

**Siuslaw Forest-Wide Collaborative
Sand Lake Project Discussion (Hebo Ranger District)
12/01/2020 3:00 – 4:30pm**

Attendees:

NAME	ORGANIZATION	NAME	ORGANIZATION
Marc Barnes	IRM	Paul Lulay	Hampton
Aric Devens	Silviculturist-USFS	Morgan McCarthy	Hydrologist-USFS
Paul Engelmeyer	Portland Audubon	Brad Pfeifer	Hampton
Doug Heikken	Oregon Wild	Trent Seager	Sustainable NW
Kailey Kornhauser	SFWC Coordinator	Hannah Smith	NEPA Planner-USFS

Minutes: by Kailey Kornhauser

I. Overview of meeting Schedule

II. Introductions

- a. District Ranger Bill Conroy could not attend this meeting.
- b. ID Team Wildlife Biologist, Michelle Drago, is on detail.

III. Presentation of Sand Lake Draft EA by FS ID Team partners

- a. Sand Lake Draft EA was released on 11/25/2020 beginning the 30-day comment period
- b. Overview of EA:
 - i. 2,600 acres of silvicultural treatments including: 100 acres of early seral within the adaptive management area (AMA), 136 acres of heavy thinning, 32 acres of habitat improvement, 38M board feet, 5 units with felling in riparian reserves, 3 culvert replacements, snag creation, invasive treatment, parabolic dune restoration, 100 acres of prescribed burning (under burning).
 - ii. Proposed road action: 1 mile of road addition, 6 miles of road closures, 9 miles of temporary road construction, 2 miles of new temporary roads, 6 miles of decommissioned roads.
 - iii. District Ranger Bill Conroy sent a letter to Collaborative participants addressing the topics of early seral treatments in the AMA and evaluation of no-cut buffers in the project area. This letter is attached to the meeting minutes.

IV. Discussion

- a. Collaborative members had multiple questions about the location and treatment of early seral in the AMA. Our FS partners provided these details:

- i. Early seral treatments will be in the AMA at the northern edge of the project. This is a unique opportunity to do early seral treatments to create habitat for elk (forage) that also provides other plant and wildlife habitat.
 - ii. These treatments will create patches up to 5 acres and gaps up to 5 acres with low tree canopy cover that will not be maintained over time (change in trajectory without maintenance). Thus, there is the expectation that trees will establish and the early seral will fill in over time. Page 10 of the Draft EA includes a list of proposed treatments.
 - iii. There are a wide variety of treatments that may be used to create temporary early seral conditions.
 - iv. There are no interior forest patches in the AMA where early seral treatments would occur; there are non-Forest Service stands adjacent to the AMA block that potentially have Marbled Murrelet (MAMU) habitat.

- b. **Collaborative Questions:** Multiple MAMU questions (see list at the end of this document).
 - i. **FS Answer:** without a wildlife biologist at the meeting, we are not able to go into details of MAMU surveys and analysis. or answer specific questions that Collaborative members had (see questions at the end of this document).
 - ii. **FS Answer:** in general, there was analysis done to identify MAMU habitat and interior forest in the Sand Lake project area, any MAMU habitat or potential habitat was noted in the FS surveys.
 - iii. **FS Answer:** as the Draft EA states, there is no plan to create ecological no cut buffers.

- c. **Collaborative Comment:** This is frustrating that we are meeting for the first time in months only after the Draft EA was released. The AMG was involved with Sand Lake early on and made progress in the Fall 2019 with field trips. The previous District Ranger held a few listening sessions and public NEPA meetings in April and May, but after that everything went on hold during COVID, and there wasn't much communication until the Draft EA was released.

- d. **Collaborative Question:** How did you decide where and how much to treat for early seral?

FS Answer: There are about 1,100 acres in the AMA and 100 acres were selected for early seral treatment (a little less than 10%). We were limited in how much we could treat to meet overall project standards. We used a model to determine the best areas for early seral, and that included areas that had potential for under burning. This is not necessary, but it is a tool we are interested in exploring for habitat creation.

- e. **Collaborative Question:** What are the limitations to doing more early seral treatments?

FS Answer: As an IDT they decided to consult with USFW to create early-successional patches and do heavy thinning, but to protect sensitive fungi they are maintaining 40% canopy cover across the entire northern block of contiguous AMA, so that limits to amount of early seral if we thin other stands. The whole AMA is proposed to be thinned to about 40% but some sections will get a heavy thin vs. early seral. It would require additional USFWS consultation to increase early seral treatments if the overall treatments went outside of the % allowed in the existing consultation. It may be the case that decreased thinning in the AMA would allow for more early seral treatment.

- f. **Collaborative Question:** what would be the treatments for the thinning?

FS Answer: Thinning treatments would include thinning from below, removing smallest trees, skips and gaps, and radial tree releases.

- g. **Collaborative Comments and Follow-up:**

- i. Some stakeholders shared their interest in increasing the number of acres in the AMA that receive early seral treatment.
- ii. Other stakeholders shared concern that reducing the acres of thinning of young stands (40-79 yo) to focus on early seral would mean that some of the young stands age out of being able to receive treatment (>80 yo).
- iii. There is interest in further discussion about these tradeoffs and the flexibility of the AMA and LSR.
- iv. The proposed gap sizes (1/2 to 5 acres) for early seral treatment may be challenging for timber operators.

V. Next-Steps

- a. Kailey sent a list of follow-up questions to Hannah for further consideration and to guide the discussion at a later meeting (to be scheduled). The list is included in these meeting minutes.
- b. If possible, participants would like to hear from wildlife biologist, Michelle Dragoo, who is currently on detail but carried out the MAMU analysis.
- c. If possible, some collaborative participants would like to continue to work with the IDT and District Ranger on the Sand Lake project after the 30-day comment period has concluded. Kailey and Trent will work with Bill and Hannah to figure out a path forward.
- d. In future Sand Lake discussions, Kailey will get topics of interest from Collaborative participants ahead of time so that the FS can prepare.

Follow-up Questions sent to Hannah Smith

1. What was the process of analysis for identifying MAMU habitat and interior forest in the Sand Lake area?
2. What are the limitations to doing more early seral treatments?
3. Would increasing the amount of early seral treatments require additional FWS consultation?
4. Is there a potential to tradeoff between amount of thinning vs. early seral treatments within the AMA?
5. Is there a map that shows identified MAMU habitat adjacent to or within the project area, specifically the AMA?
6. Was adjacent State Park land considered in the analysis of endangered species proximity to treatments?
7. Can we get additional detail on buffers within the AMA? Specifically, in regard to parts of AMA that are adjacent to interior forest.
8. What does Late Successional Reserves (LSRs) Established by Murrelet Occupancy refer to? Were MAMU seen in these stands?
9. How did the Forest decide on the percent of early seral treatments in the AMA?
10. There is a concern that if we increase early seral treatments and reduce the amount of young successional thinning (<80-year-old stands), then the young stands might age out (e.g., be greater than 80 yo) of being treatable. There is a question about the amount of flexibility to return to do more treatments in the AMA vs. the LSR.
11. In Bill's letter to the Collaborative, it mentions that AMG agreed with Michelle Dragoo's approach to analysis of MAMU stands but meeting participants are not sure this is the case. Does the Forest have notes from this meeting?
12. Is there any ability to increase the amount of early seral treatments in the AMA?
13. Is there any ability to include some buffers?
14. In Bill's letter to the Collaborative, it mentions that "If murrelet nesting trees were present, there was no evidence of corvids, and there was no evidence of berry producing shrubs within 50 meters of the soft edge, then it was recommended for a no-cut buffer." A participant has asked for clarification about what this means, and if there were communications between the USFS and USFWS regarding the no-cut buffers.