



4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting
Wednesday, September 26th, 2018 10:30am-3:15pm
Alpine Ranger District
42634 US-191
Alpine, AZ 85920

Minutes

Little Timber Sale Field Tour

10:30 Meet at Alpine Ranger District: Introductions

10:35 4FRI SHG Involvement in Rim Country DEIS –Berlioux, Aumack, Vosick

In light of the Forest Service moving ahead on the Rim Country (RC) DEIS and Regional Forester Cal Joyner's decision to remove the Extended Duration Restoration (EDR) treatments from consideration in the RC analysis Berlioux stated that, upon consultation with a number of collaborators, including Vosick and Aumack, it makes sense to suspend the activity of the Planning Work Group (PWG) and initiate a new Working Group focused on producing comments on the DEIS.

This change will be discussed with the Steering Committee (SC) on October 9th. Stakeholders were invited to participate during the call or provide input to the co-chairs regarding their thoughts.

10:45 Depart for Little Timber Sale Field Tour

The Forest Service provided a detailed overview of the area that was posted on BASECAMP on September 17th.

10:55 Stop #1- Little Timber Sale Unit 2 - Pre-Harvest LTM General Forest Prescription (1-Hour)

- Discuss West Escudilla EA, Silviculture Prescriptions and A-S Forest Plan Desired Conditions.
- Examine Leave Tree Mark and Group Selections/ Mistletoe
- Discuss Mistletoe issues in general

The following captures the discussion from the site. Comments are identified as either stakeholder (SH) or Forest Service (FS):

- Site is a former White Mountain Stewardship Contract treatment. The area is considered a WUI treatment and treated for mistletoe. The West Escudilla EA treatments incorporated

the old and large tree guidance from the first 4FRI EIS and is considered part of 4FRI even though it is a separate EA. The acres that are treated are counted as 4FRI accomplishments. However, the treatment deviated from the 4FRI SHG guidance on old and large trees to permit treatment of trees with high (VMR 4,5,6) infestations of mistletoe (FS).

- What gets labeled and counted as 4FRI varies and changes (SH).
- This looks better than some places, but this isn't where some would choose to go first. Why did the Forest Service choose to go to a place that has already been treated (SH)? Because it is in the WUI and not consistent with Desired Conditions (FS).
- How are sites prioritized for treatment (SH)? Forest Service uses multiple variables that include the need to provide balanced offerings to support industry (FS). We go where we are told to go like the WUI (FS).
- Can this site be treated with fire only (SH)? Better to treat by thinning and burning (FS).
- The document wasn't clear that the site was in the WUI (SH).
- Full restoration achieves fire objectives (FS).
- FS used best available science to guide mistletoe treatments (FS).
- Disagreement. It was recommended to the FS to use a broader set of literature for mistletoe, not just the 1960's Hawksworth paper. 2010 Conklin and Fairweather can be referenced. Open stands with proposed prescribed fire have very low mistletoe spread.
- Why are mistletoe treatments necessary when the objective is ecological restoration and by conducting ecological restoration mistletoe infestations are managed (SH)?
- Only 20% of the area analyzed will be treated (FS)
- We are on the cusp of a bark beetle outbreak similar to what was seen before 2002 (FS). May want to follow-up on this to learn more – bark beetle outbreaks happen when trees are stressed by drought, and by competition.

11:55 Travel to Stop #2: Travel Time (5 Minutes)

12:00 Stop #2 Little Timber Sale Unit 7 - Post Harvest/ Take lunch during Discussion (45 Minutes)

- Examine Post Harvest Conditions
- Discuss WUI Treatments
- Discuss Large Tree Retention/ Mistletoe.
 - What is an old tree? A-S LMP vs Others?
 - What is a large tree? A-S LMP vs Others?
- Walk through units and discuss treatment outcomes, suggested changes, modifications, what worked and what didn't.

Thinning at the site was completed the week prior to the field trip. It was a matrix thin that was in the range for basal area described in the prescription:

- The treatment met objectives and looks good (SH).
- Is this an example of a treatment that will be used in the RC EIS (SH)?
- There may be a confusion of terms by the SHG with respect to old trees and old growth (FS).

- The EA said removal of old trees will be rare (SH). Site shows that removal of old trees is not rare (SH).
- Concern was raised about terminology and the fact that marking crews change. Current stop shows significantly less intense treatment than upcoming stops. Could some treatments intensity result from lack of consistency in marking and/or lack of training in PIPO restoration with some out of State marking crews (SH). Mark is OK (FS).
- The issue of appraisals was raised and the fact that the sale was appraised based on distance to the White River mill but the wood actually went to Reidhead Bros in Nutrioso and Luna. The appraisal rules were described as crazy (SH).
- Removing black bark trees with mistletoe isn't of concern. It is removing old growth with mistletoe that the SHG disagrees with (SH).

12:45 Travel to Stop #3: Travel Time (5 Minutes)

12:50 Stop #3: Little Timber Sale Unit 8 - Post Harvest (45 Minutes)

- Continue discussion
- With regard to old growth, single tree removal language for hazard trees has to stay in the EIS (FS). Agreement by SH
- Why was an old tree cut and small ones immediately adjacent left (SH)? Only old trees with mistletoe should have been removed (FS). Mistletoe DMR classification appears significantly different between A/S NF interpretation and Kaibab NF interpretation (SH).
- There are no proposed changes to the old and large tree language from the first 4FRI EIS for the Rim Country EIS (FS). Actually, West Escudilla EA has modified language (SH).
- This site is one of the most open in the prescriptions (UEA 40-50). West Escudilla was intended to experiment with mistletoe management (FS).
- Stakeholders recognize the need for industry and that this is a Bridge the Gap treatment. However, cutting old growth is not acceptable (SH).
- Some industry members stated that they aren't making money and need a few larger trees to make the economics work. Tri Star and Novo BioPower stated that they do not want and cannot process large old tree, and do not need them to make the economics work.
- FS doesn't cut large trees for economic reasons but for restoration (FS). Restoration does not include cutting old growth (SH).
- Arguments over single trees aren't going to achieve landscape scale restoration. The group talks about the wrong things. The treatment site is too open and will offend recreationalists (SH).
- The site is appropriate for climate change predictions, drought and resiliency to fire. Eventually people will prefer it (SH).

13:35 Travel to Stop #4: Travel Time (2-5 Minutes)

13:40 Stop #4: Little Timber Sale Unit 9 and 18. (45 Minutes)

- Continue discussion

Discussion comments:

- Why are small trees left when large trees have been removed (SH)? Prescription left trees under 5 inches with mistletoe because they can come back and do Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) with KV dollars (FS).
- Concerns expressed about the FACEBOOK post accusing 4FRI of bait and switch when it comes to old tree protection (SH). Is this the direction the Forest Service is going (SH)?
- Is this site an example of what will happen to old growth (cutting) in the Rim Country EIS (SH)?
- Discussion went back and forth on the appropriateness of the size and frequency of openings; canopy density; and interspace. Comment was made that the treatment de facto converts the forest into savannah (SH).
- Some large trees were cut but not old trees (FS). Discussion back and forth about what is old growth. Apparent disagreement between FS and SH about the age threshold for old growth.
- The thinning at this site is consistent with the W. Escudilla EA but not consistent with the 1st 4FRI EIS. The W. Escudilla EIS modified the Old Growth and large tree policy. This is not contemplated for the Rim Country EIS (FS).
- CBD did a random check at the site and found trees that were around 260 years old.
- The prescription may have been wrong. Not what was done (FS).

14:25 Travel to Stop #5: Travel Time (5 Minutes)

14:30 Stop #5: Little Timber Sale Units 10 and 17 (45 Minutes)

- Continue discussion

The Center for Biological Diversity provided a handout of data and analysis they conducted at the site. The handout was posted on BASECAMP on Monday, October 8th.

- Upset expressed about the old growth removed from the site (SH). Tour visited a site where a clump of old growth trees was removed.
- There is concern about what some perceive as a trend towards the more open end of the range of variability (SH).
- We're wasting emotional energy on one stump (SH).
- It's not just one stump. 4FRI is the vanguard for restoration (SH).
- There is worry that this will continue. Reassurance is needed that this isn't going to continue (SH).
- BA is pretty similar to other sites. It is at the low end of the range but below 40 BA. Reminds people of deferred areas and climate change (FS).
- Mean diameter of the site was decreased which is the opposite of the goals of ecological restoration (CBD).
- A suggestion was made that the cutting of old trees was motivated by the contractor (SH). Vehemently denied (FS).

- This cut is the most intense treatment the FS has done and the approach was defended, but the issue regarding old and large trees is acknowledged (FS).
- Cutting old growth trees is not part of restoration (SH).
- Rim Country EIS will put this issue to bed (FS).
- The Rim Country EIS will fail to receive support if the SHG is put in the position of having to defend old growth removal. This site matters (SH).
- Request was made that the mark be redone for the remainder of the Little Creek project and West Escudilla projects already marked (SH).
- Randy Fuller was asked to come back to the 4FRI SHG to report how the FS plans to address the other prescriptions on the W. Escudilla project.
- Concern raised again about how cutting old growth moves the 4FRI collaboration backward and raises more concern about old growth than has existed in 20 years (SH – high level of consensus here).

James and industry representatives were thanked for the work that was done.

A-S representatives asked the SHG to be more active on the A-S. Steve Best committed to look and think about what is right and where.

15:15 Return to Alpine Ranger District/ Depart for home

10/24/18 SHG meeting information:

Wednesday, October 24th, 2018, 9am-TBD
 Coconino National Forest Supervisor’s Office
 1824 South Thompson Street
 Flagstaff, AZ 86001
 Teleconference line: (712) 775-7031, code: 439290611#

Action Item	Lead	Status
1. SHG would like Randy Fuller to attend the November meeting of the SHG to discuss how the A-S will address the rest of the West Escudilla timber contracts.		
2.		
3.		