

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, November 3, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

By Webinar/Video Conference

ATTENDEES

Participants: Rich Szlemp (USFWS), Rod Krahmer (ODFW), Ryan Singleton (DSL), Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Tere O'Rourke (NOAA Fisheries), Mike Wilson (ODF), Julie Firman (ODFW), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Josh Seeds (DEQ), Brian Pew (ODF)

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Aaron Gabbe (ICF), Melissa Klungle (ICF), Corey Grinnell (ODF), Robbie Lefebvre (ODF)

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West, welcomed Scoping Team (ST) members. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Sylvia reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Agency Updates, 2) Review key issues and work plan, 3) Adjacent northern spotted owl site assessment, 4) Coastal marten coverage, 5) Aquatic climate change analysis, 6) Terrestrial monitoring, 7) Confirm topics for Steering Committee (SC) update, and 8) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

Sylvia noted that the ST has been working collaboratively for years and are reaching the problem-solving mode to find closure on outstanding topics. Members were encouraged to provide specific and constructive feedback, comments, solutions, and alternatives if something in the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) does not seem sufficient.

Cindy Kolomechuk, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), encouraged ST members to reach out with any topics they would like to discuss at future ST meetings.

AGENCY UPDATES

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

- **ODF:** 1) ODF is working to manage the HCP workload to meet the March deadline while ensuring a quality work product. 2) There is a Board of Forestry (BOF) meeting on

November 3 that will focus on climate change. This will be the last BOF meeting for four members. 3) The agency is working on a resource assessment as part of the post-fire recovery efforts. The road assessment has been completed and culverts are being replaced.

- **NOAA Fisheries:** 1) There have been changes in some personnel categories within the agency that will likely influence the way federal employees are categorized, placed in, or removed from positions. 2) The agency is working with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) on the Coho conservation plan. 3) NOAA Fisheries is continuing to work on the five-year status review for all species. This will be the effect baseline for the biological opinion. It is expected to be released in the spring of next year.
- **Department of State Lands (DSL):** There will be a Land Board meeting and vote on December 8 on the Elliott State Research Forest HCP. This meeting will give clearer direction if Oregon State University (OSU) will pursue a research forest.

REVIEW KEY ISSUES AND WORK PLAN

Troy Rahmig, ICF, reviewed the remaining key issues to address in the HCP and the workplan. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Reminded members that the project team sent updated draft chapters to the ST following members' review to show how ST feedback was incorporated into the HCP.
- Presented a high-level table outlining the outstanding tasks to be completed.
- The first step to addressing the outstanding issues for the HCP is to ensure we have a complete list of the key issues/topics to address. These issues will then be attached to specific HCP chapters.
 - The Conservation Chapter (chapter 4), Effects Analysis (chapter 5), and Monitoring Chapter (chapter 6) require the most work and discussion at the ST level.
- The next step is to identify which topics require work from ICF and ODF, which topics require focused technical meetings with ST members, and which topics require a larger ST discussion.
- The project team is working to develop a revised chapter schedule that identifies what chapters can be revised soon and sent back to the ST for review. The schedule will also map out when the team can realistically distribute the other chapters (chapters 4-6) that addresses larger issues, requires larger discussions, or includes key decision-points.
- ICF is developing a workplan that will include the process and timeline to address the remaining key issues. A live version of the workplan will be distributed for ST members to review and see what is coming next.

- ST members were encouraged to provide feedback on the workplan. The intent is for the workplan to be a tool that works for everyone to ensure we stay on track to complete the HCP by March 2021.
- The plan is to provide the majority of HCP chapters for ST review by January and February 2021.
- Members were encouraged to reach out to Troy if they are unable to find specific information or the most recent versions of the draft chapters of the HCP.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the HCP key issues and work plan and provided the following questions and comments:

- A member requested that small group meetings with ST members be scheduled as soon as possible due to busy schedules and to ensure time is reserved well in advanced.
 - The project team will schedule focus group meetings to discuss technical aspects of the HCP sooner than later.
- It is important to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of expectations, how key issues will get resolved, and how we plan to move forward. In order to meet deadlines for key milestones for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), it is important to meet the deadline of completing the HCP by early March 2021.
 - The goal is for the HCP to be as complete as possible by March, but the HCP can move into the NEPA process without full completion as long there are no fundamental changes expected.
- It was noted that we are not necessarily striving for consensus on every topic in the HCP, however, there is interest to hear input, feedback, and concerns from the full ST. It is important to consider how are we going to implement the HCP, and this requires collaboration. The applicant will make the final decision as we get closer to a final administrative draft.
 - There is an option to elevate issues to the SC. The ST was encouraged to consider what topics should be brought to the SC for direction and guidance.
- Due to the overarching timeline, it is likely that the ST won't be able to address every issue. How will these issues get resolved in the remaining meetings? A member expressed concern that a lot of ST comments have not been addressed and noted concern about where the ST will end up on certain topics based on the deadlines.
 - It was noted that the project team has been updating the draft chapters to incorporate ST feedback and these will continue to be updated. In the coming weeks, the project team will be sharing updated draft chapters for additional ST review.

- Today's meeting includes discussion of four key technical topics; we seek to resolve these issues as much as possible during today's discussion. This will be a good example of operationalizing the work.

ADJACENT NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL SITE ASSESSMENT

Troy framed discussion on the adjacent northern spotted owl site assessment. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Today's discussion will focus on how to address adjacent northern spotted owl sites. The project team is looking for ST suggestions on how to approach these sites and how to offset the impact of effects or take.
- Presented data on adjacent active northern spotted owl activity centers within the provincial radius of the permit area. The data includes the number of adjacent sites and where they fall in regard to land ownership.
- Presented a table showing where the sites fall in relation to the Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs). They were reminded that HCAs were largely drawn to include northern spotted owl sites as well as suitable and highly suitable habitat.
- It is important to consider which covered activities are likely to have an effect on the 142 adjacent activity centers and how to quantify those effects.
 - For the sites adjacent to HCAs, we will likely use the HCA management activities to develop habitat.
 - For the sites not adjacent to HCAs, we will need to consider the covered activities expected to occur and how many acres are expected to be harvested.

Discussion:

The ST discussed how to address adjacent northern spotted owl sites and provided the following questions and comments:

- It was clarified that under the habitat suitability index, highly suitable habitat is quantified at 0.8+, suitable habitat is quantified at 0.8-.6, and marginally suitable habitat is quantified at 0.6 - 0.4. Those numbers have all now been adjusted and an updated table will be provided once it is determine how to structure the analysis.
- A member noted that habitat suitability should not be the only factor considered when looking at northern spotted owl sites. If an area with lower habitat suitability is supporting an owl currently, this should also be taken into an account.
- Suggestion to make the assessment more robust to show all habitat.

- It was clarified that a lot of the suitable habitat is within HCAs and is not shown in the table. The table focuses on harvest.
- What are the total acres inside and outside the HCAs and what is ODF's land ownership ? Suggestion to include landownership to show the larger picture.
- Suggestion to put the number of acres in the context of a site.
- Is there benefit to narrowing the analysis to focus/prioritize the list, such as reducing the list to sites closer than a half a mile?
 - We could use a distance like a half a mile, or we could use a proportion of the permit area to focus the analysis. The thresholds will come out as we develop the table.
- Suggestion to use policy level harvest modeling to help identify the areas to prioritize and see what the model selected as a possible solution.
- Suggestion to show inactive pairs in the table.
 - It was noted that when inactive pairs are included in the table, the numbers get large quickly due to the difference in land ownership.
- It was clarified that currently the table uses data to define active sites that goes back six years. This was developed in the context of the ST. That decision was made early in 2019 making the cutoff year 2012.
 - It would be interesting to see how the numbers would change if the data went back ten years. Would it be helpful to see the number of active sites for the past ten years to better understand the inactive pairs?
 - A member noted that the decision had been made early on to use 2012 as a cutoff for activity for analysis purposes.
 - By using a data set that goes back ten years, there would likely be some partials not included in HCAs that would be picked up. The project team will consider this further.

Troy reviewed next steps. The tables in the adjacent northern spotted owl site assessment will be updated based on today's discussion and will be distributed to the ST. The tables and data will later be plugged into the effects chapter. As the project team updates this information, ST input and feedback will be needed before the information is incorporated into the effects chapter.

COASTAL MARTEN COVERAGE

Troy presented updates on coastal marten coverage. He noted that there were a lot of placeholders for coastal marten going into the October Board of Forestry (BOF) meeting. The project team developed a proposal to address coastal marten and incorporated ODFW and United States Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) input.

One of the challenges is modeling for coastal marten because the species favors landscape elements that are not easily modeled. It is likely that we will have better modeling information in time for implementation of the HCP. Due to the limited modeling, the coastal marten strategy relies heavily on monitoring and is more high-level and conservative in what we think will have an effect on the species. It will be helpful to define what conservation looks like for the species.

Troy presented the monitoring proposal and expressed interest in hearing the ST input on what should be included in the monitoring strategy. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Reviewed ST comments on the original draft coastal marten strategy and how the project team addressed the feedback. The ST provided feedback on distribution monitoring, snags and legacy stands, the downed wood strategy, and reducing emphasis on maternal den protection.
- The intent is to reduce fuels outside HCAs and manage habitat inside HCAs, but there will need to be a balance.
- Management actions inside HCAs for coastal marten include striving to have more of a dense understory and increase shrubs for the species. It was suggested to use fuel break standards rather than reducing fuels in the HCAs.
- There may be a need to do more work on the ground during implementation and characterize habitat at the stand level to make a determination whether it is habitat for the species during harvest.
- It was proposed to create a habitat assessment process inside HCAs and before harvest. It will be important to show the conservation benefits over the course of the permit term through the use of HCAs.
- Key questions to consider and discuss as a group are what kind of monitoring is sufficient for the species? Is this a viable proposal? What does avoidance look like? How do we show we are mitigating the effects on the species? How do we estimate effects?

Discussion:

ST members discussed coastal marten coverage and provided the following questions and comments:

- It is important to build upon the distribution assessment to address coastal marten. It would also be helpful to do surveys on coastal marten to better understand occurrence,

habitat, and how the species uses the landscape. This will help close the information gap.

- There is a Carnivore Working Group, that includes land managers and USFWS, that addresses coastal marten as well as other species. There is a lot of ongoing research to build on distribution work and to understand the role of ODF southern lands near occupied sites. There will be a multi-carnivore survey effort in the southern portion of the permit area and could include a radio tagging study.
- It would be helpful to discuss what is and is not an effect on the species. Is there a need to supplement the distribution assessment at the stand level through a habitat type assessment? Will having a better understanding of the distribution of coastal marten help us determine if an action has an effect on the species?
- It will be difficult to categorize habitat for coastal marten. Suggestion to focus on habitat enhancements over time. It will be possible to create habitat but it's contrary to the forest management that has occurred. Forest management rarely manages for brush or understory.
- It would be informative for ODF to produce some approximate number or estimate of coastal marten occupancy.
 - ODF noted they have not been able to get access to coastal marten occupancy data. A member suggested connecting with ODFW for an estimate of the number of coastal marten that occurs on the landscape and information on how reliable an estimate would be.
 - It would be helpful to understand the methodology used to determine the approximate number of individuals and the assumptions used. With the scattered landscape, it will be difficult to determine the occupancy.
- A suitable approach would be to develop an approach that focuses on habitat improvement to see what silvicultural prescriptions will be needed to enhance understories for the species.
- It would be helpful to develop a tool to determine the baseline. The existing coastal marten model has problems but is the best tool available right now.
 - Ray Davis' models are improved in terms of predictive capability across habitat types but are not ready yet.
- A member proposed that we identify the area and assume that anything is potential habitat and any harvest has a potential effect. We can then discuss how management actions in the HCAs will minimize effect.
 - An overgeneralized approach may be the best solution. Suggestion to true up the gross area over time and refine it during implementation.

- A member reiterated that harvest actions would be an effect.
- More presence surveys under the HCP is a possibility but would only be worthwhile in nexus with the Carnivore Working Group.

Troy recapped next steps. He explained the project team will revise the original proposal on coastal marten coverage based on ST feedback. The proposal will be incorporated in different parts of the HCP but will be a cohesive piece as it is developed. Key updates to the proposal include adding detail or reiterating the commitment to surveys, running an analysis based on gross estimates to identify acres affected by covered activities, and considering how to refine the approach during implementation. We may create a new conservation action specifically for coastal marten and will continue to consider how to quantify occupancy estimates.

AQUATIC CLIMATE CHANGE ANALYSIS

Troy framed the discussion on the aquatic climate change analysis. He noted that TerrainWorks modeling looked at different climate change scenarios and evaluated streams that are more susceptible to warming.

Melissa Klungle, ICF, presented on the climate change analysis that aims to build upon what was discussed qualitatively in Chapter 5 of the HCP. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Presented historic stream temperature data from Buster Creek as an example. The data shows areas that are fish friendly, areas that are adequate for fish, and areas that are deadly for fish from a temperature perspective.
- Reviewed projected stream temperature data for 2040 and 2080. The data shows the temperatures are rising towards lethal.
- The modeling can be used to identify specific reaches that are susceptible to warming.
- To address climate change, it was suggested to point to the buffering strategy to show that the HCP provides shading in the areas that are susceptible to warming. Monitoring data can also be used during implementation to change the buffer strategy in key locations to protect fish as needed, through adaptive management.
- It is important to consider if there any other areas in the permit area that are projected to warm that do not have a 120' buffer.
- The intent is to retain a qualitative climate change analysis in the HCP and supplement it with more detail about how/if the current buffering strategy is adequate to address these issues. We are not proposing to change the strategy or overall analysis, but instead are looking to provide more detail and show how the HCP will address climate change.

Discussion:

ST members discussed the aquatic climate change analysis and provided the following questions and comments:

- Does the climate analysis model presented include the current buffers?
 - The modeling and data presented is part of the University of Washington's climate analysis. This does not include the HCP buffers.
- A member noted that the buffers are the best thing we can do for wood, temperature management, erosion, etc. It is important to explain that the modeling data shows climate projections if the buffers are not utilized. We need to highlight that the HCP buffering strategy reduces stream temperature increases and is sufficient to minimize climate change effects.
- Suggestion to add a narrative about carbon sequestration that describes the total number of acres not subject to management.
- It was clarified that these models assume there is no change in the use of land.
- We should consider adding protections in areas that are anticipated to get warmer as well as consider areas that don't have the 120' buffer but may need protections due to warming.
- It was clarified that this modeling aims to be another tool during implementation to help make decisions and minimize climate change effects
- Does this modeling reflect changes in precipitation?
 - The model accounts for groundwater inputs but does not take into account changes in precipitation and stream flow.
- It was clarified that the climate analysis model looks at air temperature and stream discharge.
- It would be beneficial to show the effects of the proposed action rather than just the model. A member suggested developing a narrative that explains how much stream temperatures will likely increase during the permit term and outlines the proposed approach to address or minimize climate change effects. This narrative could then be supplemented by the model projections.
 - The project team was not planning to create a new model with the buffers. Instead, the plan was to summarize how stream temperatures are likely to rise to a certain amount by 2040 and 2080 and show how the buffering strategy addresses this change.

- Suggestion to use the language “minimize temperature increases” rather than “temperature protection.”
- The ST was encouraged to send any additional research or data that should be included in the analysis.
- The project team is to share information on the model as well as the model outcomes across the permit area.

TERRESTRIAL MONITORING

Troy and Nick Palazzotto, ODF, framed discussion on monitoring for terrestrial species. Key topics of the presentation included:

- Monitoring is important to ensure the biological goals and objectives are being met and that the conservation strategy is working as intended. There are two pieces to monitoring: 1) Habitat and 2) Species.
 - Habitat monitoring describes habitat suitability and the number of acres of habitat that are lost and gained.
 - Species monitoring involves specific monitoring for the species.
- Today’s discussion will focus on monitoring activities and frequency for terrestrial species. It is important to discuss the level of species monitoring that is expected and the purpose of monitoring efforts in order connect it to the conservation strategy.
- The team estimated the level of effort to monitor each of the terrestrial species to determine the approximate monitoring cost. This estimate is included in the cost and funding chapter of the HCP.
- Presented a table showing habitat and species monitoring as well as monitoring inside and outside HCAs.
- Reviewed the proposal for monitoring northern spotted owls which included monitoring active ODF activity centers, non-ODF adjacent active sites within a half mile, and highly suitable habitat outside HCAs.

Discussion:

The ST discussed terrestrial monitoring for northern spotted owl and provided the following questions and comments:

- It would be helpful to have demographic data for northern spotted owls on ODF lands.
 - As of next year, acoustic studies will replace demographic studies. As a result, there will be activity center checks.

- Regarding the pace and scale of the surveys, is ODF able to survey all active sites in a given year?
 - It was assumed that ODF would monitor all active sites every year. Nearly all active sites are in HCAs. That would be 90 visits under a demographic protocol. The intent is to track the sites through the activity center and monitoring.
- A high priority would be monitoring active sites in HCAs given the active management approach for these areas.
- A member agreed with monitoring sites inside HCAs, however, it does not need to be done for a full demographic.
- Suggestion to use crude density surveys overtime.
- A goal is to reduce survey costs. How does the cost of monitoring compare to the take avoidance strategy?
 - This monitoring approach is a flat fee whereas the cost of the take avoidance strategy varies. Surveys under the HCP focuses more on the species unlike take avoidance, so it is not a direct comparison. The cost would likely decrease overtime.
- Monitoring priorities change overtime. In the past, monitoring plans were so rigid it was difficult to make any changes. Previously, there was a large effort to collect data for species that did not have much information, and this was money well spent. However, we underestimated the need to do monitoring after events like fires or floods. The concepts were built into the plan but not the funding. It was suggested that the HCP build in adaptive monitoring to allow changes to the monitoring plan and include post-event monitoring and funding.
- A member reiterated the need for adaptability in the monitoring approach as overtime there typically is a shift in monitoring priorities or a reduction in effort. Suggestion to have an annual meeting to evaluate the monitoring efforts and allow for decision making along the way.
 - A member recommended evaluating the monitoring efforts on a five- or ten-year timeline to make decisions and shift priorities. The annual meetings should be a check on the monitoring.
- A member suggested infrequently banding owls outside of HCAs to learn what happens to those owls in particular.
 - It may not be beneficial to limit banding to dispersal habitat outside of HCAs.
 - It is important to consider how banding fits into the larger landscape and alongside other activities.

- A next step is to discuss how to allocate monitoring funding.

Troy recapped the conversation and noted there will be more discussion on monitoring for the other terrestrial species. He recommended scheduling a small group meeting this month to continue the discussion on terrestrial monitoring.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next SC meeting is scheduled for December 9 from 1-4 pm.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Sylvia thanked members for their participation and reviewed upcoming meetings. The next ST meeting is scheduled for December 1 from 10 am – 1 pm.

Revised versions of the first three chapters of the HCP are expected to be sent to the ST for review in December. The remaining chapters will be sent to the ST in January. The Project Team will circulate the agenda topics for the December and January ST meetings. ST members were encouraged to provide feedback on the agendas and any additional topics to discuss at upcoming ST meetings.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- ICF: Develop workplan and schedule to address outstanding issues of the HCP and meet the March deadline.
- ST: Provide any comments or feedback on the workplan and schedule.
- ST: Send any additional research or data that should be included in the aquatic climate analysis.
- Project Team: Circulate information on the climate analysis model and the model outcomes across the permit area to the ST.
- ICF/ODF: Schedule a focused small group meeting to discuss terrestrial monitoring.
- Project Team: Circulate revised versions of the first three chapters of the HCP to the ST for review in December.
- Project Team: Send agenda topics for the December and January ST meetings.
- ST: Send any additional topics to discuss at upcoming ST meetings.