

Wild Rivers Coast Forest Collaborative Meeting

September 14th, 2018

10am-4pm

Gold Beach Ranger District Office

Barbara Cisneros (USFS), Gary Grotrian (Agness Citizen), Alex Campbell (Oregon Solutions), Virginia Gibbons (USFS), Mike Miller (Curry Citizens for Public Land Access), Karla Cotliem (USFS), Merv George (USFS), Carol Lagodid (USFS), Chris Stewart (USFS), Kristin Coons (USFS), Bill Kohn (USFS), Cathy Bounds (BLM), Rich Nawa (KS Wild), Marie Simonds (Wild Rivers Coast Alliance), Norma Kline (OSU Extension), Cody Johnson (USFS), Kaily Clarno (USFS), Terry Mock (Ocean Mountain Ranch), Dale Hodges (Cedar Valley Fire), Kay Shelnutt (USFS), Teresa Bird (Kalmiopsis Audubon Society), Steve Royer (USFS), Scott Nicols (South Coast Lumber), Frank Burris (OSU Extension), David Turner (BLM), Dana Walsh (USFS), Clint Emmerson (USFS), Jim Seeley (Wild Rivers Coast Alliance)

1. Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor Merv George

- I am excited to meet the members of the forest collaborative and learn about your values: What motivates you to keep coming? What is your vision of the future? It is important to me that our agency remain relevant to the people that we serve.
- There are transitions in leadership both on the district and in the National Forest leadership. Gold Beach District Ranger job vacancy going to be posted in the next few weeks.
- We are on day 62 of fires on the forest. This might be a new normal. The forest is not healthy and there are dangerous fuel conditions.
- The forest collaborative can help develop projects that are relevant and make sense economically and ecologically.
- Mill infrastructure is important in order to implement forest projects.
- The Forest Service must maintain a difficult balance: Manage public lands that are relevant locally and meet national standards. Public input is important because our decisions impact the communities we serve.
- Klondike Fire is at 52% containment. We are not expecting meaningful rain (“season ending event”) until November. Fatigue is starting to set in, not just firefighters but communities that are sick of the smoke.
- Zones of Agreement are hard to do. We aren’t going to get 100% consensus, it’s not measure of success, but we can get it as close as possible.
- My vision for the collaborative is that you do at least one NEPA decision every year, whether it’s a CE or an EA. This demonstrates that the group is getting stuff done. We are being encouraged about how to be more efficient with our NEPA.

Q&A

Q: The current Northwest Forest Plan is not working for communities and not working for old growth. Any revisions need to incorporate more fire management. How do you plan to address this?

MG: We need active management for a clean understory. There isn’t a word for mega fire in the Hoopa language. With indigenous forest practices, we have always been managing the forest. The aim is to take care of your forest so that it takes care of you.

Single species management is does not work. The goal should be clean understories achieved through mechanical thinning that is, when appropriate, followed up with prescribed burns.

Q: Does the forest have the financial resources for this strategy?

MG: This is where the collaborative comes in. We can leverage private money to help get work done. This forest, this is seen as a forest that does good work with prescribed burning. We just got \$500k to do more fuels work.

If you have NEPA done your projects are shovel ready, chances of getting funding are much higher.

Q: Could you use Programmatic EA to plan fuels work?

[Definition: Programmatic Environmental Analysis is when the NEPA analysis addresses a type of project broadly rather than a specific project. For example, a Programmatic EA might address culvert replacements meeting x,y,z requirements across the forest]

MG: Programmatic EAs are good in some regards, but we still need to do a number of steps specific to each project including surveys, tribal consultations, etc.

Comments

Rich Nawa: KS Wild unequivocally supports active management, but not projects where 200 year old trees are cut. Thousands of acres of fuels treatment, and the research says it is effective 2% per year rather than large treatment.

Jim Seeley: I would like to point out the invasive species work of the Sudden Oak Death Task Force and the Gorse Action Group. We are exploring air curtain burners for managing these issues while also creating biochar and reducing carbon emissions.

2. Shasta Agness Landscape Restoration Project

Barbara Cisneros, NEPA Coordinator for Gold Beach Ranger District

[For reference, see the documents titled "ShAgnessEISTimeline-WRCFC-Final" and "ShastAgnessWRCFCPacket-Final"]

All of these dates of tentative and it is a working draft. There are two schedules, the compressed schedule and the normal-ish schedule.

The Forest Service has many steps required by NEPA, the Northwest Forest Plan, and mandates such as (but not limited to and not necessarily in this order, for more specific overview of NEPA steps see the timeline document):

- Demonstrating consistency with the Northwest Forest Plan.
 - FS must consult with agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers and the Fish & Wildlife Service
- Washington Office need to do Federal Register notice.
- Comment Analysis Report (comments submitted during comment period)
- Draft record of decision (Merv picks the alternative)

- 45-day Objections Period followed by an Objections – Resolution Period
- Ongoing tribal consultation

When you could have a decision?

- 7/31/2019 goal for signed Record of Decision (ROD).

Legal Designations about Impacts

- Many projects have short term disturbances but long term benefits.
- “Likely Adverse” and “Take” are two legal terms.
- For Shasta Agness, there is probably going to be a “Likely Adverse” impacts, but not “Take”
- Owl take is a deal breaker for KS Wild.
- Forest Service is doing full disclosure about impacts, good and bad.

What does the forest service expect from the collaborative?

Collaborative Input during the comment period

- Provide comment letters that are as specific as possible
- Comment to official comment box, not staff emails.
- Please submit comments as early as possible.

MG: If you write a letter of support you get a seat at the table during any hearing. You can help defend it. The best projects is when you are having some say in how it gets managed.

Caught up in NEPA: regulatory process can be highly technical for collaborative members/public

- Is there a 1 pager about NEPA for local government and citizens?
- More than regulator process, how do we communicate why this project matters?
- Forest Collaborative could do a road show with local governments in the region
- Important to include Agness residents from the beginning

3. Post Chetco Bar Fire Restoration

[For reference, see the pdf titled Post Chetco Bar Fire Restoration Strategy]

Agency is changing how it deals with post-fire restoration.

This is not NEPA. This strategy is an assessment process about how we can best move forward. A fire restoration has 3 real components to it.

Post-fire environments continue to change over time.

This strategy will include assessment, project planning, and monitoring:

- Assessment: How is this going to burn in the future? What were the fire effects? Insects diseases other risks? Restoration opportunities? Where was the fire beneficial? The decision maker picks what we move forward on.
- Project Planning
 - Danger trees, salvage already underway.

- Develop other projects: reforestation, redwood restoration, meadow restoration, fuels management
- Monitoring: Post fire needs will continue to develop.

Next steps: Pinyon Box (Shared Folder), which will allow the FS to share post-fire information with the collaborative.

- What information does the forest collaborative want?
- Is there work you are doing or are interested in doing to accomplish this?

If we want to replant, what do we want it to look like? That is where the communities input on those conversations are really important. It is important to remember that no action is still an action.

Going out and replanting is 2-3 years out.

Need to look at information about where natural stocking is appropriate vs where the earth is so burned that reforestation is important? This is a technical issue.

Q: How do we bridge the technical gap when bringing this to a broader public?

- Start with big picture principles and values and drill down into technical detail from there if necessary.
- This might go a good issue to form a technical working group on.

Invasive species stops healthy reforestation. We need to include this in the restoration plan. Some invasive species management was funded through BAER (Burned Area Emergency Response). However, this is only one-year funding.

Dale Hodges: Future post fire restoration could use permaculture technology such as bioswales to keep more moisture in the soil as a way to mitigate future fire risk.