Polallie Cooper Collaborative Stewardship Meeting (Field Trip)
Friday June, 14 2013
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Rick Ragan – HRSWCD/HRWG
Bruce Holmson – Individual
Leanne Hogie – Individual
Cindy Thieman – HRWG
Whitney Olsker – USFS
Janeen Tervo – USFS
Jim Thornton – USFS
Clay Penhollow – Confederated Tribes of WS
Eric Fernandez – Oregon Wild
Lindsay Warne – Oregon Wild
Sarah Wald - Bark
Jon Gehrig – Hood River Fire
Leo Segovia – USFS

Field Portion:

Stop 1: Tilly Jane Creek Overview

Leo: Stop 1 is intended to provide the group with an overall landscape view of the project area and the diversity of stand ages, sizes, and structure. The Fire condition class for the project area is a 4 and the fire regime is 3. The majority of the stands are fir dominated. Most of the young stands have a high brush component. Currently some of the stands are meeting forest plan standards for fuel loading, but if we would thin and not treat the fuels there would be an issue.

Cindy: What do you mean by treat?

Leo: Example of treating would the disposal of created and in some places existing slash and debris through piling, burn, and/or masticate.

Jimmy: What type of equipment would be used?

Whitney: Mainly a grapple piler, skidder, processer, and/or masticator.

Leo: Mastication has its issues; it is only rearranging the fuels not reducing them and based off my observations weeds can also be more prevalent after treatment.

Rick: You could still masticate because of no overstory.

Leo: Still an issue because of the high brush component.

Rick: Mastication can be less compacting in places because it is operating on a slash bed alleviating some soil issues or concerns.

GROUP MOVED INTO A YOUNG STAND LESS THAN 80 YEARS OLD

Cindy: How would this type of stand be treated?

Whitney: The majority of the thinning is done by chainsaws in this type of stand with piling being done either by hand or with a machine.

Bruce: As you can see thinning slash from 20 years ago is still present in the stand. Material does not break down quickly here on the Eastside.

Clay: Would there be a species preference and if so what would it be?

Whitney: Yes there would be a preference for more fire adapted species like ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas-fir.

Rick/Bruce: Current stand observation; the stand appears to be a slop over burn from neighboring treatments with lighter consumption.

Rick: What would you do with existing fuels?

Leo: In this stand type and condition I would recommend leaving the existing and only treating the created fuels from thinning activities.

Jimmy: Are there thermal cover concerns?

Leo: We would work with our resources specialist to ensure that all standards are met, whether that is thermal cover, hiding cover, canopy cover, etc.

Erik: Would skips and gaps be utilized?

Whitney: We would still be using variable density thinning from below for this project. The use of skips and gaps are a part of that treatment size, location, and presents would be based on current stand needs and conditions, and desired future condition.

Cindy: Are there any birds of concern in the area?

Whitney: There are the sensitive, managed, threatened and endangered species that we account for following all Forest and Regional directions. Individual species needs outside of those we would need to ask our project biologist about.

Erik: What would you do with legacy trees?

Whitney: In stands like this all legacy trees would be left alone.

Cindy: When would thinning start?

Whitney: Not for at least 3 years.

Jimmy: With all the past fire activity in the area would the burning be on the same time frame?

Leo: Burning usually occurs 2 years after the closing of a sale or a project area (so up to 5 years out as a minimum).

Janeen: There are option for the Forest Service on how burning can be accomplished externally (contract) or internally (FS workforce).

Leo: The majority of the burning on the Mt. Hood has been done internally. The use of FS workforce would be recommended so there is better control.

Cindy: Is there a biomass option?

Group: Yes biomass is usually analyzed as an option and if the market is available it is a tool that can be used.

Stop 2: Cooper Spur Trailhead

Leo: This area gets a lot of dispersed camping with abandoned campfires one of the biggest concerns. Current fuel loading within stands in the area ranges from 27-50 tons per acre. Current fire regime is around a 4. The stands are within the timeframe for a burn.

Jim: What is the forest plan land use allocation?

Whitney: The land use for this stop and for the majority of the project area is scenic viewshed (B2) Special use area (A11), Timber emphasis (C1), and Historic emphasis (A4).

Leo: The project area and the area around the project area (Gnarl Ridge and Dollar fire areas) are dominated by a thermal belt. A thermal belt is a pocket of warm air trapped between two layers of cold air

Leo: What we can do to move stands similar to a more defensible fuels reduction? Reduction in basal area BA and ladder fuels would create stands that would support and carry more ground fire instead of a canopy fire. Basal area is the term used in forest management that defines the area of a given section of land that is occupied by the cross-section of tree trunks and stems at their base.

Jim: What would the target BA be for this kind of reduction?

Whitney: It would be stand dependent but in general to meet the above desired future condition the BA coud range from 60-100 ft^2 or around 30-40% canopy cover.

Cindy: What would be removed to achieve this BA?

Whitney: Predominately small diameter trees and unhealthy trees are removed first (thin from below). Target species to maintain would be the fire resistant species like pine, larch, and Doug-fir.

Erik: I have concerns that the FS is farther ahead in a final proposed treatment then the group is.

Whitney: Currently the Forest Service does not have any proposed action for the Polallie-Cooper project area. We have created potential treatment blocks for survey and specialist needs based on stand age and plant communities. For this field trip we focused on stops around the private land that are representative of current conditions in the area and how in the past we have treated or created a fuels reduction and what our recommendations would be to achieve the groups objectives (determined at the 02/12/2013 meeting).

Rick: These field trips are for the purpose of showing the group current stand conditions.

Cindy: What would this stand look like with a fuels reduction?

Leo: More open.

Rick: Is the FS open to a range of treatments? There is a need to prioritize areas to meet the group's objectives.

Erik: The project is controversial with an increase in removal.

Leo: I can provide a powerpoint presentation with fire modeling and behavior for the area at the next meeting. I can do model runs with a range of treatment options. *Leo showed a video of a fire behavior in conditions similar to FS recommendations for a fuels reduction*.

Cindy: Is there a diameter limit?

Whitney: No decision has been made if there will be diameter limits.

Erik: Are these stands natural fire adapted stands?

Leo: This stand is a regime 4 which means there is a longer fire return interval and would be natural denser than a regime 3, but due to the WUI the stands need to be treated.

Jon: The County wants to prioritize treatments within the WUI.

Clay: The tribe also wants to see fuels reduction around the WUI with no treatments in the Wilderness. What are you using as a line for the for the WUI?

Whitney: We are using the Community Wildfire Protection Plan line for Hood River County.

Jon: The newly designated Crystal Springs zone of influence area needs to be protected as well and with the high public use in the area there is concern from the public to protect the watershed.

Bruce: There is a lot at risk with no treatment. I am having problems finding reasons not to treat.

Rick: What would the tradeoffs be with different treatments? Could Leo include that in the presentation he gives on fire behavior?

Leo: Yes.

Cindy: What is the WUI?

Leo: Wildland urban interface. Some concerns around the WUI are dense canopy cover and substantial ladder fuels that would carry a ground fire into the crowns.

Sarah: What is the risk rates based on treatment? Do we have to do the heaviest treatment or can the treatments vary based on risk and stand conditions?

Leo: The fire behavior presentations will show changing conditions based on range in treatment options. A range in treatments is an option.

Stop 3: Over 80 stand from Original Polallie-Cooper project

Stop 3 overview. This is a stand that was a part of the original Polallie-Cooper project. The goal was to reduce grand fir within the stand. The stands have a large root rot problem and ladder fuel concerns. In stand conditions like this FS would recommend piling both created and existing slash. Larger existing material could be left and still meet a fuels reduction need.

Most dialogue at this stop mimics stop 2. Group emphasis their desire to have a range of treatment options available.

Stop 4: Warming Hut

Rick: I would like to see stand conditions around the historic sites like the warming hut returned to historic conditions.

Everyone agreed that this site was really cool.

Goals for next field trip

- Have a sample plot set up with a desired fuels reduction flagged so the group can get an idea of what it would look like.
- Map that shows the WUI area boundary.
- What are the risk potentials? This will be best displayed in a Powerpoint presentation by Leo. Timing may not allow for this presentation on the field trip. Leo will have it ready for the next office meeting.