



August 14, 2018

Steve Beverlin
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Ryan Nehl
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Dear Steve and Ryan:

This letter is to provide a summary of the AFRC and Malheur (MNF) field trip to the Austin Idaho planning area that was held on August 8, 2018. The attendance roster is attached. Thanks to the MNF, and specifically to Scott Officer, for the excellent job in planning and providing this opportunity for AFRC members and to other Forest Service personnel from Region 6 and Region 4. Opportunities to engage with the Forest Service during the early phases of project development help produce better projects and strengthen the ongoing partnership between the agency and the industry.

Introductions & Antitrust

Introductions were made and Irene read the anti-trust statement.

MNF Current Sale Program

The Forest FY18 target is 75 MMBF which will be met. The Conroy Sale, approximately 10 MMBF, is currently in the preparation process and will be offered prior to the end of this fiscal year. The Forest has not finalized the FY19 program but will provide that information when it is available.

Cable Logging Discussion

Tim Brown, Brown Brothers Logging from Emmett Idaho and Rex Storm, Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) based in Salem, were guest speakers. Prior to leaving for the field Tim and Rex each provided a basic summary of what is necessary to make cable logging viable.

Tim shared these critical factors for an economically feasible cable logging: 1) requires 8 months of logging annually, 2) span distance is critical, 3) sawlog volume/acre is critical, 4) density of leave trees is a factor, 5) lateral yarding requirements are a factor (75 feet is good but can work with up to 100), 6) intermediate supports are doable but add to the cost and suitable trees must be available, 7) pre-bunching to skyline corridors using a feller-buncher is desirable, 8) removing nonsaw in addition to tops adds to the cost, and 9) the contour of the slope and the steepness of the slope are factors that influence the cost and the viability of the individual job. Brown Brothers is thinking about selling their equipment due to lack of consistent work and uncertainty about available future work.

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Rex provided a handout with a summary of “viable systems for low-volume cable yarding” and a brief summary of the issues around contracted services in the forest products industry. Nationally there is a lot of tension in the trade services, which is partially due to a good economy. As a result there is not a sufficient labor capacity in the forest products industry. Rapid changes in the forest sector market have driven a 30 percent increase (capital, labor and equity) in the cost of doing business. This is exacerbated if the Forest Service puts out a cable project that is poorly designed. It is critical that the cable logging capacity be maintained in NE Oregon and SW Idaho.

Stop #1

Stop #1 was a ponderosa pine stand where the draft silviculture prescription is to reduce basal areas to a range from 25 - 40, which would provide approximately 8 MBF merchantable volume for removal. The primary discussion centered on the need for temporary roads and flexibility in locating those roads, as well as the critical positioning of the yarder.

Kate Cueno, MNF NEPA planner, indicated that a range of temporary road miles is typically put into the NEPA analysis due to the contentious nature of roads in projects. There was general agreement in the group that clearly articulating the need for temporary roads, and analyzing the tradeoffs of temporary roads, is a key component during the environmental analysis phase.

Stop #2

Stop #2 was a dry forest vegetation group with heavy grand fir encroachment. Merchantable volumes per acre for removal are adequate for cable yarding. Slopes were variable characterized by steep pitches interspersed with gentle topography creating poor lift conditions and difficult cable yarding. A temporary road may be proposed on an old existing road mid-slope which was supported by industry members.

The forest industry suggested forest plan amendments to allow ground-based logging on slopes greater than 35 percent. Logging through wildlife connectivity corridors could be an issue in this area.

Stop #3

Stop #3 was a dry forest stand above the Highway 26 corridor which is heavily overstocked and in critical need of fuel reduction for public safety as well as resource improvement. The convex contour of the topography, in combination with the steep slopes above the highway corridor, create significant logging feasibility issues and public safety issues. In general, industry felt that hanging the skyline across the highway would be most advantageous, especially since the highway will be closed during logging operations regardless. Tim Brown suggested a tractor-jammer system in combination with a forest plan amendment that allowed ground based equipment on the slope.

Larry Whitehead, CO on the Boise, described a successful tractor-jammer operation such as Tim described, above a busy state highway in Idaho. Jammer logging is not frequently used in Oregon due to OR-OSHA regulations.

Summary

This field trip provided an opportunity for “cross Forest” and “cross Region” discussions which were beneficial for all groups involved. Sharing information on techniques and tools that have been successfully used in different areas provided for thought provoking discussions. Malheur employees shared that DxP was implemented without any marking on the ground, which is truly “designation by prescription.” Some Forests require all DxP stands to be marked in advance by the purchaser which is technically “purchaser mark.” Having members of the Austin Idaho ID Team present was very helpful for all involved. Helping shape these projects and interfacing with ID Teams early in the planning process results in projects that better meet objectives for all parties involved. Industry members emphasized the need to analyze for “tractor/skyline” in the NEPA to allow for on the ground flexibility during the implementation process. Contracts must be designed with flexibility to allow industry to meet the resource objectives of the projects in an economically practicable manner.

Boise Forest employees offered to hold a field trip to the Williams Creek project and invited any interested individuals to attend. AFRC will work with the Boise to coordinate this effort.

Sincerely,



Irene K. Jerome
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cc: AFRC Members