

LAVA COLLABORATIVE GROUP MEETING NOTES
January 23, 2013

Attendees

Rick Ragan	Whitney Olsker
Megan Saunders	Leo Segovia
Bruce Holmson	Gary Asbridge
Leanne Hogie	Chris Rossel
Brenna Bell (via conference call)	Edan Lira
Daina Bambe	Christina Wessler (notes)

INTRO COMMENTS

Rick: We have had field trips to the Lava Planning Area, and we are now talking about the proposed treatments.

Whitney: We have huckleberry treatments and we also have some planting needs for old plantation units that were burned during the Dollar Lake Fire. This area (as you may remember from the field visits) is off the 16 road and the 1610 road, and is very similar to Red Hill in plant communities, but it is a drier forest type and is much flatter. Portions of the Middle Fork Hood River are in the project area and we have Bear Creek, Tony Creek, and Coe Branch in the project area. The majority of the plantations we are proposing to thin are between 45 and 50 years old, averaging around 300 square feet of basal area with an average diameter (dbh) around 11 inches, based off field reviews and field visits.

When we were in the field we talked about recommendations, and if you felt that we would follow similar recommendations as those from Red Hill and add on to them, or if you would rather go a different route. I believe most people were comfortable with the recommendations for Red Hill in the plantations from Red Hill, correct me if I'm wrong, folks who were on the field trip. Based on the Red Hill recommendations, we don't have much from you (the collaborative group) on recommendations for huckleberry treatments, fuel wood or planting. This is a good opportunity to talk about this. We also have Chris and Gary here to talk about potential retained receipts projects, if you have questions about that.

Rick: There had been one question raised which should be addressed: why were the Huckleberry units brought forward from the Red Hill project to this one?

Daina: The rationale for moving the Huckleberry Enhancement units from the Red Hill project area to the Lava project area was that there is a greater percentage of the huckleberry habitat type within the Lava project area. A huckleberry enhancement treatment would be more aligned with the purpose and need of Lava than Red Hill, so I deferred analysis to Lava.

Whitney: Most of the plantations, I'd say about 90%, have huckleberries in them. They aren't bearing, they aren't producing, but they are established and are being outcompeted shade-wise. There is no break in the canopy for them. But they are there. The same with commercial fuel-wood. The percentage of huckleberries throughout this project area is higher, and it fits better overall with the huckleberry enhancement proposal to bring those units over as well.

SIZE OF OPENINGS

- Rick: So you generally think that by opening up the canopy you'll get more sunlight, therefore hopefully there will be a response by the plants to bear?
- Whitney: Yes, and also I don't have as many windthrow concerns in a lot of this area. It's a lot flatter and we have more flexibility to open this canopy up more. In Red Hill we only proposed a 50% canopy cover retained, where in Lava we'd like to see 40% canopy cover retained. So we can open the canopies up more and keep them open longer, whereas in Red Hill we had more slope and wind and similar concerns that came up with stability.
- Rick: With the 40% canopy retention?
- Whitney: Yes. And as Daina said, we are still proposing variable density thinning, utilizing skips and gaps. We are proposing one to five acre gap sizes again.
- Brenna: There is something I'm really curious about, because you mentioned following the Stew Crew's recommendations for Red Hill in Lava, but the Stew Crew specifically recommended gaps no more than 2 acres in Red Hill and the Forest Service went ahead with gaps as large as 5 acres. It is questionable about whether that is a gap in the Red Hill project. So you didn't follow the Stew Crew's recommendations in Red Hill. When you say you want to follow the same ones now in Lava, what do you mean? The ones the Forest Service went ahead with or the ones the stew crew actually recommended? Can we clarify why the Forest Service didn't follow the stew crew's recommendations in Red Hill? This was difficult for us at BARK.
- Daina: We have recommendations and we pay attention to those recommendations. There were about five units where we went with 5 acres and used that opportunity to get white pine reintroduced and provide that additional diversity, improving forest health in the long term. If there had been a very strong rationale by the stewardship group saying "We should stay with 2 acres because of these reasons...", that would have enabled me to understand more as opposed to, "Recommend that gaps be no bigger than 2 acres." There was no real ecological justification to why that needed to happen and I felt that the ecological reasons for providing those large open areas to ensure our ability to get white pine into those stands was of greater importance. My suggestion to the collaborative group was that if there is a very strong ecological reason they feel that we should be compelled to stay with the 2 acres or less that I would like to see that articulated in the recommendations.
- Brenna: Gradey was at the meetings and I wasn't, but he did say there was a lot of discussion around coming to that recommendation. It seems like it wasn't in the recommendations it would be in the notes. Maybe other people who were there can speak to this. It was definitely surprising to see that the recommendations were not only not followed but the reasoning that you just gave was not in the EA. It feels dismissive of the stew crew's work.
- Daina: I'm sorry that it felt that way. The recommendations are not to be perceived as direction to the line officer. The Forest Supervisor feels strongly about the ecological need, and he is the final authority on these projects.

Bruce: We did talk about gaps previously. The 5 acre maximum got my attention. It does seem large, even for white pine restoration. With the Lava project in plantations, you would be taking trees off at their prime growth. But for huckleberry restoration I'd be willing to try this size of gap.

Whitney: The maximum gap analyzed in the Northwest Forest Plan is 5 acres. We analyzed for the biggest impact using this value to see where we could and couldn't put gaps. During implementation it is site specific where we use 1 to 2 acre gaps and where we use 5 acre gaps.

Bruce: Do you see this as a 1-entry planning area?

Whitney: I would like to try 2 entries, with the next one planned in 20 years. We would need to complete NEPA before the second entry anyway.

Rick: I thought the openings were larger, but I agree with Bruce that it might be large for plantations. The research right now is suggesting that to get old growth conditions, you need larger spacing. On average most of our spacing is 12 t. The research is suggesting increasing the spacing towards 20 ft.

Bruce: Yes, that is Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson who are working with this right now. Because we are in plantations I am not certain about gaps this large for white pine reintroduction. I could buy creating larger gaps for deer and elk, but for white pine, 1-2 acres seems more reasonable. What are the land allocations in these proposed units?

Whitney: The majority of the units are in C1, there are a few which overlap with riparian reserve. There are also proposed treatment units within B1 (Scenic viewshed of the Middle Fork), B2 (Viewshed), and B5 (pine marten and pileated woodpecker). The majority of the treatment areas are within matrix land, but we still have some thinning proposed in riparian reserves.

Rick: Do you have preferred treatment for fuel wood?

Whitney: Yes, there would be ground-based restrictions and designated skid trails. We will be maintaining Forest Plan standards for snag requirements. I've walked through units with our Wildlife Biologist, Patty Walcott, to determine the snag needs. Based off field evaluations, current snag levels are around 22 snags/acre. Most of this is lodgepole pine, some large true fir and Douglas fir, some hemlock. There is plenty of regeneration occurring in these fuel wood areas.

Daina: With regards to recommendations, if the stew crew feels strongly about limiting gaps to 2 acres, I would recommend bringing that forward again. It could influence how we move forward with Lava. I would support this to Chris Worth.

Brenna: BARK requests that the notes from Red Hill be reviewed to make sure the group's recommendations were accurately provided to the Forest Service.

Bruce: I'm not sure how you can exceed 2 acres if this is considered a regeneration harvest. Doesn't it have to meet the 95% annual mean annual increment rule?

Whitney: In the Forest Plan the threshold is five acres. The guidelines say to start monitoring at five. Based off acre size, the natural openings in this project area are closing very fast without regeneration. Two acres or less openings are filling in with rhododendron, Douglas fir and hemlock. There may be less competition in Lava than we had in Red Hill, though.

Bruce: Will you be planting?

Whitney: Yes. We would not be clear cutting, we would retain all minor species and maintain shade trees for planting white pine.

Bruce: If you came back in 20 years would you do the same treatment?

Whitney: Yes, I would maintain openings, and reopen as needed, thin the matrix, establish new gaps and remove encroachment.

HUCKLEBERRIES

Leanne: Glad to see Huckleberry treatments

Brenna: These are the old Red Hill huckleberry units that are now in Lava? What is the difference between the Red Hill prescriptions from those being proposed in Lava?

Whitney: The prescriptions will be the same for the Huckleberry Enhancement units that were originally in the Red Hill project area.

Brenna: I believe we recommended against treating these units during the Red Hill discussions.

Whitney: The units have not changed, but there is more opportunity now to treat them in conjunction with these other Lava units.

Megan: This was a year ago, but as I recall, moving these units seemed likely at the time.

Bruce: We talked about treating one of the flatter units as a demo. BARK was not ready to agree to this at the time. Since it wasn't in agreement we dropped those units.

Rick: Brenna and I have had conversations outside of meetings, and as I recall, we weren't for or against it. There was no group agreement, so we were silent in our recommendation.

Rick: It was not steep ground, but it was more exposed. We were concerned about windthrow. We had talked about an experimental unit to the north which would be less ground disturbing. Then we would see what response the huckleberries had.

Daina: Did you discuss alternatives to thinning, such as removing trees by girdling? Was that in the dialogue? There are trade-offs to using this method.

- Rick: I don't think so. We talked about different levels of removals with a commercial product. We could not come up with an option to retain enough trees but also enhance the huckleberries.
- Megan: Could you clarify girdling?
- Daina: To girdle a tree you remove the upper cambium layer of wood in a ring around the tree. The tree will die, but remain as a snag in the unit. If the objective is to open up the stand or to deal with parasites or disease like the wooly adelgid, this is an option. The Tribes have strong interest in enhancing huckleberries.
- Rick: We want to enhance the huckleberries, but we don't want to cause a disturbance which would destroy the stand. We do not understand how treatments will affect this plant association yet.
- Leo: The Tribes have tried burning in this same plant association. They burned heavily, and the plants died back quite a bit. The huckleberries did not respond for 3 years after the treatment.
- Whitney: Many of the existing openings where these huckleberries are established are next to large rock piles. We could slowly open up the stand around these huckleberries. There are many opportunities to create new openings while protecting the stand.
We would like to meet both needs. We can experiment with different thinning techniques... The easiest units to access are units 52 and 53, which are near the road. Unit 50 is a helicopter unit. There are more sheltered units with opportunities to try these treatments.
- Megan: Are the removed trees being sold?
- Whitney: Yes, if possible.
- Bruce: Could we get some input from Brenna on these huckleberry treatments? How would you feel about at least trying one unit?
- Brenna: Are these the ridge units? That would make a difference. Units 51 and 53 were the flattest, as I recall. Those sound interesting. However, I could not sign off without consensus from Gradey and BARK. Have you considered the use of fire?
- Whitney: Fire would not have been a major disturbance factor in this plant association type since it is typically much wetter. When it did occur, it would have been crown fires, or very intense ground fires. We are trying to mimic smaller scale disturbances.
- Brenna: If the Dollar Fire just opened up many pockets, why are you creating more?
- Whitney: What I have seen in walking the burn zone, is that it burned too hot for most of the plants to survive.
- Brenna: Would they re-sprout after 1-2 years?

Whitney: I would assume that this could happen, but we are not seeing evidence of that yet.

Rick: I walked along the Vista Ridge Trail where the fire came through, and I saw no sprouting.

Leanne: Which units did we talk about that would be easier to access by the Tribal Elders?

Whitney: Units 52 and 53.

Rick: Do we want to put a motion on the floor to try at least one unit?

Leanne: It would be interesting to do one or the other of these units. As I remember, BARK was not interested in considering this the last time we discussed huckleberry treatments.

Bruce: This proposal is different from last time, in that there would be no fire applied.

Rick: Unit 53 is the flatter of the two. 52 is a hillside unit. I would suggest trying modified treatments in Unit 53, and leave the other units.

Whitney: (referencing map of units) That unit is about 30 acres, but we could do less of the stand.

Rick: Any thoughts from the group?

Leanne: I was thinking we could do two and not do the other two.

Brenna: If we are considering tribal accessibility, the lower units (Whitney: 52 and 53) make more sense.

Bruce: Let's go for two units.

Rick: We would have to reopen the roads to treat the other units.

Whitney: The Vista Ridge Trail is in unit 52. I'll be visiting with Recreation to discuss the visual resources and how to meet those standards. Some of the best access points for huckleberries are above the trail.

Rick: Let it be recorded that the Stewardship Crew recommends treating units 52 and 53 for huckleberries according to Whitney's treatment prescription.

Brenna: BARK is abstaining from this decision.

THINNING

Rick: Are there any other concerns? Would this (unit 54) be a commercial thin or a variable thin?

Whitney: Unit 54 is now a plantation thin. There are no more commercial thins in this project proposal. There is a history of planting in this area.

Brenna: Are you trying to move this unit toward an old growth condition?

Whitney: There are concerns about growth loss. The trees in this unit have stopped growing and are lacking stand structure. Left as they are, they will not move to another stand structure.

Rick: Are there other questions?

Brenna: It would be interesting to see how these stands will self-thin naturally. BARK would recommend staying out of this unit and stands over 80 years and monitoring how they change naturally.

Bruce: Is this matrix land?

Whitney: Yes, this is a C1 area under the Forest Plan.

Brenna: You still have the discretion not to log in this unit.

Bruce: What are the reasons for not treating?

Brenna: There are very few older, replanted forests which are allowed to naturally reselect in a single story forest. It won't stop growing altogether based on my experience with forest ecology. This perspective of non-active management is what BARK advocates.

Whitney: This unit was part of a larger unit in the 1900s. In the small scale it would be interesting to watch and monitor. It is a compare and contrast opportunity.

Brenna: More importantly, if this is a C1 unit then just talk about it in terms of logging commercially. Don't say it is a forest health thin when it is being sold commercially.

Leanne: It would be helpful to visit these stands later in the summer to see what the different stands look like. There are a lot of parcels that we aren't touching that we could go see.

Bruce: This stand is not a money-maker. Is it natural regeneration?

Whitney: It has noble fir, so it could be natural, but the composition does not look natural. There were also Douglas-fir and hemlock. It is a very wet stand with saturated soils.

Rick: A small, stagnated stand is what I remember seeing. Do we have recommendations on plantation thinning?

Bruce: We don't have a firm knowledge of natural versus planted in this stand.

Brenna: BARK would advocate not including 80+ year old units.

Bruce: Are there any others like this?

Whitney: All of the others are 50 years and younger.

- Bruce: I would keep it in. It is 90+ years old and it isn't growing much based on its small diameter trees.
- Leanne: I would agree with keeping it.
- Rick: That is my impression too. Let the record show that BARK advocates not cutting in Unit 54.
- Daina: These dissenting comments are important to include in the notes, along with their rationale. Brenna, please review the notes for this.
- Whitney: You can also write something up and send it to Anne (Saxby).
- Rick: I'm trying to move on. Let the record show that three of four non-Forest Service members present agree.
- Brenna: The treatment proposed would retard the recovery that is already occurring naturally, as Whitney has stated. It is doubtful that logging would assist the stand health. Gradey may have more information, having been on the ground.
- Bruce: Photos should be sent to Brenna.
- Whitney: This unit has more snags (3/acre) of 20+ inch remnant trees. The other units do not.
- Brenna: Places with adequate snags like this should be protected from damage by operations. BARK advocates that older stands not be entered.
- Rick: Are there any restoration opportunities in this area? Would those go under the same proposal?
- Daina: It would depend on the project, but if it tied in appropriately we would.

ROADS

- Whitney: Roads have been reviewed for decommissioning in Lava or closed to a Level 1 access. There may be other projects.
- Daina: The 16 road needs significant work because of the high recreation use. One portion does not have the appropriate subgrade ("mattress subgrade"). It is lacking the right subgrade materials to keep the road bed porous. This is not a cheap fix. Other options would be grinding the pavement, which would offset the cost of maintenance. However, this is a popular road for recreation use – road bikers. This kind of road work might be appropriate with this project.
- Rick: Are there any roads to trails opportunities? It would be nice to find out.
- Leo: Are you referring to hiking or biking trails?

Rick: Leaving a trail prism rather than the road, but also meeting the culvert removal needs. I would like to see which roads are to be closed.

Whitney: Getting things on the website has been difficult.

Rick: There is a snotel site out by Perry Lake. Will they (NRCS) still be able to access it?

Whitney: I believe so.

Bruce: What about restoration opportunities in Middle Fork?

Gary: You could put wood in, but it wouldn't stay because of the heavy seasonal flows in that area. There is some potential work in Tony Creek and lots of potential work in Clear Branch, below the dam.

Chris: Unit 15 on down along Tony Creek would be good for introducing wood. There is very little in the creek below the 16 road crossing.

Rick: What about Bear Creek? There wasn't a lot of opportunity 20 years ago. How about now?

Chris: I will be looking into this.

Megan: The Tribes have surveyed the lower reaches.

Gary: We can use the retained receipts for road maintenance and invasive plant treatments. There is a culvert on Tony Creek which needs work to improve fish passage. There are no other fish passage problems, but most of the culverts are undersized.

In Clear Branch above the reservoir there is an opportunity for thinning. This is wilderness now, so this may be moot, but other opportunities are out there.

Daina: It is still being proposed for wilderness. From Tilly Jane east of Cloud Cap are being proposed.

Brenna: I need to leave now for another meeting. (Exited conference call at 2:47PM.)

Gary: Other ideas for retained receipts are the Middle Fork Irrigation's Coe pipeline. There is a quarry at the upper end of the Laurence Lake. One proposal is to close (decommission) the road and quarry leading at the upper end of the lake. However, our current preferred option is to keep as is because it is such a good place to store logs and is also a great jumping off point for forays into the upper watershed for bull trout surveys, etc.

Daina: That would be wilderness usage. As a background: this quarry is one we have used in the past for log storage, and it is now mapped within the wilderness. We can make minor adjustments to the Wilderness boundary by working with the surveyors. We have approached them on this. There is also Bull trout monitoring equipment that is now in wilderness.

Rick: What would the costs for the Tony Creek culvert be?

Gary: I have some estimates I can pull together.

Rick: We should get a list all of these opportunities by watershed basin within the notes.

Daina: As a reminder, we can only use retained receipts if it is tied to restoration.

Rick: I'm surprised at how much use this area is getting by bikers.

Daina: The Mt. Hood Classic goes along these roads. That increased the popularity. We need to get some caution "bikers on road" signs for these roads. I believe it was supposed to be brushed this year. (Whitney responds: It was)

Gary: Is that a fuels treatment opportunity?

Leo: There are pockets, but the area has been heavily impacted already. The area around Tony Creek could use some visual enhancement. Fuels treatments were considered earlier in the project development mostly along Laurence Lake and the Middle Fork

Whitney: Chris Worth thought that a fuels break project should be kept separate from these types of timber treatments, rather than lumped together. Extending the Polallie-Cooper boundary is an option to pick up potential fuels treatments around Laurence Lake and the Middle Fork.

Bruce: When we meet next time about Polallie Cooper we need everyone (BARK and Oregon Wild) here to discuss the project. If there is poor weather we should cancel the meeting.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Rick: (To Daina) What else is needed?

Daina: We need to have a dialogue on road management to see if the team has recommendations. There may be roads-to-trails opportunities. We need to have a better idea of doable restoration opportunities. I think we should close out the Lava discussion with how the Stew crew would recommend our priorities. We have retained receipts. We should also get some more through North Fork Mill, but we don't need to wait for those areas. We should start this dialogue. We need to work on the road-to-trails concept with recreation. We need to better understand how to balance maintenance between roads and trails.

Rick: We should plan another meeting.
We need to keep Lava and Polallie Cooper separate in these meetings.

Bruce: February 11-15 were the doodle poll dates.

Rick: How about for Lava?

Rick: Let's schedule a meeting before the 28th of February to finalize Lava recommendations.