

BMFP Damon Subcommittee Meeting – Thursday, October 16th, 2008
Aspen Restoration and Potential Treatment in Goshawk Territories

Jack Southworth, Dan Hubbard, Mike Billman, Elaine Kohrman, Andy Daniels, Hersh McNeil, Cindy Kranich, Alden Boetsch, Dan Bishop, King Williams, Glen Johnston, Tim Lillebo, Will Brendeckie, Marylou Welby, George Meredith, Roy Walker, Curt Qual, Bob Crisler.

Roy Walker: Roy gave a general overview of what stage the project is in. Silviculture and Fire have visited all stands and developed integrated treatments. Road systems and logging systems have not been identified but there will probably be no skyline logging proposed. If treatments are proposed in heritage sites one option is over the snow logging.

- Total commercial harvest – 9,858 acres
- Commercial and precommercial thinning (together) – 4,933 acres
- Precommercial thinning only (7” to 9” dbh) – 2,000 acres on tractor ground
- OFSS and OFMS to be managed on a 100 year horizon
- Historic Range of Variation for OFSS – 5-50%
- Non-forest – 17% of project area

Andy Daniels discussed proposed basal areas (BA) for stands with commercial and precommercial thinning prescriptions. Dry pine sites would average between 40-90 BA leaving clumps and holes throughout the stands. Mixed conifer sites would be reduced to 40-100 BA outside of wildlife areas.

Questions/concerns from the subcommittee included:

- What would the average BA be following thinning? Answer: The overall average BA would be 60, at 60 BA the next entry would occur earlier than if the stands were reduce to a lower BA. Wildlife corridors would be maintained at a higher BA somewhere between 140 to 180 BA
- Doing a thinning that wouldn't require another treatment for 30-40 years.

Specific issues discussed

Goshawk Habitat:

There are four goshawk nest sites within stands that are currently classified as Old Forest Multi Strata (OFMS) that will be treated to produce Old Forest Single Strata (OFSS). There needs to be 30 acres left untreated around each nest site if goshawks are the species managed for. If stands are treated to increase the amount of Whiteheaded Woodpecker habitat (OFSS) goshawks will probably leave the area.

Elaine asked the subcommittee what species they thought the Forest Service should be managing for?

Responses and questions from the subcommittee included:

- Do we need to choose between the two? Answer: The areas proposed for treatment were not necessarily ecologically appropriate for goshawk habitat.
- Are there other areas of OFMS that could be converted to OFSS because the goshawks were already established? Answer: There are nine goshawk territories identified in the project area.

Most in attendance were in favor of treating goshawk habitat in the Swick Old Growth Area, but the subcommittee requested more information from the Forest Service before making a decision. . More information will be made available at the next meeting on the effects to goshawks and at what scale those effects will occur.

Amending the Forest Plan:

If commercial and precommercial thinning treatments are implemented then the amount of OFMS will drop below 5% which will require a Forest Plan amendment. The question was asked if the subcommittee was comfortable with a Forest Plan amendment? No one at the meeting expressed concern over doing Forest Plan amendments.

Old Growth

Treating stands within the project area is being approached on a stand by stand basis; treating individual trees will be covered by the marking guides.

There was a brief discussion on old growth stands vs. old growth trees. Field trip suggested to a stand proposed for treatment in the Canyon Creek WUI HFRA project. The stand has trees less than 21” in diameter that demonstrate old growth characteristics. It was suggested the field trip should be before next month’s meeting.

Aspen

Will Brendeckie gave a presentation on aspen and handed out a paper describing the current and projected condition of aspen within the Damon Project Area. He discussed how the potential loss of aspen could be dealt with. Not all aspen stands within the project area have been surveyed.

Aspen is important for wildlife and birds. Stands within the project area are missing recruitment of a midstory aspen component. In this project, prescriptions will be based on individual specific condition of aspen stands.

Questions/concerns from the subcommittee included:

- How would the commercial component be removed from aspen stands within riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCA's)? Answer: Commercial volume had not been removed from RHCA's before.
- The subcommittee may need to continue to discuss specifics of removing commercial volume from the RHCA.

The next Damon Subcommittee meeting will be November 20th from 12:00 to 3:00 pm. It will be held at the Federal building. Tim and Mike will make a video of the stand in Canyon Creek WUI project that has old growth characteristics and a video of the aspen stands will be produced by Will. A virtual field trip as well as a draft proposed action will be presented at the next month's Damon Subcommittee meeting.