

**Blue Mountains Forest Partners
Dad's Creek Committee Meeting
Dad's Creek Draft Proposal Discussion
January 24th 2008**

Participants

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We used this meeting to discuss outstanding issues and decisions that need to be made on the Dad's Creek project proposal as presented by the Forest Service. The Forest Service worked to address all public comments received in this current iteration of the Dads proposal.

Watershed Restoration

There was a lot of discussion of this issue because currently watershed restoration projects that are not tree-related are not included in the Forest Service's environmental analysis though they have part of group discussions from the start. The Forest Service explained that they made this decision in order to make it easier for them to use Healthy Forest Restoration Act authorities in order to speed the planning process.

However, after some discussion, the Forest Service agreed they could add restoration projects that aren't controversial such as roads that aren't needed or are causing resource problems to mitigate for impacts to wildlife caused by thinning. If additional restoration work is needed in this area, a Categorical Exclusion could be added to the district's 2009 program of work. Prioritization of restoration work across the national forest was mentioned because there are very limited dollars for restoration work and it might make sense to focus scarce restoration dollars elsewhere.

The group feels strongly that whole watershed restoration is really important, and that the analysis for all restoration work should occur at the same time. FS committed to analyzing restoration work at the same time for next project.

Next Steps: Group needs to agree very quickly on which restoration projects to recommend to the Forest Service for inclusion in the current analysis. Activities that are included in the EA need the full support of the collaborative group. When the FS completes the roads analysis, we could revisit this question. The roads analysis will probably be done in the first week of February, and the group and FS can meet then.

Recommendations to Full Group: Group should decide on restoration projects to recommend to FS for inclusion in this project. This would be done by both the group and the FS.

For the next BMFP project, we should open with a discussion of authorities so that we don't get stuck with this same problem.

New Roads and Skyline Logging

The proposed action requires temporary roads construction. There is a lot of economic opportunity in some of these units while many are economic deficit units. There is a small number of stands that will provide us with excess funds. However, the temp road units are high and steep and would also require skyline yarding, which might not be feasible because there are no local contractors who have this type of system. If skyline is not a possibility, are there other ways we can meet our objective of reducing density/ fuel loads?

Two temp roads in bottom of project area. Road didn't exist here before. One at top of project area: top of the ridge road. North side of unit 12, maybe about a mile long. Far southern boundary, a few roads that are really short. The longest road would be right along the boundary of the roadless area. Was railroad logged in the past, and there are some existing skid trails.

Northern temp road accesses unit 12 which is 92 acres and would be mostly skyline logged. Little more value than other stands up here because it has been pre-commercially thinned. Probably accesses unit 10 as well. Portion of unit 50, units 51 and 52, and a portion of unit 28 are too steep so some temp road would be built to access these units. Portion of 22 is too steep, but just a sliver, and it might not be worth going after it.

Temp roads would all be decommissioned: scarified, seeded with natives, etc. Not much change to slope would be needed; a little will be needed at the start on the longer temp road. Dirt surface, no gravel.

Is there a way to do it without having a long-lasting impact? ORV folks have breached a lot of the closed roads in the area. Might need another alternative because there is no local skyline operator anyway.

Next Steps

- Analyze the most-impacting option: skyline. Also analyze economics of this type of system too?
- Look back through previous notes to see if any decisions were made in the past on temporary roads.
- Have a conference call to discuss the temporary roads issue.
- Explore other options for getting work done in the area.
- Sustainable Northwest will see if we can borrow a small skyline yarder from another community-based forestry group in northern California.

Economics/ Biomass

FS would like to utilize biomass opportunities with this project, but they aren't sure the needed local capacity is there. If stewardship contracting is used, the contractor could offer the FS options on how to incorporate biomass in their proposal. FS will analyze the alternative that would have the most impact, and contractors would get extra points in their

proposal for lower impact options. FS understands that BMFP would like biomass utilization pursued.

Regeneration Harvest

Shelterwood and regeneration harvest language doesn't adequately represent what would be happening on the ground. Concept is not necessarily bad. Language will be adjusted to reflect work on the ground and not what people think of/ what has historically been called a regeneration cut. The goal of the prescriptions is to guide the land towards fire-adapted species.

Next Steps: change current language and monitor the marking before work is done in these areas.

Basal Area

FS tried to incorporate design features that were highly variable. Retention of up to 15% in 3-5 acre chunks.

Eric created a bell shaped curve for basal area. Seems to some folks like the upper end of the basal area curve is missing. 80 is missing. Current basal area of 60 at 15% will be changed to 60-80 at 15%.

Basal area now ranges from 25 – 60. In the field, some partners were opposed to anything much below 120. Marking crews skills are varied and the tendency of these crews is to be a little more conservative.

Next Steps? We didn't decide on any next steps for this issue except that the current basal area of 60 at 15% will be changed to 60-80 at 15%. We should probably talk about this on a conference call as well.

Pile and Burn

There was significant public comment on this. The Dad's project would be affecting 2% of acreage with piles. The prescription says no more than 3% of the acreage will be impacted by pile burning, and most likely it will be lower than that. Piles usually affect no more than 1%. Landings are a different story. If chipping is an option, it would be great, but it might not be possible. Group asked if more material could be left scattered across the landscape so the piles are smaller and the Forest Service said that this is part of the plan.

Satisfactory Cover Amendment

On field trips it seemed like this wasn't going to be a big issue. Big game winter range is closest to private land. Patches of unthinned areas near here will be larger than originally proposed. Closing some roads or other work could help mitigate this.

Steep Slopes

See page 20 of the FS document. Limitation on downhill skidding and uphill skidding. (Same as current guidelines.) More specific guidelines will be developed unit by unit.

Aspen Regeneration

Next Steps: Change language to “remove all trees within x feet of aspen.” Trees will not be clear-cut. FS will clarify what they are going to do.

Ephemeral Draws

BMPs will be used. Not necessarily no cut. Group thinks we may want to do some work in these areas. No cutting except for restoration needs or reduced fire risk which would be approved by the hydrologist and noted on the map.

Snags

Snags will be left if at all possible.

DOGs and ROGs

Need some mechanical treatment before any fire can be introduced here. If it makes sense to do some treatment here, it should be prioritized. FS does not want to propose an action that would require another forest plan amendment in the DOGs and ROGs. Can do activities for fuels in the DOGs but should probably stay away from anything commercial. In ROGs, commercial is ok and wouldn't require an amendment.

Next Steps: Tim will get a hold of Karen and Asante and talk to them about it. Roy, Andy and Tim will get together and put something into the proposed action.

General Comments

Impressed by amount of small-diameter thinning and burning that is being proposed. Concerned about economics, weeds, and moving designated old growth.