MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, February 25, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

USFWS: 2600 SE 98th Ave, Portland, OR

ATTENDEES

Participants: Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Rod Krahmer (ODFW), Mike Wilson (ODF), Julie Firman (ODFW) – by phone, Ryan Singleton (DSL) – by phone

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Aaron Gabbe (ICF) – by phone, Matt Wood (ICF) – by phone, Randy Smith (ODF) – by phone, Corey Grinnell (ODF)

Facilitation Team: Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West), Michelle Bardini (Kearns & West)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West) welcomed members. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Sylvia reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency updates, 2) Updates on stakeholder engagement, 3) Updates on modeling, survey data, outliers, and the habitat growth model, 4) Introduce conceptual habitat conservation areas (HCAs), 5) Review conceptual HCA examples, 6) Confirm topics for Steering Committee update, and 7) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

Sylvia reflected on the past terrestrial ST meeting on January 28. Members discussed terminology, the conservation strategy and effects analysis for terrestrial species, and habitat modeling for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.

AGENCY UPDATES

Members provided the following updates relevant to the Western Oregon State Forests HCP process:

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW): 1) ODFW is developing the marbled murrelet status review. 2) Stakeholder meetings for the South Coast Conservation Plan have begun.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF): A memorandum of understanding (MOU) around developing an HCP for Oregon private forests was released by conservation and industry stakeholders. ODF is drafting talking points to help address potential questions from the public regarding the different HCPs and to explain how private forest lands will be managed differently.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): The Historic Preservation Act (HPA) compliance process for the HCP has been initiated.

UPDATE ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Sylvia provided an update on stakeholder engagement efforts. A meeting open to public is scheduled for March 30 in Salem. This meeting will provide an opportunity to provide updates on the conservation strategy and forest goals and objectives.

The Board of Forestry (BOF) meeting on April 22 will include an HCP update. Scoping Team (ST) and Steering Committee (SC) members are encouraged to attend and show support of the HCP.

MODELING, SURVEY DATA, OUTLIER, AND HABITAT MODEL UPDATES

Troy Rahmig, ICF, reviewed the purpose of today's terrestrial ST meeting. The key topics of the meeting include:

- Provide updates on survey data and habitat models for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.
- Review data and modeling for red tree vole and Oregon slender salamander.
- Discuss the habitat models.
- Review and discuss conceptual Habitat Conservation Area (HCAs).

Troy and Aaron Gabbe, ICF, presented updates on the survey data, outliers, and habitat modelling for the terrestrial species to address ST feedback.

Northern Spotted Owl Survey Data:

Aaron presented updated northern spotted owl survey data that will be used to inform the conservation strategy and ultimately the effects analysis. Key points of presentation include:

- Organized northern spotted owl survey data by activity center on ODF land and land adjacent to ODF land.
- Sorted the data by the following factors: pair, pair status unknow, and resident single.
- The occurrence data will be used to inform where HCA's will be located and to inform the development of a landscape level conservation strategy.

ST members discussed the survey data for northern spotted owl and provided the following comments and questions:

- There can be disturbance issues within a quarter mile of a site. Suggestion to add a column in the survey data to show within a quarter mile of a site on ODF land.

Marbled Murrelet Survey Data:

Aaron presented updates to the modelling and survey data for marbled murrelet. Key points of the presentation include:

- The data used in the modeling is based on occurrences/observations. Both audio and visual observations were used to understand presence.
- This is only one tool used to identify HCAs in the conservation strategy. This tool might be used differently when we incorporate them into effects analysis.
- Utility of presence: Tracking presence allows us to understand the nature of observations. Presence shows where marbled murrelet have been seen on the landscape and the differences in observation.

ST members discussed the survey data for marbled murrelet and provided the following comments and questions:

- Is there a way to estimate how much suitable habitat has been surveyed and how much habitat has been surveyed on ODF lands?
    - Every site has been surveyed and ODF has surveyed most of what is potentially suitable habitat. The model includes habitat with lower suitability that would not be considered habitat from a survey perspective.
- Suggestion to calculate the percentage of surveyed land to better understand what the totals from the survey data represent on the landscape.

Habitat Model Outliers:

At the last terrestrial ST meeting, members noted that there are several outliers in the habitat model. In this case *outliers* are stands that exhibit extreme characteristics, either on the low end or the high end of the frequency distribution. Aaron reviewed outliers identified for the northern spotted owl model and explained the efforts to address these outliers. The team developed histograms to show the variability between forest stands within each habitat variable.

Aaron showed the rating of each stand in relation to the various parameters in the model to explain why stands were classified as a certain suitability. Aaron demonstrated how each category characterizing suitability has a large variance around the mean. It was noted that low suitability many be too broad of a category and it may be worth reclassifying this category.

Aaron noted the model has undergone expert review. Next steps include incorporating the feedback and suggestions from the reviewers.

ST members discussed the habitat model and the outliers and provided the following comments and questions:

- It was clarified that the model is not intended to be a statistical analysis but is intended to identify stand characteristics that do not fit in the categories of habitat suitability.
- A member explained modeling will always have outliers. The intent is to use the model generally to help inform the HCP development while recognizing it is not a perfect science. It is important to not over rely on the model.
- Members noted that the model could be improved and adjusted to more accurately represent the suitability of habitat on the landscape.
- Suggestion to adjust the parameters of the model for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet by assigning more or less weight to particular variables so the model more accurately reflects habitat suitability.
- Suggest reclassifying the “low suitability” category to “modest suitability” to better reflect the characteristics of that habitat.
- Members agreed that as a next step, the ODF-ICF team will incorporate expert review and then review any outliers to determine if any changes need to be made to the model, such as adjusting parameters so that the model more accurately represents suitability. It may also be useful to consider weighting of parameters. Members will discuss this at a future ST meeting or other small group meetings. During this meeting, it would also be helpful to query the database to determine if there are any other potential outliers, and end with a determination of whether the model is sufficient to move forward with policy-level modeling.

Expert Review:

Aaron explained that the habitat models for northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, red tree vole, and Oregon slender salamander have undergone expert review. Overall, the reviews were positive and most of the feedback received were areas that ST members had previously mentioned.

A member noted the need to identify how this model compares to the existing federal model that is currently used. It is important that the federal and ODF model are consistent, so it does not lead to different conclusions of the suitable habitat available. Suggestion to develop a brief overview capturing the differences between the models in order to explain or address the discrepancies.

Aaron explained that they ran regressions from the ODF model to the federal model at the stand level across every district to see if the two models had any differences. He noted there will be variations in the models across different years.

Aaron recapped the feedback from the expert review on the northern spotted owl model. Key feedback received included:

- Consider adding parameters for dead tree elements.
- Logistic response functions are appropriate for most parameters; however, other response functions may be more suitable.
- Consider adjusting weights to align with the federal 15-year or 20-year model.
- Consider providing an analysis of accuracy of forestry inventory data.
- There is a moderate positive correlation between the ODF model and the federal 25-year model.

Aaron then reviewed the feedback from the expert review for the marbled murrelet model. Key feedback received included:

- Consider adding additional support from the literature.
- Consider using the modeling package and occurrences to model habitat. Utilize the inventory data and do a regression.
- Expressed agreement with our caveats and decisions of how to interpret results.
- Reasonable choice of parameters was utilized.
- Consider using the average of weighted scores for the overall index.

Red Tree Vole Habitat Suitability Model:

Aaron provided an overview of the red tree vole habitat suitability model. The model includes habitat parameters that are supported by data. Parameters were weighted equally and include serial state, structural diversity, large trees, and percent conifer cover. The model applies sustainability probability for these parameters so the model could be used to predict red tree vole presence. Aaron noted the model shows little difference between stand age and suitable habitat; this will likely be a topic of feedback from expert review.

ST discussed the habitat model for red tree vole and provided the following questions and comments:

- Based on the data, members suggest simplifying the model to combine the “high suitability” and “suitability” categories. Suitable and highly suitable habitat could still be differentiated by the HCAs.
- If habitat is identified as low suitability, it is still considered habitat and there are limits to take in those low suitability areas.

Oregon Slender Salamander Habitat Suitability Model:

Aaron provided an overview of the Oregon slender salamander habitat suitability model. The habitat model is based on three parameters: downed wood, forest height, and seral stage, and is used to determine habitat sustainability probability. Aaron then reviewed a map showing the

suitable habitat on the landscape and noted there to be an abundant amount of downed wood. There is interest in receiving an expert reviewer opinion on the relationship between downed wood and suitable habitat.

The ST discussed the habitat model for Oregon slender salamander and provided the following questions and comments:

- It would be helpful to indicate where surveys have occurred.
- It was clarified that every stand that had been surveyed found Oregon slender salamanders to be present.

Next Steps:

Aaron recapped next steps to address outliers and to fine tune the model. Next steps include:

- Revise model based on expert feedback received.
- Assign weight to specific parameters.
- Identify outliers to see if more adjustments to the model need to be made to ensure habitat suitability is accurately categorized. Systematic outliers will be used to inform revisions.
- Consider reclassifying outlier stands.
- ICF to schedule a meeting with USFWS, ODF, and ODFW to get feedback on the modeling prior to the next ST meeting.

Members noted they were comfortable moving forward with the modeling for the four terrestrial species with the changes and adjustments the ST discussed today. The full ST will have an opportunity to review the changes made to the models at a future ST meeting.

Modeling Future Habitat Quality:

Matt Wood, ICF, demoed the tool ICF has built to connect the timber growth model with the species habitat models. The model shows a map of the plan area and the habitat on the landscape and allows the ST to view the landscape over time to visually see how habitat suitability changes over the years as the forest grows and stand structure changes. The tool showed that by the year 2118, the habitat is mostly highly suitable. Matt noted that the growth model currently assumes no treatment and is a grow only scenario. Assumptions, management actions, and treatments can be utilized to accelerate habitat suitability.

The model can be used to evaluate the performance of the strategies overtime and has been modeled for both northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. The utility of this model provides a visualization of what the landscape looks like today and what the landscape might look like in the future.

Conceptual Habitat Conservation Area Introduction

Troy introduced conceptual HCAs and explained that HCAs are areas conserved and managed for covered species. Criteria for these areas include:

- Maximize conversations of occurrences.
    - This includes multi covered species conversation.
- Current highly suitable habitat and suitable habitat.
- Habitat that will become highly suitable and suitable.

ODF and ICF prepared three examples of conceptual HCAs for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet in Miami, west Oregon, and the Western Lane District. These examples aim to be discussion points to help designate and design HCAs across the permit area.

ST members were asked to consider the following points when reviewing the HCA examples:

- Management in HCAs is specifically to improve habitat for the covered species.
- The size of the HCA.
- Where and how the boundaries and borders are drawn.
- Landscape design, including connectivity, representativeness across the plan area, and adjacency.
- Integration with riparian buffers and the aquatic conservation strategy.

Conceptual Habitat Conservation Area Examples

Matt and Nick Palazzotto, ODF, presented the three conceptual HCA examples.

Example 1: Miami:

Nick presented the first example conceptual HCA in Miami. Key points of the presentation include:

- Large scales are utilized in the north coast and a large HCA is applied to provide a foundation of functional landscape.
- The HCA includes several active sites for northern spotted owl. It is important to think about connectivity across patches.
- The HCA was developed by looking for active owl sites and using recent survey data to identify active ownership. There are also marbled murrelet management areas (MMMAs) in this HCA based on observational data. This example is an HCA that has marbled

murrelet, northern spotted owl, and red tree vole activity well distributed throughout the area.

- The boundaries of the HCA were based on typology. ODF will have to make decisions about which ridges to follow and the areas and species presence to include in the HCA.
- Showed where potential other HCAs could be across this area of the landscape. It is important to prioritize landscape that could be good habitat in the future but currently doesn't have any occupancy.

ST members discussed HCAs generally and provided the following comments and questions:

- Consider a public educational component to explain HCAs. Suggestion to clarify the objectives for the HCA to explain what can and cannot be done in that area. The public will assume an HCA means no management, and it will be important to explain the kind of management that can occur within HCAs, and that the purpose of management is for the benefit of species only.
    - Suggestion to present the HCAs in tandem with the habitat development model to address public assumptions.
- What is the target number of acres to include in an HCA? How much is enough?
    - Based on landscape, the HCAs can be relatively large. Management actions inside the HCA will determine the size of them.
    - For this example, if ODF land is fairly isolated and there is little surrounding Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or private land, HCAs are able to be larger.
    - It is important to identify HCAs without a predetermined percent or number of acres in mind. Suggest drawing HCAs with what is best for species or combination of species in mind.
- A description explaining general rules of an HCA as well as additional rules to maintain a specific species will need to be drafted.
- A future consideration is determining how management for covered species in the various HCAs will differ based on needs. Conservation measures outside of the HCAs are needed but they might not be as conservative.
- For the benefit of owl species, suggest drawing HCAs that focus on core areas, rathe than focusing solely on home ranges or past use areas of owl. Core areas are more significant for owl habitat.

ST members discussed the first HCA example in Miami and provided the following questions and comments:

- Suggestion to expand the HCA on the east side to include additional northern spotted owl active sites.
- For an HCA this size, we should encourage other species to occupy this area.
- Consider looking at the HCA at a finer scale to provide connectivity for a species like Oregon slender salamander because the species covers less ground. Additionally, consider adding enhancement activities within the HCA for red tree vole.
- It might be helpful to have separate HCAs versus one big one due to dispersal opportunities.
- There is an opportunity to connect two basins together to allow for upper basin, strategically placed connectivity.
- Nick mentioned the HCA was developed by starting with northern spotted owl because of the large land base and available survey data, and then will utilize a layering approach. While there may not be a lot of active sites on the landscape, we want to include land to encourage occupancy later. Do you have any ideas on where those areas where we want to encourage occupancy are?
    - Primarily the Tillamook State Forest and areas in Forest Grove because there is a lack of older forest habitat and these areas have large land bases.
    - Suggestion to lead with historical sites.
    - Consider looking at where there is suitable habitat on the eastern landscape.
- Suggestion to draw the lines of the HCA based on where the landscape will develop habitat in the future, with little management, to target suitable habitat and most productive land.
- Suggestion to start by designating large HCAs that represent a large percentage of the landscape. Modifications and adjustments will be made after the timber harvest modeling.

Example 2: Western Oregon:

Nick presented the second HCA example in western Oregon. Key points of the presentation include:

- This HCA example shows ODF land surrounded by federal, private, and BLM land.
- The HCA includes large patches for marbled murrelet with four to five MMMAs and includes three to four northern spotted owl sites.
- The HCA focuses on existing patches and improving them.
- Includes red tree vole occupancy.

- This example highlights considerations the ST has been discussing. This is an iterative process and is informed by the greater question of how much land to include.

ST members discussed the second HCA example and provided the following questions and comments:

- Suggestion to round out MMMAs around suitable habitat.
- Members discussed potential areas to expand the HCA or draw an additional HCA based on the landscape and habitat suitability.
    - On the ground knowledge will help inform what HCAs to connect, where not to connect, and where to draw a new HCA because of habitat conditions.
- For this area, it is important to consider connectivity and function within patches for owls, marbled murrelet, and red tree vole.
- There should be a minimum size for MMMAs. Be cautious about drawing MMMAs too small.
- Suggestion to be mindful of where there will be movement and activity on the landscape. There will be a need for maintenance activities in these areas.
- Pace/timing becomes a challenge within the HCAs and between them.

Example 3: Western Lane District:

Nick presented the third HCA example in the Western Lane District. Key points of the presentation include:

- This example is a scattered track district; there is a substantial amount of federal lands dispersed throughout ODF land. Decisions made in this HCA will impact the quality of habitat on the surrounding federal lands. It is important to consider how these lands support conservation at a larger scale, what are the important pieces we have to contribute, and how the district interacts with the landscape in relation to federal lands.
- There is a good amount of habitat for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet activity.
- There are modified clear cuts that could grow into dispersal habitat.
- There are potential other HCAs on the landscape as there are 3000 acres of 300-year-old forest.
- For this district, the ST will need to have a conversation about priorities. Decisions made in this HCA will affect the larger landscape.

ST members discussed the third HCA example and provided the following questions and comments:

- It was clarified that not all marbled murrelet sites need to be included in an HCA as long as they are not too small.
- Connectivity in every direction on ODF land is not necessary.
- There is more flexibility in this district because of the other ownerships.

Troy explained that the feedback received for these three HCA examples will be incorporated across the landscape. The ST will then review the HCAs individually at future ST meetings. Depending on how many HCAs there are, it may be beneficial to develop a narrative on each HCA and include in the HCP.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next SC meeting is scheduled for March 31. Members did not provide specific messages to communicate.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

Sylvia thanked members for their participation.

The next ST meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- Tuesday, March 3 (aquatic focused)
- Wednesday, March 18 (terrestrial focused)

Cindy Kolomechuk, ODF, recapped the meeting and provided the following next steps and summary:

Survey data and terrestrial species modeling:

- Include a column to show within a quarter mile for northern spotted owl survey data.
- Estimate how much of the landscape has been surveyed for marbled murrelet.
- Incorporate expert review on the models, assign weight to specific parameters, and identify outliers to see if additional adjustments are needed.
- Compare the ODF northern spotted owl model with the federal model to see if there are any differences.
- Compare red tree vole model with the model USFWS is utilizing.
- Access forest accuracy on federal and state side.

- ICF to schedule a meeting with USFWS, ODF, and ODFW to get feedback on the modeling prior to the next ST meeting.

Conceptual HCAs:

- When drawing the lines of an HCA, consider functional patches and connectivity for species that may involve a finer scale.
- In areas where owls don't currently persist, but we want owls to occupy that area in the future, considering designating a larger HCA to promote that species to return. Suggestion to focus on historic core areas because they are repeatedly used as long as forest stands are still intact and there is suitable habitat.
- When drawing an HCA, there is value in using the Forest Grove model to help identify where boundaries are. Additionally, consider distinguishing between suitable and unsuitable habitat for red tree vole to draw lines.
- All MMMAs do not need to be included in an HCA specifically, as long as they are not too small separately.
- Connectivity in all directions is not needed but will depend on landscape context.
- Develop a set of general rules for all HCAs that include what management actions will be used to maintain the cover species in each HCA and how those management differ across HCAs and why. Management actions will influence the size of HCA. Each HCA should include a goal and a range.
- Next steps are to use the ST's feedback and begin drafting HCAs across the landscape.