

LAVA COLLABORATIVE GROUP MEETING

February 19, 2013

Attendees:

Rick Ragan

Bruce Holmson

Richard Larsen, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Megan Saunders, Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District

Eric Fernandez, Oregon Wild

Daina Bambe

Gary Asbridge

Chris Rossel

Laura Pramuk

Christina Wesseler (notes)

Rick: The reason for this meeting is to finalize recommendations. At previous meetings we talked about huckleberry units, and those moved from Red Hill, and gave recommendations for that. We discussed treating units 52 and 53. We also talked about unit 54, which is over 80 years old. BARK recommended not treating in this unit. We finished our last discussion by talking about stewardship opportunities.

I would recommend continuing the discussion about unit 54. It is in matrix land. The majority of the Stewardship Crew was fine with the treatment prescription. Controversy arose because of the age of the stand.

NOTE: Photos of Unit 54 will be provided with these notes for the Stewardship Crew.

Bruce: Matrix land over 80 years. Not seeing anything to act off of on this.

Rick: I think disturbance would assist with stand health. This is a stagnant stand, so it might not respond. Huckleberry might respond.

Bruce: It will respond. The canopy is good, with a diverse species component. I would propose thinning from below. After reading BARKs comments, it triggered some thoughts. Whitney is looking at 1-5 acre gaps and also at putting gaps in riparian areas.

Rick: This was the discussion, but we decided against skips and gaps in riparian areas for Red Hill.

Bruce: Is this still the case for Lava? I have not seen evidence of benefits of gaps in riparian areas.

Rick: We talked about feathering treatments.

Bruce: I would not support gaps in riparian areas due to connectivity principles.

Gary: In the team discussions for Red Hill the connectivity as being used by wildlife was never brought up.

Rick: This is in regards to the principles of riparian acres.

Daina: The forest plan allows up to 5 acres, but Whitney would plan gaps sight specifically to determine greatest benefit. Wildlife prefers gaps away from roads to prevent shooting corridors. This then becomes a challenge on where to put gaps. In Lake Branch we ended up with gaps close to roads, which. We need to articulate ecological concerns with these gap/riparian dynamics. The final authority goes to the forest supervisor.

Gary: All gaps in Red Hill were based on silvicultural need, and were not volume driven.

Rick: That would enforce the 2 acre limit. There was also a discussion at the last meeting regarding larger gaps for western white pine (WWP) planting.

Daina: There were only five units where Whitney felt that larger gaps for planting WWP were needed. She felt that given the moisture level, if the gaps were smaller they would fill in quicker with competing vegetation. We could limit it further based on slope/vegetation.

Gary: In Red Hill, we created no gaps within the no-cut buffers. These buffers were along all intermittent and perennial streams. Some buffers were extended based on unstable slope conditions. The intent was no gaps adjacent to creeks or on steep slopes. The analysis by myself and Mark Kreiter concluded there was no stream temp affect. Not much impact to aquatics.

Chris: My understanding is that treatments would expand existing openings in riparian reserves. An example is Unit 1 along Bear Creek.

Bruce: There is a generic statement for skips, gaps and thinning in the "brown units". I am still not sold on putting skips and gaps in riparian areas.

Rick: This gets back to our discussions about riparian areas and riparian zones and the aspects of thinning. A gap provides some leave trees (6 trees per acre). It is essentially a shelterwood.

Richard: This would provide elk forage habitat.

Rick: I am not opposing treatment, but perhaps it should be feathered instead. It might also depend on the riparian corridor and the previous treatments along the corridor.

Eric: What is the advantage of putting a gap along a riparian corridor?

Gary: It is silviculturally driven, and centered around root rot pockets. Whitney proposed to eradicate the forest health problem by removing trees. There may have been a wildlife component as well. These gaps would provide beneficial openings for forage.

Rick: The issue will be the strategic placement of these gaps.

Gary: I would recommend using these terms when you make the final recommendations. A **riparian zone** is directly adjacent to the stream and has truly riparian vegetation. We have the **no cut buffer** (the buffer size depends on whether the stream is perennial, intermittent, fish-bearing or not) surrounding this, and then around that is the **riparian reserve**, which also depends on the stream type. The gaps in Red Hill were in the riparian reserve outside of the no cut buffer. The buffer was decided based on DEQ shade sufficiency needs. The default was 60 feet to add extra protection. If there was a steep slope we extended this.

Chris: Other aspects included the available woody material for slope stabilization and material introduced to the creek.

Richard: For Red Hill we agreed to small gaps outside the no cut buffer to provide wildlife forage.

Rick: I remember talking about doing some lighter feathering treatment, but not necessarily gaps.

Bruce: "Create a cap or a gap and they will come." Should we create those in a riparian reserve and invite deer and elk in there?

Richard: It would depend on the steepness of the ground and the distance to water.

Rick: In Lava it is comparatively flat and rocky. I recall that the ground changed as you moved away from the stream to become steeper.

Bruce: I would agree with Rick that density reduction or snag/down woody creation is needed, but not gaps in riparian reserves.

Daina: What about a scenario which utilizes an existing opening within the riparian reserve to further expand the opening outside the riparian reserve?

Rick: That would be fine.

Daina: Whitney said that was the goal with gaps in the riparian reserve.

Bruce: Another scenario was in the 90s when we put a corridor in through a riparian area. The treatment ending up getting out of hand. The contractors were swinging logs into other trees, causing additional damages.

Gary: There were five units in Red Hill which had corridors. Every tree which was mistakenly cut within the no cut buffer was a drop and leave. Management ramifications of gaps – it would be clear direction for presale if you said no gaps. But in small units with a high stream density we have to incorporate a certain amount of skips and gaps and it becomes difficult to decide where to put them. If you limit them in one area it may become a problem in another.

Rick: I want to make sure we don't recommend something it is impossible to do. We should have a fall back for the presale crew.

Richard: We should talk about where we want the gaps to be. Gaps should be in the flattest ground available, where there will be the best forage development away from roads and streams.

Daina: Skips and Gaps are in the silvicultural prescription, but there is no official recommendation in the Forest Plan. Pay close attention to criteria for gaps in small units.

Eric: If you had the small unit scenario and it is too small for a large percentage of gaps, I trust the FS will make a good decision.

Rick: We should have a provision for these smaller units.

Eric: There are plenty of larger units which we can be more creative with.

Daina: Recognize that variable density goals cannot be met in the smaller units.

Rick: Conversation at a previous meeting regarding the rationale for gap size. I would like to determine a gap size to recommend. Limit to 2?

Bruce: Why would you limit it to 2?

Eric: Oregon Wild would suggest a limit of 1-2 acre gaps anywhere in the unit.

Rick: Let's step back and look at the other units. No controversies and similar treatments in firewood units.

Eric: How about road decommissioning opportunities?

Daina: There is a rundown of roads which have been proposed for decom/closure, but there has been no discussion about what we will be doing in conjunction with this project.

Rick: Let's return to skips and gaps. We are talking about doing no gaps within the no cut buffer. Previously existing openings can be utilized in riparian reserve.

Bruce: How about the gap size issues in smaller units?

Rick: Should we recommend that gaps are smaller or nonexistent in those smaller units?

Bruce: There is no set quote for the FS to put in skips or gaps on any units, correct?

Rick: Skips and gaps are there to ensure variable density thinning. If this is the objective, perhaps there are other methods.

Richard: One objective for gaps is to provide early seral habitat.

Chris: My understanding is that Whitney wants to create habitat for white pine, and this may also determine gap size.

Megan: What are the negatives of a five acre gap?

Bruce: It takes a good chunk out in the first entry, and if you come back in 20 years you may have precluded some options for the second entry, especially if it is a smaller unit.

Eric: All gaps are temporary. Smaller gaps leave you more options for adding more gaps in later treatments.

Rick: A gap may provide good forage initially, but it will be choked out eventually. We could describe the limitation based on a percentage of the unit acreage.

Bruce: How small is too small?

Richard: That would depend on slope, aspect. North and south facing slopes will have different light exposure.

Rick: "If it fits justification"?

Eric: I would be more comfortable with a set size, such as up to 2 acres, given set goals.

Daina: There is an absence of WWP where it was once present in the landscape, and one silvicultural goal is to create persisting pockets of WWP. This should be taken into consideration. Whitney recommended gaps of 3 acres to promote this. 5 units in Red Hill had larger gaps (up to 3.2 - also utilizing existing openings) to plant WWP.

Eric: We haven't seen any completed projects utilizing these gaps. I'm nervous about not having evidence of success.

Richard: We haven't talked about the number of gaps in units. If we had smaller gaps, would we have more of them?

Daina: There would be a percentage of skips and gaps, but exact number and size would be site specific.

Megan: Are there proposed numbers for that?

Rick: The gaps are also based on areas of forest health concerns. Should we limit based on a percentage or let Whitney do her job?

Bruce: I would support 2 or 3 acres, even 5 if the site needed it. Most of these are young stands.

Rick: Hydrologic recovery? I am trying to put this in a standpoint for the benefits.

Richard: We are ignoring the early seral component in this discussion. What percentage would you need?

Bruce: Land allocation objective. Put in too much early seral at this time does not fit the growth and yield. You can create some, but 5 acres would be a large hit.

Richard: Depends on the age of the trees.

Rick: We can also consider the placement of units – such as those adjacent to Longview Fibre land (which is essentially early seral).

Richard: Placement as far from LVF as possible. Private landowners also usually spray competing veg and encourage rapid growth, so this is actually very low quality for forage and habitat.

Gary: From a landscape perspective, in Red Hill there were 1500 acres treated. Of this, there were about 60 acres of gaps. Not a large component.

Bruce: That is about 5% and is reasonable.

Richard: I see that as being a more reasonable limitation, versus the specific size of the gaps. The real question is what percentage will be in gaps.

Rick: That would depend on the stand dynamics.

Richard: Should we keep the larger gaps in older stands?

Eric: I would also like to recommend that legacy trees should be avoided.

Daina: We usually concentrate skips to avoid legacy trees.

Bruce: Also note that snags, seeps, wet pockets, and down woody debris should be avoided.

NOTE: There is a bullet list of discussion points regarding skips and gaps, as well as recommendations which were given during this meeting at the end of this document.

Rick: Moving on to stewardship projects.

Referencing list provided by Chris Rossel and Gary Asbridge.

Daina: It would be helpful to prioritize these projects, as funding will not be available for all of them. There is no set amount which will be available.

Gary: Another project which was suggested by Susan Nugent was seed collection and planting of huckleberries in some treatment units. (Monitoring would not qualify for retained receipts)

There was general group approval of such a project.

Bruce: What about decommissioning roads. The Lawrence Lake quarry road has been discussed before.

Daina: That quarry has been used for log storage, and we still need to discuss the wilderness boundary with the surveyors. It is a location which benefits us.

Gary: I think it is an oversight that decommissioned roads opportunities did not make it on this list. There is still an opportunity to go after other sources of money to accomplish these projects.

Eric: I'm fine blessing the whole list, but de-prioritize road maintenance and riparian thinning.

Gary: We can re-convene this group once we have the retained receipts to discuss how monies are spent.

Rick: We can come up with a list of projects that we would recommend for this area.

Richard: Could these be funded by goods for services?

Daina: It does depend on the project type, and the skill sets required. (ie: road maintenance can be completed by contractors, while other projects require more specific skills)

Rick: Invasive plant treatment should also be a priority.

Daina: Most of the infestations of concern in this area are on private land. Yearly weed spraying along the major FS roads have kept weeds to a minimum.

Eric: Let it be noted that Oregon Wild has a dissenting opinion on the recommendations for treating Units 52 and 53, based on recreation conflicts and the fact that these are healthy stands adjacent to wilderness.

DISCUSSION OF GAPS

Gap Size:

- If a gap is too large in young stands then it may limit future options for stand treatment
- If you create a smaller gap now you will retain options in the future to create more gaps, adding more structure to the stand.
- If a gap is too small then there is not enough sunlight to create quality forage
- Longview Timber Lands contain early seral lands (These are of low quality due to spraying of competing veg)
- Dollar Lake fire provides early seral habitat.

Riparian Zone vs. Riparian Reserve:

- No gaps located:
 - 300' from fish-bearing streams
 - 150' from non fish-bearing perennial streams
 - 100' from intermittent streams

Gap Objectives:

- create early seral habitat
- create micro-climate for successful regen of shade intolerant species (western white pine)

Skip Objectives:

- Leave islands of cover

GAP RECOMMENDATIONS

- no gaps in buffers
- can utilize existing openings in Riparian Reserves
- small units may not have gaps if criteria cannot be met
- preference for gaps on flatter ground

- minimize gap locations near open roads, and avoid placing gaps too close to Longview Timber Land.
- Preference is for gap size to be 2 acres or less (**Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation does not agree**)
- Unless there is a compelling, site-specific reason (ie: root rot, western white pine) to put in a larger gap, not to exceed 3 acres. (**Oregon Wild does not agree**)

SKIPS TO FOCUS ON/CORRIDORS TO AVOID

- down woody debris
- areas of legacy trees, legacy snags
- wet areas
- skyline corridors near skips and legacy tree areas

RETAINED RECIEPTS

Lower Priority:

- Road Maintenance
- Riparian Thinning

Higher Priority:

- Fish Habitat Enhancement
- Road Decommissioning
- Huckleberry Enhancement
- Invasive Plant Treatments