

## 1. CFLRP Resolution

- Passed with no additional discussion.

## 2. Public Meetings Update

- 5 completed (Williams, Flagstaff, Tusyan, Sedona and Show Low)
- Attendance low between 1 – 5; asked for outreach ideas to public at Show Low meeting (5 attendees). Radio, over 200 media outlets were contacted.
- Other suggestions welcome.

## 3. DEIS Discussion

### Excerpted Discussion points that apply to all Subgroups:

- Please see handouts from each subgroup posted on basecamp.
- STAKEHOLDERS: If you want to provide comments or feedback on the DEIS, you need to do so by Wednesday May 1. Send directly to the appropriate team leader. If you don't know who that is, send to Buck or Diane and they will route it to the proper person.
- It is important to remember that the purpose of this review process is not to poke holes in the document, but to identify existing gaps and suggest patches in order to make the document stronger.
- All note-takers please send your notes on each Subgroup to the Team Leader as well.
- All Teams are encouraged to work closely with the FS in order to understand the NEPA process, ask clarifying questions, get help finding information, etc. It is critical that teams correct any misperceptions before they get incorporated into SHG recommendations.
- If knowledge is gained by subgroups regarding the NEPA process, please share this with the larger group.

### **DEIS Team #1:** *Degree of openness across landscape (Team Leader Sharon Masek-Lopez)*

**Progress Report:** There have been 5 participants in this group. Mostly in agreement, but a few items on which they have not been able to reach consensus. Addressed 6 issues (see handout on basecamp).

### **Substantive Comments:**

- Sharon Gilbreath has expressed interest in being a part of this group. Please include her in all future correspondence.
- Please provide more background information on the issue of opening size and snowpack accumulation.

- How will fire be modeled over time? 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years in the future and how will this affect openings long-term?
- The DEIS doesn't address follow-up treatments and how they will affect openings
- Sub-issues 1 & 2 focus on DFC (desired future conditions) while 3 focuses on fire behavior and restoration goals. Make a clearer distinction between these.
- Issues 1 and 2 are in direct opposition to each other. Please ensure that this subgroup does not bring conflicting recommendations back to the SHG (Stakeholder group).
- While there are no SHG-approved documents that provide recommendations or positions on openness, The Path Forward addresses Sub-issue 3.
- The WMSP (White Mt. Stewardship project) found it useful to separate the issues of restoration and fire hazard reduction. Would like to see Sub-issue 3 divided into 2 separate sub-issues to maintain this distinction.

**DEIS Team #2:** *Forest Plan Amendments (Team Leader Mark Sensibaugh, represented today by Pascal Berlioux)*

**Progress Report:** Group has agreed that the Amendments are “appropriate” in that they will allow the alternatives to be executed. Questions about how the determination of “non-significance” of the Amendments was made, would like FS to “show their work” on this. Important to note that significance has a very specific meaning in NEPA and is not the same as “important to Stakeholders”. The team is moving towards addressing process issues more than content, which might should be addressed by another team. Discussed whether there should be another amendment that does not require FPAs (forest plan amendments), and that all 3 existing amendments are largely identical when it comes to mechanical thinning. team will move forward on validating the findings of non-significance based on the underlying science. Note that this progress report is trying to provide unfiltered information on the group's discussions to date, and not everything discussed so far will end up as a recommendation.

#### **Substantive Comments:**

- FS encourages team to look at scoping documents: developed alternatives are direct responses to comments received in scoping of PA (proposed action). Also states that it would not be possible to accomplish the objectives of this project without amendments, and encourages Stakeholders to provide specific comments on any concerns regarding the amendments. Most of the amendments (e.g., MSO, Cultural resources, etc.) are in order to increase clarity, not to change practices on the ground. Without these amendments the project would be vulnerable to lawsuits.
- If the preferred alternative gets us to the DFC we want, let's not over-engineer it to the point where progress on the ground is delayed, risking more damage from catastrophic wildfires.
- The stated reason for not adopting the LTRS (large tree retention strategy) was that it did not comply with Forest Plans. Why didn't the FS make an amendment on this issue like it did for others? Is the FS being consistent in how it addresses different issues? Would like to see more clarity on the FS process. (See page 57 of the DEIS for the FS explanation of why the LTRS was not adopted. FS states that it was

excluded due to issues of regulations and decision-space, and it was not something an FPA could have resolved.)

- Important to understand that the area affected by each amendment is generally relatively small (~10-25% of project area).
- While an alternative not requiring amendments is not appropriate, would including alternatives with more variation in the acreages of mechanical thinning make the plan stronger? It might be pretty easy to examine another alternative or two and state why they do not meet project objectives.
- Development of other alternatives will delay treatment, but a relatively small delay at this point in the process might prevent a much larger delay in the future (e.g., if Adaptive Management shows that DFCs are not being met, more NEPA might be required at that point). If another alternative IS needed, it is much easier and quicker to develop it now rather than later
- Note that the options for how the FS can address comments are prescribed by CEQ (Council of Environmental Quality) at 40 CFR 1503.4.

**DEIS Team #3:** *Translation of OGPS and LTRS (old growth protection and large tree retention strategies) into the Implementation Plan and DEIS (Team Leader: In Transition)*

**Progress Report:** This is a really big issue and this subgroup has a lot of participants. Therefore, the document developed at this point is still in pretty raw form. The group is now focusing primarily on how the INTENT of the OGPS and LTRS has been incorporated into the DEIS, not if and where portions have been included verbatim. There was disagreement in the group as to what the original intent of these SHG documents was—to provide guidance to the FS or to constrain the FS. In other words, are they taken as exceptions or as general rules? The intent of the original SHG document was to protect old growth and, *as much as possible, while achieving the project's ecological objectives*, the large tree component. Some team members feel that this intent has not been translated well into the DEIS. There are concerns that the DEIS currently allows too much permissiveness (i.e., latitude on the ground) re: the removal of old and/or large trees. Also, the recommendations from this group are likely to include something addressing the issue of regeneration.

#### **Substantive Comments:**

- Remember that the OGPS/LTRS was split in 2: OGPS was included in DEIS while the LTRS was included as an appendix.
- FS please post the Exception Category Map to Basecamp
- FS needs to provide more assurances (i.e., “guardrails”) that there will be safeguards against the bias towards the removal of old trees and old growth in order to increase confidence and build trust with Stakeholders.
- FS and SHG need to work closely together to articulate what the SHG is willing to accept (in terms of old/large tree removal) in order to meet project objectives, and why the FS/contractor needs that latitude. This is a trust-building exercise.
- The intent of the LTRS is incorporated into the DEIS in many separate parts (e.g., MSO and N. Goshawk Guidelines). It might be helpful for the FS to add a summary that ties together how all of these different parts address this issue so that people can

see this holistically in one place. The Bridge Habitat document, while very useful, does not adequately address this particular issue.

- Too many different terms and acronyms addressing this issue: OGPS, OTIP, LGPS, OGRS, etc. Please pick one or two terms and use them consistently throughout the DEIS to improve clarity.
- There is confusion regarding the allocation of old growth in the DEIS (20%) and the actual amount of old growth (30%). Please clarify.
- Confusion between the terms “old growth” and “old trees”. Also, in the termination re: openings: interspace, within-stand opening, regeneration openings, etc. Clarification is needed (visual representations might help on the latter terms).
- Sharon Gilbreath and Steve Gatewood suggested as co-leads for this subgroup

#### **DEIS Team #4:** *Specificity of Operational Interpretation (Team Leader: Jerry Payne)*

**Progress Report:** Group is going to focus on the issue of whether NEPA documents are specific enough on a treatment site-by-treatment site basis. Will randomly select a number of sites and then work with the FS to see if they can find DFC, Prescription, Effects of No Action, effects of proposed treatments to all resources, etc. The group wants to develop an index or guide to help others find this information about a given site.

#### **Substantive Comments:**

- FS states that there will not be prescriptions available.
- Along with Cumulative Effects, this area is one of the greatest potential vulnerabilities of a document this size. An index or guide would be a great way to address this issue.
- Software to help visualize what treatments would look like on the ground at a given site might be really helpful, but FS says that currently this is a very time-consuming process—it can be done for a few areas, but not universally, and the models don’t necessarily show what ANY one spot on-the-ground would look like. There are before & after aerial photos of some treatments (e.g., Mountaineer) that could help people visualize, though.
- If one has to go to specialist reports in order to find site-specific info, that could be a potential problem. CEQ directs the FS to develop reports that are *analytic*, not *encyclopedic*. It is always a struggle to achieve this balance.

#### **DEIS Team #5:** *Cumulative Effects (Team Leader: Jerry Payne)*

**Progress Report:** The team has not yet had a chance to look at or achieve consensus on Sharon Gilbreath’s comments. Many of those comments will probably need to be addressed by other Subgroups. Need to work with FS in order to find detailed information on how CEs have been measured or incorporated into DEIS. Will probably recommend that some type of index or inclusion by reference is included in order to explain to public how to access background information (i.e., analyses) behind CE statements.

#### **Substantive Comments:**

- FS says that Appendix F is NOT an analysis, just a list of previous projects. Analyses are spread throughout the DEIS on a resource-by-resource basis. The CE

boundary will be different for the CE Analysis for each resource. The criteria for analysis are included that way as well.

- FWPP should be included in CE analyses since it is now on the SOPA (Schedule of Proposed Actions).
- While there is some concern that the CE sections are quite short in the DEIS, it is important to understand that they only consider how the effects of this project will interact with other projects (past and future)—the effects of THIS project on its own are included in the Direct Effects and Indirect effects sections. Since this project is so big, it follows that the effects of this project will generally overshadow those of other projects.
- Phase 2 of 4FRI (2<sup>nd</sup> EIS area) cannot be included in the CE analysis of this EIS (even though it seems to be “reasonably foreseeable” because, since there is no proposed action or actions yet, it is not (nor will it be) on the SOPA and it is impossible to analyze those actions. However, Phase 1 will certainly be included in the CE analyses of the Phase 2 EIS.
- Where is the analysis behind the CE statements? FS: Interactive maps and master lists in Specialist reports.

**DEIS Team #6:** *Adaptive Management and Monitoring (Team Leader Amy Waltz)*

**Progress Report:** FS stated in DEIS that this section was unfinished and that it would be working with the SHG to flesh it out. Group is relying on SHG documents (Biophysical and Socioeconomic Monitoring Plans) to guide discussions. It will probably not be possible to complete this section before the end of the comment period, so the group will probably continue to work with the FS on this after that point for inclusion in the FEIS, even though that will mean that there will be no opportunity to comment upon the FS’s final version.

**Substantive Comments:**

- FS requests to work closely with this group—“Let’s do this together”.
- This should be finished, if at all possible, to the point of allocating money, before the end of the comment period so that it becomes part of the ROD (record of decision). The success of the whole process relies on adaptive management, which cannot take place if good monitoring does not occur.
- Discussion of who will make decisions as to what and how monitoring happens. It will be the MPMB (multiparty monitoring board), but its recommendations to the FS will be non-binding.
- FS says that we are still trying to agree what AM (adaptive management) actually is—how far will we be able to adapt? (See SHG-provided definition of AM incorporated into DEIS). Requests that Stakeholders commit funding for monitoring.
- In response to FS, everyone (or at least most) understand that AM means changing practices *within the scope of NEPA documents*. not changing NEPA. Maybe we can better articulate the parts of what AM means (and doesn’t mean) where there is still confusion or a lack of agreement.
- Can’t finalize all of the details by mid-May because we still lack key information (metrics, MPMB not in place, etc.). Let’s try to get it done to the level of what are the categories and key indicators going to be, and where are the gaps that still need to be filled. then, time allowing, we can work on some important specifics (e.g.,

LTRS). Focus at the level of what we want the AM & Monitoring plans to accomplish.

- By definition, AM is always evolving. We need to strike a balance between ensuring that monitoring is funded and avoiding so much detail that things get pinned down and do not have room to change with new information. As work begins to happen and monitoring results start coming in, we may need to drop some measures and add others. FS needs to be committed, as part of the NEPA process, to funding and doing the monitoring, but without constricting too much how it is done.
- AM happens on the ground whether or not formal monitoring occurs. There will always be events that weren't planned for.
- Discussion of practicality of the FS obligating funds as part of the EIS—cannot obligate dollar amounts, but there are precedents to obligating percentages of funding (e.g., CFLRP funds).

**DEIS Team #7:** *How Collaborative Input has been incorporated into the DEIS. This group was dissolved and the other subgroups are looking at this issue as it applies to their areas instead.*

**DEIS Team #8:** *There turned out to be a satisfactory answer to the question delegated to this group so it was dissolved as well.*

**DEIS Team #9:** *Prioritization of Treatments (Team Leader Amy Waltz)*

**Progress Report:** This team agrees in substance that it will limit itself to providing a small number of high-quality comments on this issue.

#### **Substantive Comments:**

- Established priorities for treatment include: WUIs, Fire risk, High-risk watersheds, and Wildlife. (See documents from 2011 re: HRVNs and MRVNs).
- FS has mentioned also prioritizing based upon access to contractor.
- FS states that prioritization of treatments is not a NEPA decision and that the SHG might want to table this for now and address it later.

#### **DEIS Discussion Closing Comments:**

- Special thanks to Pascal Berlioux for all of the hard work and time he has put in to all of the groups in which he is participating—it is very much appreciated.
- Discussion about whether it would make sense to ask for a 30 day extension of the Comment Period. Some thought it would be useful while others felt that this group often does its best work under tight deadlines and that an extension would be counterproductive. Although the process has gone smoothly and efficiently to this point, it was pointed out that we have yet to make a single Decision, and that that process will likely take a lengthy discussion.
- Any comments need to get to the team Leaders by Wednesday May 1 in order to be considered in future deliberations. There will be a conference call of the full DEIS working group on this day as well.
- Team leaders need to get all of their information into the templates by Wednesday, May 8 so that they are out before the next facilitated meeting

- The next SHG meeting will be 2 days: May 21-22 in Flagstaff in order to provide enough time for the Decision-making process on the final SHG recommendations to the FS regarding the DEIS.

#### 4. Contractor Update

A short statement provided by Marlin Johnson was read just before the lunch break.

#### 5. Forest Service Update

- CFLRP: There is an opportunity to change the CFLRP boundary and/or change outputs based on changes to the landscape beyond our control (e.g., changes in local government policies, massive wildfires, etc. **Stakeholder discussion/decision:** No objections to maintaining the current boundary.
- DEIS: Attendance has been light at meetings. No comment submitted at the meetings so far. Expecting that comments might be submitted at the meeting (May 15 Flagstaff). So far there have been 6 or 7 electronically submitted comments on the DEIS. These are available to read on the FS 4FRI website in the “reading room”.
- New information on task Order: the Ranch TO (on the A-S NF) was issued 2 weeks ago (April 4<sup>th</sup>). Talk with Roberta about any and all contracting issues.
- The FS does not currently want to say anything new on the issue of a contract extension.

#### 6. Stakeholder Disclosures

- 4FRI asked by Mean Conklin to submit comments on Gosar bill, told that we don’t comment as a group on legislation.
- Tommie Martin did testify on the Gosar Bill in DC on behalf of Gila County, unaware that comments were solicited from 4FRI.
- The Stewardship Contract Authorization Extension is getting attention in DC. One senator (?) issued a clean bill extending authorization for 10 years, while others wanted to address some of the issues, e.g., cancellation ceiling, extension to 20 years, etc.
- FWPP Proposed Action: Notice of Intent to issue EIS, Comments due by May 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Charter Member update: The list has been cleaned-up: Stakeholders who had not actually signed the Charter before were added: AZSF, Tom Mackin’s group (Arizona Wildlife Federation??), Coconino County Supervisors. Alicyn Gitlin of the Sierra Club had signed by accident (thought it was the meeting attendance roster) and has been removed (email requesting this now included in Charter document).
- There has been a request by a researcher, Marcy ?????, to interview a group of Stakeholders re: the collaborative process. Individual members should contact her directly if you want to participate (**include contact info?**).
- Yellowbelly Ponderosa community performance Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>. Anne Mottek-Lucas, GFFP KNF’s More Kids in the Woods grant and SRP have been instrumental in making this happen—it has been much improved since 2 years ago

and SRP also funded the development of a classroom curriculum based on it. All are encouraged to attend.

- Jerry Payne will give update on the Roads issue to anyone who wants it after the meeting.
- Upcoming CFLRP webinar, look for more info in your inbox soon.

## 7. Eastside Boundary Discussion

- Russ Winn and Billie Hughes provided and discussed written comments on their concerns about giving Jim the go-ahead to collect data across the entire area of 4FRI phase 2. Russ that he would submit to agreement by acquiescence if the rest of the group wanted to move forward, and that the submitted document would serve to record his concerns. Billie stated that she would be OK with that decision as long as the SHG was willing to invest significant time and energy into addressing the concerns listed in that document.
- Jim states that the San Carlos Apache tribe contacted them and is interested in participating in the planning process for phase 2
- It was clarified that this recommendation on area boundary is for the purposes of data collection only, and that the area could be split into two project areas for purposes of analysis and treatment at a later time
- Out of 1.5 million acres, pinion-juniper accounts for about 100,000 acres.

***Stakeholder Discussion/Decision:*** Give Jim the Go-Ahead to move forward with the proposed boundary for the terms of data collection for the 4FRI phase 2 NEPA process. No objections, Russ Agreed by Acquiescence, as did Billie (with the reservations identified above).

## 8. ACTION ITEMS:

1. Sharon Masek-Lopez will add Sharon Gilbreath to Subgroup #1 and include her in all future correspondence of this team.
2. Sharon Masek Lopez will post additional background information on opening size-snowpack issue to Basecamp.
3. All team leaders will number sub-issues throughout their documents to ease reference and discussion.
4. FS will post Exception Area map to Basecamp (done).
5. Chairs will notify all Stakeholders that the next SHG meeting will be 2 days, May 21-22 in Flagstaff.
6. Comments on DEIS are due to team leaders by Wednesday, May 1.
7. Team Leaders will get the first draft of the subgroup templates done by Wednesday, May 8.
8. Team comments/recommendations in approved template will be posted to basecamp no later than May 17<sup>th</sup>
9. Steve Gatewood appointed as co-leader to Subgroup #3.
10. Steering committee will finalize location of May SHG meeting.