analysis units.

Discussion:

Q: Is the Lookingglass Creek Inventoried Roadless Area suitable for roadless or wilderness? How many acres?

A: As part of the planning process, a determination will be made as to whether or not this area should be recommended to Congress as wilderness.

Q: Are there roads inside this roadless area?

A: We are still in the process of getting information on roadless areas.

Q: What about putting some wilderness back into multiple use?

A: The revised Forest Plans will not “undesigned” wilderness; wilderness is designated by Congress not the FS.

Comment: In the Barometer Watershed Study (1976-1985) nearby areas were clearcut by as much as 49% and showed no increase of flow turbidity.

Comment: Many other clearcutting studies show something quite opposite to that.

Q: Where there any measure of ground water flows in the Barometer Watershed study?

A: No

Q: How do we protect the three endangered fish species in this watershed without active management?

A: The revised forest plans will include desired conditions for fish and wildlife, and they will provide guidance for how to move towards those desired conditions.

Comment: This area is a management dilemma. About 30% of the area is a lynx analysis unit and there are several listed fish species. Every 100-150 years there is a catastrophic fire, and there are 150 private lots. It will take thoughtful, careful planning.

Comment: FS management of the Burnt Cabin Fire was a fabulous job.

Q: How will FS determine focal species?

A: The new planning directives tell us to track each species of interest; there are specific criteria within the directives.

Comment: What people want is the freedom to pursue their activities. FS has to have a really good reason to restrict it in any way.

Q: There are conflicts between hunters and ATVs during hunting season. After walking miles, ATVs run, shoot off their machines, go everywhere and anywhere. Are there areas designated? Who can I talk to about this?

A: Your District Ranger; in this case Mary Gibson.

Comment: There are also conflicts between snowmobilers and x-country skiers, but Mt. Bachelor has both without problems.

Comment: We could co-existence but in smaller numbers.

Comment: Closed roads intensify people in a smaller area. Open that up to disperse more widely, like ATVs.

Q: Does the plan have a mechanism to acquire private land?

A: No, but there is a desired condition related to exchanging lands. It would be desirable block up ownership, but that requires Congressional action so it involves a longer timeframe (five year minimum).

Stop Two: Ruckel Warming Shelter

Discussion:

Bruce explained the biophysical setting for the area as well as past large wildfires. This area is the warm/dry, open stands, with more recent fires. The desired condition for the biophysical setting is to increase the amount of ponderosa pine and western larch and decrease grand fir to protect against disease and insects. Various strategies to reach the desired conditions could include timber sales, thinning, and underburning.

Bob Mason explained how the biophysical setting relates to the desired conditions for fish and wildlife. He also explained that there was a specially designated Botanical Area nearby (special plant species, some plants are listed, some are important to American Indian tribes).

Bob Gecy, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team hydrologist, discussed soils and watersheds at this site. This site is the drainage for the headwaters of the Umatilla River.

Trish discussed various recreation uses for the area such as snowmobiling, skiing, x-country skiing, Boy Scout outings, family picnics, hunting, fishing, bird watching, root digging, horseback riding, and various cultural uses.

Comment: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation observes hunting, fishing here on a regular basis.

Q: Would logging income go back into the budget?

A: Some money would go to the Treasury, some to regenerating the site (e.g., seeding or planting); some would go to schools.

Q: What about "special sites"?

A: Some meadow areas that are headwaters are currently designated. The desired conditions for their particular biophysical settings will include specific standards and guidelines.

Q: Why don't we see any sign of beaver and otter?

A: Historically they were there. Part of this change is primarily changes to the habitat. We have cooperative agreements with the State and sub-basin plans. We are working with Nature Conservancy. Each State has a cooperative plan.

Comment: If there are not enough big trees or old-growth, and we need more ponderosa pine to move towards the desired conditions, what can we do about it? We should treat it like a garden and have long-term goals. A big fire could come along, but we suppress fire. Would disease move this site towards the desired conditions? There are not enough resources to do what we want to do for a greater chance of success.

Q: Why is there always money to fight fire but not to prevent it?

A: Until we treat enough of the landscape to reduce the chances of fires becoming larger and more intense than we are willing to accept, we have to fight fire aggressively.

Q: What is desired condition for grasses and shrubs?

A: Refer to the vision; there will be desired condition statements for this type of vegetation in the revised forest plans.

Q: What about invasive species?

A: Management direction for invasive species will be tied into the plan.

Q: Is FS going to bring back "lost species", like the wolf?

A: The FS primary charge is to take care of the habitat. We have cooperative agreements with agencies about introduction or reintroduction of species.

Q: How does the plan address the possibility of a large scare like a forest fire?

A: Plan needs to address salvage harvest fast. We (FS) hope to have a strategy for something catastrophic or imminent, being allowed to use a variety of management tools.

Comment: We need a plan that can be implemented; that has common ground. Some areas protected - Some open. Put all of that into the plan.

Comment: Stewardship--we are all interested in the resources and the key is healthy forests. Our forest is unhealthy. It is going to take all our parts. It costs \$3,000 to 5,000 to fight an acre of fire. Active stewardship can be worked out and carried out.

Comment: Engage your local government to promote watershed health. Public awareness to do our part is essential. Feedback is important but what is the administration looking for to confront the issues?

Response: Devise a plan that has large support. Administrative plan for support is there. Plan needs to meet the needs and desires of the people.

Comment: Remember that people who don't live here also have wishes about how these forests are managed.

Q: What percent of the forest is outside the range of viability? Are there any large blocks that are in good condition and are within the historic range?

A: Dry ponderosa pine stands are in shortage. Higher elevations are closer historically.

Comment: Regarding water volume quantity, does the FS provide most of the water? What about clean air? Global warming? The answer is to pay the FS for the water. It depends on how the FS manages the watershed. When trees are cut or burned there is more carbon in the air

Comment: Reading from Gifford Pinchot's 1891 statement to Congress, "Trees are dying and need to be cut so the new, young ones can grow...Plan should be site-specific...Renewable process, stewardship...We owe it to this and future generations."

Comment: Make a plan whereby we all are educated and then challenged to do it. Challenge all of us, and fund us.

Q: Is there any vision about how we can use our public lands in a responsible way?

A: Raise the level of the public awareness. How to get to the 5% who are not responsible? FS can do more education before they go to the forest. Let them know the problems and what is expected of them.

Comment: That is preaching to the choir; use the press.

Comment: Lots of trees need to be cut. We import a lot of lumber from Vietnam. Have the plan address more harvesting.

Q: Do you have a rough guess of wildlife species historically missing, say 300 years ago?

A: Grizzly bear and wolf

Q: What has happened that the common person can't fight a fire when they are there? 45 years ago we put fires out. Firefighters have to walk to fight fire then analyze the situation. – money is being squandered.

A: Burnt Cabin Fire was initially fought by private people, fisheries people doing research work in the Walla Walla River, but they didn't have the resources. There is a liability after the agency takes over.