

**McKENZIE STEWARDSHIP GROUP
FIELD TOUR OF FOREST THINNINGS AND FORUM FOR DISCUSSION
FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2008**

TOUR SUMMARY

The McKenzie Stewardship Group field tour on Friday, June 27, 2008, brought 21 people together to visit, learn about and discuss several vegetation and thinning projects in the McKenzie District of the Willamette National Forest. Tour facilitators encouraged participants to ask questions and make comments. In the future, additional tours may be organized based on other areas and interests group members would like to learn more about.

Stop 1 – Ridge Cat 24

Speakers: Monty Wilson and Mei Lin Lantz

Objective: View the desired condition following commercial thinning of forest stands and subsequent fuels treatments (underburns).

Ridge Cat 24, an Adaptive Management Area (ADA), provided an example of a moderate thin. It received helicopter and ground-based thinning on various slopes. The area has a natural fire regime of approximately 120 years and consists of primarily Douglas fir and hemlock trees on a southwest dry slope.

The 50-acre area was thinned in the mid-1980s, partially cut in 2005 and underburned in 2007 to create a diversity of seral (successional vegetation) stages. The burn in 2007 reduced 7-11 tons of slash with 0-10 percent tree mortality. For comparison, the adjacent steep area was not logged.

Discussion at Ridge Cat touched on prescribed burning, wildfire and climate change, wildlife and snag retention, and tree retention, shelterwood and the cost to tax payers to log and burn an area.

Stop 2 – Young Stand Thinning

Speakers: James Rudisill and Penny Harris

Objective: Share the purpose and results of the Young Stand Thinning Study.

Stop two included a discussion of wildlife tree creation in snag-limited, plantation-created stands. The stand was originally clearcut in 1950, broadcast burned in 1952, and planted in 1956. It was thinned in 1995 and planted (some underplanting) in 2002. The site is considered a heavy thin, with 50 trees/acre retained. Some of the second growth is approaching the canopy of older trees. Compared to stop one, more self-pruning was allowed in this stand, as limbs closer to the ground were left.



Ridge Cat 24 – 50-acre area with 75-120 year-old trees, natural regeneration 70 trees/acre



Picture by: Nancy Toth

Snags are created using various techniques: sawing, top girdling, straight inoculating, sawtopping and inoculating, inoculating on girdled trees, and base girdling (tree dies faster). There is a need to keep the tree alive long enough for heartwood decay and nesting to start. In the stand visited in stop 2, a few snags were sawed off at 50-70 feet. Snags were monitored in 2007.

Drive-by – No Thin

The tour included driving by a site, a dark, dense forest, with most lower tree limbs dead, which was originally clearcut in 1955, then broadcast burned and planted, and precommercially thinned in 1975 to 300 trees/acre.

Stop 3 – Young Stand Thinning Study with Gaps

Speakers: Monty Wilson and James Rudisill

Objective: Present a forum for discussion on variable density thinning, gaps, and variable treatments over a larger area (i.e. heavy thin, light thin, light thin with gaps).

The stand visited in stop three was originally clearcut in 1955, then broadcast burned and planted; precommercially thinned in 1975 to 300 trees/acre; thinned in 1995; gaps planted in 1997; and thinned to 100-120 trees/acres with two half-acre gaps every 5 acres.

Discussion at stop 3 included planting vs. not planting gaps, elk habitat, definitions for ‘desired condition’ and ‘restoration’, avoiding doing work in natural stands, and focusing on water quality, climate change, and ecosystem services, rather than just fiber. Tour facilitators brought up the possibility of developing a smaller pilot project that implements some of the methods/treatments that people agree on in a place where people do want to see something done, similar to the pilot project mentioned by Gregory McClarren from Friends of the Metolius at a previous stewardship group meeting.



Stop 4 – Stream Restoration/Fish Passage

Speaker: Johan Hogervorst

Objective: View a “need for restoration.” – a site with potential to remove a fish passage barrier and restore the original stream channel.

In 1948 a bridge was built at the site visited over Cougar Creek. When it became structurally unsound, a bypass road was built for larger loads. The bypass includes a hanging culvert, which requires a 4-5 ft. jump and blocks fish passage.



Eighty percent of the McKenzie River base-flow in summer comes from cold-water springs, supportive habitat for bull trout. Bull trout mainly use the site area for foraging, not spawning, so it is a moderate restoration priority.

USFS has completed a design to replace the bridge and remove the culvert entirely. The project would include regarding the stream closer to its original flow pattern, sloping it back gradually to support fish passage and prevent headcutting, and during construction, dewatering and pumping the stream around and below the site. USFS is consulting with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the project.



The project still needs funding. Possible sources include OWEB, the National Forest Foundation and Legacy roads funds.

Next Steps

Field tour participants also discussed other ideas for a small collaborative project, including elk habitat, community wildfire planning, recreation, and road management. The McKenzie Stewardship Group will continue to meet and discuss the potential for collaboration and restoration projects in the McKenzie District. The group currently meets the last Thursday of each month. Up-to-date information is available at <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/mckenzie.html>.

Tour Participants

Name	Organization or Agency
Johan Hogervorst	USFS
George Regas	USFS
Mary Allison	USFS
Nancy Toth	EWEB
Mei Lin Lantz	USFS
Chandra Legue	Oregon Wild
Doug Heiken	Oregon Wild
Josh Laughlin	Cascadia Wildlands Project
Rachel Barton-Russel	Infraspect Environmental Auditing
Steve Northway	Lost Valley
Jake Groves	American Forest Resources Council
Bill Barton	Native Forest Council
Roberta Swift	Army Corps of Engineers
Carol Ach	McKenzie resident
Monty Wilson	McKenzie resident
Jim Baker	Blue River CDC
Penny Harris	USFS
Shane Kamrath	USFS
Jeff DeVore	McKenzie Flyfishers
James Rudisill	USFS
John Pine	ODF