

McKenzie Stewardship Group Meeting Notes

February 12, 2008 6:00 pm—8:00 pm

Vida-McKenzie Community Center

Participants:

Bert Sandker	Blue River Reforestation
Bill Barton	Native Forest Council
Bryan VonBargen	US Army Corps of Engineers
Chandra LeGue	Oregon Wild
Cliff Richardson	McKenzie High School
Greg Wagenblast	ODF
Jeff DeVore	McKenzie Flyfishers
Jim Baker	Blue River CDC
Johan Hogervorst	USFS, Willamette National Forest Supervisor's Office
John Gray	Upper McKenzie RFPD
John Pine	ODF
Larry Six	McKenzie Watershed Council
Marcus Kauffman	Resource Innovations
Mary Allison	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Mei Lin Lantz	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Monty Wilson	
Nancy Holzhauser	McKenzie Watershed Council
Penny Harris	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Rachel Barton-Russel	Infraspect Environmental Auditing
Ryan Ojerio	Resource Innovations
Schee Six	McKenzie River Watershed Council
Shane Kamrath	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Teiva White	USFS, McKenzie River RD
William Blair	Infraspect Environmental Auditing

Upcoming Events

	Date	Time	Location
Stewardship Group Meeting	TBD	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	TBD
Field Trip – Bridge Thin Project	May	TBD	TBD

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting kicked off with a round of paired introductions where participants found a partner and spent some time getting to know one another before introducing each other to the larger group. This was first step to forming relationships that transcend titles and organizational affiliations, relationships that will be important to the success of the group.

Defining the Stewardship Group's Role

Marcus gave a broad definition of the stewardship group's role noting that it will be up to the group to define its own interests and priorities. Other stewardship groups including the Siuslaw, Alsea and Mary's Peak, are examples of how the group could operate, but they are not indicative of how the group should operate. However, similar to those groups, success depends on the committed participation of a membership willing to meet regularly over the course of at least a year and longer. Over the next few months the group will need to come up with a vision, mission, goals, ground rules and a decision making process. Concurrently with the group process deliberations, the group will also have an opportunity to give substantive input on a current project (Bridge Thin) as well as learn about the latest science that can help inform the group's decisions.

Reasons for Participating in the Process

Next, each participant got a chance to express their interest in attending tonight's meeting and some of their concerns for both this process and stewardship contracting in general. Several themes emerged from the comments.

Interests

Participants expressed interest in achieving natural resource restoration and economic development that is consistent with the character of the communities in the valley. Specifically, participants wanted to see improvements to forest health, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, minimizing wildfire risk, and clear-cut restoration. Many participants noted that their organizations are involved in restoration and land management activities so they were curious about opportunities to work together towards common goals.

In addition there were many comments on process goals. Participants expressed hope for improved relationships, successful collaboration, community and private landowner involvement, partnership building, and the capitalization of local expertise to solve the issues facing the community.

Concerns

Participants also expressed many concerns about the process. One person asked what the timeframe is from deliberation to actual on-the-ground results; another wondered if it was possible for this diverse group of people to come to agreement and do positive things for the watershed. Marcus responded by pointing to the successes of other stewardship groups, but noted that it is a long process, often taking years to get from project development to implementation and monitoring. One participant added that it takes time to come up with a decision making process and time for people to get comfortable using that process.

Several participants noted the importance of defining terms and using clear language. Terms such as forest health, restoration and stewardship need to be clearly defined. Another participant said that the group needs to clarify a distinction between production/mitigation and restoration. It will be important for the group to agree upon the definitions of these terms and ensure that the group's actions and recommendations are aligned with these definitions; and that sound science is used to inform these decisions. Clarifying these important terms will be the subject of future meetings.

One participant raised concerns and offered criticism of the collaborative process as it is used in stewardship contracting. He voiced concern that the public interest would not be served if the process was used to further timber extraction without meeting true restoration objectives. He also expressed skepticism that the public has received adequate compensation for the value of the timber extracted via stewardship contracting. Another concern with the collaborative process is

the lack of representation for the broader public interest beyond the interests of the collaborative group and that the true decision making power lies with the Regional Office.

Marcus and other Forest Service staff confirmed that ultimate decision authority does lie with the Regional Office, but in practice, the Regional Office has supported the recommendations of stewardship collaboratives. The authority of the stewardship group is based on mutual trust among the participants and their support for the process; and it will be up to the participants to faithfully represent the interests of the community and the public at large.

Finally, one participant commented that it is good for people to be aware of the different roles that participants have within the group. Understanding these roles, defining the structure of the group and developing goals, ground rules and establishing a charter will be the focus of future meetings.

Bridge Thin – Project Update

Mary and Shane presented a brief overview of the Bridge Thin project, the following notes capture some highlights of the project, more detailed information will be available in a couple of weeks with the release of the EA for public comment. This project is significant for the stewardship group because the group will be able to give recommendations about priority restoration projects to include with the project. Although it is too late for this group to give input on the thinning objectives, there will be future opportunities for the group to get involved earlier in the planning phases of future stewardship projects.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project is to improve stand conditions in terms of species composition, density, and structure over the long term in managed stands up to 80 years of age and fire regenerated stands generally up to 120 years of age. The Bridge Thin project will be divided in to several logical pieces (sales). Two of these sales have been identified as candidates for retaining receipts under the Stewardship Authority. The two stewardship areas are lands inherited from a private timber company (International Paper) and are second growth stands in need of restoration. Specific actions needed are:

- Restore structural diversity in stem exclusion stands to enhance wildlife habitat;
- Accelerate restoration of late-successional conditions for stands within riparian reserves;
- Restore “open oak savannah” stands where they were historically present;
- Restore degraded roads infrastructure;
- Protect and maintain water quality and reduce hazardous fuel levels in the watershed for communities in the wildland-urban interface;
- Improve the role of fire as a natural disturbance process in the ecosystem.

The Interdisciplinary Team for the Bridge Thin project has identified a no action alternative and two action alternatives. Proposed treatments include: Moderate Thinning, Heavy Thinning, Wildlife Thinning, Oak Thinning, Riparian Thinning, Group Selects (gaps), Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Natural Fuels Underburn. Variable density thinning would incorporate skips and gaps. The Public comment period for the Environmental Assessment is scheduled to occur early March through early April.

Education Topics for Future Meetings

One of the goals of the next several meetings is to educate the group using the latest science to develop a shared foundation on which to make decisions. Everyone in the group brings a

different level of experience and expertise to the group, so we'll be able to draw on our collective resources as well as invite experts to present to the group. Ryan asked each participant to think about what they would like to learn more about. Some participants submitted questions in writing and those will be included with the summaries for the stakeholder interviews to develop an education curriculum that addresses priority restoration and economic issues in the watershed. See attached appendix A for a list of restoration and economic priorities, and questions that came out of the stakeholder interviews.

Next Steps

- Ryan will send out an email to poll the group to determine the best time to meet for future, regular meetings.
- The group expressed interest in a field trip to see the Bridge Thin project site. Marcus will work with the Forest Service to find an appropriate date, perhaps in May.
- Ryan will send an email to the McKenzie Stewardship Group once the Bridge Thin EA is available for public comment.
- Ryan will draft a set of goals based on the stakeholder interviews and comments from this meeting to review at the next meeting.

Appendix A. Stakeholder Interviews – Key Findings

The following lists were generated from comments collected during a series of stakeholder interviews conducted by members of the McKenzie Stewardship Group Executive Committee. A complete narrative summary of the interviews can be accessed at:

<http://cwch.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/mckenzie.html>

These lists illustrate the breadth of topics and are organized by theme. These list do not reflect any sort of prioritization.

Economic Priorities

Rural Community Character

- Maintain rural character (don't want malls, urban development)
- Clean up Blue River business district
- Prevent the development of a resort area or place for expensive vacation homes
- Retain the rural character of the Valley

Business

- Diversification of recreation and tourism
- Restoration economy
- Develop small contractors in a restoration economy
- Support/create infrastructure
- Create jobs & financial security in the community
- Create/maintain sustainable businesses in the valley
- A stable and sustainable economy
- Stable economic base that protects our environment and the values
- Need to balance business, recreation and the environment.
- Biomass utilization and round wood products

Jobs

- Maintain decent living wage jobs in community.
- Decent pay up river local jobs
- Help local forest contractors stay in business.

People

- Support the “retirement community”
- Support to schools and kids – work/ educational opportunities
- Involve local, county, state, and federal resources/partnerships
- Provide economic opportunity for young families
- Support/fund schools
- Provide opportunities for correctional crews, a positive experience for inmates

Restoration Priorities

Forestry

- Restore plantations - recover old growth character
- Increase diversity of species, including deciduous trees
- Thin overstocked stands
- Reforestation

Wildfire Mitigation

- Fuels reduction/fire prevention
- Create defensible space

Riparian

- Replace culverts to improve fish passage
- Restoring native riparian vegetation and improving fish habitat.
- Riparian restoration, restoring channel complexity and migration.
- Protection and restoration of flood plain function in lower elevations
- Letting some young stands mature especially near riparian areas.
- Restore/increase riparian habitat areas
- Protect water quality
- Riparian restoration/habitat enhancement
- Restoring the McKenzie River (especially lower river) – impacts of septic systems

Fish and Wildlife

- Treatment of homogeneous even-aged stands to benefit spotted owls in particular
- Restore/improve elk habitat
- Restore fish habitat
- Restore wildlife habitat

Invasive Species

- Invasive species removal
- Planting of native plants
- Control invasive species

Other

- Appropriate road & trail management
- Campground maintenance
- Treatment/Management of the road network
- Mitigate overuse of Wilderness
- Mitigate the effects of encroaching civilization on the lower watershed
- Salvage logging (supported small load operations)
- Mitigate impacts of human development

Want to Learn More About.....

Restoration

- What kinds of restoration projects need to be done on the basin?
- What is the fire history and need for thinning in the area?
- Do we need to treat stands (for fire mitigation) over 80 years old?
- I want to learn more about stream enhancement and water quality.
- How extensive is the logging that might be done?
- What is happening in thinning young stands?
- I have concerns about “biomass extraction”. What does that mean and what are possible impacts to the forest?

Wildfire Management

- I'd like to have a better understanding of the WUI.

Economics

- I want to know more about the revenue generating side of this program.
- What kinds of equipment and expenses are involved in thinning young stands?
- How can we enhance the market for round wood to benefit McKenzie communities?

Stewardship Contracting

- I have technical questions regarding contracts/projects.
- I would like to read the federal legislation that authorizes this activity.
- What is different in the contract format between a traditional timber contract and a stewardship contract?
- How much money is there currently for restoration efforts such as the ones that may be funded in the future by stewardship contracting?

Other

- Who is going to be participating in the stewardship group and whose interests do they represent?