

**Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)  
December 12, 2018, 10:00-11:30 AM  
Webinar Summary-FINAL**

*Participants:* Teagen Blakey, Marin Chambers, Angela Gee, Alex Markevich, and Kevin Zimlinghaus

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman

**ACTION ITEMS**

MMG Members	Contact Angela Gee or Kevin Zimlinghaus with questions on the draft contract or other topics.
USFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send the draft contract to MMG members by December 21 that points group members to the section of the contract with unit-specific information.</li> <li>• Send group members information about units being discussed with the USFS wildlife biologist.</li> </ul>

**UNIT 1 UPDATE**

Webinar participants discussed progress made on resolving differences over Unit 1. Their comments are summarized below.

- At the November MMG meeting, an MMG member proposed that the USFS drop plans to include a patch cut on the southeast corner of Unit 1.
- There have been impressions that the Town of Nederland’s Board of Trustees (BOT) or Design Advisory Team (DAT) has veto power over USFS prescriptions for Unit 1. This is not true.
- It is important for the USFS to consult with the DAT and BOT because those groups provided detailed input that informed the original prescription for Unit 1.
- At the November MMG meeting, a group member stated that the DAT only proposed that the USFS cut 30% (the maximum) of the basal area in Unit 1 because they believed that this was the only option. A DAT member has since told the USFS that it was known that the DAT could recommend treating less than 30% of the lodgepole in the unit and that any aggregations would be treated in addition to that 30%. The DAT member opposed dropping the patch cut from the treatment and stated that any changes to the current prescription would require more feedback from the BOT. The USFS will not ask the DAT or BOT to submit any modified proposals
- The USFS has received more feedback since the November meeting on potential changes to the Unit 1 prescription. The USFS would like the MMG to agree upon some version of the Unit 1 changes so that the USFS can ask the BOT for input on those suggested changes and make a final decision
- The USFS will send out a draft contract for Phases 1 and 2 by December 21. The draft contract will be based on the way that the units are currently laid out because it would be easier for the USFS to remove units from the contract than it would be to add new ones at this point in the process. The USFS can change that draft contract all the way up to the final deadline of January 21. The USFS and MMG will need to allow time to change Unit 1 well in advance of the deadline if needed.
- MMG members have suggested several possible places where patch cuts could be subtracted in Unit 1.

- MMG members said that the aspen "aggregation" in Unit 1 does not meet the requirements for aggregations outlined in the decision notice. If the USFS priority is to thin the area along the road near the aspens, one option would be to patch cut near the aspens and compensate for that new patch cut by not patch cutting somewhere else in the unit. Eliminating the aggregation would remove the need to remove any patch cuts. However, the MMG member who originally proposed dropping the patch cut is not attached to one being removed somewhere other than the southeastern corner.
- The southeastern portion of the unit is a fire hazard with fuel on the ground, so it would be preferable to cut there rather than the southwestern portion of the unit near the gully, where cutting could increase erosion. Dropping the southeastern corner's patch cut would also mean that treatments are concentrated north of the road that runs through the unit, which could mean insufficient cover for wildlife.
- The USFS will discuss this input with members of the DAT and bring a plan to move forward on Unit 1 at the January MMG meeting. The draft contract that MMG members will be able to view on December 21 will not reflect changes made to Unit 1 from these conversations.

### **CONTRACT REVIEW**

Kevin Zimlinghaus of the USFS provided an example of a treatment contract and discussed it with webinar participants. His comments are summarized below.

- The contract process began when the USFS conducted step transects for the Forsythe II project and developed unit prescriptions based on those step transects. USFS crews then began field preparations by establishing boundaries, cruising, etc.
- The USFS is now touching up boundary paint and beginning to compile information gathered throughout the summer in language suitable for a contract. This information will provide contract specifications for the units to be treated in Phases 1 and 2 beginning next summer.
- USFS contract deadlines come from the Regional Office (RO) and Washington Office (WO). Those deadlines are:
  - All of the Region's contracts must be fully obligated by June 1.
  - 40% of the Region's projects must be obligated or starting procurement by December 20.
  - All requisitions between \$250,000 and \$1,000,000 must be submitted by January 25.
  - 80% of projects must be initiated in the USFS system by February 1.
  - All requisitions between \$25,000 and \$250,000 must be submitted by March 8.
- The USFS provided a sample contract for MMG member review. The key components of the contract and relevant explanation are as follows:
  - Schedule of Items: Provides the contractor with acreage for each item in the unit so that the contractor can submit a cost-per-acre for each item.
  - Section C: Provides general background on the contract, location, etc. Note that there are different requirements for different contract types (task orders for stewardship contracts, for example).
  - Unit Cutting Descriptions: Describes paint color instructions, diameter at breast height (DBH) requirements, species requirements, monitoring needs, etc. The contractor is tasked with making the distinction between different types of trees when cutting; the USFS does not physically mark, for example, all ponderosa pines greater than 14 inches. Most unit-specific information will be found here and in Section C.

- Slash Requirements: Details specifications for how high slash piles should be and how far they should be from each other and trees. In some cases, there is more material than there is space to make piles, so the piles may get closer to each other and other trees than is ideal. However, some scorching on trees would not be out of line with historical conditions because it could promote vertical and horizontal structural variation. USFS inspectors and contract administrators will observe if contractors are meeting slash pile requirements on the ground.
- Operations: Lists instructions from the USFS on when work can begin, how long the contract is, a ban on littering, etc.
- Inspection/Acceptance: Explains what the USFS and contractor will do to meet quality control and government inspection requirements.
- Performance: Lays out a work timeline and explains how the contractor and USFS will address failures or delays. The USFS Contracting Officer has the ultimate authority on these matters. The Contracting Officer for this project will be a USFS employee from Colorado or elsewhere in the US.
- Invoice/Payments: Explains how contractor's invoices will be processed once the contract units are completed and accepted. This section details the deductions that will occur if the contractor does not meet the USFS level of work requirements, which would be verified by data collection and trips to the fields.
- Special Contract Requirements: Includes contractor expectations, equipment requirements, etc.
- Section J: Outlines maps, fire control plans, and other documents attached to the contract.

#### **TABLE OF WAYS FEEDBACK FROM MMG LED TO CHANGES IN PRESCRIPTIONS**

Webinar participants discussed the USFS table detailing ways in which MMG feedback led to changes in prescriptions. Their comments are summarized below.

- The table focused on Phases 1 and 2. Input provided for Phases 3 and 4 will be included when those phases are discussed. Not every comment or concern was included in this table. There are examples of cases where the USFS did or did not incorporate feedback. In Unit 5, for example, MMG members requested that lodgepole pine along a roadbed be maintained, which the USFS agreed to do. On the other hand, there was a lot of concern about the USFS cutting larger trees in Unit 24, but the USFS decided not to incorporate this feedback, although it did reduce the total patch cuts in the unit from eight to four and a half acres.
- Recent discussions of ways to improve the Avenza point process will make input easier and more efficient for Phases 3 and 4.
- Reducing the number of mechanical treatments in Phases 1 and 2 has made things easier and could for Phases 3 and 4 as well.
- MMG members stated that the USFS did not seem to have made changes based on MMG input on the presence of wildlife. The specific presence of animal trails merits further consideration from the USFS. MMG members have identified animal trails by observing tracks in the snow and places where residents have seen animals moving over the years. There will be occasional situations where residents will know something useful about the movement of wildlife that the USFS does not know from its wildlife surveys.
- There was particular concern over the USFS decision to place a patch cut directly over a wildlife trail in Unit 107.

- The USFS cannot make further changes based on wildlife trails because of time constraints. Additionally, many trails (including the trail in Unit 107) are used by both humans and wildlife because animals use the path of least resistance through the woods. The former USFS wildlife biologist reviewed Unit 107, and the current USFS wildlife biologist is talking with other staff about several units.
- Group members discussed two maps (one of Unit 40 and one for Units 42, 75, and 76) of units where the USFS made changes to prescriptions based on MMG input.
- The map features a highlighted patch on a dense area of Unit 40. This area is highlighted for slash piling because the USFS was concerned that if used a typical lop and scatter treatment there a broadcast burn could kill the trees nearby.
- The map of Unit 75 shows larger trees on the western edge of a patch cut because the USFS wants to create an opening adjacent to the patch cut so that ponderosas can naturally seed the patch cut. Ponderosa in the patch cut will be left, as all non-lodgepole species would be under the decision notice. There is some language in the decision notice that allows the USFS to take other trees if they pose a hazard, but that is intended to allow the USFS to address the threat posed by hang-ups among small trees to equipment in mechanical treatments.
- The USFS should consider leaving larger lodgepole pines that grow on the edge of patch cuts in the future.
- There was discussion of the reasons for leaving large lodgepole pines uncut. The USFS has determined that there is some old-growth lodgepole pine in the project area and could lead a field trip to show MMG members how that compares to areas with large trees that do not meet the definition of an old growth forest.
- Leaving the oldest trees generally uncut can preserve generational diversity in the forest, although the largest trees are not necessarily the oldest.
- There was disagreement as to whether the USFS was treating more doghair forest than it originally seemed to plan to treat. MMG members who have visited Unit 3 (which is marked for manual treatment) have found that most of the planned patch cuts will take mature, well-spaced, relatively large lodgepole pines. This seems like a departure from the draft prescription that the USFS issued (which mentioned the desire to target smaller, denser trees) and feedback that the MMG provided on Unit 3, particularly because this a manual unit not designed to create timber products. Considering that the area features other patch cuts from the Forsythe I project and planned thinning of regenerated vegetation, this area could become open ground.
- The USFS does not use a one-size-fits-all approach in planning patch cuts in lodgepole. In this case, the patch cut makes sense for the project's objectives. The USFS is creating more diversity in Unit 3 by creating multiple structural stages through its various project entries.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- The USFS will send the MMG a draft contract by December 21. Most of the contract is fairly structured already, but the USFS can control portions of the unit cutting description, slash, and inspection sections. The contract will not include changes proposed at today's webinar or any time afterward. There is still an opportunity to make some changes to Unit 1, but the USFS is out of time to modify other units in Phases 1 and 2.
- Anyone with questions on the contract or other topics should contact Angela Gee or Kevin Zimlinghaus.
- The project team takes responsibility for letting input timelines slip in the past and will now be more proactive in reminding MMG members about upcoming deadlines. MMG members suggested that the whole input process start earlier.