

McKenzie Stewardship Group Meeting Notes

April 24, 2008 5:30 pm—8:00 pm

Leaburg Training Center

Participants:

Bill Barton	Native Forest Council
Brenda Hallmark	McKenzie River R.D.
Chandra LeGue	Oregon Wild
Craig Patterson	Human Being
David Thomas	McKenzie Flyfishers
Douglas Garletts	US Army Corps of Engineers
George Regas	USFS, McKenzie River Ranger Station
Greg Wagenblast	ODF – E. Lane
Gregory McClarren	Metolius MPMT & Friends of the Metolius
Jim Baker	Blue River CDC
Johan Hogervorst	USFS, Willamette National Forest Supervisor's Office
Josh Laughlin	Cascadia Wildlands Project
Karl Morgenstern	Eugene Water and Electric Board
Marcus Kauffman	Resource Innovations
Mary Allison	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Monty Wilson	Blue River Resident
Nancy Toth	Eugene Water and Electric Board
Penny Harris	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Rachel Barton-Russel	Infraspect Environmental Auditing
Ryan Ojerio	Resource Innovations
Shane Kamrath	USFS, McKenzie River RD
Steve Northway	Lost Valley
William Blair	Infraspect Environmental Auditing

Upcoming Events

	Date	Time	Location
Logistics Committee Meeting	Wednesday May 14th	4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	EWEB
Stewardship Group Meeting	Friday May 16th	2:00 PM – 4:30 PM	Upper McKenzie Community Center (<i>Pending confirmation</i>)
Field Trip – Bridge Thin Project	June	9:00 AM – 3:00 PM	June 27 th (<i>Tentative</i>)

Updates and Announcements

A decision has been issued on the Bridge Thin EA. The decision is a findings of no significant impact and implements alternative B. To read the decision notice visit:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/willamette/manage/nepa/current_mckenzie.html

or contact the McKenzie Ranger Station at: (541) 822-3381 to request a copy.

Group “Check-In”

Since the last meeting, the Logistics Committee decided that the meeting time should be extended by ½ hour to allow more time for participants to provide input.

This meeting started off with an open discussion about participants concerns, suggestions and ideas. There was a lot of discussion and some of the details and nuances are missed in a summary such as this. Appended to these notes is a list of topics from the discussion (Appendix A.).

Later in the meeting Marcus condensed the comments into major themes that will become future agenda items. The themes are described below. After some discussion and debate the three priority agenda topics were: Clarifying Definitions, Vision and Goals and Decision Making Method.

Vision and Goals

Many participants expressed that they wanted to spend more time discussing what the group goals were. They saw a need to establish a sense of direction for the group and to uncover areas of agreement, common ground, and improve communication.

One participant noted that there are good examples of conservation/development planning already out there and referred the three elements of sustainable forestry 1.) environmental health, 2.) social equality and 3.) economic vitality as a good starting point to this discussion.

Another participant commented that much had been accomplished since the Northwest Forest Plan and that the Willamette Forest Plan also describes useful goals to serve as examples for the group.

Clarifying Definitions

Along with establishing shared goals, many participants thought that finding agreement on how to define terms such as stewardship, restoration, mitigation, sustainability and local (to name a few) would help the group improve communication and explore assumptions that need to be questioned. One participant suggested that participants bring definitions with cited references and share them with the group. Another noted that we need to think about what authority this group has to establish definitions and how much latitude is warranted in their application.

Related to clarifying definitions, Gregory asked what geographic area the group is focused on.

Decision Making

At the previous meeting the group began a discussion about a decision making method. Participants felt that it is important to return to that effort and come up with a way for the group to confirm decisions.

“Getting Straight”

A participant in the group expressed strong dissatisfaction with how the process was being facilitated. They felt that the facilitator and the context were biased towards the use of the stewardship authorities without critically examining assumptions about negative impacts and

unmeasured costs to the public at large. They also felt that Resource Innovations had failed to follow through on a request to provide definitions for terms and selected speakers that presented a biased view of stewardship contracting.

On a related note, another participant called for a discussion about the foregone future benefits from thinning to try to find a way to value the “tree that isn’t cut”.

Local Value Added Stewardship Opportunities

A participant expressed frustration that they had been told by the facilitator that alternative, parallel proposals could be considered, but that their consideration had been deferred until June or July. Marcus responded that the decision to delay discussions of alternatives was made to focus on seeking a common set of goals by which to evaluate possible action alternatives.

Speaker Ideas

Marcus, noting a comment about how speakers are selected added this topic as a possibility, but it was not discussed in the prioritization process. It may be a topic to return to at a later date.

Stewardship and Collaboration

Two guest speakers gave brief presentations on their experiences working with collaborative stewardship groups. They discussed lessons learned and key components of a successful collaborative stewardship group.

Gregory McClarren – Friends of the Metolius, Metolius Multi-Party Monitoring Group

According to Greg prior incidences of timber theft on the Forest led to an atmosphere of mistrust between the community and the Forest Service. Consequently, when the Forest Service announced plans to conduct thinning operations the community was upset. It has taken a long time to rebuild positive relations with the community.

In 1997 a series of ice storms and wildfires cause the Friends of the Metolius to get involved to show how different projects could be done to accomplish restoration projects in the mixed conifer forests. Subsequently, the Forest Service initiated a project that the Friends of the Metolius partnered on and used the project to educate the public about the restoration work. Some of the work was in highly visible areas because of the need to reduce wildfire risk adjacent to communities. There was an appeal on the EA that went to federal court. Two environmental groups went court in support of the project. Since then, the group that originally filed suit against the project has joined the Multi-Party Monitoring Group.

Since then the Friends of the Metolius have been involved in other projects gradually increasing in size. According to Greg, their group’s definition of stewardship has evolved, over the five years it has become narrower and clearer. But he doesn’t think it is fixed or will ever become final. He describes it as a process that continues to move forward. The formation of the multi-party monitoring team helped to lead to better decisions.

But the group has been frustrated at times; frustrated with government processes and the inability to be flexible. Greg said that sometimes there were barriers with the agencies, other times there were challenges with individuals. But throughout it all the group’s charter was a powerful tool and binding element for the team to keep bounds on what the group would work on.

Questions from Participants with Greg’s responses

Q: How would you characterize the different objects that you were looking at in the 56 acre demonstrations?

A: The board of the Friends of the Metolius came up with them and took them to the Forest Service. We didn't propose anything outside of the Forest Plan guidelines. We included things like mowing, hand thinning, and mechanical thinning. We went out with the Forest Service to show them where we proposed to do this, it was a collaborative process. Together we came up with a novel technique that we hadn't thought about originally.

Q: What needed restoration and why?

A: It was out of whack because of the 10 am control fire policy - fire exclusion. There were overgrown stands of Ponderosa pine, you could see the difference from photos from the 1920's. Competition was having a negative impact on the large old growth trees.

Q: Did it generate revenue?

A: The demo project didn't; it was paid for with FS funds, but on the larger project (106 acres) the logger was able to break even. In the next project the logger had enough variation in the prescription that he was able to harvest some larger timber. Plus with the additional time he was able make adjustments to ride out changes in market prices. The FS paid for planning and post treatment.

Q: Do you monitor the process and is there any value assigned to the standing forest? For example for ecosystems services? Has there been any effort to evaluate the net loss to taxpayers?

A: We don't have the type of information to answer that question. We have a good sense of the planning costs. But in terms of what is the value of the trees left standing – we don't know that dollar figure. But we also don't have figures on the education value for the thousands of people that we've taken there. There was a social decision made; people responding to the project felt that it was important to reduce the wildfire risk and restore the forests.

Chandra LeGue – Oregon Wild

Chandra got involved with the Siuslaw group after they started, but was involved in the formation of the Alsea group in 2005. Chandra noted that her experience with both groups helps her to understand the how such groups develop and mature. In the Siuslaw it started as an agency initiative from a demonstration project. So she found it interesting to hear from Gregory and see how the Metolius evolved differently but ultimately lead to the same types of goals and work.

Here are her thoughts on the needs for a successful, functional stewardship group.

1.) To have consistent participation.

Chandra reiterated this point which was brought up at the first meeting; it takes time and dedication.

2.) Commitment to common goals.

Chandra commented that this is an area that is lacking with the McKenzie Group.

3.) Agreement to what constitutes stewardship.

She said that the Alsea stewardship group developed a guidance document that included a vision, background material on what stewardship is, defined the area, laid out objectives in what the group wanted to see and defined the decision making method. Basically, a charter for the group. The group also defined what "best-value" meant and described guiding principles to inform future decisions and recommendations.

The group needs to understand that the process happens within the guidelines set by the Forest Service and the BLM. According to Chandra some participants want to look more broadly, but there are limits.

4.) *Agency leadership and buy-in is really important.*

She noted that it is important for the agency to show that they are in support of the effort and committed to listening to what the group has to say.

5.) *Taking a whole watershed view is important.*

Chandra thought that if you're focused on one area in particular you need to think outside of your particular issue. For example Oregon Wild focuses on public lands, but they have become involved in private lands projects because its part of the stewardship group's mission.

6.) *Commitment to working through disagreements.*

Chandra shared an example from the Clackamas group. They had some major disagreements about thinning and about the way that the Forest Service was conducting the process. But they committed to working through the problems and it took a couple of years and they achieved an award from the Forest Service for effective collaborative forest management.

Next she described the benefits that can be accomplished in a mature functional group. Trust that develops leads to good results on the ground. On the Siuslaw, she noted, "I think we've done really good work." They have also worked with the Salem BLM at the start of a NEPA process to prioritize projects to include in the EA that they were doing. The BLM typically doesn't ask for that level of participation, but she said that the group felt like they had really good input. They also helped local community members to identify and do outreach to private lands owners to accomplish projects to improve salmon habitat. As well the group works with the Forest Service pre-NEPA. In the Alsea the Forest Service invited the group to be involved, go on field trips, and talk about what needed to be done. A working group (of the stewardship group) met with the Forest Service ID team to share local knowledge. The Forest Service really listened and included some of their ideas in the EA. She said the early involvement helped the group feel like they were making significant contributions.

In addition to working on the front end, the group has also had opportunities to do monitoring and adaptive management. She said that on the Siuslaw they had an opportunity to do monitoring and go on field trips on both Forest Service and private lands and see projects pre and post implementation to see what the impacts were, where things working, learn from it and improve future projects. Chandra added that it really helped especially with the private lands projects.

Questions from Participants with Chandra's Responses

Q: What is your definition of natural condition?

A: It depends on where you're talking about. But I would say it would be what a landscape would look like with out human intervention.

Gregory: It is context specific, it is based on science, but also what society deems as "natural".

Q: Have you tracked costs?

A: I haven't personally done that.

Q: Could we have taken that money that the FS spent to manage those sales and achieved the same restoration work without giving away the public's trees?

(at this point there was some discussion, but I didn't capture the conclusion in term of an "answer" – this may be a topic that group will want to revisit. –Ryan)

Q: What are some examples of projects that the Siuslaw has done on private lands?

A: Instream addition of large wood and boulders to enhance salmon habitat, riparian plantings, recountouring of streams that had been ditched. Replanted have seen improvements in salmon returns. We've also done weeds removal.

Plan Bridge Thin Field Trip

Due to limited access to the area because of snow, the field trip is scheduled for late June. Participants expressed interest in seeing examples of areas where thinning had been done in the past as well as areas proposed for thinning and areas that would serve as a "natural reference condition" The date was tentatively scheduled for: June 27th tentatively 9am -3 pm

Next Meeting

Because Macus will be out of town the last two weeks of May, the group agreed to hold the meeting one week prior. Several people had scheduling conflicts for a Thursday evening and the best next alternative was Friday afternoon. The location will be up-river, near McKenzie Bridge. Ryan will confirm the venue. The date is: Friday May 16th, 2:00 - 4:30 PM.

Appendix. A Flip Chart Notes

Round Robin Discussion – Concerns, Comments and Ideas

Opportunity for multiple ideas (lack of)

What can we agree upon?

Common Goals

What would people like to see accomplished?

Need to clarify definitions

Scientific support for restoration?

Misuse of public resources

Biased context and facilitation

Lack of follow thru

Field trip to see past thinning

Cleaning up rifle range and other types of projects besides timber

How to work together to find common ground

Definitions and decision making

There is common ground

Linkage to previous efforts

Learn from what has been done

University study that's out there

Suggestions for speakers

Accountability

Hard to have trusting environment

Need or neutral facilitation

Need to follow through with requests from group

Agency people with duty to provide definitions

NGO's have interests

Audit is being created (with in legal guidelines)

What is in the Audit?

Definition of "Local", "Stewardship"

What is intent of the Authorities?

Desire to be collaborative and create learning opportunities

Need for integrity

Stalling opportunities for alternatives

Need for shared goals before knowing what alternatives will bet us there

Time needed for sale prep

Explore assumptions with Bridge Thin

Natural reference conditions

Goal/Value/Priority vs. Operational Goal/Value/Priorities

Authority