

Payette Forest Coalition

Field Trip Notes
September 24, 2013

Preliminaries – Purpose of Field Trip

- The PFC's September meeting was a field trip to the Mill Creek-Council Mountain (MCCM) project area. The field trip was designed in part to support the PFC's role in implementation monitoring.
- The Coalition's business process for implementation monitoring (i.e., the swim lane diagram for implementation monitoring adopted last spring) includes an annual field review of completed activities within the Weiser-Little Salmon Headwaters Landscape.
- The annual field review is a precursor to a PFC report on restoration progress. The report will build upon the annual CFLRP report that the Payette NF prepares and submits to Washington, DC. To view an example of the Forest Service annual report, see the *2012 CFLRP Report for Weiser-Little Salmon Headwaters*, [found under the CFLRP file tab](#).
- The Forest Service report documents restoration progress based on metrics adopted for the national CFLRP program. (Reminder: At the March PFC meeting, the PFC requested that the Payette NF provide additional detail in future annual reports. The additional detail will facilitate reporting of restoration progress towards the five PFC goals).
- The Forest Service has awarded contracts within the MCCM project, and restoration actions are underway.
- The Payette NF has implemented restoration actions within the CFLRP landscape but exterior to the MCCM project boundary. The PFC chose the MCCM project area as the priority for this year's field review.

Road and Recreation Infrastructure

- The Payette NF awarded the Cottonwood Public Works contract in 2012 (road improvements).
- The travel route for the field tour included mileage on the Mill Creek Road and the Grossen Canyon Road.
- The roads are located within the Mill Creek – Weiser River sixth level watershed. The watershed condition is Class 3 (impaired function).
- Both of these roads were reconstructed as part of the MCCM project.
- Flooding in the spring of 2010 contributed to the need for reconstruction of the roads (see photo inset: 2010 flooding impact on Mill Creek Road).



- Contract specifications included rolling dips, adding gravel, replacing culverts, and improving drainage.
- The field review included stops at two culvert replacement locations.
- The road reconstruction work visited today represents significant restoration investments in MCCM that contribute to the PFC goals: watershed health, forest access and restoration economics.

Vegetation

PFC Recommendations for MCCM

- The PNF awarded the Cottonwood Stewardship contract in 2012. The contractor has deferred harvest until 2014.
- Although harvest is deferred, the PFC was able to view harvest units today. The Payette NF field crews have marked retention trees within the units.
- These tour stops are relevant for the PFC role of implementation monitoring in order to view the condition prior to treatment, and visualize the post treatment condition based on the retained trees marked within the unit. It is anticipated that the PFC will revisit selected sites post-harvest.
- In the NFMA project design phase for MCCM, the PFC vegetation treatment recommendations were adopted for general categories of current stand conditions. In general, the prescriptions will implement variable retention of trees. The trees selected for retention will vary by species, size and spatial pattern depending on the current condition and desired outcome.
- The harvest units visited today included examples of:
 - **Restoration Stands:** Restoration stands are dry forest types, with low to mixed severity fire regimes, with a significant component of larger diameter seral species of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and western larch.
 - **Reserve Stands:** Some reserve stands have lost most seral species and larger diameter trees from past timber harvest or disease, and some may have a larger legacy of ponderosa pine/Douglas fir and larch and tend to be drier. Other reserve stands may be composed of large diameter over-story trees of grand fir/mixed-conifer with a dense understory and are considered a "moist forest types"- typical of natural forest succession.
- The PFC discussed treatment of reserve stands at length during the project design phase for MCCM. Appropriate treatments for Reserve Stands were a consensus challenge. For this reason, only 695 acres were selected for treatment out of 13,243 acres of candidate stands for treatment.
- The prescription for reserve stands includes "openings", ranging in size from 1/10 of an acre to 10 acres. The field tour included a harvest unit with a regeneration opening of about 0.5 acre.
- Treatments will also contribute to the PFC goals regarding wildlife, wildfire, and restoration economics.
- In subsequent years, the CFLRP annual report will document vegetation treatment progress.

Legacy Trees

- In addition, these vegetation tour stops had a dual purpose. They were designed to address an action item from the PFC's May 28th meeting. The Legacy Tree Policy and DBH limits were discussed at the May meeting in the context of the LCBC project's proposed action.
- The stands visited during the field tour today demonstrated the results of marking trees according to the Payette NF guidelines.
- **Action Item:** The [guidelines remain posted on the PFC Forum](#). Members are encouraged to provide Forum comments on both the guidelines and the marked harvest units visited in the field.
 - Do the example stands, marked to retain legacy trees, address the issues PFC members have raised regarding retention of large trees in harvest units?
 - If the answer is not, how should the Payette NF modify the guidelines in order to address legacy or large diameter tree retention?

Riparian Conservation Areas

- Harvest treatment in Riparian Conservation Areas was a topic discussed during the tour. Charlie Luce participated in the June field tour and provided advice regarding RCAs. His comments are listed below because they address the issues revisited in the field today regarding the scale (total acres) of restoration treatments in RCAs:
 - Goal at a landscape scale (i.e., broader than the individual stand prescription) should be to address this question: What can be done to break-up the continuity of fuels and potential for big fires?
 - Achieving this goal does not mean to treat all of the [stream] corridor at once, but treatments should be designed to spatially break-up the continuity of fuels.
 - Adopting a no entry zone may, in the long term, not benefit fish habitat. Charlie Luce advised that we should look at the RCAs not as a "stop treating here boundary" but as a "start thinking differently" zone. The regulatory boundary should be addressed with the agencies with the objective to try new prescriptions that will mitigate the hazard of the existing fuels and the associated risk to habitat quality:
 - Excluding RCAs where listed species are present.
 - Monitoring will be needed to learn what works and what doesn't.
 - Sediment control needs to be a critical design feature when treating within the riparian zone.

Photos

- The Scribe documented the tour with photos at each stop.
- The photos are referenced as photo points in a video using Google Earth as the backdrop. This technique provides a landscape context for site specific photo points. [View video>>](#)

Next Steps

Vegetation

- The Vegetation Committee will meet October 1st at the Council Ranger Station. The meeting is scheduled for 10:00am – 3:00 pm.
- The desired outcome for the meeting is to reach consensus on our draft vegetation treatment recommendations for the Middle Fork Weiser River Project.
- Issues that remain to be resolved include:
 - Restoration in PVGs 6 & 7
 - Gaining a better understanding of the natural landscape pattern in PVGs 6 & 7
 - Legacy tree program implementation and effectiveness.

Road and Recreation Infrastructure Committee

- The Committee scheduled a field trip for October 7th.
- Objectives of the field trip are:
 - View examples of road decommissioning options (level of decommissioning)
 - Examples of MFWR roads that were classified as “IDT Evaluate”
 - Trail opportunities in MFWR.

October Meeting

- Review LCBC Draft EIS
- Adopt a comment letter. If time does not permit reaching a consensus on the DEIS review, then the Steering Team will schedule a meeting within the DEIS comment period to finalize the comment letter.

November Meeting

- Review recommendations for MFWR Landscape Restoration from two PFC Committees: Vegetation, Road and Recreation Infrastructure.
- The Committee recommendations will be presented within the Recommendations Template for the project.
- Adopt the MFWR project recommendations (may require additional discussion in December).
- Initiate discussions on the project area for a fourth landscape restoration project within the Weiser-Little Salmon Landscape.

MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

Project: Payette Forest Coalition **Meeting Date:** 9/24/2013 **Meeting Time:** 9:00am-4:00pm
Facilitator: None **Place/Room:** Council Ranger Station, Field Tour

First Name	Last Name	Organization	E-Mail	Round Trip Miles	Round Trip Hours
Dennis	Murphy	Spa & Interest		—	—
Wendy	Green	Adams SWCD		32	1
George	Panek	Payette NF	gpanek@FS.R30.US	60	2
Cherlin	Moon		moonf3612@gmail.com		
Diane	Evans Mack	IDFG	diane.evansmack@idfg.idaho.gov	60	2
Becky	Sohnstone	Backcountry Rec Club Idaho Rec. Council	Becky@secesh.net	60	2
Whitney	Rehberg	Payette NF		60	2
Jeff	Rohlman	IDFG	jff.rolhman@idfg.idaho.gov	70	2
Lin	Davis	Circle C HOA	LDA1@ix.netcom.com	75	2
Tim	Kerrigan	Payette NF			
Jim	WASSMUTH	EVERGREEN	evergreen@frontier.net	30	1
Mac	Lefebvre	IFG		250	
Wes	Keller	McPierce Tribe	Wesley.K@mcpietribe.org		