

Notes from SBEADMR Working Group Meeting

January 7, 2016

The fourteenth and final meeting of the SBEADMR Working Group prior to the release of the FEIS and final ROD was held on Thursday, January 7, 2016 in the Pioneer Room at the Montrose County Fairgrounds. Attached to the notes are three documents that were distributed at the meeting:

- 10/06/2016 Draft Document: Changes between the Draft and Final EIS
- Draft of the Revised Appendix E: Public Engagement in Adaptive Management
- Draft of a Proposed Framework for Organizational Structure, Communication and Decision Making Process for an Adaptive Management Group for Project Implementation

Item No. 1: Overview of What has Changed between the DEIS and FEIS

Carmine Lockwood highlighted the changes to be noted between the Draft and Final EIS as outlined in the attached 01/06/2016 draft document. He elaborated further on a few specific changes and/or addressed questions that were raised about specific changes as follows:

- Refined original “opportunity areas” to define more specific spatial extent for potential treatments PTAs)....
 - Carmine explained that the acres in the FEIS for potential commercial treatment were reduced from the original 278,000 acres to 113,000 acres analyzed as Priority Treatment Areas (PTAs). The scope of the FEIS is for activities within those PTAs. If something else as far as commercial timber activity is proposed in the future it would have to have some other type of planning, i.e. Categorical Exclusion (CE) or Environmental Assessment (EA) – some other type of additional NEPA.
 - In the commercial areas there are activities in terms of road construction that are analyzed outside of PTAs; for noncommercial areas there are also acres analyzed outside the PTAs, i.e. – broadcast burning opportunity areas and treatments in the WUI.
 - In the FEIS, Forest Service is talking in terms of its realistic capacity to treat – what actually can it do on the ground within 8 to 12 years. That remains at 60,000 acres of commercial treatment and 60,000 on non-commercial treatment over the life of the project.
 - Carmine clarified what is meant by analysis versus treated. The analysis looks at all the acres in the PTAs as if they were going to be treated; in FEIS what was analyzed is more than a reasonably foreseeable worst case scenario. The Forest doesn't have the capacity to treat all that was analyzed. Capacity to treat represents about 50% of what was analyzed.
 - Carmine noted that the FEIS is really tightened up in terms of site specific environmental analysis. It is still adaptive as there is flexibility to operate within the PTAs since the site specific high priority treatment areas are unknown at this time given such factors as beetle mortality, working with partners to prioritize wildfire treatment areas, etc.
 - Activity will happen on all three timber zones; fairly well reflected in maps of the six geographic areas (GAs) where PTAs are. PTAs are centered in south Gunnison Basin and on Grand Mesa. Priorities are first to capture dead or dying; resiliency treatments would be secondary priority. Still looking at Gunnison basin as highest priority.
 - In process of posting the undated maps of the six geographic areas where treatment may occur on the website.

- Modified size of hazard tree buffer for roads and other infrastructure....
 - In response to comment letters it was determined that the 300 –foot buffer was excessive. Because trees are not that big did not feel had to go to 300 feet to remove the trees. Still have flexibility to go out to 300 feet for hazard if there are other objectives, i.e. WUI, areas within the PTA.

- Adjusted boundaries on proposed prescribed fire non-commercial treatment units to reflect logical burn boundaries....
 - These adjustments might mean added acres for prescribed fire treatments; reflects more realistic boundaries for prescribed fire treatments, i.e. ridgelines, roads, etc.

- Alternative 2 was modified to include the same geographic extent of Alternative 4....
 - Alternative 4 was essentially dropped from further analysis but the geographic extent was incorporated in Alternative 2. In FEIS Alternative 2 is substantially more constrained going from original acres in “opportunity areas” to PTAs.

- Silvicultural prescription matrix provides more explicitly for green understory protection
 - Additional protective measures for green understory will be added in contracts for treatment
 - Areas to be avoided for treatment will be identified in prescriptions and contracts, i.e. areas identified with sparse dead overstory but a lot of healthy understory.

- Clarified and enhanced public participation opportunities in the adaptive management framework
 - Tightened up the relationship of NEPA documentation in regard to the Adaptive Management NEPA regulation. The regulation can be found in federal regulations: 36, CFR 220. Regulation entails what is adaptive, what you’re watching for, what the triggers will be to change options for what gets implemented on the ground.

Questions/Comment

Q: What is meant by statement that “Impact analysis is highly conservative....”?

A: *Analysis looked at impacts as though the full extent of each PTA would be treated; but given resources and capacity only 50% of treatments will actually occur.*

Q: Was any changes to the acreage amount proposed in DEIS for potential clear cuts.

A: *Clear cut is primary treatment in regeneration – FS does not consider removal of dead timber in a 100% dead stand to be a clear cut - that is salvage. There are stricter protections for retention of understory; looked at stand level basis in considering what treatment would be provided. Acknowledged there may be disagreement on the science regarding the issue of 40 acres being too large an area to harvest for regeneration in spruce-fir stands.*

Item No 2: Review of Revisions to Appendix E: Public Engagement in Adaptive Management

Significant changes were made to Appendix E as noted in Carmine’s overview. Copies of Figure 1 (Adaptive Management Cycle) of Appendix E in the DEIS and the revised Figure I (Adaptive Implementation and Monitoring Framework) for the FEIS were distributed for comparison during the

review. Craig Grother, representing the “collaboration subcommittee” of the SBEADMR Working Group (SWG), introduced the review by restating the twofold purpose of the subcommittee. One was to look for additional opportunities for earlier public input in the adaptive management process and to bring back recommendations to the SWG and FS for consideration. The second task was to look at “tightening” up a more collaborative adaptive management group (AMG) to work with the FS during implementation and monitoring.

The revised Figure I reflects suggestions from the subcommittee to the FS as well as comments that the FS received in response to the DEIS. Craig walked the group through the original Figure 1 and the revised Figure 1 pointing out the significant changes and additional opportunities for public input/engagement in the beginning and throughout the proposed adaptive management process. It is important to note in the revised Figure 1 each step of the adaptive management process (implementation and monitoring) is numbered to correspond with the Steps numbers 1 – 13 in the narrative that follows the schematic. In the narrative each step goes into detail identifying the specific opportunities for stakeholder and/or AMG input.

Craig’s first point was noting the different beginning point with the actual identification in the FEIS of PTAs and the analysis of the full extent of each PTA in terms of what the FS’s capacity is to treat as Carmine explained in the first agenda item. He elaborated on the following opportunities for public input in the revised Figure 1:

- Step 2: Delineate specific treatment units with the FEIS PTAs
- Step 3: Conduct off-season workshop with stakeholders and science team
- Step 5: Prepare refined treatment plans and implementation instructions.....
- Step 6: Publish notice of public to comment on updated treatment list, treatment plans
- Step 7: Conduct public field trips of treatment areas
- Steps 10 & 11: Opportunities for stakeholders/AMG when get to post treatment field reviews to provide input on monitoring and assessment of how things are going.

Discussion followed on the extent on Step 6 - published notice of opportunity for public comment on specific treatment areas/treatment design. Carmine explained that it would be a 30 day comment period published and info shared in same way as for NEPA projects; not published in federal register. Press release in local papers. There will not be an objective period; will attempt to resolve issues and conflicts with stakeholders. This opportunity was intended to address concern that FS was not giving the public an opportunity to comment on final action on the ground; provide notice to stakeholders/public who aren’t available to go on field trips or attend public meetings.

In response to concern that such an opportunity for additional public comment may open the door for litigation, Carmine responded that door for litigation is already there so not opening another door but openly inviting participation in an effort to increase transparency in the process.

Item No. 3: Subcommittee Report on Recommendations for a Collaborative Adaptive Management Group (AMG)

Nancy Fishering reported on the second task of the “collaborative subcommittee”¹ to do some “legwork” on different examples of organizational structure and decision making processes for collaborative groups. She prefaced her remarks by referencing back to the 7/23/2015 SWG meeting where the group agreed that going forward an adaptive management collaborative group would need to be “tightened up” in terms of reaching formal and mutual agreement on matters such as organizational structure, specific mission or purpose, decision making process and identification of “seats at the table” to ensure broad representation and a balance of diverse interests. The subcommittee’s charge was to report back to the SWG with recommendations that could guide adaptive management in the SBEADMR implementation phase. She reported that the subcommittee had reviewed multiple examples of collaborative groups across the West. The attached “Proposed Framework for Organizational Structure, Communication and Decision Making Process” was adapted with permission from the Blue Mountain Forests Partnership (Oregon) model to reflect the values articulated during SWG meetings over the past two years.

Nancy highlighted certain points of the proposed framework:

- Purpose/Mission: The purpose of an Adaptive Management Group (AMG) would emerge from the final Record of Decision. All members of the AMG would have to agree to the purpose.
- People: Group should represent diverse interests, i.e. local elected officials, water users, timber industry, recreation, conservation community, geographic important stakeholders, wildlife. The optimal size of the AMG would be 9; members would be self-selected by stakeholder category and then endorsed by the SWG; alternates would be advisable
- Process: The proposed framework recommends a consensus based decision making process. Consensus is defined as decisions that all parties can support, at a minimum, agree to live with. It details how to reach consensus and recommends specific protocol if the AMG cannot reach consensus.

She encouraged the SWG to review the draft of the proposed framework for a collaborative AMG and provide feedback to the subcommittee or at a subsequent meeting of SWG for further refinement. Ultimately, it would be those individuals seated on the AMG to adopt the framework; this was presented as a recommendation of what it might look like.

In response to a question if such a structure would become a precedent for other FS projects. Carmine responded that he did not feel it would be given the specific adaptive management approach that is proposed for the SBEADMR project. That approach is not typical of most FS projects.

¹ Members of collaborative subcommittee are: Craig Grother, recreation; Emily Hornback, WCC; Nancy Fishering, timber industry; Jonathan Greenspan, citizen at large; Mary Chapman, local citizen. Susan Hansen, SWG facilitator and Chris Miller, PLP Coordinator also attended meetings.

It was noted there are lots of challenges ahead, i.e. the longevity of the project and ability to maintain commitment from AMG members for the long term; how members would be appointed or selected; how to reach out to stakeholders in specific treatment areas.

Item No. 4: What Next???

a. Release of FEIS/draft ROD

Target date for release of FEIS/draft ROD is the first week in February. Once it is released that will begin the 45 objective period before a final ROD is released

b. What is Desired Future for SBEADMR Working Group?

In the short term, the group agreed that the SWG would not meet again until after the final ROD was released which may not be until sometime in April or later. In the meantime, PLP Coordinator, Chris Miller, will continue to send notices and updates pertaining to the SBEADMR project to SWG mailing list to keep everyone informed as things may develop or there is information to share.

The proposed AMG would not evolve until the final ROD was released and there is a SBEADMR project to move forward. In the meantime, thought should be given to some of the challenges, i.e. selection of representatives; what differentiates an AMG from any other group in terms of standing in the process; maintaining continuity through 8 -12 year life of project, possibility of compensating AMG members for travel and time spent at meetings, etc.

In the long term, it was suggested that there might not be an active role for the SWG group. The AMG could emerge from the SWG as the collaborative group to provide more of the technical review and input during implementation. Figure 1 of Appendix E outlines opportunities for stakeholders or public at large to be engaged at various points in the process. It also was noted that members of the SWG may wish to represent their interest on the AMG and/or the SWG might serve as a "pool" for resources for the AMG.

In response to the question of what the FS would like from a collaborative group going forward, Carmine responded the FS would be looking for help with facilitation of steps of Appendix E: efficiency, outreach, education, diversity of interests, conflict resolution – helping to resolve issues; some continuity in the group over the life of the project.

In conclusion, it was agreed that until the final ROD was released everything was pretty much speculative in terms of the future role of SWG. Nancy Fishing offered that if anyone had ideas of how to address some of the challenges that were raised they could send them to her or PLP Coordinator Chris Miller to refer to the "collaborative subcommittee" to address prior to another meeting of the SWG.

After a round of closing comments from each of the attendees, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM

Notes compiled by Susan Hansen, Facilitator