



June 6, 2019

Tracy Beck, Forest Supervisor
Willamette National Forest
3106 Pierce Parkway
Springfield, OR 97477

Dear Tracy:

The following documents the Willamette monitoring meeting held on May 29, 2019. Attendees from the Forest Service included: yourself; Duane Bishop, Tim Lahey, Rob Mickey, Holly Jewkes, Molly Juillerat, Mark Leis, Darren Cross, Nikki Swanson, Shadie Nimer, and Andrew Geist. Attendees from industry included: myself (AFRC), Rob Freres (Freres Lumber Co.), Peter Stone (Rosboro), Rob Lay (Swanson Group), Carl Harrison (Seneca), Ian Lasslett (Interfor), Tim Tracy (NW Hardwoods), Scott Keep (Seneca), Zach Haas (Interfor), Ben Johnson (Mcfarland Cascade), and Tim Martin (Murphy). Kyle Sullivan from Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) was also in attendance.

Discussion items for the meeting included an update of the National FTPC meeting in Eugene, overview of this year's winter storm, and a review of current and out-year timber sale programs.

AFRC opened the meeting by thanking the Willamette for continuing to be a leader in Region-6 by producing a quality timber program that the purchasers can depend on. The fact that AFRC's membership relies on the Willamette's program was highlighted.

The Forest Supervisor commented on the challenges that 2019 has presented to the Forest, particularly the government shutdown in December and January followed by the winter storm in March that not only limited access due to snow but also resulted in significant forest damage. It was noted that timber sale contracts did continue to remain active during the shutdown due to the Forest's efforts. The Forest Supervisor also noted that their timber output target has increased this fiscal year while their overall budget has decreased by approximately 9%.

AFRC provided an overview of the May FTPC meeting in Eugene. The Washington DC office continued to highlight their two "flagship" targets of timber volume sold and hazardous fuels acres treated. The failure to repay trust funds "borrowed" to fund fire suppression from last year was noted as a significant barrier to achieving the 3.7 billion board foot target. The Washington office indicated that they will likely be reducing that target down to 3.3 billion board feet. AFRC noted that they, and their partner associations, are working hard to highlight the

importance of repaying these funds as soon as possible. The FTPC field trip to the Siuslaw National Forest was discussed. The field trip focused on designation by prescription and tethered-assist logging. AFRC noted that the take home message on the tethered-assist portion is that there is more than one way to log any piece of ground and that the agency should accommodate that reality when writing its NEPA documents and contracts.

FY19 PROGRAM

The Forest is striving to hit a target for FY19 of 88 MMBF, which is a 9 MMBF increase from last year. It was noted by the Forest that they plan to sell on one sale in September. This year's sale program is more balanced between the north end of the Forest and the south end. The disparity between these two has been a topic of discussion over the past several years. The Detroit/Sweet Home Districts plan to sell 32 MMBF. The Forest also noted that they hope to grow the program to 100 MMBF in the next couple years. The Forest Supervisor commented that the Forest's PSQ is 116 MMBF and they have never achieved this amount.

AFRC inquired about the Hall Fly timber sale on the Detroit District that is planned for 100% helicopter yarding and commented that due to recent accidents with helicopter yarding, there is some apprehension among the industry to pursue such sales. AFRC and industry commented that helicopter should only be used as a last resort option for treatment and that every effort should be used to build road in order to facilitate conventional yarding.

ONGOING NEPA PROJECTS

Each District Ranger and their staff outlined ongoing projects including their timelines, potential treatments, and potential products.

- The Middlefork District 's two primary planning efforts are Lowell and Rigdon. The Lowell project is analyzing a large planning area (123,000 acres) and planning to treat a large percentage of it (17,000 acres). This is being accomplished through a programmatic type EA document. The Rigdon project will be analyzed through an EIS and is likely to initiate this year.
- The McKenzie River District is focused on the Flat Country project which will be treating in stands up to 150 years old with a variety of silvicultural prescriptions including regeneration harvest. AFRC thanked the District for being a leader in the region in treating their Matrix land base as it was intended to be treated and noted that, if implemented as planned, the project will yield timber products to a broad spectrum of purchasers.

Following Flat Country, the District will be taking the lead on the 3D project that will consider treatment on the Mckenzie River, Detroit, and Sweet Home Districts.

- The Detroit District is moving forward with the north section of the Highway 46 project which was authorized through a separate Decision document from the south section. The Dry Beard project will follow Highway 46. The next analysis area will be Divide.

The District commented on the true-fir component in Divide that may require helicopter yarding to implement. Industry commented on the relative lack of demand for true-fir compared to Douglas-fir and its lower value. Despite this reality, AFRC advised the District to move forward with analyzing these acres if they want them treated and a harder look at implementation can occur closer to the implementation time. Industry inquired about whether a separate service contract could be used to pay for the expensive helicopter yarding. The Forest Service indicated that they would consider this but also noted that securing funding to do so is difficult.

The District also informed the group that they have a sale administrator vacancy and will pursue filling that position in the near future.

- The Sweet Home District is analyzing a project called Quartzville-Middle Santiam. They will be considering regeneration harvest on this project but noted the challenges they have with managing the red tree vole population on the District.

GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY

The Forest Service provided the group with a four-year plan for sale implemented via GNA authority. They anticipate over 45 MMBF to be implemented through 2022 using this authority. AFRC inquired about how the program income will be utilized to grow the Forest's program assuming that NEPA is the Forest's primary bottleneck. The Forest indicated that they plan to leverage some of these funds to contract out NEPA. They also indicated that using ODF resources to prepare sales will likely "free up" Forest resources to ramp up NEPA completion.

Industry inquired about contract lengths used by ODF. The ODF representative indicated that while they typically use two-year contracts, they are not limited to increase this length for larger sales with constraining operating restrictions. AFRC asked about the advertising of ODF sales prepared on the Willamette which previously were advertised online in the Grants Pass area. ODF is aware of this and is planning to change to advertising location to western Lane county.

OTHER ISSUES

- AFRC inquired about the Forest's strategy for hazard tree removal on the Terwilliger fire from last summer and whether they would utilize the same tactic for future fires. The Forest indicated that, despite some challenges, they would likely use this tactic again. The only limitation is that they were not able to address hazards in "interior" roads not used by the fire suppression teams.

Industry asked about the use of “green-sheets” to help expedite the sale of hazard trees on active fires. The Forest Service noted that this tool is no longer available, but if it were, they would consider it.

- AFRC asked if the Districts consider rock pit development on each NEPA project they analyze. Each District indicated that they do and AFRC and industry encouraged this as securing a local rock source, as opposed to an off-site commercial source, is a huge cost savings opportunity.
- The Middlefork District discussed the impact of the winter storm to their road system and their future management plans. They estimate about 450 miles of road are blocked due to downed trees. They have prioritized gaining access with the focus on roads that access sold timber sales, areas requiring surveys for future projects, and recreation areas. They anticipate curtailing this effort in June as resources shift to fire season preparation. They also recognized their limited knowledge of the scope and intensity of the damage due to the lack of access. However, what they have seen are scattered stands with partial damage to trees mostly in the smallest diameter class.

AFRC asked about how the Forest will handle snow damage to sold and awarded timber sales. The Forest recognized that existing silvicultural prescriptions on some sales impacted by the snow damage may no longer be appropriate and that modifications to both the NEPA documents and contracts may be warranted. They also noted that these modifications may result in additional timber sold. Industry agreed but also highlighted that while volume may increase, logging costs may also increase due to the increased risk/cost of operating in damaged timber. The Forest Service recognized this and will work with purchasers to ensure that existing contracts are modified appropriately.

AFRC and the Forest Service will arrange another monitoring meeting in the fall of 2019.

Thank you for the meeting. Please express our thanks to all of your employees who took the time to meet with us. I will work with Tim Lahey on scheduling our next meeting this coming spring. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

/s/Andy Geissler

Andy Geissler
Federal Timber Program Director
American Forest Resource Council
2300 Oakmont Way Suite 205A
Eugene, OR 97401
541-342-1892 Work
541-525-6113 Cell
ageissler@amforest.org