

Blue Mountain Forest Partners
Dad's Creek Field Trip 7/24/07
Summary of notes

I. Discussion at Forest Service Office:

1. Language in the PIL

Concern: Some of the language describing the group's five focus areas is different in the version of the PIL the Forest Service recently drafted than the language the group came to consensus on. For example what the group referred to as 'aquatic habitat' is called 'summer steelhead habitat'.

Explanation: The PIL was written to fit into a specific HFRA framework, therefore some of the language was changed.

Group decision: The group feels more comfortable using the language they agreed on earlier. Decision made to continue to discuss this issue and what to do next during a debrief meeting.

2. Available information and maps

Concern: Karen would like more information on goshawks. If current information isn't available, then the most recent information would be helpful (one to two years old).

3. Wildlife to keep in mind as project moves forward

The group agreed to focus on the following species when trying to balance wildlife concerns with other aspects of the project:

- Steelhead or redband trout (whichever is the most sensitive indicator species)
- Pine Martin
- Pileated woodpecker
- Raptors
- Elk
- Possibly Columbia spotted frog depending on what information there is on amphibian habitat

II. Field Trip

Stop 1:

This kind of a site is an example of an opportunity to cut some conifers for stream restoration, to encourage hardwoods to come back and to encourage bigger trees to grow. In terms of commercial timber opportunities there could be the opportunity to thin 12" – 15" diameter trees if there was a way to pull them up or out without compromising the other goals for the area.

Concerns and topics discussed:

- Sedimentation as a result of disturbance
 - Ashy soils that displace easily

- Steep slopes above the stream
- Protecting pileated woodpecker habitat
- Supporting neotropical migratory bird species (need for shrubs and cover)
- Impacts from cows on stream bank
- Using machinery in the area (both in terms of impact on stream bank and feasibility of getting the machinery in there)
- Cost effectiveness

Decisions:

- Thinning:
 - Within 100' – 150' of the stream the group was okay with the idea of doing some hand felling
 - Further than 100' – 150' from the stream group was generally okay with idea of thinning some bigger trees with machinery as long as it met the restoration goals the project set by the group and didn't disturb the soils or cause increased sedimentation of the stream.
- Where should group focus?
 - Do as much restoration along the stream as possible within the framework of the objective identified by the group concentrating on areas where there are already hardwoods
- Planting:
 - Group should develop some guidelines for addressing this issue
- What does 'short term' mean?
 - In general group was thinking 3-5 years before the abatement of impacts
- Grazing:
 - Group should continue to think creatively about ideas to address the impact of grazing. Some preliminary ideas discussed:
 - Meet with permittee to discuss the idea of doing a small enclosure by the stream to keep the cows out of the stream and to keep them from eating the deciduous trees the group would like to encourage to grow in the area.
- Burning:
 - Group generally okay with idea of doing some prescribed burning here. Would be good to think strategically in terms of timing and consider if its best to do it before hardwoods are planted (if they are), or once more hardwoods are established.
 - Hand piles would be best.

General discussion point to keep in mind

- Cost effectiveness
 - When thinking about cost effectiveness it's a good idea to keep the entire project area in mind. While some individual projects might not be cost effective, other individual projects may be able to make up for them/support them.

Stop 2:

This area is representative of less than 1% of the whole project area.

Specific recommendations for this site:

- Continue to help this area become single strata old growth
- Remove some trees of the trees, but don't take as much as 2/3 of the trees (no firm agreement on recommended percent)
- Consider whiteheaded woodpecker habitat
- Leave the mark the group did as an exercise as an example of the kind of things people comfortable with
- Variable thinning is okay
- Using low intensity fire is okay

Concerns and topics discussed:

- Bark beetle
- Crown fires
 - Area not really at risk of crown fire right now, but 20 years from now could be a different story.
- Wildlife habitat
- Intensity and kinds of thinning
- Marking crew
 - Group concerned about the level of experience of crew members
 - F.S. response to concern: the crew will contain a core group of members who have done this for a number of seasons and are well trained.
- Tree removal strategies and timing
- Mistletoe
- Availability of information on cover and wildlife in addition to silvacultural info

Feedback from different group members on why they did their sample mark the way they did:

- Karen: Goal = To thin the smallest, sickest trees in the densest areas. Wouldn't want the result to be too patchy and would like to keep some of the bigger trees for snags. Would also like thinning to help reduce the risk of a crown fire.
- Mike: Goal = To thin the stand to encourage a late stage situation. Would do thinning in stages to reduce the risk of damage from wind and snow that might occur if area opened up too quickly (about 5 years apart). Also, wouldn't want to do all the thinning all at once b/c there is a likelihood of beetles coming in and killing some additional trees.
- Eric: would prefer to see about 2/3 of the trees come out in a single treatment. This would help with resistance to bark beetle, preventing a crown fire in the future, and keeping mistletoe from spreading.

Additional Points:

- Doing this project as a stewardship contract would provide an opportunity for the collaborative group to be involved in the mark.
- The group will continue to discuss marking crew concerns and opportunities.

- When thinking about economic benefit, its good to think not only in terms of community benefit, but also benefit to the project so that revenue can be generated to help fund other, less economically beneficial projects.

Stop 3:

This area is representative of about 20% of the whole project. About 10 – 20% of the whole project planning area has more dense, continuous characteristics.

Goals for this stand:

- Reduce ground fuels
- Reduce small diameter ladder fuels in denser areas
- Maintain open area like the one the group stopped in
- In denser stands, maintain larger trees in each area
- Maintain or enhance wildlife habitat if it exists/should be there
- Reduce mistletoe: use mistletoe as a factor in deciding which trees to cut, but leave mistletoe witches brooms in larger Douglas firs for goshawk nesting

Additional suggestions and topics discussed:

- WUI and private land
 - Karen suggested taking a feathered approach to land that is in or near the WUI or private land with structures. For example, in general, do the heaviest thinning in areas closest to the WUI and to private lands with structures with an emphasis on fuels reduction and mistletoe reduction. In the area about 100' to 300' from the WUI do lighter thinning, in the next farthest block do even lighter thinning and have more of a wildlife focus.
 - What to do in areas in or near the WUI and areas adjacent to private land
- Big game habitat
 - Group agreed they need to have more discussions about big game habitat.

Stop 4:

About 10% of the project area is like this site: multi-strata, unlogged area with old growth characteristics.

Concerns and topics discussed:

- Protecting the area from wildfire
 - Group wants to protect the area from wildfire, no firm agreement on best way to do that
 - Some ideas discussed: doing heavy thinning, doing some hand felling, doing light thinning, doing horizontal breaks
- Steepness of slope
 - Karen concerned about steepness of slope and the affect thinning activity would have. Tim and James not as concerned about the steepness of slope as doing work to reduce risk of wildfire.
- Conversion of multi strata old growth to single strata old growth

- Karen concerned about conversion in an area with such a steep slope. Would be more okay with conversion in an area that was flatter and was not naturally mixed conifer.
- Whiteheaded woodpecker habitat
 - Group okay with protecting/encouraging whiteheaded woodpecker habitat*
 - *as long as pileated woodpeckers aren't using the area – if they are, they should take precedence
 - Tim suggested developing a strategy that considers historical and more recent (w/in 50 years) conditions when evaluating habitat.

Decisions:

- Group generally okay with idea of doing relatively aggressive ladder fuel reduction around bigger trees

Stop 5:

Idea behind prescription proposed for this site:

Reduce risk of fire and bud worm infestation

(The briefing sheet handed out at beginning of day describes the background behind the prescription propose for this area.)

Group is comfortable with the idea of a more complex prescription based on each site.

Karen concerned about maintaining intermediate trees (15" – 20") to help maintain big tree landscape – doesn't want too many trees taken out, but some would be okay.

Group requested to see another site where the kind of prescription proposed for this site has already been implemented.

III. Next Steps

- In preparation for the next meeting group members should prepare a list of things they'd like see done (or not done) to share with the Forest Service
- Finalize the PIL
 - Group given most recent draft to review
- Andy will try to get group more info to the group 2 weeks before next meeting
- The Forest Service needs to revise the timeline of the project
- Karen will try to finish field checking the more controversial sites by mid to late August in time for the next subgroup meeting