

November Meeting Minutes

Meeting Participants

Frank Burris-OSU Extension, Gary Grotrian-Agness Resident, Kelly Timchak-Lower Rogue Watershed Council, Lily Miller-ORREC, Rich Nawa-KS Wild, Joe Bush-Local Resident, Kendal Martel-WRCFC Facilitator, Jenna Knobloch-Sustainable Northwest, Rich Nawa-KS Wild, Kevin Adamak-South Coast Lumber, Mike Miller-CCCPLA, Representative David Brock Smith, Theresa Bird-Kalmiopsis Audubon, Jim Sealey-Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, Jesse Burner-USFS Powers District Ranger, Amy Amrhein-Senator Merkley's Office, Molly McCarthy-Senator Wyden's Office, Tina Lanier-USFS Gold Beach District Ranger

Forest Service Updates about post Chetco Bar Fire Work:

- ~190,000 acres fire of which 170,000 acres was on National Forest. The rest were primarily BLM/Private lands.
- The fire was detected July 12th and was 100% contained last week.
- We did a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) only covers the first year and focuses on stabilizing soils, addressing public safety risks, etc., within the first year of the fire
- The FS was funded for almost all recommendations, except for half of the danger tree/ hazard mitigation work along the Chetco River Road 1376.

Implementation includes:

- Storm proofing
- Upsizing Culverts, inlets, trash collectors, etc.
- Cultural Resource site protection
- Recreation: making sure trails aren't lost in the first year
- Storm patrols to reduce risk of losing roads and trails
- Removing hazard trees where we are doing road treatments (we can't ask for hazard trees mitigation everywhere because BAER does not allow that)
- Warning signs for when roads reopen at user's own risk
- It is probably going to be too dangerous to enter roads until the first winter is over. There are predictions for high run off and debris flows. This winter will be a test of that.
- Toilets were melted, need to be fixed
- Noxious weeds, early detection and rapid response
- For implementation we will do as much as we can before winter hits, pick back up in the spring
- We have to get this work done within a 1-year time frame of when the funds were received. (From October 23rd)

Hazard Tree and Danger Tree Mitigation

- Hazard trees are trees that can fall on campsites and where people congregate. Danger trees are moving targets- along trails, roads, and public/private boundaries.
- The Forest Service is looking at danger tree mitigation in the Chetco Bar Fire area as well as the High Cascades and Miller complex fires, and they will be using categorical Exclusions for these projects.
- The FS expect decisions on these CE's in a couple weeks for the ~300 miles of impacted road, at which time we will begin implementation.
- The FS hopes that work will include some commercial harvest to offset costs.
- The roadside buffer is generally 1.5 tree lengths on both sides, but that can change depending on slope and other factors.

Q: How much revenue will be generated from hazard tree removal?

A: There is a FS team working on that in Medford, but they won't know until the contracting process.

Q: How many acres of matrix land was burned in high severity?

A: 13,000 in moderate and high severity. Note that roads are not only in matrix, but go through other kinds of land. Whatever salvage logging is done in the matrix land is in addition to what will be removed along the roads.

Implementation right now

- The FS has started danger tree mitigation work up to the wilderness retreat where the private landowners go on Chetco River Road. We have it open up to Nook Bar. They are trying to get it open up to South Fork Campground, but this all depends on weather.
- South Coast has been doing most of that work. Kevin Adamak said that because of the weather, some of the larger trees between Nook and Redwood are going to be left until the conditions are less dangerous. This work is being paid for through road use fees, instead of paying those fees, SCL is getting credit for the work on those roads.

Jesse Burner, USFS Powers District: Jesse is leading the Chetco Bar salvage project:

• Rapid Assessment Team came to the forest 2 weeks ago to evaluate salvage:

- The team is mostly regional office specialists, also some local specialists.
- Report went out to Forest Leadership Team and they are preparing an EA for salvage for primarily matrix land. There is a priority for treatment along private land boundaries, about 1500 acres.
- They are estimating 15-25 million board feet (initial analysis)
- There is a very compressed schedule for EA, the FS hopes to make a decision before June 1st but are shooting for early April/May for flexibility for the region's requirements.

Q: If there is an estimated 20 million board feet coming from this, is that only within the 1500 acres along adjacent private landowner property?

A: Yes, but this is still a work in progress. This is out of the 13,000 acres of moderate to high intensity loss.

Q: Why are we limiting the scope so much this early in the process?

A: Time is a limiting factor. We want to keep it focused for it to be successful. The wood is going to start deteriorating. Doing work closer to private boundaries will help with fuels reduction. The more complexity you add; the more time it takes. We want a decision in a timely manner.

Q: Is the limiting factor how much work needs to get done or is it how likely it is going to be challenged in court?

A: More about amount of time it will take to get through the analysis. More complexity means more time it takes to do the analysis.

Q: Is it the lack of capacity in the personnel to get the work done?

A: It's about complexity of the project. We have made it the number 1 project for the forest. We are doing outreach to help cover 2 out of the 10 positions on the team. It's not about capacity. On that note, effective today, the FS is moving forward on the team for the EA. It's going to be a focused proposed action.

Q: How much time do the timber companies have to make use of this timber?

A: A year and a half. We have to log it by next summer or else we will be in trouble.

April 30th is the FS's aggressive timeline for a decision. Realistically it is going to bleed into May. The Regional Forester gave a deadline of June. The FS can't let out contracts before any decisions are made.

Round Table on Chetco Bar Salvage Concerns:

- Joe Bush: My main concerns are that a lot of this wood can be utilized to help the local economy, but my other concern is the protection of the water, in particular run-off and protection of fish.
- Jim Sealy: 1500 out of 13,000 acres seems like a small target. What does complexity in this case mean?

Action Item: The Forest Service can make a list about what it means to take on more acres. This would not be an all-inclusive list. Factors that can add to complexity can be things such as access or logging systems.

- Gary Grotrian: As a private citizen and member of the watershed council, I'd like to see salvage logging done with as little impact on the watershed as possible.

Q: Where are these 1500 acres primarily located? A: The FS is working on this in their analysis.

- Kelly: To give an example of complexity: Easy logging is based on whether there are roads or access there already. Fuels reduction doesn't usually get litigated, but when they are talking about building roads into a road-less area, you are going to start running into litigation, so that's an example of how complexity is added. I also believe salvage is a good thing, and can help economy, but let's do it in areas where there is

already access and roads. I am concerned about impacts to the watershed. Roads are the main cause of erosion in our watershed.

- Rich Nawa: Roads are the biggest issue for fish post fire. The problem is that there is a lot of deferred maintenance on Gold Beach's infrastructure. The culverts are in bad shape, and we need to storm proof these roads before the winter. If we don't get the roads right, it doesn't matter how you log because the fish will be trouble.

Question-Kendal: What roads need to be prioritized?

- Rich: After the Biscuit Fire, the Pacific Rivers Council did an analysis of roads in the Biscuit Fire area. There are a lot of roads in the Gold Beach District that aren't there anymore, they are falling in the creek.

(*Link to this study:* <http://pacificrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PRC-RES-Final-Biscuit-PWA-Report.pdf>)

- Mike Miller: I have concern on the 1500 out of 13,000 acres. We don't have the data to make an informed decision. We need to monitor high severity areas on a map so we can make that decision. To just limit it to matrix, then to the boundary, there are a lot of LSR and existing plantations and you can drive to the landing where they just recently thinned it. I have a hard time understanding limiting it from the beginning. I also have concern on addressing future fuel break needs on the ridge so you can prevent or be prepared for this to occur again in 15 years.
- Tina: To address why we're going into the matrix instead of LSR: The Rapid Assessment Team said that if we do anything in LSR we have to get approval from the LSR work group. We have done that on 2 projects and it has taken months. So that is not a quick process. If we want to get done by June 1st, we can't go into LSR.
- Kevin Adamak: Time is of the essence. Keep it simple, break out where you can get it done the fastest, maybe don't start with all 1300 acres by June 1st, start with 500 acres by March 1st. It would be ideal to start operations by the summer because small matrix type timber won't be worth anything in three years. So no matter what type of contract you have, you won't have value in it.
- Frank Burris: The BAER report said that there were no attempts to slow down erosion, and Emergency land treatments were not recommended because treatment only reduces erosion by 50%. To me 50% is a significant amount to reduce erosion and some research shows that mulching can reduce erosion by up to 90% depending on the amount of material that's put on the soil.

I am part of the economic recovery council. I propose that we put the burden back on the state to pay erosion control. My research shows that mulch and forest mulch is the best way to do erosion control. It makes sense if we are doing salvage logging and removing material alongside of roads, we use that material to mulch that material then return it to the forest floor to reduce erosion. My proposal suggests that we pick areas with the steepest slopes, highest fire burn intensity, and most erodible soils and treat the top 20% with mulch. I've looked into the numbers for that and its going to cost us between \$2000-3000 an acre. This will be expensive but we need to solve the sediment problem in the Chetco River. The reason the FS

chose not to do erosion is they said downstream forest service values at risk do not justify treatment costs (from the BAER report) But if you start adding fish in as a value on the Chetco River, that is a fallacious argument.

Rep David Brock Smith:

The downstream values are also important to Brookings Harbor and the costs to dredge that port are enormous. We've seen from the Biscuit Fire, the sediment that has come down but the bulk of the pulse of the sediment that came from the Biscuit Fire didn't come for two years. Then there was another pulse that came 10 years later, assuming that as the trees deteriorated the root structure released more aggregate that was stored up.

- Brookings was 5 miles away from the edge of the fire. We are in a situation where we are far closer to the WUI than ever before. If we don't mitigate fuel loads, we will have the chetco effect again, especially when you add SOD to the mix. Having these fuel loads so close to the city is unacceptable. We need to harvest what we can within the two years before it isn't worth anything. Then its costing you to clean it up rather than generating the revenue to clean it up.

Lily Miller: I would say that ORRECs main interest with post-fire is going to be education and citizen science. We are interested in getting some education to the kids about fire and post fire issues such as erosion and vegetation. I'm open to hearing thoughts on education and citizen science that we can bring up later on.

Theresa Bird: We would like to see the post-fire logging focus on roadside areas and matrix. Our other concerns are how many snags are going to be cut and in what areas and maybe that should focus on fire breaks or keep them in riparian areas for shade. As far as erosion control I'm wondering if we can focus on culvert repair; that's a big danger to the fish habitat. Another question might be if there are other restoration plans that are being talked about such as replanting and what that might look like versus allowing for natural regeneration. Also, I am wondering if there are defensible space programs already in place and if the collaborative could work with landowners that are already on that urban wildland interface. It will be important to find ways to keep fuel reduction and fire preparedness around that boundary line of private land.

Cathy Bounds: The BLM is working on emergency stabilization right now. Our burn area is interspersed with south coast lumber on the Chetco and Pistol area. For emergency stabilization, our BAER report was released and we applied for money, we got a pretty good chunk of money this first quarter to start. One of the things we are jumping on right now is the culvert replacement. We have eleven culverts identified that need to be replaced and we will be working with South Coast Lumber to make sure we don't interrupt their schedule of hauling. We also received money to do about 370 acres of planting for the Coho salmon and murrelet and owl. We also received money to put up warning signs which we are doing right now. Our second phase would be doing noxious weed monitoring for emergency stabilization and trying to hit those as quickly as possible.

In the longer-term, we are looking at planting 3000 acres, primarily Douglas fir. There are some other restoration projects. Our BAER report didn't include any soil stabilization measures for the emergency

stabilization. So we didn't receive any funding for that. Our hydrologists and fisheries biologists are out there taking a look at some of the stream inception points right now to see what we might need to do to litigate that, and our district manager is asking for money to perhaps cover that. The BAER team suggested that we keep it simple to get approved for funding and get work done on the ground.

As far as the salvage, our foresters have determined about 1200 acres could be salvaged. In order to get it done quickly, if we're going to do categorical exclusion, we'd be looking at doing 250 acres through that NEPA process as quickly as possible. That only allows about half a mile of road construction so access is going to be our biggest obstacle. We are also currently consulting with Fish and Wildlife because last year we had two new pairs of spotted owls in the burned area so they are looking at habitat to see if there are any remnant pieces left that they can utilize, or have we lost the habitat completely, and can get their buy in for doing more salvage. The total area that BLM managed was 6,500 acres. Our public affairs officer put together something for our state director and I can post that on our site. It lays out BLM efforts so far and where we are.

Strategy Moving Forward:

Forest Service Ask: In a letter, state what you the group does support and where there is agreement so that when the scoping letter comes out, the group can immediately respond.

The Forest Service is not going to go into LSR and wilderness, and feel context wise that a lot of the issues are already addressed at a landscape level.

The group agreed to create a document that would capture the spectrum of agreement within the collaborative and inform a comment letter that would be submitted during the public comment period.

Guidelines for the Document:

- The scope of the letter and conversations will be limited to the matrix lands and harvest land base within the 13000 acres. There isn't going to be any discussion of doing any LSR outside of that. This will focus entirely on the Chetco Bar Fire and the Forest Service Project. The document will be topic specific.

Topics:

- What areas are off limits regarding salvage?
- Roads (Health and development)
- Roads (Access)
- Riparian Areas (Erosion and Water Quality)
- Culverts: replacement and improvements
- Watershed health and Riparian Structure
- Planning for future fire management and fuel treatments
- Actual prescriptions: (ex: cutting green trees along with dead trees)
- Sudden Oak Death
- Monitoring recommendations
- Focus areas/miscellaneous categories.

Needed Sources of Information:

- Maps with Forest Service/BLM land within the burned area.
- BAER Report
- Matrix map
- RAT Team report
- Map of burn severity (Tina will find)
- GIS Data
- Aerial photography.
- Purpose and Need
- -Sketchmapper flights

These will be put into a google doc that can be shared and distributed. Group members can add their input to inform the drafting of a comment letter.

Adjourn: 4:00 p.m.