

**Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team (NSOIT)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 20, 2012**  
**10:00am – 12:00pm**

**Attending:**

**NSOIT:** Bridget Moran and Kevin Godbout. By phone: Shawn Cantrell. **Technical Team:** Joe Buchanan and Tony Melchiors. By phone: Karl Halupka, Elaine Rybak, Kara Whittaker, Ernie Niemi, and Gina King. **Others Present:** Paula Swedeen and Cindy Mitchell. **Staff:** Andy Hayes and Lauren Burnes.

**Call Meeting to Order**

Meeting called to order at 10:15am.

**Review Draft Agenda**

No adjustments to the draft agenda.

**Report from Chair**

Bridget notified the NSOIT and Technical Team that she has accepted a position with USFWS and her time with DNR is ending. Members thanked Bridget for her service, commitment and leadership on the NSOIT and wished her well in her future endeavors. Bridget said that there hasn't been discussion on a replacement for her position on the NSOIT at that time, but that Executive Management was working quickly and carefully to fill her role as Deputy Supervisor and Chair of the NSOIT. The NSOIT process is a priority for the Agency, and continued support of the endeavor with little interruption was a priority.

**Technical Team Discussion**

***Overview of GIS Process***

**Gina:** Kara got us off to a good start on GIS; we have RHS by land ownership. I generated some maps with a little more detail on SharePoint. We still need Zonation layers and networks that have been run in the Dunk et al white paper. [*DNR staff will coordinate with USFWS to obtain data*]. As we delineate areas we're projecting kinds of changes in the area. The scenarios will need to be specific enough to delineate boundaries for GIS.

**Kevin:** Where is this data stored?

**Bridget/Lauren:** Sensitive wildlife data is not available broadly right now, but we'll have to consider that in the future.

**Kara:** Gina created an RHS spreadsheet by landowner. I can put that information in chart form.

**Kevin:** What do the "bins" mean?

**Gina:** We changed the three classes to four. RHS values can vary from 0-100.

**Kara:** The values are described in Appendix C, the 34 and 35 RHS value split is important.

**Paula:** How were the numbers derived? (Owl behavior and habitat scores?)

**Gina:** An RHS value of 35 is the threshold for habitat selection.

**Karl:** Those figures predict the probability of occupancy. These relationships are probabilistic; it is still possible to find sites in areas designated with RHS values of 0-34.

***Baseline and Scenarios***

**Bridget:** At our last meeting we landed on three federal baselines: (1) DCH + exclusions; (2) NWFP as intended; and (3) NWFP as implemented.

**Andy:** We would like to walk out of here today with confirmation from the NSOIT on the baselines.

**Shawn:** I question the utility of moving forward with multiple baselines, when it will limit the number of scenarios we are able to study.

**Bridget:** We do need to be sensitive to time and cost constraints. So far we have three baselines in front of us. I share concerns that using multiple baseline scenarios could further limit alternative nonfederal scenarios.

**Andy:** Just a reminder on the process we have agreed proposed; we plan to do a baseline analysis and bring the results back to the NSOIT. Then we decide how to proceed with the NSOIT. Also, there are no temporal changes to the baseline at this time.

**Joe:** The team initially started with the NW Forest Plan (NWFP) and the Critical Habitat Designation (DCH). It was at our most recent meeting to compare the NWFP “as intended” versus “as implemented”. NWFP, as implemented, might end up looking a lot like DCH. On the other hand, NWFP as intended might end up looking different from DCH. This distinction may be important, but it may not – we have to run it to see. I would also add circles within SOSEAs to the baselines to reduce the number of scenarios. The baselines would be static.

**Bridget:** If we run both, what’s the possibility of “NWFP as intended” providing us with useful information if it doesn’t reflect reality?

**Joe:** It’s what is still on the books. It’s theoretically still possible that the NWFP could be implemented as intended. It’s what the current NSO conservation is built on. It makes sense to have a baseline that reflects the current Forest Practice Rules, so if we were ever to see that “as intended” implemented, we’d be able to see the relationship between state and federal management. More broadly, it gives us a picture of a range of possible conditions/outcomes if we don’t want to foreclose the opportunity to consider it as a possible future outcome.

**Bridget:** What did they assume in the DCH modeling?

**Karl:** In DCH, we modeled the NWFP “as intended”. We grew habitat in LSRs, matrix lands grew. We decremented growth in matrix areas (assuming that matrix lands would be managed around 34/35 RHS in perpetuity).

**Paula:** But DCH identified all current habitat (including matrix lands)...

**Elaine:** To clarify what Karl just said, it does not include riparian reserves and assumes that all that habitat is gone. The run was worst-case scenario.

**Cindy:** I like the intellectual idea of testing NWFP as intended, but I think using as implemented will yield more applicable results.

**Karl:** During the modeling process we used worst-case-scenario for NWFP, but the proposal resembles the NWFP “as intended” because a lot of the matrix lands are included within CH.

**Paula:** Does it make sense to not run all three baselines if the NWFP as implemented is similar/identical to DCH?

**Joe:** Maybe not.

**Bridget:** Do we think three baselines would be possible? I’d rather ask for all three then retreat to two so we can be sure as we move forward.

**Kevin:** We should test out CH and NWFP as implemented and compare.

**Cindy:** The model should reflect, as best as possible, real life so that it isn’t hypothetical.

**Shawn:** I’m fine with all three, but if there’s a significant time cost issue then two is fine.

- **Bridget:** In sum, we will proceed with all three unless there’s a barrier. If there is a time/money constraint the Technical Team should pick the two most different baselines so we can compare differences.

**Kevin:** How do we address other management activities that weren’t meant for owls but are providing conservation? There are other activities that are providing or will provide habitat.

**Joe:** To get to Kevin’s core comment, the list isn’t finalized.

**Paula:** Runs should include lands providing contributions. What is the habitat quality for HCPs?

**Joe:** We'll need to make some assumptions about the HCPs, e.g. round off some estimate of habitat.

**Bridget:** The scale will be an important issue.

**Joe:** We could decide to leave out certain HCPs that don't meet certain habitat thresholds.

**Bridget:** We're getting a best-case-scenario with removing the barred owl encounter rate.

**Cindy:** Habitat isn't static. In the Olympics, NSO are moving to higher elevations because of the barred owl. Do they return to lower elevations once the barred owl is removed?

**Bridget:** So you're saying the use of habitat is changing with the barred owl?

**Paula:** We might not be able to know that at this time.

**Tony:** We'll all get a good understanding when we pull the barred owl out. We don't need to run it across the scenarios.

**Bridget:** As we're walking towards implementing a transaction, we can look to local knowledge for more information.

**Elaine:** We could take a habitat-based look, and then overlay barred owl removal.

**Joe:** We have some information that the NSO should recolonize lands of former habitat...juvenile dispersing owls in CA were found to seek out former site centers. Owls have the ability to identify habitat.

**Elaine:** In British Columbia, the NSO is moving back in where the barred owl is removed.

**Bridget:** It's important to keep an eye on what's happening in British Columbia.

**Karl:** The model is best to compare a range of alternatives; it's difficult to ask these models what the reality would be in the future. It's good for what-ifs. The best use of the model is for relative comparisons. All are expressed in standard population dynamics. We could come up with a metric for scenarios.

**Paula:** It would be good for us to start thinking about ultimate what-ifs. How do scenarios help us prioritize landscapes?

**Bridget:** We plan to reach out to USFWS to throw our model runs in the queue over the summer.

**Cindy:** What about the NSO committee for the Board?

**Bridget:** There is no existing analysis for the Board on owl management. At the August Board meeting, we'll have a 1.5 hour timeline of FP rules, RP, CH, and NSOIT. The subcommittee could take time to understand the complexity.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.