

POLALLIE COOPER STEWARDSHIP CREW MEETING

March 11, 2013

Attendees:

Rick Ragan

Bruce Holmson

Richard Larson

Eric Fernandez, Oregon Wild

Mike Moore, ODFW

Edan Lira

Whitney Olsker

Kim Valentine

Leo Segovia

Gary Asbridge

Christina Wessler (notes)

Rick: At the last meeting we had a list of items for the FS to bring.

Whitney: The new maps showing land ownership within the project area are available and there is a map for wildlife, with four sensitive bird species and suitable habitat versus dispersal. This layer is what Fish and Wildlife used for the Spotted Owl critical habitat breakdown. The other requests were for the Omnibus bill. This is posted online (handouts at meeting). The Community Fire plan is also posted online, and Anne sent out a link. We are still waiting on some definitions, but we will hand out what we have now.

For wildlife, I can break that down as needed. Stephanie will finish the definitions. Home range, dispersal, suitable habitat, core, and hiding cover.

Rick: As far as a timeline goes, when would you like a product from us?

Whitney: Stephanie needs to get contracts out for Survey and Manage. The field season will begin at the end of April, so if you have priority areas, we would like these by the end of April for field surveys.

Richard: Is there a scoping letter yet? Is there a timeline?

Whitney: No, we still have a large general area. We would go out for scoping in the fall of 2013 or winter of 2014.

Eric: Do you have a map of the over-80 stands?

Whitney: We are using lidar and old stand exam data to find those sites.

Rick: Is there any background info people would like to discuss?
I was thinking about high priority areas. In the late 90s there was impetus from the land owners to do a fuel break around the Cooper Spur/Mountain Shadows community. Should we talk about this area for fire hazard reduction?

Eric: Those lands are owned by Meadows (in blue on the map), and potentially this will change ownership to the FS in an exchange. This could happen as early as 2015. (Ski area)

Rick: That is still speculation at this point, from what we know.

Whitney: Our main goal with this project is fuels reduction. We have some objectives from the last meeting, but we want them to tie into our main goal. You can draw on the maps and list priorities. We are pursuing HFRA first.

Kim, Leo and I have created blocks of fuels reduction priorities, and we will fit your priorities into this.

Bruce: We were thinking we should look at the western side, with the WUI, and concentrate on that interface. There is also the fire strategy plan, which seems to emphasize looking at these edges first.

Richard: That would be a good starting point, but after that we should look at the eastern side, where it is flatter. I believe it is beginning to get grown in. This is far away from the fire areas. Treatments would increase use by deer and elk.

Do most of those stands need treatment?

Whitney: It depends on the plant community.

Bruce: We should also be sure to include features we know of out there.

Rick: Cooper Spur Rd. is on the top. Leave out riparian areas (Tilly Jane Creek). You would need to keep in mind the prevailing winds that affect where a fire would run.

Bruce: Are you talking about treating all the way down to Hwy 35 (westside)? Back in 98 we didn't go all the way down there.

Rick: We would also have to pay attention to stream density and soils (ashy, easily disturbed) where it is too steep for ground treatment.

Richard: The riparian reserves were set up 20 years ago, and since then there has been a change in thinking. Gordon Reeves (PNW) suggests that current policies may not achieve management goals for long term viability in streams, and is advocating for active management in riparian areas.

Rick: I would argue that it depends on the health of the entire stream corridor and the level of disturbance needed.

Discussion of Riparian Areas – Gary

Riparian Reserve is a designation from the NW Forest Plan, and those are set widths based on the status of the stream. It will be pretty straight on either side. We usually stick with this numeric value, but the site potential tree height can also be used. The riparian zone depends on the stream channel and can be narrow or wide. This is where truly riparian vegetation grows.

We rarely have done any veg treatment within the riparian zone, but we have treated within the riparian reserve. This is common.

Eric: Is the designation of the Crystal Springs watershed official?

Whitney: It is not at the moment, but we need to manage it as if it is (guidelines within the Omnibus).

Rick: I drew a buffer which stays within the flat areas. To the southwest there were a number of clearcuts, but it could be time for some PCT.

Bruce: Another area is in that southwestern area (3511 road system). There was a proposed treatment in there which never happened.

Whitney: Past treatments in the 80s, 90s?

Bruce: This was never treated.

Eric: Oregon Wild would be interested in looking at stands that have been treated before, to look at the method of treatment. We would have red flags because it is pretty nice forest in there. If there is a land exchange that changes property ownership then do we want to deal with those boundary questions now?

Rick: One problem with this area is the risk of fire, with the prevailing winds pushing it into private land.

Eric: This is also a viewshed.

Bruce: There is a chunk of land which was designated for insect and disease treatment in the last Polallie Cooper (background of current Forest Health conditions).

Richard: At the Cooper Spur meeting six years back, on the eastside of the road (flat on top), the group consensus was it needed treatment. There was fairly good second growth.

Bruce: This goes into Meadows land, which needs work.

Eric: I think the county would look favorably on work adjacent to that land.

Rick: We would need to do stocking surveys in this area. Perhaps some stocking control, but is there a way to have it yarded out to reduce fuels?

Richard: Chipping and scattering?

Kim: The “track matting” or “brush beating” can be good and bad. It doesn’t remove the fuels and creates a mat. You don’t get a crown fire, but you maintain heat around the root collars of trees and kill them. We could go in and burn it, but you may still lose some trees. My preference would be to thin and pile, and then sell the piles for biofuel if there is a market, or burn them.

We are already starting with a heavy fuel load, which does not decompose as quickly here on the eastside.

Leo: The soil layer is thin and ashy/pumice. Compaction would not be good in this soil type.

Rick: Is our goal to get it to the point where we could do a ground fire?

Whitney: We’ve tried that, but only in commercial treatment areas. We need to keep our options open for treatment so that we can do mechanical treatments where possible.

Rick: Are there options for getting more funds to treat adjacent to the WUI? What are some ways to justify spending more money on non-commercial land?

Whitney: We have retained receipts which could potentially be used.

(Group agreement for including extended area to the southwest below county land)

DISCUSSION: Area to the SSW from Private Land – lodgepole pine, frost pockets. Management options? Beetle damage 5-6 years ago.

(1st draft priority: South and west of private and county land to the west of Hwy 35.)

Gary: North and east of the historic Cloud Cap area we could do fuels or forest health treatments so long as they met management priorities.

Eric: I would also be open to treatments further south of the county land, above the wilderness line, where there have been previous treatments.

Whitney: In the Omnibus bill we have leeway along the road to Tilly Jane to protect it from fires. There is a 400 foot strip which is outside of wilderness designation.

Kim: In my opinion we could do some work in this area to protect this last green area around Tilly Jane (it has been assaulted on three levels).

Eric: It would be remiss not to get input from other constituents in that area.

Bruce: That would be about 1000 acres.

Whitney: It would end up being open for piles and firewood.

Rick: The road up to Tilly Jane needs significant cleanup work.

Gary: The last time we pulled logs out we could not get off the road to collect them.

Bruce: Whitney, are there units around this area we haven't talked about?

Whitney: There are treatments above the creek. These areas were treated in the 60s and now need a thin. There is a mix of commercial and non commercial around the butte.
(Circles added)

Rick: Next time can you bring more information about the history?

Whitney: We can bring aerial photos and stocking history.

Rick: I understand that Oregon Wild would not necessarily want to treat the southern end, but we should get out on the ground and see what it looks like.
Should we consider the other side of the road?

Richard: I would suggest looking at – (drew large polygon) the many small stands within that eastern side. There are flatter areas where deer and elk would use the habitat. This could also help in preventing fires running into The Dalles Watershed.

In the November field trip we talked about treating in this area.

Whitney: There is a mix of age and size, but the fuels risk is that there are more concentrated fuels in the flat ground. It will be the easiest and most economical, but not the only area we want to look at. We took the boundary out to Dog River to try and improve the viewshed.
(LSR?)

There have been past treatments.

Eric: Is this a pine dominant area?

Whitney: Yes, the ponderosa pine component should be more than 30%, but is not in the density it should be. We would be protecting the remnant pines.

Eric: This seems like a good area for restoration and fuels reduction.

Rick: Do you have the dates of previous entries?

Whitney: The dates are on the map.

Edan: Is there a lot of bug kill?

Whitney: I have not noticed it much in this area. We haven't had that much activity since the late 90s.

Rick: This would be another good area to field check.

Bruce: Is this area only for deer and elk?

Leo: The Bluegrass Fire Assessment projected that fire would run up into this area, and could endanger the watershed.

Bruce: There are thinning opportunities down past the Surveyor's Ridge Trail.

Whitney: There is a natural bench below the trail.

Bruce: There is road access above to conduct skyline logging down to the natural bench below the trail.

Eric: I would be comfortable not going too much into the steep areas.

Rick: If we did go into the steeper areas, we would probably suggest thinning from below to protect remnant trees.

Whitney: Forest Health is willing to pay for treatments which protect those large, remnant pines. This is a restoration opportunity for those concerns. If we analyze for this under HFRA the opportunities are there for funding.

Rick: There are significant ladder fuels.

Kim: We would prefer to hand pile, then burn the piles.

Rick: Where would we go – are there opportunities to find the larger trees and concentrate on those?

Whitney: That will come out when I do stand exams. I will analyze within the areas to find those remnant pockets for treatment.

Eric: I would be interested in doing that on a small scale on those steep slopes to experiment how well that works, rather than treat a large area and potentially lose many large trees.

Whitney: We can prioritize within the higher occurrence clumps, and analyze for treatment within those areas.

Leo: If Whitney does her stand exams, we can put that data into our fire programs with slope, etc to see what areas would work best.

Kim: We need to create a planning area with some shelf stock that we can return to for several years rather than doing yearly NEPA.

Rick: Is there a way to throw in some monitoring to this plan?

Whitney: We can always put monitoring into the PDCs for these specific areas through our BMPs.

Bruce: We should give this back to Whitney and let her fine-tune it.

Edan: Can you also include the tri-layer information?

TO BRING:

- Aerial photos
- Stocking history
- Treatment history
- Map of areas outside of inventoried roadless areas

Eric: I didn't participate in the last Polallie Cooper, but I heard there were many upper valley people involved previously. Is there not so much enthusiasm now?

Whitney: We have sent out participation letters, and so far this is the group.

Rick: Anything else?

Mike: What about the bottom leg (south of Meadows – old Bluegrass burn)? Based on what we know from elk collar data, this is a significant corridor for elk and deer. What are some thoughts? If this is all core area/nest patch, what are our limitations?

Whitney: This is an inventoried roadless area, so we are limited in what we can do. Basically we can't do anything. It isn't covered under the Omnibus Bill, but it is under Oregon Law.

Bruce: Washington DC isn't supporting any entries into Inventoried Roadless. The road in that area is old and access is very limited and includes traveling thru private property. Access ends before crossing Polallie Creek.

Richard: The areas above that are options, though.

(Discussion of Spotted Owl habitat map)

Whitney: F&W recommends no treatments within nest patch buffers. The bigger circle is the home range, where we would maintain 40% of the ring at 60% canopy. Each nest patch is a no treat area

Eric: What is the timeline for our next meeting?

Whitney: 2-3 weeks, so mid to late April.

Rick: Anne will send out a Doodle poll for the weeks of April 15 through the 26.

Whitney: Also, all these maps will be on the web by the end of the week. And I will bring some large printed maps for the next meeting.

Rick: Do we want aerial photos of some of these areas?

Whitney: We have some big photos, but our ortho photos are from the 90s.

Rick: At least have them available

TASK FOR LEO – 2007 PHOTOS