

Meeting Notes
Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative Meeting
5/12/2023 9:00am – 10:30pm
Online

ATTENDEES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative Members:

- Andy Geissler, American Forest Resources Council (AFRC)
- David Eisler, Siuslaw Watershed Council
- Doug Heikin, Oregon Wild
- Fran Recht, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Marc Barnes, IRM
- Paul Engelmeyer, Portland Audubon Society
- Paul Lulay, Hampton Lumber
- *Kirk Shimeall, Cascade Pacific RC+D (non-voting)*
- *Alyssa Bonini, Triangle Associates (Coordinator, non-voting)*

Forest Service:

- Adriana Morales, Fish Biologist
- Chuck Fisher, Central Coast NEPA Planner/Hydrologist
- Crystal Barnes, Hebo Wildlife Biologist
- Eric Andersen, Partnership Coordinator
- Katie Richardson, Natural Resources Staff Officer
- Michele Holman, Central Coast District Ranger
- Hannah “Ruth” Halla, Hebo Silviculturist
- Shawn Rivera, Hebo District Ranger

Notes Key

- Meeting notes do not represent collaborative agreements unless they specifically say so. They are meant to record three basic things: 1) the issue discussed, 2) the major points or questions raised in conversation, and 3) the resolution or next step if there is one. Unless specifically stated, resolutions are only the resolutions of the people present at the meetings.
- Text in **red** denotes action items.
- Action items and a transcript of the Zoom meeting chat are provided in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#) of this document.

WELCOME / ANNOUNCEMENTS/ AGENDA OVERVIEW

The Coordinator for the Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative (OCCFC/ the Collaborative) welcomed participants to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. She led a round of introductions and reminded participants that Collaborative members decided at the April 24 meeting to repurpose the group's May meeting time to continue the conversation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) about the Little Gaudy Restoration Categorical Exclusion (CE) project.

PRESENTATION: DEEP DIVE INTO RESTORATION CE'S

- Katie Richardson, USFS, gave a presentation covering the importance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and explained how the USFS is utilizing Restoration CE's in accordance with the 2020 NEPA updates issued by the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Katie's presentation is accessible on the [OCCFC OneDrive](#).
- Federal agencies can create CEs 1) Legislatively; or 2) Through the NEPA statute.
- To create a CE though NEPA, federal agencies are required to present multiple Environmental Assessments (EA) / Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) to CEQ that document conditions in multiple contexts and show that a proposed action does not have significant effects. Once CEQ approves, the agency publishes the proposed CE in the Federal Register for public comment.
- The legislative avenue is not utilized often in the Oregon Coast range.
- Project proposed action steps still happen in CEs, but the agency does not analyze the effects of actions on the landscape because CEQ had approved that the action likely would not have an effect.
- USFS is still required to meet the requirements of the Northwest Forest Plan, NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and other environmental, cultural and historic preservation laws when utilizing CEs.

Questions

- 1) **How does USFS know if an impact is "significant" for purposes of NEPA and CEs? –** Demonstrating "significance" is a high bar to achieve because it depends on context and intensity. While impacts may occur on natural resources to be significant, courts prefer the impacts to be broad (more than 2800 acres) or of high importance (impacting a species or population at large, rather than individuals).

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: LITTLE GAULDY RESTORATION CE

- Shawn Rivera, Hebo District Ranger, introduced himself and shared his intentions towards working on the Forest and what he hopes to accomplish in collaboration with the OCCFC. He feels strongly about conservation and restoration and believes in the restoration work that the Siuslaw National Forest is doing. He spoke to his practice of assuming positive intent throughout his work and in the work of others.
- Shawn revisited the presentation he gave at the OCCFC's April meeting on the Little Gaudy Restoration CE. Participants were reminded that the purpose of the Little Gaudy project is to

restore young plantations, in Adaptive Management Areas, Adaptive Management Reserves, and Riparian Reserves, to accelerate the development of late-successional and old-growth characteristics. Shawn's presentation and supporting materials are available on the Collaborative's [OneDrive](#).

- Shawn walked through each of the proposed actions and took questions, provided below:

Questions

- 2) Is it possible to share Little Gaudy project maps in KML/jpg format? Specifically, having access to an interior forest map (updated) to overlay onto the Little Gaudy Restoration Project Map will help inform habitat connectivity discussions in the future.** - Shawn has submitted a ticket request to USFS's Digital Resources Management (DRM) office and is awaiting a response.

Action Item: Shawn will update the OCCFC on the status of his request to DRM for KML/jpg maps of the Little Gaudy project area.

- 3) To what extent is carbon accounting considered in CEs?** - NEPA does not currently require an agency to include carbon accounting in its analysis. Little Gaudy will follow Forest Service policy in addressing carbons storage.
- 4) Are there any pure Alder stands in the project area?** –Alders appear in the project area along riparian areas or roads, but there are no pure stands in the project area.
- 5) Do you try to retain any diversity that is there? E.g. Cherry/Big Leaf Maple?** – Ruth Halla, Hebo Silviculturist, shared that her wildlife team does ground-truthing in concert with pre-sale and sale teams to identify unique habitat and protect those types of features on the landscape. There is also spruce in the stand. Ruth has seen one big leaf maple, but it won't be a cut species unless it poses a safety concern. Treatments would not remove a species that exists in the stand. USFS will go in and plant cedar, spruce and hemlock after treatments are complete.
- 6) What definition of "mature" is USFS using on this project?** – Whether a stand is considered "mature" for purposes of silviculture depends on the characteristics found in that stand. USFS definitions of "mature" and "old growth" are available [online](#).
- 7) Is there public access to the lands that are up for consideration for this project?** – There are currently blown down trees blocking some roads in the project area, but they should be cleared by May 24. Otherwise, access is open to the public.
- 8) How has USFS considered connectivity and road density in this project? I am concerned the Transportation proposed action doesn't go far enough. It should include watershed health and wildlife impact.** –There are two roads in the Little Gaudy project, both of which are in a storage status. USFS will not be adding any new roads. With respect to connectivity, Adriana Morales,

Fish Biologist, shared that USFS checks the impacts that proposed actions have on each corridor and have Project Design Criteria (PDCs) there that work to put erosion control measures in place that ensure water quality, wildlife and aquatic species are not impacted. Engineers and biologists are working together to minimize impacts.

9) (Slide 9) Are there ways to accelerate the creation of old growth habitat without negatively affecting the existing species and characteristics of remaining old growth habitat?

– Crystal Barnes, Wildlife Biologist, responded that the verbiage on Slide 9 is in Northwest Forest Plan. She noted that there is a difference between what USFS is required to do by the Forest Plan to protect for Late-Successional Reserve (LSR)/old growth, and what lands to use for production. All silviculture projects/treatments are designed to move towards LSR conditions with the goal to create more LSR for species and make the landscape better in the long term.

A Collaborative member clarified that the Collaborative does not exclusively want LSR conditions – it wants what is appropriate on the land. Collaborative members will discuss where on the forest LSR might be appropriate and share outcomes of that discussion with USFS.

Action Item – OCCFC will discuss where on the forest LSR conditions are appropriate at its June meeting.

10) I think using the CE in appropriate conditions is a great way to accomplish more treatments with a limited budget. Do you see more opportunities on the forest where these NEPA pathways can be used to gain efficiency?

– There are many activities covered by CEs, and each is used in accordance with rules that were given by CEQ. USFS strives to utilize whichever NEPA management pathway that is in the best interest of the project.

11) How was the Little Gaudy project area identified? Are there other stands available for similar CE projects?

– USFS's small sales forester contributed to where this project would be. When the project was identified, limiting factors included road/roadwork constraints and financial constraints. USFS doesn't want to create additional sedimentation, and including other nearby areas would have created too much roadwork from a cost standpoint or taken USFS past road restrictions of the CE. Other areas weren't ripe/ready or mature enough.

WRAP-UP & NEXT STEPS

The Coordinator shared results from a poll to schedule an early-summer field tour of the Little Gaudy project area. Based on responses to that poll and at the meeting, the field tour will be held on Friday, May 26. The Coordinator will work with Shawn and Eric Andersen, Partnership Coordinator, to organize details and logistics and will share a calendar invitation with the OCCFC and USFS after the meeting.

Action Item: Alyssa will share a calendar invitation for the Little Gaudy field tour on May 26th with the OCCFC and USFS by COB 5/12/23.

The Collaborative's next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday, June 9 from 9am-12pm**. The Coordinator will follow up with draft notes from this meeting by Friday, May 19.

Action Item: Alyssa will polish meeting notes and share with USFS and the OCCFC for comment/revision by Friday, May 19.

APPENDIX A: ACTION ITEMS

	Task	Who	Timing/Status
1	Circle back with OCCFC on status of Little Gauldy CE maps in jpg and KML format	Shawn Rivera, Hebo DR	ASAP
2	OCCFC will discuss where on the forest LSR conditions are appropriate at its June meeting.	OCCFC/Coordinator	By 6/9/23
3	Share a calendar invitation for the Little Gauldy field tour on May 26 th with the OCCFC and USFS by COB 5/12/23.	Coordinator	Complete
4	Polish meeting notes and share with USFS and the OCCFC for comment/revision by Friday, May 19.	Coordinator	By 5/19/23

APPENDIX B: ZOOM MEETING CHAT

KatieRichardsonUSFS to Everyone 9:33 AM

Doing an Environmental Assessment (EA) involves determining the significance or importance of likely environmental impacts. The regulations direct that this be done by considering two variables: "context" and "intensity."

"Context" is the geographic, biophysical, and social context in which the effects will occur. The regulations mention society as a whole, the region, and affected interests as examples of context. Considering contexts does not mean giving greater attention to, say, effects on society as a whole than to effects on a local area. On the contrary, the importance of a small-scale impact must be considered in the context of the local area, not dismissed because it does not have impacts on larger areas.

"Intensity" refers to the severity of the impact, in whatever context(s) it occurs. The regulations require that a number of variables be addressed in measuring intensity.

Fran Recht to Everyone 9:48 AM

It would be better for slide 9 to have accelerate the creating of old growth habitat WITHOUT NEGATIVELY AFFECTING THE EXISTING SPECIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF REMAINING OLD GROWTH HABITAT

Paul Lulay - Hampton to Everyone 9:48 AM

I think using the CE in appropriate conditions is a great way to accomplish more treatments with a limited budget. Do you see more opportunities on the forest where these NEPA pathways can be used to gain efficiency?

KatieRichardsonUSFS to Everyone 9:53 AM

Thanks for the question, Paul L! As we look to develop our program of work for future years we are always discussing what tools to apply. It is always a work in process.

Fran Recht to Everyone 9:58 AM

I don't disagree Paul L., but if we don't look for potential negative impacts of sales or actions within 300' of a nest, e.g. we might not see affects on soil drying, blow down, predation etc. for the first purpose and need

Paul Lulay - Hampton to Everyone 9:59 AM

Are you trying to say they are not doing that with a CE?

Fran Recht to Everyone 10:00 AM

It's not entirely clear... that they analyze blow down etc.

crystalbarnes to Everyone 10:01 AM

Hi Fran, we do analyze areas of blow down with our treatments. Ruth can talk about this further :)

Ruth Halla to Everyone 10:01 AM

I went ahead and pulled up the language from the North Coast Range AMA guide: management emphasis is on the "restoration and maintenance of late-successional forest, conservation of fisheries habitat and biological diversity"

Paul Lulay - Hampton to Everyone 10:01 AM

From my understanding, the CE is used because the USFS believes they have already investigated what they believe is important in past EAs that are similar to this new CE treatment area.

KatieRichardsonUSFS to Everyone 10:04 AM

Thanks for that clarification Marc! Another nuance to our discussion.

Fran Recht to Everyone 10:07 AM

do you try to retain any diversity that is there? e.g. cherry? big leaf maple?

crystalbarnes to Everyone 10:09 AM

Fran, yes, my wildlife team does ground truthing in concert with our pre-sale and silv teams to identify unique habitat and protect those types of features on the landscape.

Eric Andersen - USFS to Everyone 10:12 AM

Recent definition

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/mature-and-old-growth-forests-tech.pdf>

Eric Andersen - USFS to You (Direct Message) 10:14 AM

Time check? Good conversation, Q&A.

You to Eric Andersen - USFS (Direct Message) 10:14 AM

We have about 10 min

Eric Andersen - USFS to You (Direct Message) 10:14 AM

ok

crystalbarnes to Everyone 10:18 AM

Adriana says that Little Gaudy only has 2 roads.

Marc Barnes -- Integrated Resource Management to Everyone 10:26 AM

A KML would be very helpful

Well Said Englemeyer!

Joan Hagar has a late seral GIS layer which might be very useful for this analysis

joan_hagar@usgs.gov

Marc Barnes -- Integrated Resource Management to Everyone 10:32 AM

Here is a link to that layer:

<https://www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/5b071250e4b0ac450c98b538>

Chuck Fisher, USFS to Everyone 10:32 AM

There is a carbon accounting dashboard that are being drafted that should help.

Paul Lulay - Hampton to Everyone 10:32 AM

Will all stewardship projects that receive money from the USFS be performing the same carbon accounting as well? Such as projects receiving Stewardship off forest funding?

Chuck Fisher, USFS to Everyone 10:34 AM

Example

AC Paul Englemeyer to You (Direct Message) 10:34 AM

Does not work for me

Ruth Halla to Everyone 10:34 AM

I am not available on the 26th

AC Paul Engelmeyer to You (Direct Message) 10:36 AM

I will not be available until later in the summer -

Paul Lulay - Hampton to Everyone 10:37 AM

See everyone later. I have to go.

Marc Barnes -- Integrated Resource Management to Everyone 10:38 AM

doodle poll?

You to Everyone 10:38 AM

<https://doodle.com/meeting/organize/id/bWQ1YQJe>

Marc Barnes -- Integrated Resource Management to Everyone 10:38 AM

will do

AC Paul Engelmeyer to Everyone 10:41 AM

Just want to let folks know we are doing murrelet community event July 18/19th here around Cape P landscape - a flyer be sent around soon/

Marc Barnes -- Integrated Resource Management to Everyone 10:42 AM

KML