

Lemiti Fuels Reduction Project, Mt. Hood National Forest
Objection Resolution Meeting
Regional Forester's Conference Room
January 7, 2016

Attendees: Becki Heath (USFS), Lisa Northrop (USFS), Debbie Anderson (USFS), Michelle Lombardo (USFS), Jackie Groce (USFS), Jim Roden (USFS-via phone), Michael Krochta (Bark), Brenna Bell (Bark), and Doug Heiken (Oregon Wild-via phone)

Objection Reviewing Officer's Opening Statements

Becki provided a reminder that she is not the Responsible Official, and that the point of the meeting is to hear the key issues about Units 14 and 22 from the objectors and explore different avenues for resolution. She is here to listen to decide if what, or anything, there is that the agency can do to resolve the objection.

Units 14 and 22

Bark appreciates that riparian reserves and owl habitat was removed from the project between scoping and draft EA.

Bark feels that there is a discrepancy for these two units as it relates to the Purpose and Need. They passed out a one-page paper demonstrating that the units are a departure from what the EA describes for the Purpose and Need because they are more than just dead lodgepole stands. Further, Bark stated that the three sections of the Purpose and Need are not being met by logging in these units; and it is contradictory to the project because they are so far away from the Forest/Reservation boundary.

Bark states that these two units are different than most of the other units in the project area; as they are mixed conifer, they believe these stands will revert to dense lodgepole if treated and lose the fire-resilient conifer species that are in there now. They are also far away from the important routes disclosed in the EA as part of the purpose and need. Therefore, Bark doesn't see how fuels reduction will meet the stated goals.

Becki asked if there is a different way to treat fuels in these two units; or if there is a different prescription that could be used. Brenna stated that these units may not need treatment; and reiterated that these units were different from the rest of the project area. Michael suggested leaving skips and diameter limits for these two units.

Bark expressed concern about the road accessing unit 22 due to its "new" construction which will fragment the area, as well as it possibly being counterproductive to not having fire starts (increased human presence). Michael stated that they would like some reassurance that the road will be properly closed because they have not seen these roads closed in the past, despite what the EA said.

Becki stated that this is all about managing risks; and she acknowledged Bark's concerns. She expressed her perspective about the importance of this project and its stated goals and objectives and how it is important to balance use and manage risk.

In regards to diameter limits, Debbie stated that diameter limits are not required. Brenna stated that she understands that one is not required, but still would like this to be considered. Becki stated that this is something that we will take into consideration, if it doesn't impact the project's goals and ability to meet the need.

Becki stated that we should look into the record about what fire modelling was done. The EA discloses that the Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) was used to model treatments and their expected flame lengths and that the Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS) was used to look at basic fire behavior, short term fire behavior and fire spread probability.

Michael asked what the hesitation is about providing limited access during the operating season since it is a lot of newly accessible area. Becki asked what Bark is trying to prevent with controlled access. Michael stated that the concerns are: riparian impacts to Slow Creek; human presence could have an increased fire risk; and roads can be easily breached resulting in resource damage.

In summary, Bark stated that they have mentioned the idea of having diameter limits and that this was broad for the entire project area, but they would like to have this considered for these two units and noted that for these two units, the diameter limit should probably be less than 21". Also, they would like some sort of explicit commitment to having access blocked when operations are not occurring. Bark also welcomed going out to the project area discuss skips.

Doug stated that he is not convinced that this is a high priority for fuels reduction and that the project is just as likely to make things worse as it is make them better. He also stated that if they could reduce the amount of logging and retain more trees then they would consider dropping their objection.

Michael concluded that he was concerned that access was not included in the pre-advertisement sale, and they do not want to see this project exacerbate the situation.

Debbie concluded the meeting by stating that the meeting notes will be sent out early next week for review. The written responses will be signed by Becki on January 19th. Also, all documents will be posted to the web.