Metrics and Data

TTC Work Group Call, February 21, 2023 – Summary

Participants

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Goals

1. Create metrics that help guide, prioritize, and balance on-the-ground needs.
2. Ensure existing data, analysis, and inventory are being utilized to inform planning.
3. Identify data gaps and future needs.

Challenges/Concerns

The Forest Service has a lot of data compiled forest-wide but lacks granular-level information to inform the kind of forecasting and planning that could lead to more successful projects.

> The Forest Service uses metrics to guide its program of work. The **metrics which are currently driving Tongass timber management are narrowly construed, based on an outdated Forest Plan, do not encompass forest management as a holistic enterprise and do not necessarily result in desired outcomes.** For example, there is a focus on number of sales offered versus number of bids (without sufficient regard to whether sales even receive bids or move forward to completion). The consequences of relying on "widget-based" metrics rather than ones that are more outcome based include lack of incentive/accountability for producing promised supply and/or achieving other management objectives.

Many people are unaware of the numerous Forest Service efforts that are underway relative to young growth or what progress the Forest Service has achieved. Often what happens internally is not communicated externally, especially with local communities. Even those who are regularly involved in management discussions internally are sometimes surprised to learn what is happening.

Suggestions

Please note that these suggestions **do not represent agreement or consensus among call participants**. They are a compilation of ideas that were discussed – from differing perspectives.

1. **Conduct a basin-by-basin scenario analysis of future young growth availability and accessibility.** See the attached request for support of basin-level analyses, focusing initially on Thorne Bay and Thomas Bay. (This request was first generated by the Supply work group and has received the support of the Forest's leadership and staff). A lot of information already exists, just not at the suggested level of granularity. The working group recognized that Forest Service does not currently have the bandwidth for conducting a lot of additional analysis, but suggested that cost-share agreements, consultants and partnerships etc., may help deal with the internal capacity shortfall. Community Forest Stewardship Councils could be a way to engage in more outreach to and engagement by communities, by providing updates, outcomes of analysis, etc.

   In addition to collecting and synthesizing new data it is important to utilize information that is already available, to build upon it, to connect the various pieces of information into a coherent picture of what is possibly and desirable at the local level over various time horizons (including infrastructure and workforce considerations), and to determine how to measure impact at scale. There are a number of data collection and analysis initiatives underway that could help support development of sale schedules, etc., as well as relevant current environmental analyses that might also be useful (As an example: information already compiled for Thorne Bay could be incorporated into the basin-level analysis). It might be useful to also look at working circles as a complement. In addition, given stand variability there will always be a need for "boots on the ground" to ground-truth data that is collected in the aggregate.

2. **Conduct an inventory of PCT acreage that has already been treated and assess the results**. Go beyond the numbers of acres treated to how the forest has responded over time (e.g., reduction in stem exclusion / amount of improved deer habitat. Recognize these will be long-term measurements. It would also be helpful to determine what is available to divert to biofuel for renewable heat source utilization (versus what slash needs to remain for the ecosystem).

3. **Update Forest management metrics to reflect community benefits, represent the outcomes we want to see on-the-ground, and provide the context for what sales and restoration projects to pursue.** This will help get us to desired outcomes, provide insights into systemic issues that are standing in the way of more progress towards meeting young growth goals, and to eventually help guide the next Forest Plan – i.e., a new rudder to help us navigate to a better future for the Forest and its communities. One example of a useful metric could be including deer as one underlying/prioritized factor for community well being (and an indicator of forest health).

Next Steps

- Work group members - review and provide input re: request to agency for basin-level analysis.

- Meridian – help organize existing background materials on the TTC website and work group members - identify data/info gaps/needs.

- Andrew - draft suggested metrics (as starting point for conversation). Coordinate with Tessa.