

Community Workshop Notes

July 19, 2004
Portland, Oregon



Meeting Facilitator: Lois Schwennesen
Meeting Recorders: Elaine Kohrman, Trish Callaghan
Meeting Participants: 46 participants signed in

Co-Convenors: None

Forest Service Officials: Jeff Blackwood, David Hatfield

Team Members: Dave Schmitt, Elaine Kohrman, Trish Callaghan, Bob Mason, and Bruce Countryman.

Meeting Summary/Objectives: The team and the co-convenors held a series of community workshops to introduce the forest plan revision process to the public and invite them to help define a vision and desired condition for the Blue Mountains. The beginning of the session was held in an open house format with each team specialist providing a display and discussion on the Current Management Situation and a sign-up sheet to have a copy of the Current Management Situation Report mailed to anyone interested when it is ready. Team Leader Dave Schmitt gave a PowerPoint presentation about the process, followed by a short question and answer session. The second half of the workshop consisted of the neutral facilitator leading the participants through an exercise to identify what participants "want their forests for" to create a vision of a desired condition.

Q & A Sessions:

Q: What regulations are we using?

A: *The 1982 Planning Regulations.*

Q: Who are the decision-makers?

A: *The 1982 regulations list the Regional Forester, and the new regulations list the Forest Supervisors as the decision-makers.*

Q: Is there a Preferred Alternative?

A: *Not at this time; the Preferred Alternative is identified later in the planning process.*

Q: Who are the co-convenors, what is this relationship?

A: *We chose them as a way to have interested, accountable elected officials to help guide the collaborative process, and to build constituents involvement in the process. They can help get folks to participate in our meetings, and they do not have decision-making authority.*

Q: Would the new plan still have the standards and guidelines?

A: *Yes, but they will be less prescriptive, and more descriptive. For example, the 35% slope restrictions may not be appropriate on every place where we may need to do activities. If the activities can be done on 50% slopes without creating damage, then, under the new plans, that would be allowed and we would meet the objectives for the area.*

Q: What money is available for monitoring, what's the monitoring status?

A: *For this year - We are using the 10 year plan monitoring to do our work. The forest plan is not a budget tool, but the proposed action will look at expected budget based on current and projected budget constraints.*

Q: Will we publish something that indicates/looks at past monitoring?

A: *The Current Management Situation Report, or CMS as we are calling the document, will use the 10-year monitoring data, and compare trends and conditions with monitoring information to build the Current Management Situation Report.*

Q: Will the new plan recommend wilderness, if so, what is criteria?

A: *New wilderness may or may not be built into the proposed action; right now, we have no proposal either way, that is what we are building with this process.*

Q: Who's taking wildlife into consideration (example: Fences)?

A: *The activities in the plan will be crafted as we revise the plan, some of the specifics will be outlined in design criteria or strategy statements, and we are not making site-specific decisions in the Forest Plan.*

Q: Will the Department of Fish and Wildlife have input?

A: *Yes, the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be involved.*

Q: Will we address PACFISH/INFISH? Will it be part of the plan?

A: *They will be pulled into the Forest Plans as part of the existing plans, and not left as amendments.*

Q: How do we know whether we are meeting benchmarks (monitoring)?

A: *For example: if the VISION is to have a 10% reduction in noxious weeds as defined in the objectives, the STRATEGY would show which methods might be used, or excluded, and a timeframe would be included. Then the BENCHMARK would be answering "Did we meet the Vision?" and if not, why not...*

Q: Can the Forest Plan have selections for how we reach the vision?

A: *The new Forest Plans will have monitoring as a part as well. If we don't get funding to monitor, need to know before we take actions (ex. Grazing).*

Q: Are we taking input from other places? Such as Bend and Walla Walla?

A: *Our schedule has been tight, we selected what we selected based on Forest Supervisors, Co-convenors, and team timeframe. Involvement in collaboration can be done in many ways, and information about further participation will be kept current and posted to gather ongoing comments and concerns.*

Q: Five-year vision for Healthy Forests Restoration Act - How does this fit?

A: *It will be part of what we incorporate as we go along in this process of building the proposed action.*

Questions/Issues/Concerns brought forward at display tables:

Handouts: The Forest Plan Revision Team; Components of a Forest Plan; What a Plan Does and Does Not Do; Workshop Schedule; PowerPoint Presentation; How to Contact Us.

Table - Social and Economics /Criteria and Indicators:

Handouts: Draft Criteria and Indicators

- ♦ You folks have a tough job ahead of you.
- ♦ I like how this is sounding as a first step.

Table - Recreation & Access:

Handouts: Inventoried Roadless Areas & Wilderness

- ♦ Snowmobilers came from Stayton to hear what was going on. They recreate all over the Blues and want to be able to continue doing that and other activities.
- ♦ Access concerns on a portion of the Heppner Ranger District that may be obstructed by a recent private land owner action to place more fences/gates on his land to deny public access through his holdings to public lands where folks are used to accessing and can now only access through him..
- ♦ An outfitter/guide operator would like to be able to continue doing business with the national forests in a cooperative manner.
- ♦ Concerns about keeping available recreation opportunities open, and wanted more explanation about the recent OHV rule and about the roadless rule current news issues.

Table - Vegetation Management:

- ♦ Need decreased number of cows on the national forest to allow for more elk winter range forage and to avoid conflicts with cows disturbing elk hunters.
- ♦ Need fewer cows on the landscape.
- ♦ Save the big trees.
- ♦ The fire regime condition class map should be based on local stand level data instead of coarse scale National level data.
- ♦ Wood products should be a byproduct of restoration efforts, not a target.

Table - Biological Sciences:

- ♦ Received specific input about roads on the Heppner Ranger District. Jeff Blackwood (Forest Supervisor-Umatilla NF) was at the workshop and answered the questions.
- ♦ There was a lot of discussion regarding the retention and management of old growth forests. The input ranged from total preservation to active management.

- ♦ How do we decide on what themes to bring forward to the workshop?
- ♦ What are your credentials to be in my current position?

Vision Exercise: Comments expressed regarding the Vision for the Blue Mountains-

“What do you notice about the activity sheets, sticky note distribution, comments on the notes/maps”? What are some broad visions for the Forests?

- ♦ It seems to be a group that is very educated about Forest Service processes and policies.
- ♦ Some of the differences reflect short-term thinking versus long-term thinking.
- ♦ Some posturing is bound to occur in these types of forums, once the ecology starts to unravel, everything falls apart;
- ♦ Same thing with the economy, if one component goes away, the economy of an area falls apart.
- ♦ You have to realize that we are not starting with a virgin forest system – the starting point is not balanced – So where do we go from that? For example, half of the area in wilderness may be a little drastic for some folks; lots of excess roads are not good for wildlife habitat there is something of the order of over 9000 miles on one of the forests.
- ♦ It's hard to talk about where to go when we are long past the balance “point” – line has already been crossed. Ecological value unraveled – can't add on top of an unraveled system.
- ♦ I envision a Forest Plan that isn't just “business as usual” with timber, mining, and grazing as outputs.
- ♦ There is other ways to not do business as usual and still do things badly.
- ♦ Focus should not be on making \$\$ off of the forests, but focus should be on social and ecological instead.
- ♦ We have the right to recreate on public lands, and public lands should provide economic benefits to communities.
- ♦ Variety of opinions, promoter use – more wilderness, lot of generalities
- ♦ A lot of falls on user groups to work with issues, has to be a way to mesh differences geographically
- ♦ Caravan of ATVs to find biggest swamp – that's what it's about. We need roads, mud, access.
- ♦ A few off-road trails
- ♦ Want suitable hunting, need to close roads
- ♦ Ecological value is way down compared to economic
- ♦ Recovered sustainable fish populations
- ♦ Provide for values and resources not provided in private marketplace
- ♦ High value recreation opportunities.

Group Critique:

What was worked and what we learned – Why did you come tonight?

- ♦ To stay informed about new direction in Forest Plan.
- ♦ To change and protect interests in Forests
- ♦ To maintain diameter restrictions, keep current wildernesses where they are, and find out about challenges and or changes possible in Forest Planning process.
- ♦ Pissed off about past condition
- ♦ Attempt to change past conditions
- ♦ Set precedent – concerns actually heard
- ♦ Maintain current restrictions on cutting old growth concern about challenge to this

What did you learn? What worked about tonight, What would you change?

- ♦ Maps and displays are nice, but you're not using 2-sided copying and apparently no recycled products.
- ♦ Thanks to the forest folks for coming here, we appreciated that. It's one thing to disagree with subject matter, another to disagree with geographic meeting selection.
- ♦ Speaking on behalf of 4x4's as one who has done past damage off road & etc... There is no room for the 2 to co-exist on the same ground (motorized and non-motorized). Don't let 4x4s destroy the landscape – also, we spent 3 hours and the subject of logging was never even discussed, no more timber should be harvested.
- ♦ We have a lot more in common than not. Huge inventory of wilderness, restoration activities to fuel economy

What could be changed –

- ♦ Need food – timing of meeting
- ♦ If everybody did not leave a trace that they had been there.

Comments from the Critique Forms:

Workshop participants answered the following eight questions on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): I understand what a Forest Plan is, and the revision process that was described to me tonight. **(Average 3.88)**

I plan to attend most or all of the Blue Mountains Community Collaborative Workshops in my area. **(4.38)**

It is important that the public is involved at this early stage of Forest Plan revision. **(4.78)**

The workshop format made it comfortable to discuss public land issues with people I don't know. **(3.38)**

The workshop format made it comfortable to discuss public land issues with people who hold different viewpoints. **(3.48)**

I am comfortable contributing to discussions in a large group setting (15 people or more). **(3.85)**

I am comfortable contributing to discussions in a small group setting (6 to 8 people). **(4.11)**

I am comfortable using maps to enhance the group discussions about concerns regarding the area. **(4.41)**

They were also asked:

Is there anything in particular that you liked or didn't like about the workshop?

- ◆ Good exercise and overview of issues, sufficient question period
- ◆ I thought the attempt to facilitate this discussion was cute, although there was an obvious goal to find agreement between participants, the facilitator was willing to accept that there were irreconcilable views
- ◆ It started off too slow – cut time of meeting down
- ◆ Not enough notice to encourage people to come
- ◆ Good facilitation
- ◆ Need food – I just got off work to come right down here and now it's nearly 9 and I feel that my voice isn't heard if I choose to leave to go get food
- ◆ Room set up could be improved – spread chairs out, warmer, poor acoustics
- ◆ Liked the neutral facilitator who spurred provocative questions
- ◆ The independent facilitator was extremely confusing! I'm not sure where she was coming from or where she was trying to go! If there is a desired outcome it can often help to front load that desired outcome. My overall view of the format was that of an initial meeting and just that, with much to learn and move forward into. I hope to be a part of as much of the process as possible.
- ◆ Good visual aides with maps
- ◆ Use of slightly biased mediator, polarized feel from multiple users ie OHV vs. wilderness; vision forms are too small, mediator got off track but they were perceptive and respectful
- ◆ Evaluation criteria (ecological, social, economic) seemed constrained, general commitment to consider all input in for DEIS alternatives
- ◆ Forest Service often ignores the majority of conservation views – making this no more than a dog and pony show
- ◆ Too repetitive
- ◆ Why at the Doubletree, why not in a school?
- ◆ Thanks for coming! I don't need to be validated by the hired facilitator
- ◆ The mediation was very appreciated, it helped so much
- ◆ At the end of the workshop, the facilitator tried to "pick a fight" by highlighting conflict – not effective! (or constructive) honestly, I find this form to be a workshop in placating the public

Was the information presented helpful to you? Is there anything that you would like to know more about?

- ◆ Yes - I wanted to know more about what took place at other meetings before this one
- ◆ Yes; yes, it was – thanks!
- ◆ Locations of meetings with dates, times, etc. past and future
- ◆ Involve all team members in Q and A session to use expertise
- ◆ Would have been helpful to have forest professionals attend to build trust in expertise
- ◆ Wanting to know more will happen as public comment and the revision team start to build the revision we will wait to see
- ◆ Not really
- ◆ Yes, the information was helpful
- ◆ Yes, how the Forest Service works and where to find out more about what's going on with the issue
- ◆ I understand the process of revision but I am unclear what it is that the FS wants out of this process
- ◆ No, there was no information or words regarding logging
- ◆ Yes, future collaboration efforts

Was the information presented helpful to you? Is there anything that you would like to know more about?

- ◆ Thank you for coming to Portland!!
- ◆ When beginning a facilitated discussion do not lead group down one road (such as wilderness vs. OHV) rather let group direct because may be point of agreement not disagreement
- ◆ Whatever happened to the professional manager being empowered to make a decision without having their hands held by "the public"?
- ◆ Meeting went to 9pm sharp, thanks!!
- ◆ Thanks for having the meeting and involving all who want to show up!!
- ◆ Do more meetings in varied NW communities

- ◆ The facilitator did a nimble job of navigating the disparate opinions of the group, the facilitator either accidentally or unintentionally mischaracterized statements to create positions that didn't seem to be in evidence
- ◆ Food for long meeting;
- ◆ I want the Forest Service to forest the land as most Americans think they are, expect us want to see, map of old growth, any remaining wilderness, all riparian reserves, no cows, old growth, roadless 1000+;
- ◆ Thanks for effort USFS in being here
- ◆ I'm sure USFS gets hostility most everywhere they go, from folks on both/every side of every issues, Maybe remind folks for example: Portland beef and wood products come from these forests, Portland recreation, hunting/fishing dollars go to those communities, water in the Columbia, fish that do or don't swim in it come from those forests, we want a say as well!
- ◆ And how about encouraging people from different communities to attend and/or hold meetings to discuss – not just those with their communities who have different viewpoints
- ◆ I sense that the USFS is trying to move away from enforceable LRMP standards; much along the lines of the 2000 NFMA regs. While some may believe that this is an easier way to manage the forest, it will ultimately fail, either ecologically or legally (or both), local communities will suffer from the uncertainty as well, beware of lofty promises without a way to deliver! I hope the agency will shift its focus from commodity production (Board Feet, AUMs) to ecosystem restoration that can serve the needs of many.