Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan
Virtual Meeting Open to the Public
Monday, March 30, 2020

Meeting Summary

Introduction and Overview

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is considering a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for forest lands in western Oregon. As part of the stakeholder engagement process for the effort, ODF held a virtual meeting open to the public on March 30, 2020. The meeting was also recorded and posted to the ODF YouTube channel.

Purpose of Meeting

- Learn about the forest goals and objectives associated with the HCP.
- Hear updates about the Western Oregon HCP's development and the status of conservation strategies, including:
    - A high-level overview of the methodology for habitat modelling and timber harvest modelling.
    - The conceptual framework of aquatic and terrestrial conservation strategies.

Attendees

Over fifty members of the public attended the meeting. Those in attendance represented conservation groups, industry representatives, government agencies, and county representatives, as well as members of the Scoping Team (a technical level HCP working group) and Steering Committee (a policy level HCP working group).

Notification Methods

ODF invited agencies, interested parties, stakeholders, members of the Steering Committee, members of the Scoping Team, and the general public to the meeting.

Notification methods included:

- Email distributions to interested parties
- Posts on ODF social media including Facebook and Twitter
- Meeting notice via FlashAlert to media in areas that would be potentially covered in the HCP (including Portland media)
- Post on the ODF news site
- Post on the Western Oregon HCP project webpage
- Post on the State of Oregon Transparency Website

Format

The meeting open to the public was a two-hour webinar meeting that included question and answer discussion opportunities. The meeting was followed by an informal, one-hour virtual discussion period for participants to ask questions and discuss topics of most interest. Participants were also able to submit questions or comments via email to Jason Cox, ODF, at Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov to be addressed during the meeting.

Participants were encouraged to write and confirm their name as they joined the webinar to track attendees. Participants also received the opportunity to introduce themselves at the beginning of the meeting.

Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview

Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West, introduced herself as part of the facilitation team and welcomed participants. She mentioned that this is the fourth meeting open to the public. The intent of the meeting is to share more information about the HCP process and to provide updates on HCP development. She reviewed webinar instructions, tips, and protocols and then led participants through introductions.

Liz Dent, ODF, welcomed meeting attendees. Liz mentioned that a lot has been accomplished in the development of a Western Oregon State Forests HCP and ODF understands the importance and value of public engagement. She expressed her appreciation for those in attendance and for participants adjusting to a virtual platform due to COVID-19 concerns. She mentioned we look forward to hearing participants' feedback.

Liz explained the Western Oregon HCP is a project led by ODF. ODF has worked on HCPs in the past and based on the lessons learned from those experiences, ODF is working closely with sister agencies and partners to develop this HCP.

A project team, with a variety of expertise, is working alongside ODF to develop the HCP. The project team includes ODF, ICF, Oregon Consensus, and Kearns & West. Cindy Kolomechuk is ODF's lead on this project. ICF is providing technical support to write and develop the HCP. Kearns & West is leading the public engagement and facilitation process and helping to build alignment around the process. Oregon Consensus is providing a neutral forum for parties to reach agreement on contentious public issues.

Liz then provided information on the development of the HCP. She explained ODF is working on the Western Oregon HCP in parallel with the Forest Management Plan (FMP). The draft HCP and FMP will come together in October 2020. The development of the HCP has a three phased approach; this includes:

- **Phase 1:** ODF conducted a business case to help the Board of Forestry (BOF) decide if an HCP was in the best interest of Oregon. The BOF directed ODF to move forward into phase 2 and develop an HCP.
- **Phase 2:** ODF is currently in phase 2 and is drafting the HCP. In October 2020, the BOF will again decide if an HCP is in the best interest of Oregon and will decide whether to direct ODF to move into phase 3.
- **Phase 3:** The final phase includes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and developing the companion FMP. This phase would occur from October 2020 through June 2022.

Liz clarified the Western Oregon HCP is an HCP for state forests managed by ODF and the BOF and are shared with the counties. These lands are managed under the Greatest Permanent Value principle with the intent to provide social, economic, and environmental benefits for Oregon. ODF can best provide these services if there is certainty in operation on these lands, which includes predictability in how lands are managed in compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). While ODF thinks this is best achieved through an HCP, it is essential to engage with counties and the public to ensure the HCP meets a variety of needs and interests.

Liz provided a brief overview of the following other Oregon HCPs in development.

- The Elliott State Forest HCP is managed by the Department of State Lands and could become owned by Oregon State University (OSU). These forests have different management goals and are intended to be used for research.
- Private landowners and conservation groups have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to consider an HCP to provide coverage for private lands.
- The Port Blakely HCP is being developed to ensure compliance with the ESA.

Deb reviewed the meeting agenda which included the following topics: 1) Provide updates on the HCP process, 2) Introduce the forest goals and objectives and timber harvest modeling, 3) Review the terrestrial conservation strategy, 4) Review the aquatic conservation strategy, and 5) Summary and next steps.

Deb explained that ODF has a strong interest in hearing stakeholders' questions, interests, and concerns. After the webinar meeting, there is an hour session for informal discussion to ask questions and discuss topics of most interest to participants. She explained participants are also able submit written questions and comments via email to Jason Cox, ODF at Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov.

Updates on the Western Oregon HCP

Troy Rahmig, ICF, provided updates on the HCP and presented an overview of the progress to date.

The main topics presented include:

- Plan area and permit area of the HCP

- The covered species
    - The covered species includes species listed in the ESA and species expected to be listed in the future.
- Technical components including:
    - Terrestrial conservation strategy
    - Aquatic conservation strategy
    - Habitat enhancement activities
- The HCP timeline and schedule

Introduce Forest Goals and Objectives

Brian Pew, ODF, presented an overview of the forest goals and objectives which are conceptual goals and objectives that are part of the companion FMP that would eventually accompany the HCP. The forest goals and objectives were created by ODF, are set up to honor Greatest Permanent Value, and are divided into social, environmental, and economic categories. These goals and objectives aim to complement the habitat conservation commitments and balance between environmental and economic commitments.

Brian then reviewed the definitions in the forest goals and objectives. The definitions included in the forest goals and objectives slightly differ from the definitions in the HCP biological goals and objectives, as these definitions are more holistic to encompass broader forest management, whereas the definitions in the HCP are more specific to species. He then reviewed the forest goals and objectives for the social, environmental, and economic categories.

Additionally, Brian reviewed the timber harvest modeling that is informed by the forest goals and objectives. This modeling is used to support decision making at the policy level. The modeling tracks economic and ecological parameters over time to allow for comparisons of future strategies and tradeoffs between economic, conservation, and social values. FMP implementation-level modeling would be done later in time, once the parameters of the HCP are more final.

Brian mentioned there is a modeling meeting on April 8 that was scheduled in response to requests from stakeholders. This meeting is for stakeholders with modeling experience and interest in the technical components of the HCP. The meeting will provide an opportunity to review and discuss timber harvest and habitat species modeling.

Terrestrial Conservation Strategy Update

Troy reviewed the terrestrial conservation strategy. Key points of the presentation include:

- A review of the biological goals and objectives for terrestrial species.
    - Troy reminded participants that there is a goal and a set of objectives for each covered species that are intended to maintain and enhance habitat.
- Sequencing of terrestrial species and data in the strategy development.
- The data used to develop the terrestrial conservation strategy and the data used to build the habitat suitability modeling for each species.

- The habitat suitability modeling approach. Activities include:
    - Developed habitat models for four terrestrial species.
    - Utilized published information to determine key habitat characteristics for the species.
    - Utilized a combination of parameters from Stand Level Inventory data to represent those habitat characteristics.
    - Created gradations of habitat quality at the stand level.
    - Created a habitat model that can be linked to forest inventory for long-term planning.
    - Models were peer reviewed.
    - Compared model inputs with other published models to ensure the HCP models are reasonably aligned.
- The benefits of modeling include:
    - Allows for an analysis of how habitat quality and quantity will change over time.
    - Allows for a better understanding of how management actions will enhance habitat quality over time.
- The terrestrial strategy includes the development of Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs). HCAs optimize where terrestrial strategies occur to retain flexibly for covered activities outside of HCAs. HCAs are informed by both survey data and habitat models.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy Update

Troy reviewed the aquatic conservation strategy. Key points of the presentation included:

- A review of the biological goals and objectives for aquatic species.
- The components of the aquatic strategy including:
    - Road network management
    - Stream enhancement projects
    - Riparian buffers
- Riparian buffers are referred to as Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA).
    - The intent is to address the stream functions identified in the biological goals and objectives.
    - RCAs consider stream types and sizes and memorialize the process of laying out buffers in the field.
- The factors that inform the variations in RCA width.
- The use of data and model outputs to validate buffer strategy.
- Draft riparian buffer widths currently under development.
    - Provided examples of what the riparian buffer strategy might look like throughout the watershed.
    - Reviewed the difference between horizontal distance and slope distance and explained buffers will be measured by horizontal distance, which is greater than slope distance when measured on the landscape.

Public Input and Q&A Summary

A question and answer and discussion period followed the presentations. The main topics that were brought up during the discussion period included:

Forest Goals and Objectives and Timber Harvest Modeling:

- Q: Is ODF partnering with Business Oregon to evaluate the effects of the forest goals and objectives? Suggested that ODF consider opportunities for partnerships.
    - A: ODF is not currently working with Business Oregon due to resource constraints but are interested in keeping conversations open and in looking for partnership opportunities.

- Q: After the forest goals and objectives are developed, is there a way to change the funding structure? Schools and local communities depend on timber revenues for funding. Would there be a way to fund local communities in a different and more sustainable way than through timber revenue?
    - A: The funding model can only be altered through legislative action. The legislature can change the funding structure after an HCP or FMP is developed, approved, and implemented. The goals and objectives are broad to provide flexibility and the ability to accommodate changes within the legislature.

- Q: What is the age class percentage of the lands that will be modeled as part of timber harvest modeling? What is the variation in elevation?
    - A: There is significant geological and elevation difference. The participant was asked to email this question to Jason so ODF can follow up offline to provide answers and details to these questions.

- Q: When will the terrestrial and aquatic conservation strategies be incorporated into the timber harvest modeling? There is an interest in seeing timber harvest modeling output levels in relations to aquatic and terrestrial conservation goals.
    - A: The conservation strategies are still in development and will be incorporated into the timber harvest modeling in the coming months. This will be presented at an upcoming meeting open to the public, likely in summer/fall.

- Comment: Before conservation strategies are finalized, it is important to understand the implications of the strategies in relation to the output and revenue generated from timber harvest. It is important to understand harvest levels as a result of conservation strategies before they are finalized.
    - A: The HCP is considering what is most efficient in managing for species and creating opportunity for covered activities. The approach is leading with science and includes working with ODF district staff to receive input on the preliminary strategy. The team will be calibrating the conservation strategies with timber harvest modeling in the next few months to see if the production and harvest output is viable.

- Q: Is climate change included as part of the timber harvest model? What climate science and data sources are being used?
    - A: The approach ODF is taking to address climate change is to develop a forest that is resilient and flexible to change. There are a lot of complexities and too much variability in climate change to build this specifically into the model while maintaining accuracy. Climate science, research, and data from TerrainWorks (specifically stream sensitive to temperature increase) are being incorporated into the HCP.

- Q: Is there understanding of how much revenue is needed to have healthy and resilient forests now and in the future?
    - A: ODF understands it is paramount that the agency has the resources to manage the forests. ODF views resilience and economic needs as complimentary. When ODF implements Greatest Permanent Value, it is across all three elements: economic, social, and environmental.

- Comment: Greatest Permanent Value does not seem to be the best way to meet the needs of rural communities. The timber industry has declined, and this has imposed challenges on rural communities in terms of job creation. How does the HCP apply Greatest Permanent Value and consider impacts to rural communities?

- Q: Can you explain the relationship between the timber harvest modeling and habitat modeling?
    - A: The timber harvest modeling increases the understanding of revenue over time. The conservation strategies and habitat modeling increase understanding of projections for species over time.

- Comment: It is important to factor in climate change into the HCP development. Additionally, there is a need to transition away from local timber industries to a more sustainable model for the benefit of future generations.

Conservation Strategies:

- Q: What obligation does ODF have to produce high quality habitat?
    - A: The requirements are not to improve all habitat everywhere but to conserve and enhance enough habitat quality and quantity to offset the amount of habitat that will be lost from covered activities over time, to mitigate the effects on species.

- Q: What functions are you trying to preserve or enhance when there is buffering between the temperature protection zone and the transition zone?
    - A: The intent is to retain wood recruitment ability and manage sediment.

- Q: Will the HCP consider active management to create desirable aquatic conditions?
    - A: The intention is to do targeted active management. Any management that would occur would be for the benefit of covered species.

- Q: Has the project team considered an aquatic anchor strategy?
    - A: An aquatic anchor strategy will be considered soon now that we have a better understanding of what the aquatic strategy will look like at the watershed and basin level. The terrestrial and aquatic strategies will be merged together and then the team will evaluate whether there are enough strategies and activities in place for the species. The team will also be looking at fish population level.

- Q: Will the model outputs and data be applied to a new model or an application of a previously published model?
    - A: The outputs and data will be applied to a combination of new modeling data and previously modeled data. There will be a combination of ODF existing data and new data from TerrainWorks that allow us to model current and future conditions. The use of several models will help fill in any gaps, for example wood recruitment potential.

- Q: Is there sufficient hydrologic data in terms of flow and water quality to incorporate into the model?
    - A: There is sufficient data quality and a robust data set, however there are not a lot of stream gauges to derive data from. Ground based knowledge was combined with TerrainWorks modeling to provide enough information for the HCP planning process.

- Q: Are groundwater and surface water interactions included in the modeling and aquatic strategy?
    - A: The team may evaluate the interaction of groundwater and surface water in key areas if the team feels like the buffering strategy needs to be improved. There is acknowledgement at the Scoping Team level that groundwater is an important component.

- Q: The conservation strategies and biological goals and objectives speak to increasing the quality and quantity of habitat. What is this relative to?
    - A: This captures how much low, moderate, and high-quality habitat is on the landscape and how the quality of habitat changes over time. The goal is to increase the quality and quantity of habitat by the end of the permit term. This will likely occur in the HCAs but could occur also across the landscape.

- Q: When will the modeling be ready to be shared publicly?
    - A: Drafts of the terrestrial and aquatic strategies will be complete in approximately six weeks and then will be integrated into the timber harvest model. After, the team will use an iterative approach to adjust the conservation strategies as needed to ensure both economic and environmental needs are viable to reach greatest permanent value. This will likely be shared in summer.

- Q: What is the process for engaging the BOF?
    - It is anticipated that there will be an update on the HCP at the July BOF meeting. The team will present a detailed report at the October BOF meeting that will analyze the conservation strategies and the economic side, including forest

harvest modeling and predictions on cost and revenue distribution to counties.

Summary and Next Steps:

Deb concluded the meeting and thanked participants for their feedback and engagement. Deb reminded people that the meeting materials are posted on the ODF website. Additionally, a recording of the webinar will be posted to the ODF YouTube channel.

The next meeting open to the public will likely be held in late summer. Deb encouraged participants to reach out to ODF or the project team with additional questions, comments, or any topics they would like to discuss at the next meeting open to the public.

Cindy echoed appreciation for the participants' patience as the technical components and details of the HCP are being developed and finalized. The next meeting open to the public in the summer will present a lot of the work products.

Liz closed the meeting with deep recognition and appreciation for participants' time in the midst of COVID-19.