

DRAFT
Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team (NSOIT)
Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2011
9:00am – 12:00pm

Attending: Bridget Moran, Shawn Cantrell, David Whipple, Kevin Godbout and Bettina von Hagen (by phone)

Others Present: Ken Berg (by phone) and Cindy Mitchell

Staff: Andy Hayes and Lauren Burnes

Call Meeting to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:15am.

Review Draft Agenda

No items to add to agenda. Bridget provided a brief OPMA reminder to team and noted that Ken Berg would like to call in today from 10:15am to 11:00am to listen in on the technical team dialogue.

Bridget: Brendan White of the technical team was listed early on as one of our federal representatives, but we forgot to ask Ken Berg (USFWS) during the process. Ken is not sure Brendan is the right one for the Washington-focused NSOIT technical team. Someone from Wenatchee has tentatively been identified as a replacement (Karl Halupka), and we are waiting for confirmation of his participation.

August Meeting Minutes

Bridget: Any changes to the August minutes? [Minutes Approved].

Eastside Pilot Project Update

Lauren: We have identified a few grants through USFWS that are anticipated to become available in the coming months. The deadlines for Partners for Fish & Wildlife and Recovery Program funding have passed. One challenge is to develop an overall cost estimate before convening the ID team to write prescriptions for thinning. We won't have a firm estimate on which to base grant requests until we get the ID team up and running. We could wait to apply for planning dollars during the next grant cycle or we could try and put together the ID team before we have planning dollars secured.

Cindy: Have you looked into WWRC grant opportunities through the RCO?

Lauren: The focus has been federal mostly but I'll look into that as well.

Bridget: How do we address this catch 22 we are in? We need to spend time upfront to evaluate the site and develop prescriptions. (But we need prescriptions to get a reliable cost estimate and apply for funding.) Could we, as a team, bring those resources to the table and then apply for implementation dollars?

- **Cindy: Willing to have a conversation with Chris Lipton and see how much it would take to make the project work.**
- **Lauren: We can pursue formation of the ID team once we reach out to Longview.**

Bettina: Could you provide me with an outline of the pilot?

Cindy: A pilot rule was approved by the FPB to allow freedom to support the creation and restoration of NSO habitat. We went to timber companies that had circles in SOSEAs.

Bettina: Why just Longview? Why not open it up to other parties?

Lauren: The approved pilot rule is for a pilot with Longview Timber.

Cindy: Longview has shown some interest historically with this type of project.

Bettina: We might find some interest out there in participating and a little competition might serve the purpose of bringing participants to the table.

Bridget: That's a good point, Bettina. We may look at broadening our scope, put out some RFPs.

Andy: There's a possibility for that for a Westside pilot.

David: The eastside pilot was focused on because of forest health issues.

Bridget: There are Sec. 6 options (Paula projects on the west) not brought to group yet.

David: The pilot may not be economical at first.

Bridget: We may know after Cindy speaks with Longview.

Kevin: We're trying to address the regulatory constraints, after that it's economics. If we can't get a pilot off the ground, maybe we could get agreement between the landowner and the conservation community. Perhaps we could then go back to the Board with an Alternative Plan that we could show would work for other landowners.

Bridget: Maybe Longview could help with developing prescriptions that could somehow be adopted by the Board through some mechanism (like the Board Manual)?

David: Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is doing a rewrite of their forest plan. They are focusing on restoration activities, and are planning on doubling their management footprint on the landscape by matching current activity level with an equal amount of restoration. This could provide a synergistic opportunity.

Bridget: Maybe we could have a two-day planning trip to the field?

David: We should be out in the field now before winter hits or we're stuck until spring. We're supportive; internally we're going to have to find a way to get staff for the pilot.

Bridget: Everyone go back to their respective entities to see if we can provide the people/resources to do prep work.

- **Find industry reps, state foresters, etc. to go on an initial field trip (we don't have to go). (1) If they agree to join the ID team, schedule them for winter. (2) See if there are prescriptions we can write.**

Kevin: We should think about whether we have to come up with a tailored site plan for a specific project, or could we work on prescriptions that can be applied to future projects.

Bridget: I propose we form a project mini-team to discuss: Do we just develop prescriptions for now? Do we need a field trip? How do we move forward?

Bettina: Open it up to small forest landowners to come forward. Could we look through past permits or RFPs?

- **Bridget: Let's reach out to Longview (Cindy). Lauren to form pilot team consisting of DNR, WDFW, etc.; to discuss the work done to date; decide should it be outcome based or just develop specific prescriptions; and solicit landowners to come to us (we could help shepherd projects through rulemaking).**

Work Plan Update

Bridget: We'll skip the work plan update for now. We'd like to thank USFWS for providing us with a grant to fund Lauren for 10 months. Andy has carved out a permanent spot for staffing the NSOIT.

Technical Team Discussion

Bridget: According an old memo from Chuck Turley to the FPB, the Board asked us to do three things. A lot has happened in a year and a half, and we need to be clear about what we're asking the technical

team. The recovery plan has informed (or at least addressed) a lot of what we're asking in question 1 of the original draft memo. The most important question is "where should conservation efforts be applied?" The questions developed previously were developed before the release of the recovery plan.

Ken Berg: We're in the middle of revising critical habitat, due January 17, 2012. By the end of January, we'll see what USFWS has proposed, we'll be better informed regarding what the best thing to do is. It's premature to answer the "where" question until you all see the draft critical habitat. I'd be happy to come to you then with some technical experts and explain it to your team once the critical habitat proposal is out.

Shawn: Our charge isn't to find whether a location is or isn't critical habitat, what we want our technical team to do is to prioritize land for incentives. We'd like more detail rather than simply a yes/no critical habitat approach. Will more detailed info be available to us beyond the critical habitat areas?

Ken Berg: Critical habitat is a piece of the puzzle, federal lands are the backbone of conservation, nonfederal lands are to complement. Critical habitat could help provide context and framework as far as spatial goes.

Andy: Brian Woodbridge (USFWS) said we could use the federal model. Could we link critical habitat to the other data to answer specific questions?

Ken Berg: You wouldn't necessarily use the critical habitat maps, but you could use the underlying data.

Kevin: We should build all the data, including critical habitat into a baseline dataset. Where are critical habitat areas and how do they overlap spatially with conservation opportunities on the landscape?

Bridget: Timing will be an issue, the first technical team meeting is in December. We should start with building a baseline and then use the models/critical habitat when it comes online in January.

Cindy: I don't want to lose the conversation on other conservation efforts (barred owl management, etc). I'm not in favor of making a new charter when we've already developed a "Technical Team Process, Assignment, and Potential Members" document in 2010. The technical team's purpose is supposed to be broader than just "where," it should also focus on conservation efforts. If we don't have voluntary incentives figured out, the "where" won't matter. We don't want to lose focus.

Bridget: How could we phrase that for the technical team?

Shawn: The technical team's job is to figure out where and when. Other conservation efforts are the job of this group (NSOIT) to address.

Bridget: The more concrete and specific we can be for our technical team, the better.

Kevin: We need to figure out how to make conservation work, not just where to make it work.

Bridget: Doesn't the "how" follow the "where?"

Kevin: We need a baseline habitat assessment. Ask the team in those [landscape-based] areas, what do you think would be the best conservation efforts [conservation tools]?

Bridget: A baseline would be important to know what exists on the land today. Have team develop baseline, identify where to focus, then develop tools. Tools will differ on different landscapes.

Shawn: Need to make sure that technical team uses all available data not used in the models.

David: There may be potential difficulties on how you account for those contributions. Land covered by HCPs probably exist, but Forest & Fish/riparian buffers, etc. would be data intensive to create.

Cindy: We have to account for what's already been done, the NWFP accounted for riparian buffers. Our focus is broader than a "how many trees on the ground" approach. Habitat isn't the only thing. Critical habitat will be informative. We're the ones to be working on the tools. Have both processes go on at the same time.

Shawn: I can see us going back to the biologists for meaningful input on the best tools to use, *after* they first tell us where to apply conservation.

David: I really don't want us to derail the process with questions on the barred owl. The "how" makes a difference, particularly when considering *when* those lands come online to contribute to habitat.

Bridget: Is it value added to ask the technical team to start work before the draft critical habitat proposal is released in January? Can our discussion be focused on WA at that time (not range wide)?

Ken Berg: I'd say wait until January. The technical team needs policy direction. In January, I'll point to map of Washington and give you suggested areas to focus on. It will be an interactive process.

Kevin: Can the discussion be interactive? Can we bring info to the table and have some back and forth on opportunities?

Ken: Yes.

Bridget: Let's take a 5 minute break and come back to our discussion.

[Break]

Bridget: All four of the economists (Pittman, Kruse, Niemi, Ervin) contacted were willing to volunteer their time and expertise, do we want to stick with our top two selections or seek the assistance of additional economists?

➤ **Team expressed unanimous interest in having alternate economists assist the technical team. Lauren will reach out to the additional economists and try to schedule them for December's meeting.**

Shawn: Beneficial to involve economists in the entire technical team process.

Shawn: Let's have the scientists on the technical team help us to identify baseline factors, i.e., develop a list of what data should be included in the analysis.

Bridget: Our meeting in December will be an orientation meeting, have them start thinking about data sets they'd like to have included, and then meet with USFWS in January.

David: Technical team needs time to grapple with what scientific assumptions to consider in the analysis.

Cindy: The NSOIT doesn't have the authority to develop a charter for the technical team.

Bridget: We need to provide clarity in providing direction for the technical team

David, Bridget: We use charters all the time in government.

Shawn: The Board gave us authority to create the technical team and achieve our goals/workplan. We must also have implicit authority to take actions to do so.

Bridget: To recap, we all see value in having the technical team identify the "where," right? [Team agreed]

Kevin: Let's have a joint discussion with the technical team to discuss goals, it's an iterative process.

Let's let the dialog inform the direction taken. How quantitative/qualitative do we want to be? What will the technical team work product be?

Bridget: Wait for the release of critical habitat.

David: The level of detail needs to be somewhere between "best professional judgment" and extremely detailed and quantitative.

Kevin: Let's chat with the technical team to document what they think can be done.

Bridget: Let's get back to the value of the charter. Thoughts?

Cindy: We should not have a charter; there is plenty of existing direction in existing documents.

David: I like a charter – this is a scientific process and important that we have something to keep both them and us "honest."

Shawn: I like the idea of a charter, but I don't care what it is called.

Bettina: A charter is a good idea. I also like a joint meeting (with technical team) to help further define their work.

Bridget: Let's have each team member edit the charter, and send Lauren your individual edits by November 3rd. We'll synthesize and resend it to the NSOIT. We won't finalize it until our next meeting in December.

Kevin: The 1993 spotted owl SAG had a charter, it might be a helpful format to look at, especially helpful in the SAG charter is the "we do not want the team to do x..." section.

➤ **Bridget:** Lauren will reach out to Tim Cullinan and find out what his recommendations are for a Tribes technical team member then seek feedback from the NSOIT.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm.