

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Wednesday, June 26, 2024, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

By Webinar/Video Conference

ATTENDEES

Participants: Joe Zisa (USFWS), Michelle McMullin (NOAA Fisheries), Josh Seeds (Oregon DEQ), Jiajia Lin (Oregon DEQ), Rod Krahmer (ODFW), Julie Firman (ODFW), Ryan Singleton (DSL), Vanessa Petro (ODF), Erik Moberly (ODF), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Kevin Boyd (ODF)

Technical Consultants and Guests: Melissa Klungle (ICF)

Facilitation Team: Ellen Palmquist and Arpana Nautiyal (Kearns & West), Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF)

WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW

Ellen Palmquist, Kearns & West, welcomed Scoping Team (ST) members and reviewed the agenda, which included: 1) Welcome and Agenda Review, 2) Agency and Stakeholder Engagement Updates, 3) Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Timeline and Process Update, 4) HCP Topic Updates, 5) Report-Out to HCP Steering Committee (SC), and 6) Approach Going Forward, Next Steps, and Summary.

AGENCY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT UPDATES

Members of the ST provided the following updates relevant to the Western Oregon State Forests HCP:

- **NOAA Fisheries:** No updates. Michelle McMullin is attending for Jeff Young.
- **USFWS:** No updates.
- **ODFW:** No updates.
- **DEQ:** No updates.
- **ODF:** The Governor appointed two new members to the Board of Forestry (BOF) that previously worked together on the Private Forest Accord (PFA), Bob Van Dyke and Heath Curtis.

HCP TIMELINE AND PROCESS UPDATE

Melissa Klungle, ICF, shared that ODF completed updating the HCP in response to public comment in August 2023. ODF is continuing to work with the Services to refine and clarify the conservation commitment and to finalize the HCP. ODF is sharing changes with the Services as they are being made to get buyoff. Once received they will also be shared with the full ST.

HCP TOPIC UPDATES

Fish Salvage

Erik Moberly, ODF, shared that they added fish salvage as a covered activity to support road system management, fish passage projects, and the floodplain reconnection process within the permit area. ODF is following best practices from NOAA Fisheries on fish salvage. Erik shared that ODF has a Scientific Take Permit (STP) for 2024 and that he is the lead investigator for fish salvage. Additional staff are currently training to become fish salvage experts. The HCP requires the collection of data for salvage events, including the number of fish species captured, water temperature and water quality data, and the amount of take that could occur during salvage events. ODF added language to section 3.10 of the HCP describing the fish salvage process.

Fish Passage

Erik Moberly shared that ODF completed a full desktop and field review of ODFW identified fish passage barriers and identified a total of eight fish passage barriers within the permit area that remain to be removed, modified, or replaced. Section 4.7.4 of the HCP was updated to reflect these findings. Once the culverts are replaced, ODF may use a desktop review or complete a physical habitat survey to determine how much upstream habitat was opened up to the covered species. Future evaluations of fish passage issues will be conducted during the implementation and planning process. Erik noted that ODF developed a list of physical and biological elements to prioritize projects that have the greatest conservation benefit to the species. ODF is currently working on addressing several barriers and the remainder will require additional discussion and evaluation.

Discussion

Comment: Appreciate the level of effort that ODF has put into this analysis and the work the agency is doing to decrease the number of barriers.

Use of Private Forest Accord (PFA) Data

Erik Moberly shared that ODF used TerrainWorks to develop a synthetic stream network layer for the permit area. The layer was used to calculate metrics associated with implementing the Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs), stream classification data, and more. Following the TerrainWorks analysis, TerrainWorks developed a Statewide Flow Line data for the PFA process. The project team considered updating the HCP using the new data and determined that both datasets include spatial errors and invalidated surveys. Instead of recalculating using data that still contains inconsistencies, ODF added “or best available science” where there are references to TerrainWorks data in the HCP to be clear that all available data sets will be considered during the desktop review. Cindy Kolomechuk, ODF, added that TerrainWorks was customized to look at steep slope potential, the ability to retain large woody debris, and climate change. She noted that there are benefits and limitations to each dataset. Erik added that ODF

is considering verifying salmon, steelhead, and bull trout (SSBT) determinations with field surveys to ensure accuracy.

Equipment Restriction Zone (ERZ) Suspension Logging

Erik Moberly reminded ST members that when covered activities occur in RCAs, a 35-foot ERZ is in place on either side of the stream. ODF proposed to allow limited temporary equipment access across Type N perennial and seasonal streams associated with high energy and debris tract reaches. Having flexibility to work in ERZs instead of building new roads or opening up old roads would be a conservation benefit to the covered species. ODF would limit work to actions required for stream crossings and stream enhancement projects. The Services asked ODF to develop a needs assessment as part of approving any equipment access points for crossing. ODF would not conduct work when there is flowing or standing water.

ODF also proposed allowing ground and one end suspension cable operations when seasonal others are not associated with energy or debris flow tracts. This would provide ODF with flexibility to conduct operations without having to build new roads to access sites and create landings. Erik stressed the impact that new roads can have on the aquatic system and noted that best management practices (BMPs) will be developed to avoid and minimize any impacts. ODF updated section 4.7.2 of the HCP to clarify actions to limit riparian effects.

Beaver Management

Vanessa Petro, ODF, provided an update on beaver management language in Chapters 3 and 4 of the HCP. Several of the edits reflect conversations with watershed councils. In section 3.4.5.1, ODF updated two paragraphs to clarify how ODF would respond to human-beaver interactions. This includes explaining various beaver management tools. ODF removed language about habitat enhancement near road conflicts. In section 4.3.2, ODF updated language to add clarity and improve flow. Updates include clarifying that information from GIS queries would be used to identify potential restoration locations. ODF removed the characteristics used to identify beaver dam habitat to align with content for other species. Language was added to clarify that ODF would do a 50/50 mix of hardwood/conifers for any habitat enhancement. Citations were also updated throughout the chapter.

Management in Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs)

Nick Palazzotto, ODF, reviewed edits to 4.7.7 Management in HCAs. Table 4-10 links silvicultural prescriptions to biological outcomes and was simplified for the purpose of implementation. In Table 4-11, all foraging habitat for Northern spotted owls, and other covered species, was initially characterized as areas where ODF would operate infrequently. However, ODF will want to focus activities in areas that are low end habitat. ODF updated the table to reflect this.

USFWS has shared the importance of clearly defining what is driving management decisions in HCAs. Nick shared that management in HCAs will be focused on developing habitat where it is most likely to have the desired outcome and where it is most needed.

Discussion

Question: Do harvest activities still have caps?

- **Nick Palazzotto:** Yes.

Comment: The additional language looks good. One of the issues with structure-based management in the past was that there was no real timeline for achieving desired outcomes. This issue may be addressed with the caps.

Comment: There needs to be a strong track record for the methods used. Trying new things is important, but this needs to be balanced with proven techniques.

- **Nick Palazzotto:** There is a section that provides scientific background for the prescriptions.

Question: Will treatments that happen in HCAs be tied to adaptive management?

- **Nick Palazzotto:** Prescriptions are constrained by the content in tables 4-10 and 4-11. These methods are traditional and within the bounds of existing science. One of the primary adaptive management questions will be whether treatments are effective.

Coastal Marten den Locations

Vanessa Petro shared updates to section 4.6.10.4 of the HCP for coastal marten den locations. Initial language only included protections for denning females. ODF expanded protections to include any known martens in addition to denning females. The updated language allows ODF to incorporate any new technology used over the permit term to track martens. Nick Palazzotto added that ODF tried to put reasonable bounds on the identification of marten and will work with the Services and ODFW as marten are identified.

REPORT-OUT TO HCP STEERING COMMITTEE

Ellen Palmquist asked the ST if they had anything to report to the SC. The ST did not have any updates for the SC.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Ellen Palmquist shared appreciation for ST engagement in the HCP process and reviewed upcoming meetings before closing the meeting.

- Tuesday, July 23 - *Steering Committee Meeting*
- Wednesday, July 24 – *HCP Scoping Team Meeting*