COPWRR Project-Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report - Summary

Project Evaluated: Green Thin Project
Field Visit Date: September 27, 2007
Units Visited: 27 and, informally, 18

1) Summary Comments on Implementation and Effectiveness

Because of contingencies and logistics, the field review participants were only able to give a full review to one of the three units we had planned to visit. Reviewers were able to conclude from the visit that:

- The treatment for Unit 27 was slightly modified from what was described in the Metolius Basin EIS and the Silvicultural Prescription, resulting in less tree removal and no creation of small gaps, because the condition of existing larch on the site was better than originally expected.
- The Management Measures specified in the EIS were carefully adhered to, protecting soils, riparian areas, large trees, snags and other values.
- The project addressed the Purposes and Needs listed in the EIS and advanced the specific Management Objectives listed for the unit visited.

Review participants understood the reasons for modifying the treatment and were comfortable that the changes allowed the Forest Service to better achieve the Purposes and Needs for the project. They appreciated the great attention to the Management Measures to ensure that resource valued were protected. Fire risk, old growth, and watershed health were all positively addressed by the project.

2) Considerations for Future Project Planning

While field visit attendees were highly impressed by the results of the Green Thin Project, they also took time during the field visit to express some nagging concerns about management of Central Oregon forests. The COPWRR Ecosystem Monitoring Committee requests that the Forest Service consider the following topics in planning future projects:

A) Multiple field review participants asked whether it would be beneficial to treat riparian areas to even more extensively and intensively than they were treated on this project and to create some larger openings. The goals of this more "aggressive" treatment would be to reduce fuel connectivity along these corridors and to promote the growth of larger trees and decidous trees and shrubs.

B) Areas such as the Green Thin project site come with significant "legacy" soil impacts. While the value of implementing forest restoration in these areas is clear, there are still some stakeholders that are concerned about incurring additional soil impacts while implementing restoration treatments. These stakeholders also worry about the appropriateness of relying on subsoiling to meet the 20% or less disturbance standard. How can we minimize additional disturbance to the maximum extent possible and demonstrate that subsoiling is a sound and defensible strategy?

C) Participants in the field review expressed concern that spotted owl habitat was an important management emphasis for some of the units in this project but that much of the Green Thin

project area was not necessarily prime historical spotted owl habitat. The bigger question that these participants were trying to get at was how do we maintain and expand prime spotted owl habitat at the landscape scale east of the Cascades?

D) While participants in the field review appreciated the reasons that the Forest Service had modified the prescription for Unit 27 from LR-M to something more like an HTH treatment, there were also people who worried about maintaining transparency and trust when the treatment that is implemented might not completely match the treatment that was set out in NEPA documents. How can we create accurate expectations about what the management of an area will be like while at the same time preserving the flexibility to respond to changed or unanticipated conditions? Could the analysis that supported the NEPA document have been more accurate in the first place, allowing the implemented treatment to more closely match the described treatment?

3) Additional Comments

District Ranger Bill Anthony spoke about the importance of collaboration and stakeholder involvement in planning the Metolius Basin Project at the beginning of the field trip. Watching the interactions between members of the Forest Service interdisciplinary team and members of the Metolius Multi-Party Monitoring during the field review, it was clear that intensive collaboration had been key to crafting a project that could be successfully implemented, to the satisfaction of many diverse interests, in such a complex and sensitive area. The committed and engaged stakeholders and the open and inclusive agency staff who worked together to move this project through implementation should be commended.