



Baker River Project License Implementation
Terrestrial Resource Implementation Group
FINAL Meeting Notes

Team Leader: Tony Fuchs (PSE), 425-462-3553, tony.fuchs@pse.com

PRESENT

Tony Fuchs, Haley Edwards, Scott Heller, Ira McDaniel by phone, and Cary Feldmann (PSE); Brock Applegate (WDFW); Kathy Smayda (Smayda Environmental); Lou Ellyn Jones by phone (USFWS); Bob Nelson (RMEF, briefly by phone); and Jamie Riche, facilitator (PDSA)

DECISION TODAY: “Does the TRIG agree to allow PSE to spend approximately \$3,000 from the SA 514 funds to conduct baseline monitoring of neotropical avian species in Alder Creek management unit #2, according to the protocol sent out by PSE on 5/21/2012?”

TRIG MEETINGS: First Thursdays, generally bi-monthly or as needed. Next meeting: Sept. 6, 2012.

ACTION ITEMS

- Lou Ellyn – Ask Deanna L. to weigh in on suitable habitat for the possible reintroduction of Oregon spotted frogs on acquired lands
- Tony – Schedule the September TRIG meeting in Bothell if possible

PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT - ACTION ITEMS:

- Tony – Create a draft prioritization and schedule for the projects on the Alder Creek DNR LTA road plan for the TRIG’s review and consideration
- Tony, Haley, Scott – Compile list of suggested monitoring goals and activities related to Article 514, develop draft plan for the TRIG to review / edit (Tony: elk; Scott: wetlands; Haley: forest)
- Marty – At next pre-acquisition, update data collection forms to include overstory/understory species
- Cary, Stan – Coordinate meeting between PSE and the Tribes re: access on acquired lands (in the works)

Update on previous action items: Tony updated the group on his action item re: adding a draft prioritization and schedule to the list of tasks associated with the Alder Creek DNR LTA road plan. PSE has been in discussions with Cedar Mountain for this work, which would be billed on a time and materials basis. Once Tony has an estimate of work per day and the associated costs, he can develop a draft schedule. Essentially, the TRIG will set a budget for this work each year and the contractor will work their way down the list, doing as much of it as the budget allows.

Tony also gave an update on his action item related to the Goshawk nest. He will be back out at Burpee Hill in the next week or so and will check then to see if the nest is active. The draft BH Program Document identifies management units whose prescriptions include protection of the nest and goshawk activity areas. The group noted that we won’t be meeting all the Goshawk management recommendations, in part because the Burpee Hill property isn’t large enough. However, the TRIG will do what it can within Forest Practices Rules and the goals of the property acquisition to maintain a viable nesting habitat area for goshawks.

BRCC / LICENSING UPDATE

PSE provides monthly email updates on Working Group activities to members of the BRCC. The fourth Wednesdays are reserved for BRCC conference calls as needed. In-person meetings occur semi-annually. The last BRCC in-person meeting was held May 30 and everyone present at the TRIG meeting was also at the BRCC meeting, so we did not review the BRCC meeting.

TRIG BUDGET UPDATE:

Tony projected the TRIG accounting spreadsheet, noting that Lisa has updated it to reflect bills paid through May, and walked the group through a brief update of major expenditures since the last meeting.

About 30k remains in the Article 503 Elk O&M fund after paying for the baseline wetlands, steep slope, and roads surveys; GIS mapping; and cultural review for Burpee Hill. About 9k is slated to be spent at Alder Creek this summer to upgrade the road to the meadow / “Christmas Tree” area, and the remaining Elk O&M funds will be put toward the Burpee Hill DNR long-term application work. Another infusion of funding comes in October.

Other highlighted expenditures since April include the 504 Wetlands O&M fund (\$6k spent on amphibian surveys and mapping) and the 508 Reed Canary Grass fund (about \$13k spent on plantings).

Tony informed the group that the Capital fund transfers discussed at the April TRIG meeting (to make the Elk Capital Fund whole) will be done in October when the annual license-related deposits are scheduled.

Clarification related to Capital Fund transfers:

The April notes mistakenly used the word “escalation” in relation to the repayments due to the Elk Capital Fund (from the Forest and Wetland funds). Tony pointed out that escalation amounts are calculated and included when money is deposited into each account. Therefore, the transfer amounts will not be escalated again, but will include interest that the Elk fund would have accrued if it had held the money rather than loaning it to the other funds for the Alder Creek and Burpee Hill acquisitions.

DECISION, 502 FOREST (SONG BIRD) / 514 MONITORING PROPOSAL

Proposed decision text: “Does the TRIG agree to allow PSE to spend approximately \$3,000 from the SA 514 funds to conduct baseline monitoring of neotropical avian species in Alder Creek management unit #2, according to the protocol sent out by PSE on 5/21/2012?”

Haley reminded the group about the April TRIG discussion related to the proposal, which is to conduct baseline monitoring at Unit 2 of Alder Creek. The proposal includes two days of work; one to establish the survey locations and one day to conduct the actual surveys. Under normal circumstances, this work would be authorized by approval of the related plans (the site-specific Program Document, annual work plans, and/or the Monitoring Plans). However, since the Article 514 monitoring plans have not been developed yet and this work was not included in the 2012 Alder Creek work plan, PSE is requesting a separate approval for the expenditure. Doing the work this year allows the TRIG to establish a baseline before management work commences at the site.

Haley then highlighted her understanding of the questions Brock raised in an email the evening before this meeting. Those questions centered on cost, timing, protocol efficacy, and focus of work/expenditures. He opined that effectiveness for projects like these is generally evaluated by habitat, which Article 514 notes can be evaluated through HEP. He questioned the ability to demonstrate cause and effect with the proposed monitoring activity and went on to suggest that the funds would be better spent on habitat surveys focused on habitat targets or deposited into the TERF fund.

Haley and others noted that HEP is one option provided by the Article, but it is not the only option and it is a dated approach. She pointed out that the methodology she proposed is well tested, current, and is used by Bob K. Cary noted that Article 514 is about assessing baseline conditions so we can later assess the value of our actions. He noted that assessing presence is different from habitat. We can improve habitat to perfection

and still not see increased usage by target species, but we will not know that one way or the other unless we understand baseline conditions. He agreed that habitat matters, though, and suggested a hybrid approach – including assessments of both habitat and species presence. Kathy added that the protocols for the presence survey include recordings of vegetation at each listening spot. The Legacy Wood snag creation work included a census and she noted that there is no need to duplicate that work. She added that HEP is about assessing massive changes and has fairly significant limitations.

Haley commented that she could have brought more background information with her to this meeting had the questions come in sooner and Brock acknowledged that his questions came in late in the process. Brock clarified that his intent was to make sure the TRIG has thought through the purpose of the surveys and how the information will be used to inform management actions.

Haley responded that songbirds are indicator species and while these surveys are not habitat-focused, they would give insight into the overall health of the habitat. She agreed that the data gathered are more likely to impact scope of management rather than wholesale determination of management activities. She also clarified that the proposal is to charge the surveys to the Article 514 fund and that this decision is worded as a one-time request. The TRIG may or may not decide to include additional songbird surveys in future annual work plans, but that is beyond the scope of today's decision.

Brock reiterated the WDFW preference for habitat surveys or transfer of the money into the TERF fund for future acquisitions. He also stated that they will not block consensus on the expenditure if the rest of TRIG feels it is the right decision.

Jamie asked the group to identify proxies for today's decision. Haley reported that Stan (SRSC) reviewed the proposal and expressed support. Tony reported that Bob N. (RMEF) expressed his support by telephone when he called in briefly at the beginning of this meeting. Between those proxies and the parties in attendance, the group confirmed that quorum requirements were met. The decision was approved by consensus of those present and represented by proxy; the monitoring work will commence this month.

ACQUISITION UPDATE

Ira updated the group on his activities with the owners of possible acquisitions. Tony projected the map from the draft North Cascades Elk Management Plan and the proposed changes to the elk management area (Elk area 4371). There is a new focus on an area that is in the third tier of the TRIG's priority acquisition areas. Ira will continue research related to this and may have some new opportunities for the TRIG to consider. Questions about any acquisition-related issues can be addressed to Ira or Tony.

POST-ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES – ALDER CREEK

Tony reported on PSE's work to update the Alder Creek Program Document with the Legacy Wood content and the information gathered through the DNR LTA (Long Term Application) process. He projected the current draft and briefly walked through each of the sections being revised. He also projected the updated maps. The management units have been adjusted to match the DNR harvest units so both documents will be in alignment once the program document is updated. Tony shared that he plans to send this out to the TRIG in July. Getting a first draft of the Burpee Hill program document was a higher priority since it was due within a year of acquisition.

Tony noted that the only harvest in the current Alder Creek work plan is to remove the trees necessary to improve access. The contractor could clear the meadow / "Christmas Tree" area when they make the road improvements if we include a few larger trees so the work can be cost-neutral. Brock asked for a harvest plan before any tree harvest work moves forward; Tony agreed.

POST-ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES – BURPEE HILL

Tony asked if Brock or Lou Ellyn had any comments or edits on the draft Burpee Hill Program Document. They responded, "Not at this time."

Tony projected the Burpee Hill site maps, describing Bruce's findings for roads and unstable slopes, and highlighted the proposed management focus for each management unit. Tony noted that this draft satisfies the basic level of compliance in terms of having a plan within one year of property acquisition and reminded folks that this is one of our "living documents," subject to change as needed. The only plans for management activity at this time, other than the research needed for the DNR LTA process, are related to weed management. Based on this and the need to update this draft as soon as the DNR application is complete, he suggested that agency time might best be spent reviewing the Program Document once the DNR work is complete and inserted into the document, but noted that he welcomes input at any time.

LEGACY WOOD UPDATE

Haley reported that Canopy Conservation completed the second of three sites proposed at Alder Creek in April. This site is in an upland area of Management Unit 2.0 (Forest Habitat), with potential elk forage in the grass and shrub understory. Ten snags were created, along with a number of logs. All material was left on site in brush piles. The third legacy wood site in Alder Creek unit 2.0 (lowland) is slated for work in August/September.

She noted that work is underway to develop and evaluate legacy wood procedures for Burpee Hill, as noted in the Burpee Hill Program Document. She is also developing a method for recording snag information going forward to track legacy wood over time.

LOON UPDATE

Haley reported that half of the 2012 loon surveys have been completed. After seeing no loons in the first survey, there have been just one or two loons observed in each of the subsequent surveys. There are no signs of loon nesting activity. There are also no geese, though, this year. Haley showed photos of each platform and described the work done on each to make sure they were ready for loons this season.

An Eagle and Osprey aerial survey is scheduled for July 3.

BOTANICAL UPDATE

Scott started by showing photos and maps of Wild Chervil, a class B designate noxious weed in Skagit County. It was present in a wide variety of areas on the Alder Creek site, generally focused along roadways and elk trails, especially under deciduous trees. He and Kathy noted that it is stretched over about 7.5 acres at this time, which will influence the treatment approach. Thurston County folks report that mowing is not particularly effective since Wild Chervil can re-grow and re-flower within 10 days. Herbicide seems to be the most effective treatment. We have missed the treatment window for this year; the botanical teamlet is likely to suggest an herbicide treatment next spring. Kathy pointed out that it will be important to manage the road improvement work on Alder Creek carefully to avoid spreading this further.

Scott shared that the noxious weed treatment sheet has been updated with 2010-11 activities, which will help inform 2012 activities. He noted that the survey and map work at WB-20 and 21 (two of the seven wetlands selected for Reed Canary Grass management) was originally scheduled for Apr-May, but the Baker Lake reservoir levels have been too high to survey properly, so the team will wait until September to survey. The Baker Lake Road / Old 1106 Road berm was planted in April and conifers staked. He showed photos from the 4/25 and 5/8 project to plant wetland emergent plugs at WB-17.

This is the last year for the Article 509 Plants of Special Status survey. Scott noted that the *Platanthera orbiculata* (round-leaved rein orchid) site at Lower Sandy was surveyed for in May, with no plants found. There will be a survey coming up at WB-9 (near the Upper Baker dam) for sedge species and treatment area to test effectiveness of POAST herbicide. They want to confirm that POAST does not affect sedges; Kathy shared that Laura P. is curious to see the results of this work.

Scott noted that the April and May amphibian surveys are complete for Alder Creek and Burpee Hill. He will look for an opportunity to pair the upcoming Burpee Hill bullfrog survey with other on-site activity.

MEETING EVALUATION

- Reduced meeting frequency seems to be working well for this group (still sufficient)
- Let's try Bothell again to see if we pick up more of our south-enders

Draft September 6, 2012 Agenda

- Safety Moment, Review Agenda, Notes, AI
- BRCC/License Updates, TRIG Budget Update
- Land Acquisition Update
- Post-Acquisition Updates
 - Burpee Hill
 - Alder Creek
- 514 Monitoring Plans Update (Approval?)
- Report on Song Bird Surveys
- Loon, Eagle, Osprey Update
- Botanical Teamlet Update