

Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Resource Management Project Environmental Assessment

Meeting Notes

MONDAY, JANUARY 24TH, 2024

Participants

Participants included Jeff Hermanns, Mike Kampnich, Aaron Prussian, Austin Williams, Bob Christensen, Brian Kleinhenz, Gregg Dunn, Jim Baichtal, Katie Rooks, Mark Minnillo, Mike Cooney, Quinn Aboudara, Robert Venables, and Andrew Thoms. Connie Lewis and Tori Anderson from Meridian Institute facilitated the meeting.

Presenters

Quentin Hall and Molly Simonson of the U.S. Forest Service provided the presentation and answered participant questions about the project. Additional questions for our presenters can be emailed to them at quentin.hall@usda.gov.

Meeting Materials

- Presentation slides attached and to be posted on the Meridian TTC website <https://tongasslandmgmt.org/ttc-meetings-and-events/>
- The Forest Service's project website is [here](#).

Q&A Summary

- Question: Are there going to be opportunities for input? The FS is seeking public input on the topics covered during the presentation.
- The TTC would like more detailed project information to inform the group's ability to provide more substantive feedback. Additional questions can be directed to Quentin and an additional

presentation can be scheduled to present and discuss site-specific project details, have a more in-depth look at maps and allow for more Q&A.

- At this time there are no plans for multiple entries. It is difficult to predict future potential treatments for these units. Future treatments would require additional NEPA clearance.
- There are units within the project area, called co-intent units, that have a wildlife habitat objective. For the most part, these units have not been pre-commercially thinned before.
- The phases indicated in the plan refer to temporal phases.
- No contracting has been done for the work in the plan. The work must first be NEPA-cleared. It is important to many participants that small, local operators are prioritized in the contracting process.
- Areas that are excluded from this analysis include old growth, non-productive areas (e.g. muskeg), any off-regulation area (e.g. 200' buffer from ocean), recent clearcuts, and young growth stands whose management is already authorized in the central Prince of Wales PCT CE. Not all areas identified for potential treatment in the EA will necessarily be treated.
- Members encouraged the FS presenters to communicate their analysis standards developed and used for this project to SASS directors, so these standards can be used as a model for future SASSfm projects.
- While participants understand that contracting for these potential projects cannot begin until NEPA clearance is obtained, it is important for anticipated workforce needs to be identified as early as possible so that communities can be prepared to compete for these contracts when they go to bid.
 - While the presenters do not participate in contracting or workforce development, they will pass along these concerns to the relevant parties.
- Cumulative effect on state lands that have recently or will soon be cut in the project areas will be addressed in the EA. This will be analyzed at the appropriate scale for the resource.
- Timber harvest is very important to local communities. Local needs should be prioritized.
 - The FS explained that this is dealt with in the contracting process and that regional guidance will be followed.
- To support an anticipated 2400 acres of harvest over a 15 year timespan (~160 acres per year), the presenters anticipate 63 miles of existing roads will receive maintenance, 16 miles of temporary roads will be restored, 24 miles of new roads will be built and new roads will be removed after treatments. There is no information at this time on anticipated roadwork maintenance needs at the unit level.
 - Surprise was expressed at the amount of new road construction required for this project. In response to a question about whether there will be an alternative that minimized road building and re-opening the FS explained that there will be an

alternative looking at restoration needs. While this is still in development, it will probably involve using temporary roads.

- There are 2400 acres of anticipated commercial harvest with an average acreage volume of 25,000 mmbf, not including co-intent acres.
- The project has been scoped twice, and comments from both scoping periods will be considered.
- A member asked whether prescriptions had already been developed for different units, and if so, what they are.
 - No prescriptions have been developed or approved yet. This information will be available when the EA is released. The FS will ensure that prescriptions are appropriate as stand conditions change over time. Prescriptions may include girdling or biomass opportunities. NEPA authorizes action, but the specifics will be determined during implementation in conformity with requirements established in the NEPA process.