

Memo

To: Alsea Stewardship Group
From: Marcus Kauffman, Resource Innovations
Date: April 9, 2007
Re: Summary of Accomplishments and Next Steps for the Alsea Stewardship Project

All,

I developed this summary at the request of the MidCoast Watershed Council and thought that it would be informative for the full group. It describes the accomplishments during the previous 16 months, outlines the next steps in the process, and presents three possible approaches to funding multi-party monitoring.

For the past 16 months, Resource Innovations (RI) has been facilitating and coordinating the Alsea Stewardship Group under contract from the MidCoast Watersheds Council (MCWC). The purpose of this effort has been to:

- Develop a stewardship contracts with the Siuslaw National Forest and Salem District BLM to assure that watershed conservation projects are well supported by the Alsea Stewardship Group, are located in high priority areas, are technically sound, and provide social and economic benefits.

Alsea Stewardship Group Accomplishments

The accomplishments of the Alsea Stewardship Group can be put into three broad categories:

- Group process (goals, roles, and rules)
- Education and mutual learning (site visits, presentations, discussion)
- Initial project identification and selection

Group Process

The participants went through a process where they identified and clarified expectations, behavior, decision-making process, roles, mission, and a general work plan. Specific tasks and accomplishments included:

- Convened a diverse set of representatives, secured committed participation from a broad range of interests, individuals, communities of place
- Developed, reviewed, and submitted group charter and Stewardship Area Boundary, submitted to Forest Service Regional Office
- Solicited and reviewed ecological, social, and economic goals
- Began identification of whole basin restoration strategy that ecological (aquatic and terrestrial)
- Adopted a consensus-based decision making process, membership, and proxy guidelines
- Reviewed, modified, and adopted conflict of interest guidelines
- Clarified the role of the Group in planning and project development and monitoring
- Evaluated the process and progress of the Group at December 2006 meeting. Participants were pleased with the efforts to date and committed to achieving results.

Education and mutual learning

Given the complexity of watershed restoration, federal land management, and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, education and mutual learning are constant aspects of the process. Much of the education focused on understanding the interests, goals, resources, and limitations of the diverse participants, especially the Forest Service and BLM. However, the Group also took steps to educate themselves about condition of the resources in the Alsea Stewardship Area including:

- Conducted field trip to Five Rivers area to view potential stewardship projects (February 2006)
- Field trip to visit potential BLM projects (April 2006)
- Held “*Day with Forest Scientists*” Tom Spies and Andy Carey (Summer 2006)

Project Identification and Selection

In addition to organizational development and mutual learning, the Group focused its attention on selecting and developing stewardship contracts on federal land that restore watersheds and provide local economic benefit. The federal agency schedules presented the Group with a mix of “off-the-shelf” projects for which NEPA was already completed and new projects for which planning was just beginning. This provided the Group with an

opportunity to partner with the Forest Service on some initial stewardship contracts and provide their substantive input on the design and development of a new planning process.

The Group also engaged with the BLM on the development of the Yamaha Thin Environmental Assessment (EA). While the EA for Yamaha Thin was still being developed, the Group was able to provide their recommendations and include additional project activities in high priorities areas.

A short list of Group accomplishments includes:

- Recommended that Buck and Cascade Thins be developed as the initial stewardship projects on the Siuslaw National Forest. Recommended that the Early School Thin also be developed as stewardship project.
- Developed “local benefit criteria” and weighting of best value evaluation criteria for stewardship projects in the Alsea Stewardship Area on the Siuslaw National Forest.
- Reviewed potential restoration projects to be included in Yamaha Thin on the Salem BLM. Soliciting project proposals from partners resulted in two proposals for treatments on non-federal land being included in the suite of projects.
- Developed evaluation criteria to review project proposals for inclusion in the Yamaha Thin Stewardship. Recommended that the Salem BLM evaluate all project proposals in the Yamaha Thin EA.
- Formed working group to provide feedback on West Alsea Project. The Working Group learned about resource conditions and provided input and feedback on resource priorities. The Siuslaw National Forest accepted the recommendations and incorporated them into their analysis.
- Developed initial concept of a technical review team that would evaluate proposed projects on and off federal land.
- Examined the capacity of Cascade Pacific RC&D to act as the fiscal agent for the Alsea Stewardship Fund.

Next Steps and Upcoming Tasks

One of the goals of the Alsea Group is to develop strongly supported stewardship projects on both public and private land. Realizing this goal has led the Group to collaborate with the Forest Service and the BLM on the design of stewardship projects on public land. This engagement will result in environmental analyses and stewardship contracts that include the priorities and issues recommended by the Group.

The Group has been collaborating with the Salem BLM on the development of the Yamaha Thin Environmental Analysis and the stewardship contract that will flow from that decision. The cost of the restoration and enhancement activities proposed in the Yamaha Thin Stewardship will equal or exceed the potential revenue from the removal of

commercial material. It is unlikely that the BLM stewardship project will provide additional receipts to be invested in projects on private land.

To implement projects on private land, the Siuslaw National Forest must first implement stewardship contracts on their lands that generate retained receipts. The Forest now has two stewardship contracts—Buck Thin and Cascade Thin—in the implementation phase. The West Alsea Project is currently being planned. The Forest expects that there will be receipts available from these projects by fall 2008.

With projects underway that will generate retained receipts, the next big task for the Group is develop a system to reinvest those funds on restoration projects off of Forest Service land. This process will be similar to developing a grant fund. There will be a need for guidelines, evaluation criteria, outreach, landowner contact, proposal solicitation, review and evaluation, contract development, contract award, and monitoring. The Siuslaw Stewardship Group has models of their process that could be adapted for use in the Alsea basin.

Upcoming Tasks

Siuslaw National Forest Stewardship Projects

The Group will continue to collaborate on the planning of the West Alsea Project and track the implementation of Buck and Cascade Stewardship Projects. Upcoming actions and expected dates include:

- Review and comment on West Alsea Scoping letter-April 2007
- Conduct field trips to key resource issues in the West Alsea Project (meadows, thinnings, roads, aquatics)-spring and summer 2007
- Track progress, address issues, concerns on West Alsea on an ad hoc an informal basis summer and fall 2007
- Decision Notice published about December 3, 2007
- Track implementation and progress of Buck and Cascade Stewardship Projects-summer, fall, winter 2007
- Conduct field trips to completed units on Buck and Cascade-fall and winter 2007

Salem BLM Yamaha Thin Stewardship Project

The Group will continue to collaborate on the planning of the Yamaha Thin EA and the stewardship contract(s) that are tiered off that decision. Upcoming actions and expected dates include:

- Review and comments on draft EA-April/May 2007
- Provide input regarding priorities restoration treatments—summer 2007
- Track progress, address issues, concerns on Yamaha Thin on an ad hoc an informal basis-summer and fall 2007
- Review final EA-summer 2007

- Provide input on use of local benefit criteria in stewardship project-fall 2007
- Track contract offer, solicitation, and award-winter 2007
- Conduct field trips to ongoing and completed projects-spring 2008

Alsea Stewardship Fund

Funds will likely be available fall 2008. Planning for the first round of funding will probably require about six months and begin spring 2008 in order to have the pieces in place by fall 2008.

Multi-Party Monitoring

The MidCoast Watersheds Council, the federal agencies, and the other members of the Alsea Stewardship Group have all invested significant resources in this effort. It is important to determine the efficacy of this investment and adapt if needed. Multi-party monitoring is a tool to help evaluate whether the goals of the Group are being met and where adjustments are needed. Monitoring is particularly useful if there are activities that are innovative, experimental, or controversial.

Retained receipts from stewardship projects can help pay for monitoring activities. Since, those funds will not be available from the Alsea stewardship area for another 18 months, the ASG has three main options.

1. Use the meetings of the ASG to develop the scope of the monitoring effort and then use the retained receipts from the Alsea stewardship project to fund the monitoring work. This would entail describing the key questions, data sources, protocols, methods, deliverable, and costs. Once retained receipts were available, the Group could submit a proposal and, once approved, solicit for qualified contractors.
2. Develop the scope of work as described above and submit it to the Siuslaw Stewardship Fund. The Siuslaw Stewardship Group would review it and make a recommendation to the Forest Supervisor who has the authority to move retained receipts from one stewardship project to another.
3. Complete the scope of work and search for sources of funds (e.g. private foundations, state and federal grants, etc.) beyond retained receipts. This option would be timelier and less restrictive, given the funding source, but would the proposal would face significant competition.