

COPWRR Project-Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report Form

Project: Spears Vegetation Management Project	
NEPA Authority Used:	
Date: 9/30/2009	
Interdisciplinary Team Members Participating: Bill Queen, Ray Romero, Cathy Lund, Rob Rawlings, Brian Scholz, Dede Steele, Shelby Williams, Cindy Glick, Renee Lamoreaux, Robin Vora	
Other Participants in Field Evaluation: John Morgan, Asante Riverwind, Tim Lillebo, Amy Waltz, Marilyn Miller, Phil Chang, Katrina Van Dis	
Unit # 41; EIS# 300	Acres in Unit: 48.79
Other Units from Project Being Monitored: Units 146 & 8 respectively EIS 567 & 734	

Background

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project was derived from evaluating current planning direction identified in the Forest Plan, identifying desired future conditions, and comparing them to the existing conditions in the project area. This project has the following purpose and need for treatment of the unit:

1. Maintain and increase the abundance of late and old structure (LOS).
2. Reduce fuels and the potential for high-intensity wildfires.
3. Maintain conditions that would currently support low-intensity fires.
4. Reduce the susceptibility of the landscape to large-scale infestation by insects and disease.
5. Enhance hardwood communities, such as aspen and cottonwood.
6. Increase riparian vegetation and large tree structure in RHCAs.
7. Increase early-seral species composition.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project*)

Management Objectives for Unit:

1. Maintain and increase numbers of large trees. The criterion for LOS is 15 trees/acre, 21" dbh and larger on dry grand fir sites. Restore/maintain early seral species composition
2. Reduce mistletoe levels in the Douglas fir and P.Pine
3. Reduce risk of high intensity fire/stand replacing wildfire by reducing ladder and ground fuels and crown density.
4. Restore historic appearance of stand and species composition.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project*)

Treatment Summary for Unit:

Treatment methods:

Logging System (T): Tractor system, which includes the use of ground-based equipment such as tractor, rubber-tired skidders, and feller/bunchers to move the logs to a landing where they can be loaded onto a truck. Tractor systems are usually prescribed in areas with slopes that are less than 35%. On steeper slopes skyline or helicopter systems are prescribed.

Commercial Harvest (HIM): Do not cut trees larger than 21" dbh. Species preference is to leave P.Pine, western larch, D.Fir and then white fir, unless the overstory of the pine has moderate or greater mistletoe infections. Thin from below using the spacing guide for dry grand fir sites except in the overstory component. Where overstory pine or large fir exist, either in clumps or as individuals, try to remove smaller diameter cut trees (8"– 21") from within a 40'-50' circumference of the larger trees. Leave the old "snaggy" members of overstory pine groups for LOS character.

Within groups of co-dominant trees, use the spacing guides (see prescription record) aiming for between 35-50 ft² of basal area to be left. Spacing of these trees will be from approximately 20x20 to 35x35 feet. Select D. fir and W. fir <21" dbh, for removal, unless needed to meet minimum stocking or where mistletoe is present in the overstory pine. W. fir will often be the species of choice to leave due to the heavy mistletoe infection in the D. fir. In pockets where few healthy W. fir or non-infected D. fir are available to leave, you can cut everything up to ¼ acre. In places the stand will be open with only large fir remaining.

Along the NE edge, where W.larch becomes more common, choose larch a leave tree wherever possible. Spacing can be reduced to retain larch.

Precommercial thinning (PCT): Cut small non-merchantable trees generally <9" dbh. Diseased or damaged trees and juniper trees up to 12" dbh could...(missing content in EIS). If the objective is to have single-stories and many large diameter trees exist, then few small understory trees would be retained (40 or less/acre). Where few overstory trees exist the PCT may retain 135 or more small tree/acre. Species retained are usually PP and W. Larch. Infected species are normally removed. PCT can occur in combination with Commercial harvest. Trees cut during this activity are usually left on site. Slash will be reduced by fuels treatment.

Grapple piling (GP): use of machine such as excavate with grapple. The machine operates on existing skid trails. It is estimated the machine would be able to reach 60-70% of the anticipated slash. Grapple piles would be located on existing skid trails or landings (~5-10' high and 10-15' in diameter). The piles will be burned within 2-3 years of piling and will not occur with RHCA's.

Underburning (UB): Prescribed underburning used to produce a desired flame length and rate of spread usually using strip head fire and the backing fire. Fire intensity and rate of spread is controlled by adjusting the distance between strips, and the number of strips ignited at one time. Usually prescribed fire units that face south and west and lower elevations are burned in spring; North and east and higher elevations are generally burned in the fall.

Timber stand improvement needs: Precommercial thin to 16x16 foot spacing. Thin to dripline plus 10' of overstory pine. Remove damaged G. fir and dwarf mistletoe infected trees. Remove almost all G fir and D fir in the pine dominated areas. Lop slash to 12" fuel depth and follow with grapple piling and then underburning.

Fuel treatment objectives and recommendations: Retain large trees and remaining understory after TSI. Grapple pile after harvest.

Other Management Requirements: Snag requirements: 1.0-3.4 TPA > 21" dbh, 3.3-7.3 TPA < 21" dbh. Down wood: Maintain 81-257 linear feet (min. 6' long and 12" diameter at small end).

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures, and BMPs to Evaluate:

The Forest Service developed the following design elements headings (see below) to be used as part of all of the action alternatives. These design elements were developed to reduce the environmental effects of the proposed activities or to comply with standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. Many of the design elements for RHCA's and Water Quality/Fisheries are intended to meet the requirements for protection of water quality in the State of Oregon through planning, application, and monitoring of Best Management Practices (BMP's). Photocopies of the design elements, as stated in the EIS, will be available on the day of the field visit.

Air Quality/Private Land Interface
Cultural Resources
Noxious Weeds
Range/Minerals
Recreation
RHCA's
Sensitive Plants
Soils
Visual/Scenic Resources
Water Quality/Fisheries
Wildlife
Monitoring

Reference: (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Unit Evaluation

Were the treatments implemented as described in the decision document or Record of Decision? Were the treatments implemented in accordance with the Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures and BMPs identified above? If not, please explain why.

The goals for treatment in this unit were maintaining and increasing Late Old Structure, reducing fuels and potential for high-intensity wildfire, and reducing susceptibility to insects and disease.

Historically, this was primarily a pine site so grand fir was targeted for reduction and pine was favored for retention. The treatments thus far included commercial thinning and non-commercial thinning with grapple piling and burning coming soon. For the commercial thin trees down to 8" DBH were marked and the sale purchaser also elected to take some optional smaller material under CT211. This was completed under the Halfway Timber Sale.

The primary question that field visit participants had about whether implementation followed the description was whether soil disturbance was within standards and guidelines. Lookout Mountain RD staff reported back that Forest soil scientists had done some sampling and a review with the Ranger and they believed the disturbance was within standards. Asante Riverwind indicated that he thought that soil disturbance on some other units within the project were a concern but that this one looked pretty good. The group discussed the type of soil impacts that come from non-commercial/pre-commercial thinning. The main potential for soil impacts with PCT at this site was the grapple piling. Tim Lillebo thought post-project soil conditions at this site were pretty darn good. Other participants commented that the understory vegetation looked good at this unit as well.

The group discussed low soil disturbance equipment. While this equipment can really help reduce soil impacts it is also a major capital investment – very expensive. John Morgan stressed that the Forest Service should not be specifying types of equipment to be used when they put projects out to bid – just set the standard and let the bidders figure out what they will do to meet standards.

The group also discussed spacing, clumps and cover. Many liked the spatial heterogeneity achieved at this unit.

For each Management Objective for this Unit please evaluate whether the objective has been achieved. If the objective has not been achieved, please comment on barriers, constraints, limitations, etc and what might be needed for future projects to achieve the objective.

One participant asked whether the fuels and fire objectives will be met for this unit. There is still a lot of fuel in the form of dead and down material. Forest Service staff anticipate that grapple piling will effectively consolidate the dead and down material for utilization or burning. The

fuels reduction strategy for this site was to focus on small trees, focus on white fir, and move the stand towards a single strata structure with more LOS.

The group discussed the use of Habitat Effectiveness Process analysis to evaluate the amount and quality of habitat. This analysis examined things like cover, forage and fragmentation by roads. The Forest Service can use this tool to model how treatments will affect habitat conditions unit by unit.

In this area the Lookout Mountain RD staff left cover in swales, snag patches, and by roads when designing the PCT treatment. Small patches were included within Units and larger patches were planned and retained within the overall planning area.

The group also discussed the insects and disease objective. Reducing the tree density should reduce susceptibility to large scale insect or disease disturbance. The Sierra Club commented that there should be some level of insect and disease activity in the forest. Asante also commented that there is scientific uncertainty about whether treatments to reduce insect and disease susceptibility in the mixed conifer zone are needed.

Project Evaluation

Were the results of this project what was anticipated and intended? Have treatments addressed the Purposes and Needs for this Unit? If not, why not?

One participant asked about the cost effectiveness and economic viability of this project. Markets for material have been very volatile recently and markets for small diameter material are limited in this area. Transport costs for this project area are also high. With these factors, this unit and others are marginal in terms of economic viability, may require significant appropriated dollars to implement, and do not generate a lot of KV dollars or other funds to accomplish other resource objectives in the area. One option would be to include a few additional mid-seral trees per acre to increase the economic viability of sales. John Morgan asked if there might actually be too many mid-seral trees per acre left in this unit competing with the LOS trees. Asante indicated that if trees died from competition he thought they would be good snags and that it would be good to have more snags here.

Please share any observations or comments about the project planning, implementation, or results that are important to understanding management of this unit or important for improving future management in similar projects.

The Sierra Club made additional comments about soil impacts. They asked whether Forest soil standards need to be changed to be more protective and suggested that there are new scientific findings from the last 10 years to support a change in standards. We know more about how ground disturbance can affect the biological community and hydrologic function of soils now. More protective standards would push us towards lighter on the land equipment. Another participant commented that we also need to consider the soil impacts of uncharacteristically severe wildfire.

Someone suggested that Strategic Placement Of Treatments (SPOTS) analysis would be beneficial for planning how to change fuel conditions at the landscape scale. This would provide additional factors to consider in siting treatments.

The Sierra Club questioned whether there is scientific support for treatments in the mixed conifer zone.

The Forest Service explained that the planning for this project (and this planning area) had been long and complex and marked by past appeals. They also commented that a portion of the project will be implemented by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation under stewardship agreement. These units might need to wait for a market upturn for implementation.

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Date: 9/30/2009	
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Other Participants in Field Evaluation: John Morgan, Asante Riverwind, Tim Lillebo, Amy Waltz, Marilyn Miller, Phil Chang, Katrina Van Dis	
Unit #: 146, #567(EIS)	Acres in Unit: 79.54
Other Units from Project Being Monitored: Units #41 & 8 respectively EIS 300 & 734	

Background

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project was derived from evaluating current planning direction identified in the Forest Plan, identifying desired future conditions, and comparing them to the existing conditions in the project area. This project has the following purpose and need for treatment of the unit:

1. Maintain and increase the abundance of late and old structure (LOS).
2. Reduce fuels and the potential for high-intensity wildfires.
3. Maintain conditions that would currently support low-intensity fires.
4. Reduce the susceptibility of the landscape to large-scale infestation by insects and disease.
5. Enhance hardwood communities, such as aspen and cottonwood.
6. Increase riparian vegetation and large tree structure in RHCA's.
7. Increase early-seral species composition.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project*)

Management Objectives for Unit:

1. Reduce diseased and damaged trees
2. Decrease competition among crop trees and remove trees of less desirable species
3. Decrease stress from competition on larger overstory trees.

RHCA Objectives

1. Promote development of and/or enhance existing large trees to provide long-term stability and LWM recruitment.

2. Increase density and occurrence of broad leaf, shrub species to enhance neo-tropical bird habitat.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Treatment Summary for Unit:

Timber stand improvement or reforestation needs:

This stand needs to be thinned to reduce pressure on the overstory trees from nearby mid-story and understory trees. Thinning will shift the stand composition back towards a more early seral condition by favoring pine and large as leave trees and reduce stagnation among the clumps of younger age class trees. Thin to 18' x 18' spacing. Favor P. Pine and W. Larch as leave trees, wherever possible. Thin all trees from within the dripline + 10' of overstory trees 18" dbh and larger. This is especially desirable under the pine and larch leave trees.

Precommercial thinning (PCT): Cut small non-merchantable tress generally <9" dbh.

Diseased or damaged trees and juniper trees up to 12" dbh could...(missing content in EIS). If the objective is to have single-stories and many large diameter trees exist, then few small understory trees would be retained (40 or less/acre). Where few overstory trees exist the PCT may retain 135 or more small tree/acre. Species retained are usually PP and W. Larch. Infected species are normally removed. PCT can occur in combination with Commercial harvest. Trees cut during this activity are usually left on site. Slash will be reduced by fuels treatment.

Underburning (UB): Prescribed underburning used to produce a desired flame length and rate of spread usually using strip head fire and the backing fire. Fire intensity and rate of spread is controlled by adjusting the distance between strips, and the number of strips ignited at one time. Usually prescribed fire units that face south and west and lower elevations are burned in spring; North and east and higher elevations are generally burned in the fall.

Fuel treatment objectives and recommendation:

Lop and scatter slash to a depth of 12" or less; this stand may be underburned in the future.

Snag requirements: trees >21" and trees 9" – 21"

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures, and BMPs to Evaluate:

The Forest Service developed the following design elements (see below) to be used as part of all of the action alternatives. These design elements were developed to reduce the environmental effects of the proposed activities or to comply with standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. Many of the design elements for RHCA's and Water Quality/Fisheries are intended to meet the requirements for protection of water quality in the State of Oregon through planning, application,

and monitoring of Best Management Practices (BMP's). Photocopies of the design elements, as stated in the EIS, will be available on the day of the field visit.

Air Quality/Private Land Interface
Cultural Resources
Noxious Weeds
Range/Minerals
Recreation
RHCA's
Sensitive Plants
Soils
Visual/Scenic Resources
Water Quality/Fisheries
Wildlife
Monitoring

Reference: *(Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record)*

Unit Evaluation

Were the treatments implemented as described in the decision document or Record of Decision? Were the treatments implemented in accordance with the Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures and BMPs identified above? If not, please explain why.

When the Bandit project was being designed this unit was planned for commercial treatment. But after a significant bug kill event, the need to retain the mid and late seral trees in this unit became greater so it became a PCT unit

The prescription was adhered to in terms of cutting small non-merchantable trees generally <9" dbh and diseased or damaged trees and juniper trees up to 12" dbh to reduce pressure on the overstory trees. The area was lopped in spring and will eventually have an underburn after 1-2 years (as stated in prescription).

The Forest Service had planned to pile the material for burning, however, this may make it easier for people to poach snags and other trees that are supposed to be left. Brian Scholz commented that this unit could probably be burned without piling. This particular site is adjacent to the road and therefore has lots of illegal taking of snags for firewood. The Forest Service is trying to make the PCT material obvious for firewood collecting through promotional materials and maps.

One of the participants asked whether cover patches had been maintained in this unit. ID Team members who were present were not sure, but noted that there was substantial cover in between units. There was a thick cover patch in the swale that the group just passed through as we drove to this unit.

One participant asked if any very young trees were left in this unit and how the Forest Service plans to create a next generation of trees. Lookout Mountain RD staff answered that after the burn there would be excellent conditions for a new generation of trees to emerge.

Fuels crews were sensitive not to disturb spring areas during the PCT and will buffer them during the burning.

For each Management Objective for this Unit please evaluate whether the objective has been achieved. If the objective has not been achieved, please comment on barriers, constraints, limitations, etc and what might be needed for future projects to achieve the objective.

Participants felt that the site was treated according to the prescription. The group felt the unit objectives were addressed in the management of the unit.

Project Evaluation

Were the results of this project what was anticipated and intended? Have treatments addressed the Purposes and Needs for this Unit? If not, why not?

These treatments have helped to address the Purpose and Need set out for the Spears project.

A few participants commented that the unit was still a bit overstocked. There were places in the unit where basal area still might be over 100 sq ft while the long term goal for this kind of stand might be 50-60 sq ft. Two implications of this are that the small trees will grow more slowly and the stand will be more vulnerable to disturbance such as insects or fire. The prescribed burn will help reduce basal area and competition.

Please share any observations or comments about the project planning, implementation, or results that are important to understanding management of this unit or important for improving future management in similar projects.

The group discussed a few aspects of unit management including clumping, mosaic, fire and basal area. In general, the discussion amongst the group was productive and informative. The overall consensus was that the unit looked good.

There are some portions of this unit where the PCT slash is very heavy. The Lookout Mtn RD staff asked if the group was comfortable with having some mortality when the unit gets burned. A number of people said they were comfortable with this. One participant stated that they like seeing competition decreased through more natural means like fire.

Another commented that a bit more clumping might be nice; some areas looked good, others could use a bit more work. Can we make a more conscious effort to do this? Perhaps with Fir and Pine? Another participant agreed and stated that they would like to see mosaic patterns built off of clumps.

One participant stated we need to keep in mind all three elements: fire/water/insects. Managing for all these goals in the long and short term is very complex.

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NEPA Authority Used:	
Date: 9/30/2009	
Interdisciplinary Team Members Participating: Bill Queen, Ray Romero, Cathy Lund, Rob Rawlings, Brian Scholz, Dede Steele, Shelby Williams, Cindy Glick, Renee Lamoreaux, Robin Vora	
Other Participants in Field Evaluation: John Morgan, Asante Riverwind, Tim Lillebo, Amy Waltz, Marilyn Miller, Phil Chang, Katrina Van Dis	
Unit #: 8, #734 (EIS)	Acres in Unit: 54.70
Other Units from Project Being Monitored: Units 41 & 146 respectively EIS 300 & 567	

Background

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project was derived from evaluating current planning direction identified in the Forest Plan, identifying desired future conditions, and comparing them to the existing conditions in the project area. This project has the following purpose and need for treatment of the unit:

1. Maintain and increase the abundance of late and old structure (LOS).
2. Reduce fuels and the potential for high-intensity wildfires.
3. Maintain conditions that would currently support low-intensity fires.
4. Reduce the susceptibility of the landscape to large-scale infestation by insects and disease.
5. Enhance hardwood communities, such as aspen and cottonwood.
6. Increase riparian vegetation and large tree structure in RHCAs.
7. Increase early-seral species composition.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project*)

Management Objectives for Unit:

1. Maintain and increase numbers of large trees. The criterion for LOS is 15 trees/acre, 21" dbh and larger on dry grand fir sites. Typical LOS Stocking would be 18 trees plus. Restore/maintain early seral species composition.
2. Reduce risk of high intensity fire/stand replacing wildfire by reducing ladder and ground fuels and crown density.
3. Restore historic appearance of stand structure and species composition
4. Perform additional fuel reduction to provide protection from fire adjacent to private land.

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Treatment Summary for Unit:

Individual tree selection, uneven-aged management (HSL). Do not cut trees larger than 21" dbh. Species preference is W. larch, P. pine, D. fir and then Grand fir. Thin from below using spacing guide for dry G. fir sites except in overstory component. In overstory pine component, mark at half the rate. Remove all G. fir, lodgepole, and D. fir <21" dbh that has become established in the pine dominated area in the south half. Leave the largest, most vigorous trees. Leave the old smaller members of overstory pine groups for LOS character.

In the northern portion grand fir and D fir will be left to maintain stocking in places where P pine and larch are not as abundant. Target mistletoe-infected trees for removal and if the overstory (21" + dbh) has infection try to leave a different species in the understory or if a host species must be left, thin widely (45'-50') around infected trees to attempt to limit spread.

Logging System (T): Tractor system, which includes the use of ground-based equipment such as tractor, rubber-tired skidders, and feller/bunchers to move the logs to a landing where they can be loaded onto a truck. Tractor systems are usually prescribed in areas with slopes that are less than 35%. On steeper slopes skyline or helicopter systems are prescribed.

Commercial Harvest (HTH): This prescription would be used in overstocked stands with a surplus of merchantable sized trees between 8 – 20.9 inches dbh. Most stands contain an existing component of large tress (> 21" dbh). Current stand conditions often include multiple canopies and dense stocking and may include all seral stages. The stands would be thinned from below to recommended stocking levels in Alternatives 2 and 4. In Alternative 5, certain stands located within wildlife emphasis areas would have a higher residual stocking level. All alternatives would retain portions of the stand in an untreated condition (~ 10% untreated in stringers or ½ - 1 acre patches). All alternatives would retain old/mature Pond. Pine cohorts regardless of size. Merchantable trees would be sold and removed from the stand. Recommended stocking levels vary depending on the site quality, tree size and species. Noncommercial or fuel reduction activities:

Precommercial thinning (PCT): Cut small non-merchantable tress generally <9" dbh. Diseased or damaged trees and juniper trees up to 12" dbh could...(missing content in EIS). If the objective is to have single-stories and many large diameter trees exist, then few small understory trees would be retained (40 or less/acre). Where few overstory trees exist the PCT may retain 135 or more small tree/acre. Species retained are usually PP and W. Larch. Infected species are normally removed. PCT can occur in combination with Commercial harvest. Trees cut during this activity are usually left on site. Slash will be reduced by fuels treatment.

Hand Piling (HP): Hand piling of material 0-5" dbh and stacked in line with the slope. Hand piles would be <6' in diameter and no taller than 4'. In general, hand piling will be used along private land boundaries and in areas that have too much slash to be underburned safely and are too steep for grapple piling. Hand piles would generally be burned within 2-3 years of piling.

Underburning (UB): Prescribed underburning used to produce a desired flame length and rate of spread usually using strip head fire and the backing fire. Fire intensity and rate of spread is controlled by adjusting the distance between strips, and the number of strips ignited at one time. Usually prescribed fire units that face south and west and lower elevations are burned in spring; North and east and higher elevations are generally burned in the fall.

Timber Stand Improvement Needs: South – TSI completed. North: Precommercial thin 16x16 foot spacing, thin to dripline plus 10’ of overstory pine and larch. This will mean that in some areas with big trees very little understory will remain. Remove damaged and dwarf mistletoe infected trees. Remove almost all G fir and D fir in the pine dominated patches. Handpile PCT slash within 200’ of private property. Lop remainder of unit to 12” fuel depth.

Fuel treatment objectives and recommendation: Retain large trees and remaining understory after TSI. Remove fuel within 200’ of private property by handpiling. Lop/underburn remainder of unit.

Snag Requirements: 1.0-3.4 TPA >21”dbh, 3.3-7.3 TPA <21”dbh.

Down wood: Maintain 81-257 linear feet (min 6’ long and 12” diameter at small end)

Reference (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures, and BMPs to Evaluate:

Special Habitats: There is a meadow habitat on the south and east sides beyond the unit boundary; should not be affected

Special Management Emphasis: Cultural site in meadow habitat to south, outside of unit; should not be affected. Portion of unit is close to private land.

Other Management Requirements: Seasonal Restriction: Goshawk nesting March 1 – August 31

The Forest Service developed the following design elements (see below) to be used as part of all of the action alternatives. These design elements were developed to reduce the environmental effects of the proposed activities or to comply with standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. Many of the design elements for RHCA’s and Water Quality/Fisheries are intended to meet the requirements for protection of water quality in the State of Oregon through planning, application, and monitoring of Best Management Practices (BMP’s). Photocopies of the design elements, as stated in the EIS, will be available on the day of the field visit.

Air Quality/Private Land Interface
Cultural Resources
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RHCA’s
Sensitive Plants

Soils
Visual/Scenic Resources
Water Quality/Fisheries
Wildlife
Monitoring

Reference: (*Record of Decision and FEIS Spears Vegetation Management Project and Prescription Record*)

Unit Evaluation

Were the treatments implemented as described in the decision document or Record of Decision? Were the treatments implemented in accordance with the Selected Implementation Guidelines, Management Measures and BMPs identified above? If not, please explain why.

This is a Wildland Urban Interface site adjacent to private lands. This site has in some ways had a complete package of treatments implemented. There was pre-commercial thinning completed on a portion of the Unit near the private land boundary under the Bandit project. Then there was a commercial treatment under the Spears project. Then there was an unplanned fire at the site in August 2008 that accomplished a lot of underburning. This was a hotter fire than would have occurred if this area was prescribed burned. The Forest Service intends to do a bit more PCT and underburning on this unit as part of the Spears project.

Treatment has not exactly proceeded as described in the NEPA documents because of the unanticipated fire. Because human fuel treatments had not been completed in the site before the fire burned and because of the severe conditions on the day of the fire there was more mortality and some large tree mortality than would have occurred with the planned treatments. (Some of the larger trees were killed by the combination of the fire and insects). The Sierra Club liked this mix of human management and natural disturbance despite the higher mortality.

Adjacent to the private land boundary piling was done by hand. The Sierra Club is more open to creating a more open stand right on the edge of the private land areas. At this site the Forest Service anticipates that the private landowners are going to get some ARRA funds to implement fuels reduction on their holdings adjacent to the Spears project.

The group looked at soil disturbance again at this Unit. The disturbance was very modest. Some participants commented that they were surprised the disturbance was so minimal on this site when they had seen more disturbance on a very similar site in the Spears project. The group speculated about what the difference might have been: initial soil condition, moisture levels, the operator, the amount of material removed (less stems removed = less skidding) ... The sale administrator might have some insights on this.

There was a seasonal closure for Goshawks (PFA) on this Unit and that measure was adhered to as described. Someone asked about waivers for these kinds of seasonal closures. A purchaser might request a waiver but it would only be granted if there was no nesting in the nest or if the

site where the treatment is to be implemented is really isolated from the nesting site (visually, noise, etc). Waivers are considered on a site by site basis.

No snags were removed in this unit or in the Spears project overall. Between the beetle kill area that had been proposed for the Cougar Salvage project and the Hash Rock fire in the area surrounding the Spears project there are now significant numbers of snags retained in this watershed.

For each Management Objective for this Unit please evaluate whether the objective has been achieved. If the objective has not been achieved, please comment on barriers, constraints, limitations, etc and what might be needed for future projects to achieve the objective.

Participants felt that progress had been made towards management objectives – LOS had been maintained and enhanced, hazardous fuels had been reduced, and the site was moved towards Historic Range of Variability in terms of appearance, stand structure, and species composition. If the unanticipated fire had not occurred they might have been able to maintain more LOS trees green than dead, but this was not really within the planners control.

Project Evaluation

Were the results of this project what was anticipated and intended? Have treatments addressed the Purposes and Needs for this Unit? If not, why not?

These treatments have helped to address the Purpose and Need set out for the Spears project.

Please share any observations or comments about the project planning, implementation, or results that are important to understanding management of this unit or important for improving future management in similar projects.

The group discussed the history of planning and implementing treatments in this area (and the conflict and appeals over a period of several years) some more. Some of the area around this unit had been proposed for Cougar Salvage after beetle kill and that project had been appealed. The Sierra Club was happy that some of the larger trees proposed for removal in the Bandit planning were taken out during the Spears planning.

One of the participants in the field review commented that as the Forest Service plans projects they might think about higher basal area retention for stands with larger trees. The Cochrane study has indicated that with larger trees a site can carry more basal area. Another participant commented that this unit might still be overstocked a bit even with the basal area that was retained.

One participant commented that looking at the landscape scale, there are a lot of clearcuts in the area and that might be a reason to retain more in non-clearcut areas as we plan to treat them.

The group discussed SPOTS again. It was considered in the EIS for this project. Someone said that we need to be careful when using SPOTS because it does not work as well in real mosaic landscapes.

Asante said that it was good that the Lookout Mountain RD staff had learned about how to retain small old growth (under 16" trees with old tree characteristics) over the course of this project.

Rob Rawlings explained how he was writing prescriptions differently since this project – saving the best tree regardless of spacing. He also mentioned the possibility of doing some sample marking for discussion purposes with collaborators on the Canyon project.