

## Hood River Stewardship Collaborative Field Trip

June 27, 2016

### Facilitator's Summary

---

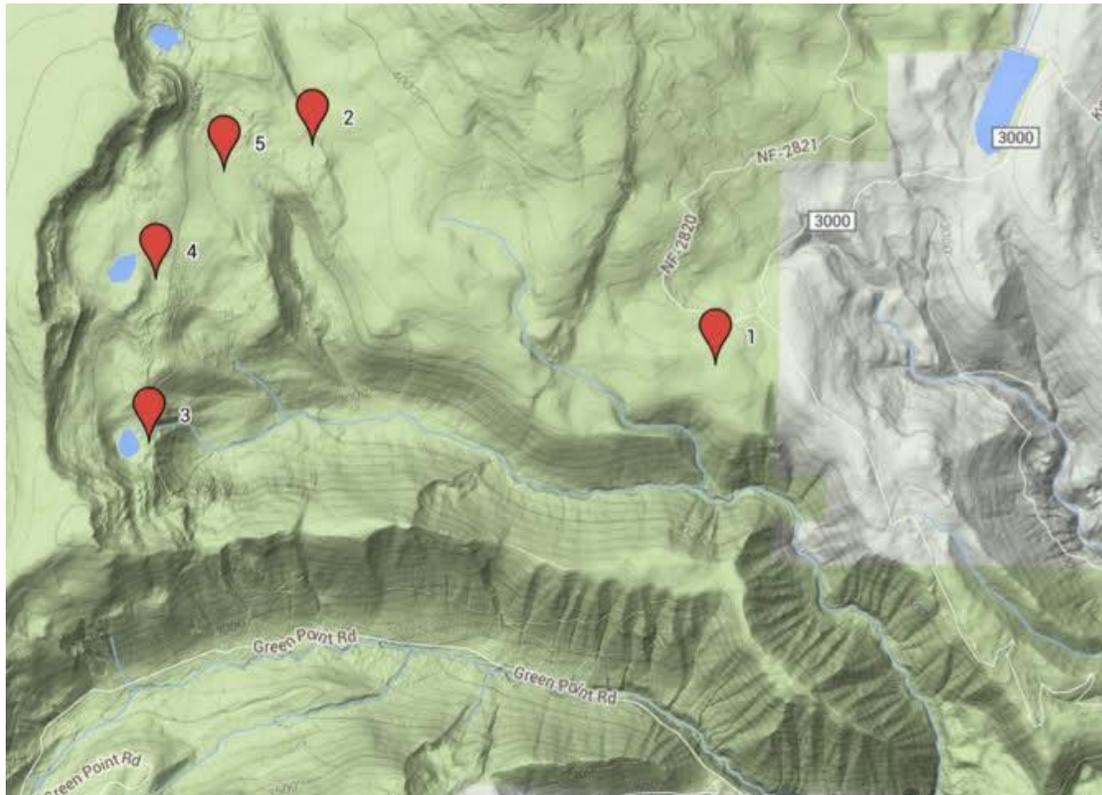
**Field Trip Participants:** Tyson Bertone-Riggs (ODF), Emily Jane Davis (OSU Extension), John Dodd (U.S. Forest Service), Sam Doak (Resident), Ann Dow (Resident), Catherine Flick (retired US Forest Service), Casey Gatz (US Forest Service), Keith Harding (HR Valley Resident Committee), Michael Krochta (Bark), Jay McLaughlin (Mount Adams Resource Stewards), Christina Mead (USFS), Stephanie Odell (USFS), Russ Plaeger (Bark), Laura Pramuk (USFS), Rick Ragan (HR Soil & Water Conservation District), Anne Saxby (HR Soil and Water Conservation District), Ron Schneider (High Cascade Inc.), Cindy Thieman (HR Watershed Group), Jim Thornton (USFS)

**Facilitator & Notes:** Emily Plummer, DS Consulting

#### Waucoma Planning Area Field Trip

The Stew Crew visited a number of sites in the Waucoma planning area to get familiar with the lay of the land. John Dodd, USFS, explained that the Waucoma is in the Mt. Defiance area. Mt. Defiance is a gently sloping shield volcano, with rocky soil that is permeable, dries out quickly and does not compact easily. As a result, this soil is resistant and equipment does not compact it as much as other more loamy soils. He noted that the Waucoma area is more similar to the east-side forests, than the west-side forests due to the soil type.

Rick Ragan, SWCD, noted that according to the 1996 Watershed Analysis, the fire return interval is 15-50 years, however, the Analysis noted that more information on fires was needed. Additionally, Rick noted that there used to be a logging mill in the area, with three irrigation canals that were used as flumes to transport the logs. It is thought that much of the Waucoma area is 2<sup>nd</sup> growth as a result of historic logging.



### Site 1: Previously Thinned White Pine & Doug-Fir Dominant Stand – 3,400ft; matrix



The group stopped at a white pine and Doug-fir dominant stand. This stand was thinned approximately 20-years ago. The plant association, which suggests plant species that would occupy the site if there was no natural or human-caused disturbance, was Western Hemlock. It was noted that it is difficult to determine what ‘restoration’ means for an area due to the fact that the plant associations are based off of an ideal condition without any disturbance, and climate change impacts what can grow currently and into the future. The group coalesced around the idea of increasing forest resiliency to fire and climatic changes.

#### Site Observations:

- Vegetation consisted of white pine and Douglas-fir, big leafed huckleberry
- The stand was homogeneous in structure and age; it was a single story stand and the canopy was not yet closed.
- There was little woody debris on the ground, however a fair amount of short and tall snag trees. There were also multiple standing dead trees, potentially from beetle, or blister rust?
- The stand has been entered multiple times and some of the openings have encouraged big leafed huckleberry. There is a nice balance of light and shade for the huckleberry.
- Previous management has accelerated the understory re-initiation phase.
- There were multiple species of shrubs.
- Relatively low fire risk, low fuel load and no ladder fuels.
- Plenty of summer browse for ungulates, however, little winter cover.
- Rodent species may not utilize this area until the 2<sup>nd</sup> story comes in – at which point other species, including owls, may follow.
- General bird species are using the area: tanagers, purple finch, hermit thrush and hermit warbler. The stumps and even living trees were being used by birds.

### Site 2: High to Low Elevation Transition Stand – 3,999ft; Matrix



This site is on the edge of the Mica thinning project that took place 20 years ago. The stand is a transition from higher elevation species to lower elevation species, consisting of Western and Mountain Hemlock, lodge pole and white pine, noble fir and some Engelmann spruce and Doug-fir.

Site Observations:

- There are openings from what appear to be old roads, these sections have more light coming through and huckleberry growing.
- Other understory species consist of cedar, alder, cottonwood, bunchberry dogwood, and mosses.
- There is significant moisture and some evidence of forest wetland.
- There is a significant amount of downed wood, in various stages of decay. The downed wood is likely from overcrowding. The ground is duff.
- All wildlife could utilize this area. There is foraging opportunity for owls, however, not nesting. Pine marten, an indicator species, could also use this habitat, as well as pileated woodpecker.
- There is low to moderate fuels on the ground, and it appears to have an infrequent fire regime.
- The marketability of the stand is low due to the variability of species and size of trees. It would be expensive to log and there is not much wood to take out.

**Site 3: Black Lake – 3,740ft; Back Country Lake, Matrix, & Riparian Reserve**



The group stopped for lunch at Black Lake which is designated for ‘roaded recreation’. This lake is near the wilderness land boundary. There are four campsites that get moderate use. There were recreationists there during the visit and the site is managed by a local concessionaire. There is a parking lot and pit toilet.

**Recreation, Limited Harvest Matrix & Wilderness**

This site is a popular camping and recreation site currently and historically. This was a popular route for Native Americans as they travelled along Waucoma Ridge. The Stanley Smith Timber Company impounded the lake in the past; however, the dam has been breached. There are user developed campsites, a parking lot and a pit toilet. The road to the lake is in poor condition, however, helps to disperse use.

Site Observations:

- There is a trail that leads from Wahtum Lake through Rainy Lake and down to Kingsley Reservoir. This trail is heavily used by hikers and bikers as a loop and point to point trail.
- There is another trail loop from North Lake to Rainy Lake, and also a trail to Bear Lake that is lightly used.
- There are large trees and still some green understory, the heavy use has not resulted in a campground desert.



**Site 4: Rainy Lake – 4,092ft; Routed**

### Site 5: Doug-fir Monoculture – approx. 3,600ft; matrix



This site was not originally on the tour, however, the group stopped to look at the stand to discuss thinning in stands that are overcrowded, mono-cultures. This stand was estimated to have been regeneration logged approximately 30-45 years ago and now is a Doug-fir mono-culture. There are very large tree stumps in the area, illustrating that the area was capable of growing old-structure forest in the past. The site was dark, with little to no shrub or plant species.

While examining the stand individual members of the group took the opportunity to share some personal views:

- Thinning could introduce species diversity.
- Thinning this stand could be economically viable. The trees in this stand are average in size compared to trees that are being logged these days. The area is flat and transport costs would be low.
- The stand is overstocked, there may be Stewardship credits to thin out the thicker areas.
- If thinned the healthier and larger trees could be left standing; favoring non-Douglas-fir species as the leave trees.
- The trees look healthy, with deep crowns, it could be helpful to thin it.
- Thinning stands that have been managed over time is better than going into areas that have not been managed in the past.
- Any management should take into consideration how close it is to the Wilderness boundary and pay attention to the habitat need in the area.
- How many acres of land are like this in the Waucoma area?
- A thinning project in a stand like this would need to take care to not create another patterned monoculture with flat tops.
- Consider managing to a basal area and varying age class.
- Consider making skips and gaps with larger gaps in some areas to encourage regeneration.
- When planning a project, allow flexibility so that the operator can take advantage of the large stumps to encourage habitat.
- The future is unknown and we should err on the side of caution, using the Precautionary Principle.
- Projects should increase stand resiliency.
- Projects need to take into consideration the areas around the stand, as well as the purpose that the stand has on the landscape.
- Diversity of stands is important and closed, dense stands serve a purpose.
- There needs to be consideration of opening lands and the impact that it may have in encouraging unauthorized trails and OHV use, fire, etc.
- Consider established use nearby and how that use will be impacted by a project.

- Also consider how neighboring land managers are using their lands and try not to impact that.

The group thanked the Field Trip Sub-group for their efforts in coordinating the day's trip. And with that, the meeting was adjourned.

**The next Stew Crew meeting is on July 20th from 2:00-5:00pm at the OSU Extension Office.**

*This summary is respectfully submitted by DS Consulting Facilitators; suggested edits can be provided to Emily at [emily@dsconsult.co](mailto:emily@dsconsult.co).*