

Shasta Agness Project Field Trip Notes-June 8th, 2017

Site #1

Conversation by the road

- This site was not part of the collaborative proposal.
- It is near Agness pass.
- There are a lot of different vegetation communities here., mixed hardwood/conifer forest, coastal Old-growth (over in the SF Coquille), serpentine influenced veg communities, brush fields, sugar pine stands.
- The mixed severity fire regimes create different landscapes.
- This area is highly departed from historical conditions with a natural disturbance regime (no forest cover in the 1940s)
- Serpentine soils are influencing vegetation patterns in this area
- The sugar pines are fading due to reduced vigor because of Douglas-fir competition, possibly mountain pine beetle, and white pine blister rust.

Q: Is there a difference in the burn matrix and burn block?

A: Burn block is the larger areas that encompass silviculture treatment stands and the areas in-between proposed for burning. Agness Pass burn block is 1700 acres. Burn matrix or burn-between are areas between treatment stands that are included as in-between areas to create a larger area for prescribed fire. Some saw treatments may be required to achieve desired fire effects.

Q: What percent of canopy cover is subject to dispersal removal for sugar pine?

A:40% is minimum canopy cover for dispersal; zero acres of dispersal removed for sugar pine stands. 64 acres of dispersal removal in serpentine pine areas.

Notes: The goal of this site is to bring about species diversity by restoring sugar pine.

Q: What is the prescription difference between this site and the Kimball thin?

A: Radial release, different diameter limit (26 inches) Radial release difference (35ft-50ft)

Note: "in between" areas will be hardest to implement, because there is little to no commercial value, and some areas will require pre-fire saw treatments in order to achieve the desired fire effects

Group Walked into the sugar pine stand area

Stand Age:

Note: there was a study done by Don and Ellen Goheen on sugar pine release treatments called the Wolf Pine Study.

Science Question: What is the difference in Individual, Clumps, Openings (ICO) and Variable Density Thinning (VDT)?

Note: ICO and VDT have some similar concepts, applied differently at tree and stand scale. ICO prescription is a possibility.

Note: not locking themselves into prescriptions or methodology in the NEPA.

Q: Why do you need a diameter limit at all?

A: LSR Working group...REO (Regional Ecosystem Office) letter of concurrence... To get a determination from the LSR workgroup that the project is consistent with LSR objectives, FS needs to preserve important elements to meeting LSR objectives. One of those elements is big trees and large dead woods. Need to be able to quantify the effects and limit tree size to be consistent with LSR objectives.

Q: After this entry, how long until next entry?

A: Not sure, monitoring would help.

Note: There is the possibility of developing LSR for spotted owl foraging. Create good habitat and food sources for small mammals that the spotted owl hunts for.

Q: If there were no rules, what would the FS do?

A: If the objective was to restore landscape back to the Natural Range of Variability, open up ridge tops with larger openings, reduce stand density, leave patches where fire might not have burned as hot, and to restore landscape heterogeneity.

Q: How much compaction will occur here?

A: They will use tractors. They have project design criteria (PDC) which is in NEPA. They will lay down slash. These soils will be more resilient than others. There is a 40% erosion hazard.

Compaction will depend on the type of logging system used and the type of soils within the area. Other soils are more resilient than others. The final Shasta Agness EIS will contain project design criteria (PDCs) and mitigation measures to avoid detrimental soil conditions. For example, laying slash in corridors, seasonal use restrictions, etc. Other mitigation measures used to avoid other impacts such as erosion are the placement of slash, which is based on the erosion hazard of soils; Allowable exposure of bare ground is 40% when the soil is rated low for risk of erosion.

Q: Is there a limit for soil detriment?

A: Maximum percent of area for detrimental soil conditions is 15% for an activity area, including roads and landings

Q: Do you have phases/where to start at certain sites?

A: They can't write up implementation plan yet.

A: They potentially have 5 implementation projects that may come out of this NEPA document.

Q: Should we make openings around tan oaks for acorns?

A: At this time, FS is still trying to plan ahead for the potential impacts of Sudden Oak Death. This is an option, probably want to do this in lower risk sites for SOD.

Shasta Costa Oak Area

Stand Age: 120 years.

Definition of decadence: large down wood, nesting trees, standing dead trees, trees with complex structure.

Note: Native, anthropogenic burning maintained oak sites. You tend to see them around historic village sites.

Q: What is the habitat rating for the spotted owl?

A: There is a mix of Nesting Roosting and Foraging (NRF), foraging, dispersal, and non-habitat that will be treated within the oak stands. Current habitat and potential future habitat influence the treatment intensities.

Note: FS are proposing to take out Douglas- fir to open black oak by using radial release, density reduction cutting up to 28" dbh trees

Q: Why manage for species that is on its way out (black oak) when you could manage for tan oak?

A: Thinking ahead for SOD, need for diversity, culturally significant. Douglas-fir tanoak forest is common, Black oak woodland is rare on this landscape. Lose diversity when you follow that logic.

Note: Black oak is transitional through succession.

Only if you take disturbance off.

"natural succession isn't natural without fire."

Note: the goal here is to maintain 40% canopy cover.

Note: Lower elevations are favored by the barred owl while the spotted owls prefer upper slopes and less mixed hardwood.

Riparian Area:

This information will be captured in the final EIS and Draft EIS when it goes out to the public; however Riparian Reserves have a protection buffer width of one to two site potential trees (175 feet or 350 feet on each side of the stream therefore a total of 350 feet to 700 feet for the entire width of the Riparian Reserve) depending on stream class (fish-bearing perennial, non-fish bearing perennial, and intermittent and ephemeral streams). Furthermore, the buffers for intermittent and ephemeral drainages have a no-cut buffer of 25 feet from the stream edges; additional protections reaching out to 175 feet will be discussed in the NEPA analysis in the project design criteria.

Q: How many acres of oak woodland riparian in this watershed?

A: Total of 2200 acres in planning area, 1410 acres in Shasta Costa; This will also be available when the NEPA analysis is out to the public. However, one point to emphasize is many of the treatment acres within riparian reserve were noncommercial treatments, which is much less disturbance than commercial treatments.

Note: goal is to find the tradeoffs between aquatic (ex. Downed wood in stream) and terrestrial (oak)

Concern with sediment:

-Watershed Best Management Practices (BMP)

-No sediment getting into ephemeral streams according to monitoring due to harvesting equipment; The best management practices implemented during treatment activities, and based off of the monitoring studies completed post-fire has shown greatly to reduce potential impacts of sediment delivery to streams.

Concern with removing dead wood from riparian area:

-There is a tradeoff within snags and dead wood. Important to measure values (oak, LSR, etc.) Important question is "what values are we managing for?"

Q: Is this perinneal stream fish bearing or non-fish bearing?

45ft-70ft depending on hillslope

"primary shade zone"

The primary shade zone applies to all perennial streams. Fish bearing status does not change the buffer width of the primary shade zone, only the entire width of the riparian reserve, which applies to the protection of one to two site potential tree distance. Primary shade zone depends on adjacent hill slope and tree height.

Oak Savannah Site

Note: Green Knob Plantation sale paid for \$500,000 of roadwork

Q: what would non-commercial treatments look like in the inner riparian zones?

Note: there is a higher clay component in oak savannahs.

Note: camas grows in oak savannahs in addition to non-native grasses (invasive)

Q: Constance Herrington did a radial release study on increased thinning, will you do oak thinning to do oak release?

A: Not sure, Doug fir could serve that same function.

Prescription in this area: take conifers, keep scattered pine, apply fire, seed with native perennial grasses.

"incidental take" definition? -Under ESA, take is specific term to harm a species or habitat, incidental means a take without intent.

Q: Would the agency do oak treatments in suitable habitat and owl habitat? Would this be a "take"

This could be considered a take unless there is already a habitat conservation plan in place. (this has to be a joint effort between the USFS and USFW) Take has to show harm (removal of suitable habitat) to known owls

A: will do limited treatments to maintain 60% canopy cover in suitable habitat.

Note: Unique habitats is a collaborative value

Issue: How will oak treatments affect owls? (needs follow up)

Note: Opening the canopy will increase poison oak and blackberry; more monitoring is needed.
Kailey got RAC funding to fight of blackberry.

KV-Kanutz Vanderburgh definition: Authority for the FS to collect money made from a timber sale to complete other work in the general area.

Q: What is the visual management for this road?

A: big landing pile concerns.

Opening treatments will open already visible areas, create nice savannah visuals along roadway
This area is a modification (vs. visual retention)

Temporary Road:

Q: will new roads be on slopes larger than 35%?

A: They will stay below 20-25%

Q: How are they getting across billings creek road?

A: They are proposing to repair it. Engineers quoted \$250,000 to fix it. There was a massive fill failure in 2012.

It's in an inner gorge.-- cited as a red flag.

Note: it is tough to figure out what to do with roads that don't go anywhere...could be enough timber money to justify fixing the bridge.

Question: There are proposed budgets beyond Billings Creek Rd., if it doesn't get fixed, could they do helicopter?

A: If helicopter is used, there would be no room to do restoration work.

Unless helicopter gets cheaper they may do non-commercial treatments.

Note: FS wants to design to do a fair amount of KV treatments

-KV can only be used in sale area, but right now they are pushing to use it everywhere.

Science Question: What is the red tree vole association with LSR? (requires follow up)