

# Stakeholder Group-State Assessment of Forest Resources (SAFR)

## Notes - August 26, 2009 Meeting

### Stakeholder Attendees:

- Steve Kimball – Idaho Department of Lands (co-lead); National Fire Plan Coordinator
- David Stephenson – Idaho Department of Lands (co-lead); Urban Interface/Planning Prog. Mgr.
- Frank Gariglio – Natural Resource Conservation Service; State Forester
- Kurt Mettler – Coeur d’Alene Tribe; Forestry Program Manager
- Bob Unnasch – The Nature Conservancy; Director of Science
- Steve Winward – US Forest Service Region 4; GIS Specialist
- Mike DeArmond – US Bureau of Land Management; Forester
- Ara Andrea – Idaho Department of Lands, Service & Regulatory Program Manager; NRCS State Technical Committee Representative
- Ed Warner – Idaho Department of Lands; Idaho Forest Legacy Program Manager
- Bob Helmer – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Management Bureau Chief
- Carol Randall – Idaho Panhandle National Forest; Entomologist
- Greg Servheen – Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Wildlife Program Coordinator
- G. Kirk David – Idaho Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee; Member
- Jeff Handel – Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- John DeGroot – Nez Perce Tribe
- Lyn Morelan – Idaho Forest Practice Act Advisory Committee; Member
- Craig Foss – Idaho Department of Lands; Chief, Bureau of Forestry Assistance
- Serena Carlson – Intermountain Forest Owners Association
- Jim Colla – Northwest Management, Inc.; Consulting Forester
- Chris Schnepf – University of Idaho Extension; Forestry Educator
- Von Helmuth – US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest; FHP Group Leader
- Scott Bell – US Forest Service, State & Private Forestry
- Dana Coelho – Western Forestry Leadership Coalition; Program Manager

### Staff Attendees:

- Chris Clay – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS/Cartography Program Manager
- Mary Fritz – Idaho Department of Lands; Planning and Development Specialist
- Suzie Jude – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Stewardship Program Data Coordinator
- Ed DeYoung – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS Analyst, Sr.
- Meghan Lonneker – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS Analyst
- Tom Eckberg – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Health Resource Specialist

## **1) Welcome, Introduction – Steve and Dave**

The goal for today's meeting is to take one last look at the assessment work to date, make any needed changes, and then start on resource strategy.

## **2) REVIEW/FINALIZE MAP OF THREATS**

There have been many people review the assessment so far and they include partners from federal, state, local, tribal, industry, and other organizations. Today, the stakeholder group will make any necessary adjustments to the data layers and maps. There's been a request to keep the comment period open until September 4<sup>th</sup> and the group will accommodate this request. SAFR stakeholders will not meet in person again to discuss the assessment, but will continue to communicate via email. The group recognizes there is a need for everyone's expertise to develop the response plan within Idaho's priority areas.

## **3) REVIEW/FINALIZE MAPS OF FOREST THREATS & BENEFITS – Dave**

Dave Stephenson reported that he will focus on issues that the group agreed to change following the last meeting and a general review period. Dave reviewed the purpose of the assessment and what it is and is not meant to do. The 2008 Farm Bill requires states that receive funding through the US Forest Service for State and Private Forestry efforts complete the SAFR and Response Strategy. The goal of SAFR is to identify high priority landscapes where partners will make the best use of scarce resources. Leveraging resources in collaborative manner is an important aspect of this process. SAFR is not intended to be policy or overly detailed. The group will look at local data when developing the response plan. Dave reviewed the process of the assessment to date beginning in June 2008, the assessment methodology, forest threats and benefits, issue weighting, and draft composite maps.

### **FOREST THREATS**

Forest Health changes from the last meeting focused on Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB). MPB is an important forest health issue in Idaho and, therefore, has been taken out of the larger group of forest health sub-issues and weighted more heavily in the FH data layer. Dave also discussed comments received on the uncertainties in the climate change data and the suggestions that it be removed because of these uncertainties. Carol commented that climate change is an important issue and thinks it should remain in FH sub-issue set. Chris asked if this national data set reflects what's happening on non-industrial private lands. Carol reported the data used is a combination of data sets including FIA and habitat types, and includes private lands. Steve Kimball commented that it is meaningful to look at the "fringe" of climate change data. Dave commented climate change is more of a "heads-up" for certain species. Chris recommended the group look more closely at the climate change data in next redo of assessment. Bob Unnasch commented he thinks it's important to keep it in because the way summarization process works, the data plays a minor role in the results. Jim Colla commented that climate change data (limitations) should be addressed in response plan. Dave will note the caveats of

the data in the write-up and that the weighting reflects this. The revised FH (Draft Two) map shows additional areas that “pop up” as a result of higher MPB weighting. Comments from Forest Supervisors in S. Idaho indicate MPB data is underrepresented in the Draft Two FH map. Scott Bell asked if the data should be “tweaked” to reflect S. Idaho MPB concerns and should there be a special designation of Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA). Steve Kimball answered that there is no additional data that would show higher priority areas in S. Idaho, but this could be addressed in the response strategy. Regarding the SNRA, there are many areas that would be potentially more significant for MPB or other FH issues. Ara commented that the SNRA beetle attack took place years ago and is no longer a FH risk as the trees are dead. Carol commented that the dead trees are not a wildfire risk until they fall down in 10-15 years. This needs to be a consideration in the narrative that trees are already dead; they are not captured in data layer map, and will require a response in 10-15 years. Dave commented that the group should look at FH issues relative to the rest of the state and compare area to area. Scott agreed this is a valid point but he is looking at balancing workloads across the state and in local areas that are critical. Serena commented that an ownership overlay on the final priority map would be helpful. This can be included within the response plan. Steve Kimball commented there has been a lot of collaborative work done in the SNRA but it was concluded that no adequate data existed of dead trees (capturing mortality and fire risk). The SNRA is currently working on developing this data.

### **Potential Canopy Loss from Development and Recreation Pressure**

No change from Draft One. Dave reviewed the issues and methodology for group.

Looking at the composite Threat maps between Draft One and Draft Two, Draft Two shows additional priority areas. Scott Bell revisited recreation areas with special designations—should they be treated differently in the assessment? Dave commented this can be addressed in the response strategy where the focus will be on high and moderately high priority areas. Scott asked what if special designated recreation areas don’t fall into these priority areas. Steve Kimball asked if the group can revisit these areas when we discuss the forest benefit issues. Greg Servheen commented that there are areas within the assessment delineated as wilderness areas that the group may or may not readily recognize. Bob Unnasch commented on development risk data and how it has been used in the assessment to this point. The model weights too heavily those areas where there’s already heavy development and increasing. He is concerned the assessment captures and weights appropriately those areas that are going from no development to some development. From a forest management perspective, going from no development to some development is a higher priority than development taking place in urban and suburban areas. Chris Schnepf commented that there are other mitigating factors in the study and in the data used. Dave commented that this layer should also consider quality of life in urban areas in terms of forest canopy—it’s not just about undeveloped forest areas. Other comments included looking at sage brush vs. more trees in urban areas and natural vs. unnatural structures. Bob Unnasch commented that he is addressing risks to forest management from development. Greg asked the group to consider what we want the model to reflect. Carol suggested redrawing the matrix and up the value for “0 to 2” and leave the rest of values the same. Bob Unnasch commented he would change the “0 to 2” value from 1 to 5. Ara Andrea commented that within urban and suburban areas there’s still an opportunity to work with landowners. The GIS staff will try two additional options with the weighting. Dave commented that

the new draft final map may not be that sensitive to these changes. Mary commented it is important to address Bob Unnasch's concerns regarding threat introductions and management opportunities. Ara agrees the value of 5 would be okay.

### **Risk of Catastrophic Wildland Fire**

Wildfire changes to the Draft Two map include data to identify areas where uncharacteristic wildfire could do great damage to large landscapes. The USFS Roadless Rule fire ecologist provided this data and confirmed this approach is valid. The data layer now contains Fire Regime Condition Class combined with Community Wildfire Risk. This changed the output dramatically for priority areas in terms of moderate risk statewide.

Scott commented that the wildfire map shows high priority threat areas in what he considers non-forested areas in S. Idaho. Should the non-forested areas be masked and the data re-stratified? Dave reported there are only three discreet values for FRCC and nothing we can do to re-stratify this data. However, it was proposed that the wildfire map mask out non-forested areas before adding it with the other threats issues for the Composite Threats map to reflect more hazards to the forest—the group is in agreement. These changes will have an impact on the final map. Changes will be posted to the website and, unless there are obvious fatal flaws, the group will use the new data layer to move forward to the response plan. It was agreed that the comments received today will make a stronger assessment. Steve and Dave will gauge if there are further concerns that merit additional discussion.

### **Composite Threats**

The composite threat (Draft Two) map was reviewed recognizing there will be some changes when today's proposed changes are incorporated. In terms of the final matrix, the moderate high and high threat areas will factor into the final composite T&B map, matrix, and priority areas.

### **FOREST BENEFITS**

The Wildlife & Biodiversity layer was updated to include five keystone species on a subwatershed (HUC 6) level. Anomalies were noted on the map—big game ranges that abut each other for various species. "Ribbons" also noted on the map – these came from The Nature Conservancy data which was used "as is." Focal Area data also had some very narrow corridors in the same areas along rivers. The Draft Two map shows changes from moderate high to moderate areas—stratified data breaks changed. Greg Servheen likes the changes.

### **Water Quality/Quantity**

The Water Quality & Quantity layer was updated to included TMDL plans (2008 dataset) and added layers together differently (reflected in the DRAFT 2 write-up). The Draft Two issue map increased categories 2,3,4,5. Kurt Mettler inquired if (tribal) reservations included in the TMDL data. Meghan Lonneker is not sure but will check on it for Kurt. Dave suspects that they are, but will check on this. (The answer is yes, tribal lands are included in the data).

## **Air Quality**

The Air Quality layer did not change in Draft Two. Dave reviewed sub-issues and issue map. The Clearwater National Forest commented regarding smoke effects on Montana. Bob Unnasch noted a correction to the water map label—it should be “relative potential benefit.”

## **Sustainable Forest-based markets**

This layer did not change in Draft Two. Dave reviewed past discussions to assess this issue. Within the layer, non-forested species masked out, but left in shrub/scrub. Greg Servheen commented that the issue is talking about Forest Products and shouldn't the title reflect this. Bob Helmer commented that it should. Mike DeArmond asked about the size of the mill in Grangeville— is it a large mill? There should be more high priority (red) area in that vicinity. If not classified large, the GIS staff will change. The layer/issue focus is on sustaining existing and planned mill facilities. Dave will make that clarification on map. Jeff Handel commented the Bennett mill is not showing up in Princeton and may have been masked out. Meghan will check on this. Bob Helmer commented that there is no mill in Emmett – why is it showing up as a red priority area? There may be a planned facility there, but Meghan and Dave will check. *(Note—it was subsequently discovered that the layer was not reflecting what it should. This has been corrected in Draft 3, and changes this map substantially.)*

## **Composite Benefits**

The Draft Two Composite Benefit map was reviewed. Scott Bell revisited the destination recreation areas issue. Dave noted that this was discussed within the core guidance team relative to connecting people to forests. However, that team felt this would be difficult to represent geospatially statewide. There is a lot of point data (campgrounds, education centers, etc.) and it's difficult to express relative impact. Education will be a component in response strategy. It was suggested that perhaps Congressionally identified recreation areas be included in discussion and response (Craters of the Moon, Yellowstone, etc.). Greg Servheen commented that previously the group talked about recreation as a threat, but now it is a benefit. Dave asked the group, should Congressionally-designated areas be included? Greg asked if it is important to identify these areas and state designated areas also? How far do we want to drill down and how does including these areas dilute the resource issues in the layer already? Steve Kimball clarified the elevated benefits of some federal areas and how they are managed. Dave stressed that this is a statewide assessment – and that considering only federally designated areas as having elevated status is a federal perspective. Many forested areas in Idaho provide benefit to recreation, or would suffer if lost due to threats. There was wide agreement that we not include specific areas simply due to designation. This should be addressed in the response strategy.

## **4) REVIEW & FINALIZE COMPOSITE MAP**

Dave Stephenson reviewed Draft One and Draft Two composite maps. The weighting of 25 unique values can be adjusted if needed. Dave asked for input on the proposed matrix. A number of iterations have been done to see the results from SAP layers and the priority areas have not changed much. Scott Bell inquired whether from an IDL standpoint, will the focus be on N. Idaho areas for competitive

grants? Dave noted there is no intention of focusing on only one area of the state. From an IDL endowment perspective—IDL will continue working on these priority areas across the state. Ara Andrea commented on competitive grants with other states (Wyoming and Washington) so grants are not limited to one area. Steve Kimball commented there's the potential to break-up the state into regions, but this will be discussed later in the response strategy session. IDL will use the final map for competitive grant work but the hope is that other stakeholders will use it within their organizations. Steve Kimball asked if the composite map missed any obvious priority areas. Chris Schnepf suggested we have more local maps, perhaps on a county level, with streams or other features.

## **5) FINAL COMMENTS ON SAFR**

There has been good feedback from reviewers to date. There are still a few tweaks that will be posted on the website for comments. We will hold the possibility of a conference call if necessary to discuss the next updates. Serena commented that, in terms of industrial forest land, it would be more helpful to see ownership especially on the final map. This will be a cartographic challenge, but GIS staff may load map so it can turn on and off individual ownerships. Mary is surprised at all the work that can and should be done looking at the draft priority areas—where do we begin?

Special thanks from the Stakeholder Group go to IDL GIS staff for their hard work to get the maps together.

LUNCH BREAK

## **6) DEVELOPING A RESOURCE STRATEGY**

Steve Kimball briefed the group on the resource strategy. No other states have completed their response strategy so there is no model to follow. However, there is a federal guidance that provides some information. Steve discussed the State & Private Forestry Redesign and the need for a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state, federal, and leveraged partner resources to achieve landscape level results. The timeline to complete the response strategy is June 30, 2010.

The Response Strategy is a planning tool that is long-term, broad, flexible, and strategic. The process is pretty open and includes:

- Priority landscapes from SAFR
- Centralized vs. Decentralized
- Identify participants, agencies, groups
- Develop a strategies framework, i.e., issues, long term strategy, potential projects, S&PF Programs, stakeholders, resources available, measures of success, support national objectives.

Discussion followed regarding the process. Steve asked the group, given where priority landscapes are located, to think about scale, involvement and process. How do we want to develop the Response Strategy? Should it be a local process with 5 to 8 groups under umbrella guidance?

Jim Colla asked how the Response Strategy ties back to the funding stream. Ara Andrea commented the Response Strategy is a central driving force for competitive grants and regular (S&PF) program funding. SAFR takes place of the Forest Legacy Program's Assessment of Need and the Forest Stewardship Program's Spatial Analysis Project. Chris Schnepf commented this is still an ownership issue. Should federal lands be taken out? Steve Kimball reported that the Strategy focus is more on what the landscape needs rather than individual management goals. Is there a need for local landowner groups to participate in the response plan? Craig Foss commented the group will be hard pressed to exclude federal or other ownerships as this is a statewide approach. Chris commented that there is a risk of what is happening on federal ownership happening on private ownership. Dave Stephenson commented that to make a difference on a landscape level, it's necessary to have multiple ownerships including federal. Given management constraints of individual ownerships, what can we do together to reach goals? USFS regional foresters and supervisors are on board with the SAFR strategy. Lyn Morelan confirmed this collaborative approach within the USFS in order to receive S&PF funds. There are also cooperative project (NFS) funds available to work on ownership adjacent to NF lands. Mike DeArmond reported the BLM collaborates (project work) with adjacent private landowners. It would be wrong to leave federal lands out of the picture.

Steve Kimball asked the group about the degree of centralization for the strategy development process. Should we go to regional centers or pursue a statewide centralized approach? Kirk David commented that a statewide concept was used in the assessment and it should be utilized in the response plan as well. Jim Colla agrees that this is a strategic plan and not an operational one. Frank Gariglio can see some partitioning according to agency or organizationally rather than geographically. NRCS has regional teams and will utilize SAFR for prioritizing project work. Chris Schnepf thinks there needs to be some formal process to include local communities input. Mary Fritz echoes the need to have local or regional input. Jim Colla commented the group needs to know what the appropriate questions are. Scott Bell needs to be some statewide group to oversee process but there are benefits of having local people involved, but need to have ownership through process to implementation. Look for partners that have this expertise and engage them in the strategy process to gain partners and ownership. Mary commented that there is a need to know who to collaborate with in a watershed. Do these folks concur with what we are proposing as priorities? Ed Warner commented on a decentralized by issues approach to get the right people involved. Scott Bell commented that it is more complicated working with local groups in order to meet the timeline, but they are much more helpful in the process. Steve Kimball suggested utilizing video conference or conference calls with partners to discuss issues and integrate into strategy. Bob Unnasch asked the group, what is it we want to achieve? Partners will want to know why red areas are a priority. The group needs to look at the issues behind the red area and how that plays out in the strategy. For example, we've done the analysis and we see that... Steve Kimball agreed, but should this be done at the statewide level or at a local level. Greg Servheen inquired about the group's capacity to support a local effort. Second guessing by partners will take place. There needs to be an earnest effort in order to engage partners.

Steve Kimball commented that, at the statewide level, the group needs to dig into and understand the issues and then take to the local groups. Further discussion followed about where the county fire

mitigation/protection plan efforts factor into the assessment. Can we take that information to that group to help build the beginning framework? There may be communities that are not priority areas and question why. The local groups will need to understand the statewide nature of the assessment first. Carol Randall commented that the first time through the assessment may generate interest from local groups that can be incorporated later. But, participation at the local level will make meeting the June timeline tough due to time constraints. Perhaps we should set the bar lower. Chris Schnepf is concerned about response process in that the assessment maps would imply someone giving top down orders about where funds are to be spent and work done. The stakeholder group needs to be prepared to change the assessment maps to accommodate changes. Carol identified a need for the communication group to get information out to the appropriate groups.

Steve Kimball commented the consensus seems to be a statewide group to oversee the response plan. Who should be on this group? Kirk David commented that now's the time to change the group and include partners to come on board; the partners need to be ones that represent their issue on a statewide level. Suggestions include assemble groups already out there (Jim Colla); groups established already forestry group with Jay O'Laughlin (Scott Bell), forestry issues for wood utilization (Liz Gephardt, Morris Huffman, and others); USFS forest supervisors want to be more involved in the strategy.

Greg Servheen asked if the assessment will go out for any additional public comment or review. Steve Kimball reported that the hope was the stakeholders would send out the draft final layers/maps to their particular constituency and provide any feedback to the stakeholder group. The assessment to date has been widely distributed among Idaho state advisory groups. Would the stakeholders present here today continue to serve on the strategy response plan. Ara Andrea reminded the group that the strategy must meet requirements for S&PF programs regardless of who is working on the response plan.

Steve Kimball recommended a smaller core group to develop the draft strategy and then bring it back to larger stakeholder group. Steve Bell agreed this was a good approach– it worked well for the assessment. The advisory committee members need to include FSP, FLP, UCF, and the Fire Working Group. Craig Foss commented that there would be pitfalls to bringing in new partners now as they will need to come up to speed quickly with the assessment. A larger oversight group and smaller core group were discussed further. Suggestions for the smaller group include: USFS forest supervisors, Andy Brunelle, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (Dave Turrell), Idaho Association of Counties, NIPF's, industrial forest landowners, The Nature Conservancy, BLM. The remaining participants will continue to participate within the larger group. Dave Stephenson suggested breaking down the state into smaller pieces and work on those now.

Further discussion followed regarding the communications plan – need to engage existing and expanding stakeholders and a broader audience. The sub-group working on communications includes Chris Schnepf, Serena Carlson, Scott Bell, Steve Kimball, Craig Foss, and Mike De Armond.

Regarding subdividing areas of state – are there natural segregations? These include the upper and lower Salmon River, St. Joe North, Payette, Upper Snake, Boise River Basins. Dave and Steve will ask the GIS staff for input on segregating areas.

Dana Coelho signed off 1:40 p.m.

## **7) SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETINGS & IDENTIFY FOLLOW-UP WORK**

To conclude there will be a few adjustments to the assessment, everyone will take another look once the updated maps are on the web site and spread the word within our own organizations to gather final comments. Then we will gather a core group to diagnose strategy segregation areas. The communications group will work on something to send out. We will gather stakeholders in a 2-3 months regarding strategy progress.

Meeting adjourned 1:45 p.m.