Draft Summary Notes

Tuesday December 4, 2018, 11:00am – 3:00pm

Location: Pine Room Restaurant, Burns, OR

**Attendees:** Patty Dorroh, Howard Richburg, Zach Koutnik, Zach Williams, Aaron Gagnon, Mark Owens, Jim Campbell, Carter Crouch, Jon Reponen, Calla Hagle, Melissa Ward, Matthew Cawlfield, Lori Bailey, Roy Walker, George Heinz, Jack Southworth, Benjamin Cate. *Attended by Phone:* Nathan Poage

**Action Items:**

* Draft comment on behalf of HCRC to submit during Rattlesnake Project scoping period stating that the collaborative supports projects that align with our common ground principles. – *Pam Hardy*
* For February meeting – take the numbers discussed by Matt Cawlfield / Numbers Subcommittee and pair them with a map to make it easier to understand – *Matt Cawlfield / Roy Walker*
* PowerPoint about numbers accomplished – *Lori Bailey*
* Presentations on what they want the ECRD to look like and provide ecologically, economically and socially in 2039 – *Pam Hardy & Roy Walker*

**Welcome / Introductions**: We started the meeting off going around the room answering the question: “What are you most proud of HCRC accomplishing in 2018? AND What are you most excited about in the coming year (2019)?

Answers included:

* Most excited about the signing of rattlesnake project (Hazardous fuels reduction project)
* Most excited about reaching consensus on prescribed fire common ground principles
* Proud of stakeholder involvement and participation in meetings
* Best thing for HCRC this year were all the successful planned ignitions – getting around 10K acres of prescribed fire on the ground.
* Excited for the rattlesnake project moving forward quickly – hoping to sign in Feb.
* Proud of lots of acres on the ground and excited for more acres on the ground (we accomplish a lot more on-the-ground restoration work than other USFS districts)
* Most impressed by the dialogue that we have in this group / open conversations, and excited about more education/awareness/outreach for the public about RX fire
* Most proud of Consensus for common ground statement on RX fire most, excited that we’re looking to ZOA’s and figuring out the numbers we need to know to answer the questions we get from potential funders.
* Proud of our Collaborative nature – excited to see more of the same, resulting in more on-the-ground work.
* Proud that we are able to answer the tough questions from the public. Excited a mix of what we get done here compared to other forests and also to work on ZOA’s.
* Excited about some of the niche market opportunities I’m hearing about for forest products (biomass) and how we can make that work in this type of small community
* 2018 – helping us get the soldier farm bill project through, Danger tree EA got accomplished as well, proud of that. Looking forward to 2019 – if we can look at some kind of good neighbor authority type of option. We’re getting to some low volume areas now that might not be economically viable (commercial timber may not pay it’s way out of the woods) and we need some other mechanism to accomplish restoration.
* I am proud of the fact that the discussions are moving toward quantifying the entire/whole picture (Long term visions) rather than a project by project basis. Looking forward to 2019 – to hear about the projects but to also bring in the big picture and the common ground we can achieve around the numbers we need to be aiming for (each year).
* Looking forward to looking at the trail project (outreach/education around prescribed fire)
* Excited about biomass opportunities
* 2018 – proud of the common ground statement on RX Fire – 2019 – would like to see us do some field monitoring for some of our burns (RX fire monitoring)
* 2019 – I look forward to bundling our projects – implementation of commercial, non-commercial, RX fire all at the same time to save time and money and multiple visits to the same site.

**Discussion around the Rattlesnake comment period:**

Do we want to comment as HCRC?

A: We could just comment as the collaborative saying: ‘refer to our common ground principles for what we support’. That gets us on the list of folks who commented so that if we want to submit a more substantive comment later, we have the option to weigh-in as a collaborative.

Q: Jack – Is this OK with everyone? – Pam H. will draft up this comment to submit.

Discussion around phone call-in option:

We’re ok with it, but… if it becomes an issue and too many folks are relying on this method then we will revisit.

Steve Beverlin – accepted new position as director natural resource elsewhere – will be getting a new Forest Supervisor soon. (Acting is committed to stay with us until March)

Q: What is the process of filling the position – timing?

A: They will move quickly – hopefully will be filling it around the time the interim is leaving.

**Discussion around the objection process: (Forest Plan)**
Mark O: I was pleased with the process, thought it was genuine and that they were trying to listen to the local concerns being raised, it was positive overall.

Pam H: Really felt like the folks from the Washington office were sincere, we will get another meeting in January, and I think there will be additional conversations that will change some of the document. Probably won’t sign the document as is, there will be changes/edits made prior to signing.

Zach W: It was good overall, but there were some occasions when folks would get off topic & derail productive conversations: for one example – there was (in John Day) a rant on the Canyon Creek complex that dominated the conversation & derailed a productive discussion.

Patty D: Didn’t hear a lot of comments that derailed the conversations at the meetings I attended – but didn’t attend the meetings you’re talking about.

**Areas of Agreement: HCRC’s Decision-Making Process –** *Pam Hardy*

Working on common ground collaborative principles doc:

Q: What is the real purpose of this collaborative and what influence / weight do we carry?

A: the USFS is required to work collaboratively and it give the USFS something to lean on (this diverse group people & entities back this project, etc.) BUT…

It gets weird (and potentially inappropriate) when the USFS employees offer their opinions and influence, etc.

Ultimately, it’s the Line Officer’s (such as District Ranger/Forest Supervisor) decision to move forward on a project…

It’s a good thing to have consensus and document it and to write letters of support, etc…

Theoretically if we were sued and we could prove that we went through the collaborative process it would carry some weight. (There was a recent decision – Lostine / ?? that says it does carry some weight) – Judges have made some comments that look favorably on collaborative efforts.

Technically a collaborative group has no more weight than any member of the public, but…

If we, as a diverse group of stakeholders (including opposing viewpoints) agree on a project, in reality it does carry more weight because it makes it a lot harder to prove ‘arbitrary and capricious’ if it were ever to go to court. And if we come to consensus in support of something, it also gives the Line Officer peace of mind when moving forward on a potentially controversial/’out of the norm’ type of decision, etc…

Zach: Look at what gets done in this forest compared to other forests – environmentalists look at litigating projects that are done through the collaborative process different than those that are not. – It’s a little riskier to litigate when it’s been through a collaborative because you have broad support, which makes it more difficult to prove ‘arbitrary and capricious’.

* The question is ‘What is All?’ (when talking about consensus) – do we need minimum # of meetings to have a vote/voice? Sign-on document? Etc…
* All was decided on by the group as everyone who ‘signed on’ – but not to have ‘voting and non-voting members’ or a minimum # of meeting attended, etc… just a simple sign-on page.

The Burns Paiute Tribe staff are here as technical representatives and they are not representing the tribe and can’t speak/sign-on for them. – that would happen on a different level – gov to gov.

Same sort of thing with Mark Owens & Patty Dorroh – can’t speak/sign-on for the County court – but are here on their own behalf.

**Talking about areas of disagreement and how to work through that**… decided on 2nd option and moved forward.

* If we have someone who is in disagreement and they don’t write a formalized ‘minority report’ - It is important that our minutes contain that information so that it is not lost.

**Discussion around ‘Common Ground Principles’**

What are we talking about with social license? The social license of the community as a whole or the social license of this group?

Gets at the difference between Social License / Values…

We need clarification that this is a living document and people can remove their signature if they need to for some reason.

**Update on Idlewild Interpretive Trail** – *Melissa Ward, Ben Cate*

* No new developments to this project at this point.
* High Desert Partnership applied for a grant to help fund staff time to develop and plan this project
* Comment/question about how this could potentially tie into the ‘Recreation Collaborative’ Adventure Harney. Could this trail be included?

**Number of acres treated with Commercial and Non-commercial thinning on Emigrant Creek Ranger District in last ten years** - *Matt Cawlfield / Numbers Subcommitte*

We’ve done 160,000 acres of NEPA Planned

63,000 acres treated (at least 1 treatment) (just under 53,000 acres of PCT or commercial harvest, etc…)

We’ve done (rough estimate) 13,000 footprint acres for prescribed fire alone

Rattlesnake there is 32K acres, we’re planning 15K acres to treat – we will plan for the world knowing some acres will get dropped based on other resource concerns.

Q: Why do we plan so large / plan for the world? Why not start with a realistic number we want to treat?

A: We plan for large areas knowing that lots will get dropped through various filters (and we need to have things project ready in the event that funding comes available)

Talking about Rattlesnake:

When we run the model for fire in Rattlesnake it shows the likelihood of a crown fire occurring at 92% and when we run it (after treatment) if we treat the 15K acres we’re planning – it drops to 10% likelihood of crown fire.

We’ve already taken out wildlife corridors, etc… so now it’s looking at the other filters to see how much more will need to be dropped for various other reasons.

We need to treat 30-40% of the landscape in order to alter landscape fire behavior / fire resilient acres.

**Going around the room to discuss perceptions of ‘planning large projects’ and ending up treating a small portion of what was “planned”.**

Aaron G – there are a lot of places that don’t have shelf-ready projects and I think that this forest being ahead of the curve with shelf-ready projects is good – we’re able to capitalize on ‘excess’ or available funds that we couldn’t if we didn’t have shelf-ready projects.

NEPA is the first step in the process and I think that we need to have projects ready to go in the event of additional funds coming available.

Happy to see that we analyze for a lot and we have a lot of shelf-stock ready projects, but… I think that it can be misleading to the public (promising too much)

The solution I propose, is to show what you can expect with existing budgets, and prioritize what’s next (if more money comes) then we have the ability to seek additional funding with something to fall back on (e.g. if we had these resources we could do these priorities – next level projects) Acknowledge that not all NEPA will get treated in the document

There could be some legal vulnerabilities with NEPA when you say that we’re going to do all of these things, knowing that realistically we won’t be able to do them. Another issue could be not being site-specific enough when you plan so large…

Q: How does wildlife corridor & cover establishment work?
A: We try to put them on steep/north slopes that we know that we’re not going to treat anyway.

It does make me a little uncomfortable planning such large areas because we can’t ground truth it all. We rely a lot on remote sensing – however, remote sensing is pretty good these days.

February: Take Matt’s numbers and put them in a power-point with visuals to make it easier to understand.

**Review on Rattlesnake Project**

Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) project (qualifies for various regions)

On federal lands within insect epidemic – developed through collaborative process

Why HFRA?

* Designed to expedite process

Q: does the planned treatment get us to desired condition?
A: Yes, I think it does a good job of that. (the example of the model showing if we do the proposed treatment it will get us from 90% crown fire down to 10% of crown fire)

Purpose & need – there’s a difference between the purpose of the project and the means/method to do this.

Here the purpose is to make the forest more resilient to fire => but the method is by reducing the fuel loads. Important to understand the distinction between the purpose and method.

Why here and why now? (Need for Action)

* Very dry, overstocked forest, insect infestations, high risk for wildfires, crown fires

Proposing commercial treatments: (this is how we will get to the desired condition of reducing fuel loads)

* Varying basal areas from 20, 30, 40, to 50… (based on site conditions)
* Listed the different treatments in PowerPoint (total acres to be treated was 9,529)

Discussion around the basal areas / large trees and how we will still be overstocked if we cut all white fir up to 30” and all Ponderosa Pine up to 21”.

Why not seek a forest plan amendment to allow us to cut larger pine down to 20 BA for those areas the science says should be at that BA??

Why are we thinning only trees up to 10”?

*NOTE*: It is helpful to show the total miles of roads on the forest when talking about decommissioning roads and creating new roads as a reference to how many roads are in the area.

**Final Thoughts**

*Updates on Farm Bill* – apparently it is going to be moving forward soon, so hopefully we will know the future of CFLRP funds at next meeting.

Q: (talking about aspen restoration) If you owned that aspen stand, would you treat further than 150 ft or is that a sufficient distance?

A: It depends on the specific site. Sometimes 150 ft. is sufficient, but other times a little further would be more beneficial.

Nathan Poage would be more than happy to come present on the density / models and how the basal area is determined & influences fire activity, etc.

We got off the main subject several times and had meaningful discussions around some important issues and always circled back to the topic at hand… had productive conversations.

**Next meeting Feb. 5th**

**Agenda Items:**

Pam Hardy and Roy Walker: Presentations on what they want the ECRD to look like and provide ecologically, economically and socially in 2039.

George Heinz – report out on Biomass Summit and local biomass heating systems

Report out on Numbers subcommittee – show planning area like Jane broken down

Lori will give us a PowerPoint of acres treated that we can all understand