

McKenzie Stewardship Logistics Committee

May 14th, 2008 4:00 pm—5:00 pm

EWEB, 500 East 4th Avenue, Eugene

Participants:

George J. Regas USFS Natural Resources Team Leader
Johan Hogervorst USFS Willamette National Forest
Karl Morgenstern EWEB
Kurt Steele USFS Willamette National Forest
Larry Six McKenzie Watershed Council
Marcus Kauffman Resource Innovations
Nancy Toth EWEB
Ryan Ojerio Resource Innovations

Upcoming Events

Topic	Date	Time	Location
Stewardship Group Meeting	Friday May 16th, 2008	2:00 PM – 4:30 PM	Upper McKenzie Community Center
Stewardship Field Tour	Friday June 27 th	9:00 AM – 3:00 PM	TBD
Stewardship Group Meeting	Thursday July 24th, 2008 <i>Tentative</i>	5:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Vida-McKenzie Community Center

Bridge Thin Update

The meeting started off with an update on the status of the Bridge Thin project that could affect the focus of the collaborative group. George relayed that the Forest Service will probably not offer the initial sales out of the project as Stewardship contracts. Rather the sales would be offered using a traditional timber contract. Due to the depressed market for timber, which is linked to fallen demand for housing, it is too risky to offer Stewardship contracts because the value of the removed material may be insufficient to cover the minimum restoration work.

While both traditional timber contracts and stewardship contracts have mechanisms built in to allow bid rate adjustments in a depressed market, the minimum bid rate on a Stewardship contract can go lower than that of a traditional timber sale. George noted that rate adjustments on the Jim's Creek project on the Middle Fork District mean that they don't have the funds to do nearly as much restoration work as they had planned.

In the worst case, the Stewardship contract would only provide "restoration" via the thinning and there wouldn't be any money for embedded restoration work. And without retained receipts there wouldn't be funds to apply to private lands projects. It was noted that the depressed market conditions could persist for a long time.

With the possibility of funding for restoration work uncertain, the stewardship collaborative will need to think about its mission and if there is a sufficient level of interest to keep the group working. Several people commented on the need to think more broadly than just Stewardship contracting. Larry cautioned that it is important for the group to see real opportunities for funding in the future to ensure their expectations are met. The logistics committee then discussed several different ways that the collaborative group could focus its efforts.

Pre-NEPA planning

George suggested that the group could turn its attention to planning future projects and working with the forest service pre-NEPA to identify priority projects. He suggested laying out some criteria to identify the low hanging fruit – i.e. projects near existing roads, where the NEPA costs are low and there is wide support to get some restoration work done. These could be an opportunity for the group to develop ownership over a project – something that was lacking in the Bridge Thin project. The crux is how to do NEPA efficiently; something that he and Kurt are committed to trying to make work.

Collaboration and leveraging grant funds

The group also spent some time talking about how the group might serve as a venue to build partnerships and leverage outside grant funds to do restoration work, both on public and private lands. Perhaps through OWEB grants, NFF grants or partnerships with ODF.

Developing a demonstration project

Marcus noted that the group could pursue a demonstration project similar to the one that the Friends of the Metolius developed and use it as an opportunity to do education and outreach as well as build the group's consensus around what types of restoration they would like to pursue.

Marcus asked the group about their interest in the collaborative group in light of the news. Members of the logistics committee expressed that they would still like to be involved in the group, even if Stewardship contracting is not the central focus. They see opportunities to build collaborative partnerships and still have a positive impact on the watershed.

Review Agenda for the Next Stewardship Group Meeting

At the last stewardship group meeting, the participants prioritized defining terms and developing a vision and goals. The logistics committee reviewed a draft agenda that Resource Innovations had developed. They decided to rearrange the schedule to make time for a discussion about the Bridge Thin Project and the impact of the timber market on the potential to use Stewardship contracting in the near term. Jeff Trejo will make the announcement; as the stewardship coordinator on the Forest, he'll be the best to explain the differences between a traditional timber sale and a Stewardship contract and why it makes sense from the Forest Service perspective to use a timber sale contract in these market conditions.

The logistics committee also discussed the field trip and decided that the group should still plan a field trip, but broaden the focus beyond the Bridge Thin Project. Ryan will put together a list of the ideas that have come out of previous discussions to give the group a place to start developing the itinerary. George agreed to coordinate with the Forest Service staff who might be interested in participating in the tour. Finally the committee agreed that it would be useful to engage some of the members of the group in planning the field tour.