

Meeting Synopsis

The Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest & Watershed Group met for a field tour of the USFS Badger project. Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP) representatives were present to discuss their initiatives adjacent to the Lassen National Forest (LNF) boundary and the potential to collaborate on future projects.

Attendees

Janine Book	Ryan Hadley	Jason Mateljak
Naomi Brown	Peter Johnson	Dale Newby
Steve Buckley	Mike Klimek	John Owen
Lauren Burton	Jonathan Kusel	Patricia Puterbaugh
Garrett Costello	Trish Ladd	Jim Richardson
Don Curtis	Dean Lofthus	

Action Items

- **USFS Hat Creek staff** to prepare relevant GIS layers for next full-group meeting.
- **Sierra Institute** to schedule meeting for August, 2017 **DONE**

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Meeting Notes:

Stop 1

- Stop 1 included a portion of the Reading Fire footprint and an adjacent plantation. These areas were separated by a road.
- The area was converted to a plantation between 1960 and 1970. Herbicides were used at this time for brush conversion.
- USFS has certain guidelines for salvage logging following a fire. The guidelines include an evaluation of crown injury to determine a tree's likelihood to survive; this particular evaluation is done visually and varies by species.
 - See [example guidelines](#) from May 2011.
- Tree planting in the Reading Fire footprint is ongoing. The effort has included at least four types of planting strategies to create variable stands.
- Variable stands were discussed. The group agreed that spatial variability and variable density principles should be applied to this area.
- Collaborative members asked if there was value in the Reading Fire perimeter.
 - There is no timber value, but there are opportunities for beneficial restoration.

Climate Change and forward thinking

- S. Buckley summarized some of the climate trends for the Sierra-Cascade region of California including:
 - Significant reductions in snowpack and higher frequency of rainfall on snowpack.
 - Increased potential for severe weather events and drought
- Resilience is a keyword when addressing the anticipated effects of climate change.
- A summary report of climate trends in Lassen, Modoc, and Plumas National Forests can be found [here](#).
- The comment was made that old-growth forest should not only be conserved, but actively grown as well.

Prescribed and managed Fire

- D. Newby mentioned that all the NEPA documents include a prescribed burning element. The main barrier to implementing burns is the window of opportunity.
- P. Puterbaugh asked if there was any "let burn" policy for LNF.
 - There is no "let burn" policy. The forest plan governing LNF requires suppression of all wildfires.
- USFS staff noted the LNF fire management plan is revisited each year. Also, the overarching forest plan is currently under revision and there is an opportunity to develop a more progressive fire management strategy within that plan.
 - Participants agreed it is important to track the status of the forest plan revision. Management decisions should account for the anticipated changes to the plan.
- There was general consensus that widespread use of fire is an uphill battle for several reasons including:
 - Shrinking burn windows
 - Effects of climate change (e.g. drought)

- Increased liability for landowners
- The concept of preparing the forest to accept fire was discussed. Without the opportunity to implement fire as a management tool on a large scale, the best alternative is to actively treat the forest to accept fire when it occurs.
 - D. Curtis said that this concept should be one of the collaborative's main priorities.
- Table Mountain was mentioned as a critical area for wildfire preparation. LVNP would like to work on Table Mountain but to make the treatments effective will require collaboration with USFS across the boundary.
 - USFS staff mentioned they have a 70-acre project planned for Table Mountain, but would like to do more. It was noted that Table Mountain is a part of the Badger footprint.
- S. Buckley introduced the idea of "fireshed" planning. Table Mountain is a good example of the need to plan for fire across boundaries.

Additional literature referenced:

- [Regional Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration](#) (March, 2011)
- [An Ecosystem Management strategy for Sierran Mixed-Conifer Forests](#) (March, 2009)

Stop 2

- Stop 2 was at Lost Creek near the LNF/LVNP boundary.
- The group discussed working in riparian areas. It was noted that riparian areas often act like "wicks" for wildfire, leading the fire through a corridor. This is one reason they should be included in project planning.
- Grouping and clumping of trees was discussed. N49 (LNF project) exhibited understory thinning and clumps of larger trees were left.
 - Private industrial landowners also utilize groups/clumps in their stands.
- The Individual, Clumps, and Openings (ICO) concept was mentioned. The group generally agreed with implementing this method.
- M. Coppoletta mentioned the value of utilizing LIDAR (remote sensing tool) for mapping canopy cover. There is LIDAR data available for LNF.
- Two types of land designations under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) were mentioned: late successional reserves (LSR) and matrix. LSR is land managed for old growth and habitat. Matrix includes land managed for multiple uses including recreation and timber harvest.
 - It was noted that roads are a separate designation under the NWFP.
- S. Buckley asked if the USFS has any flexibility in managing roads.
 - J. Book affirmed there is flexibility in managing forested roads.
- Participants discussed fuels treatments along roadways as an opportunity to get some work done quickly.

- It was also mentioned that treatments along roads could be an opportunity for the public to see what a healthy forest should look like.
- R. Hadley noted that small operators would typically complete tree removal along roadways.
- Table Mountain was mentioned again. Part of the area is classified as a Home Range Core Area (HRCA) and has certain restrictions related to endangered/threatened species habitat.
 - USFS staff noted that Protected Activity Centers (PACs) for wildlife do not preclude treatments.
 - The group would like to see Table Mountain pursued in the future. 70 acres of planned treatment is scheduled for FY '18 on the LNF program of work.

Funding

- S. Buckley brought up Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) Proposition 1 grant funds. The proposals are due in September.
- Fuels treatments across boundaries would be a feasible project for the SNC funds. If USFS has NEPA ready projects, they can easily be connected with the work LNVP has planned.
- LNVP staff also discussed the opportunities for interagency agreements and staff sharing, particularly for surveys.

Plum Restoration Project

- J. Book provided an update on the Plum Restoration Project. There will be a public meeting held on Thursday, July 27th at the Old Station Volunteer Fire Station.
 - The meeting and comment period will be a good opportunity to identify stakeholders who are not yet involved with the collaborative group.
- There was some discussion regarding the timing of the public meeting announcement. Some members of the group would have liked more time to review the draft project description.
 - J. book replied that the project description is a draft. Therefore, there is still an opportunity for the collaborative to form comments and work with the USFS.
- There was general consensus on the need for improved communications regarding projects in the future.

Education

- LVNP representatives described the Northwest Gateway Forest Restoration project. It is a highly visible project to the public.
 - LVNP has used the project as an opportunity to communicate with the public about the types of treatments and desired conditions. Treatments primarily include mechanical thinning.

- Participants agreed that public perception is critical and, at times, overlooked. The group agreed to pursue better interagency communication and share outreach resources. **Future Meeting Topic:** Newsletter and collaborative outreach
- The suggestion was made to utilize the CFLR annual report for outreach purposes. Although the report is generally for internal use, there could be a narrative developed with the accomplishments to be shared with the public.

Fruit Growers Supply Co. Stop

- The caravan made an impromptu stop at a Fruit Growers Supply Company (FGS) parcel.
- The area showed two different plantations on either side of the road. One was planted in 1992 and the other sometime prior. The older plantation originally had 700 trees/acre and was reduced to 300 trees/acre and appears densely forested; the area was planted with half ponderosa pine and half lodgepole pine.
 - The dense plantation was considered a poor management decision. D. Lofthus noted there is little value in the stand and it will require direct cutting costs for FGS to restore the area.
- The most recent plantation was last entered about 7 or 8 years ago. The work included individual tree selection and sanitation salvage. Sanitation salvage is a process of eliminating trees that are affected or at risk of disease or pests.
 - D. Lofthus of FGS pointed out a bark beetle scar on one of the nearby trees to demonstrate a marker for sanitation salvage.
- Participants were impressed with the conditions in the newer plantation and asked about FGS management tools.
 - FGS has the ability to utilize herbicides and clear cuts; the use of these tools is dependent on individual stand requirements.
- D. Lofthus was asked if FGS employs prescribed burning as a management tool.
 - FGS does not implement prescribed burns and they pile burn as little as possible. Slash is typically chipped and spread instead of burned.
 - D. Lofthus indicated the liability is too great for a private company to routinely use fire as a management tool.
- FGS sells biomass from their operations. There is also a small-log mill in Yreka that FGS sends small diameter trees to.

Stop 3

- Stop 3 is located just inside the northwest entrance of LVNP at the Crossroads Interpretive Area. The site is part of the Northwest Gateway Forest Restoration Project.
- LVNP partnered with LNF staff to prepare the site for treatment.
- The prescription included mechanical thinning. M. Klimek noted that there will be prescribed burns to follow in this area.
- There was a discussion about the public reaction to the highly visible treatment area.

- LVNP worked to communicate the goals and process behind the Northwest Gateway project to mitigate adverse reactions.
- Most of the restoration took place during a mild winter when the park was primarily closed. However, there were visitors who inquired about the activities. M. Klimek said he would address questions or concerns personally whenever possible.

Collaboration, planning, and staffing

- N. Brown described the successful collaboration between agencies for this unit of the NW Gateway project. The team assembled on both sides was very effective through the planning process.
 - Collaborative members expressed a desire to have a similar team for Badger project planning.
- Enterprise teams were discussed.
 - Enterprise teams are comprised of USFS specialists providing NEPA services to national forests. The teams are not tied to one region or forest and work throughout the NF system. More information about [enterprise program](#).
 - It was noted that the cost of enterprise teams is high in most cases.
- J. Book noted that Hat Creek has contracted a silviculturist to increase capacity on a temporary basis.
 - Staffing is a challenge on the Hat Creek District. Currently only 23% of potential FTE positions are filled. There are administrative limitations on posting new jobs at this point.
- Collaborative members asked how they can support the USFS with staffing issues.
 - J. Book replied that partnerships will be critical moving forward. Also, voicing concerns to management regarding the low capacity on the district.

Nest steps for Badger project

- There was general consensus that Badger should include the Reading Footprint. Treating Table Mountain will add to connectivity with LVNP and mitigate the threat of wildfire returning through that area.
- J. Kusel suggested that the next meeting include a map exercise with LVNP and USFS participation. Now that the group has seen what is on the ground, it will be beneficial to get a broad view of the landscape and find connections. **Future Meeting Topic:** Map exercise, Badger project, LNVP/USFS Boundary.
- Long term goals include NEPA planning that is collaborative and flexible. The concept of initial assessments as an “umbrella” from which priorities can be determined was discussed.

Final thoughts

- J. Book reiterated the Plum Restoration Project public meeting will be held on July 27th in Old Station, CA. The meeting details and draft project description can be viewed [here](#).
- Participants agreed that the next full-group meeting should take place in August, 2017.
Action Item: **Sierra Institute** to schedule a full-group meeting for August, 2017.

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