

NOTES26: SOFAR Landscape Vision Committee

September 4, 2019

Meeting in Brief

The Committee continued discussions focused on development of a red fir management strategy for the SOFAR watershed. The group shared key takeaways from the recent August 29 red fir field trip in the general Headwaters area, which involved five stops that demonstrated different conditions of red fir. The group shared characteristics that they valued and the different field trip stops (e.g., heterogeneity, soil moisture, older and larger trees, etc.).

Due to the limited information related to red fir forests and guidance on red fir management, the Committee decided it needed a basic-level assessment of the current conditions to develop red fir desired conditions and management guidelines. The group suggested using the field trip stops to help frame red fir management guidelines tied to valued conditions. The group also recommended exploring what related resources are currently in development (e.g., the TCSI assessment) and other expert advice to incorporate (e.g., USFS Timber Management Office staff that could inform the red fir strategy).

The Committee will review and discuss the Aug 29 red fir field trip stops summary document at its next meeting (Sept 26) to begin developing Red Fir management guidelines.

Action Items

1. **Traci and Michelle** to follow up with Becky to determine capacity to conduct assessment(s). Notify CBI (perhaps raise issue to Steering Committee if additional capacity needed).
2. **CBI** to follow up with Pat to determine status of the TCSI assessment and more specifics on the type and coverage of information the assessment will provide.
3. **CBI** to rename and post the Red Fir document developed by Beverly and Martin. - [View](#)
4. **Nancy and Traci** to develop initial draft document summarizing the Red Fir field trip five stops – site current conditions, “desirable conditions” (what components people liked), potential management options, concerns/uncertainties. Send to Martin and Ben for input before Sept 20th (or Sept 23-24 if needed).
5. **Dana** to share Teresa's notes and photos for Nancy to develop Red Fir field trip summary document.

[Link to All Meeting Materials](#)

Attendees: Andrew, Nancy, Dana, Ben, Lester, David Z, Brian D, Travis, Teresa, Michelle, Traci A, Martin M, Norma (phone), Gina (phone), Steph (phone)

Context for the Red Fir Strategy Development

The Committee is working to develop a collaboratively developed and generally agreed upon set of landscape-scale desired conditions and objectives for red fir forests to serve as a foundation for project development. The strategy will inform developing desired conditions at the stand level that also considers the overall landscape ([view Red Fir Strategy Intent Document](#)). The group aims to finalize the strategy by April 2020.

Red Fir Field Trip

The Committee discussed takeaways from the recent red fir field trip on August 29 that focused on visiting sites in the Headwaters region that presented a range of red fir conditions on the landscape. Field trip participants shared major takeaways from the field trip sites ([See field trip sites map](#)), including aspects / conditions they valued or prompted concerns:

- **Stop 1 Overstory Removal – John Don't:** Gulch, lower elevation, east slope, more moisture. Red fir survivorship seems fairly likely; potential desirable site for promoting red fir.
- **Stop 2 Potential Overstory Removal Pack Saddle Pass:** Highest elevation. Red fir has been continuing to degrade over time in this area. Salvage logging had occurred there. There are plantations on both sides of those red fir stands. It is a patchy landscape.
- **Stop 3 “Happy Place” for #1 for Red Fir:** North-facing slope, Lower elevation: Red fir salvage logging occurred there. Site has different age classes of red fir. Dana would characterize the area as patchy / clumpy stand conditions that she would like.
- **Stop 4: Northside of Silver Fork Road:** North-facing slope: dry, dense clumps with mistletoe. “Meadows” – watery, flowering, not a typical meadow. Drier conditions. “Boutique” treatments have occurred. Ben liked the meadow small stands inter-mixed with meadows – Participants described site as beautiful.
- **Stop 5a:** Dense stand, young red fir. It had been thinned before, and burned a few years ago. Seems to be fairly homogeneous. Participants said this site had lower value to wildlife.
- **Stop 5b:** Variety of ages and clumpy stands. More older and larger red fir exists here. Able to support a variety of conditions. Contrast to the other sites where there had been salvage logging (which created a more sterile, plantation feel). Concern that most of the younger trees were only white fir. Another participant noted that the horizontal structure seemed good.

Stop 3 could be viewed as a desired condition that might work in other appropriate places (although should not assume that Stop 3 represents the desired “final end product” with not future management / maintenance needs).

While some stops had lower/fewer desirable characteristics (e.g., Stop 5a had lower wildlife values) or conversely highly desirable characteristics (e.g., Stop 3),

the group wanted to keep all stops “on the table” as the group further explores red fir management options and opportunities.

Developing Desired Conditions and Treatment Options

Information Needs

The Committee then considered next steps for developing desired conditions and treatment options for red fir forests. Due to the limited information related to red fir forests and guidance on red fir management, the Committee decided it needed a basic-level assessment of the current conditions to develop red fir desired conditions and management guidelines.

Becky Estes had sent out an email ([see section below](#)) that identified several assessments / information needs; the group was unsure whether they had the staffing time and resources to develop a red fir assessment.

The group suggested using the field trip stops to help frame red fir management guidelines tied to valued conditions.

Management / Treatment Considerations

Participants mentioned several issues to consider as the group develops desired conditions and treatment options:

- Each stand has such unique conditions that developing desired conditions.
- Density – Red Fir has the highest capacity to support density. Some of the stands where red fir is dying might be because of the drought in the late-80s or early 90s.
- Identify where we want to have high density.
- Identify climate change vulnerability. In project-specific planning, we can overlay climatic information to inform that.
- Identify where we have the potential given the aspect.
- Given drought, how does that affect our desired conditions.
- Beverly and Martin outlined additional forest health concerns related to red fir ecosystems ([view document](#)).

Many of these align with previous Committee discussions (from [5/31 meeting](#)):

Organize around	Aspect	Other Factors
Elevation		
Alpine	South-facing	Understory species
Sub-alpine	North-facing	Dwarf mistletoe
Red Fir majority		Soil
Mixed confider with pine		Climate

Notes from Becky Estes, shared via email

- Heterogeneity both vertical and horizontal structure (gaps adjacent to existing pines for seed source) and compositional (focus on maintaining or encouraging Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, etc.) are keys to success and could potentially minimize spread of DMT in red fir;
- We might want to revisit our desired conditions for red fir for SOFAR and update based on new scientific information on red fir (GTR which should be printed soon but at this point we can use in its final form);
- In areas with extensive management history, it might be important to create more openings and maintain gaps primarily where these conditions exist away from roads or key fire breaks;
- Retain some large trees and mid-sized trees with defects for wildlife benefit;
- Monitoring might help us refine our decisions but I think we need to be willing to experiment with treatments and commit to monitoring and using this to adapt our future projects;
- Consider climate change (see attached documents) using exposure rating or focusing on specific metrics such as future snowpack that may help us assess sensitivity (I promised Traci that I would load all the information that I have on the T drive location. Dana – I was wondering if you could provide metadata for the exposure from Thorne's lab that you shared with me. I am also happy to track this down.)
- In lieu of LiDAR data, we should explore using the LEMMA (<https://lemma.forestry.oregonstate.edu/data>) data or our G4 products from RSL (attached) to help us assess tree density, basal area, etc.

Next Steps

(Also refer to [Action Items](#))

Summarize the Red Fir field trip five stops – site current conditions, “desirable conditions” (what components people liked), potential management options, concerns/uncertainties.

Share summary document for Landscape Vision committee meeting discussion (Sept 26) to begin developing Red Fir management guidelines.

Share with USFS Timber Management Office staff for input (either via email or invite to future Landscape Vision meeting).

Background Work

1. Meeting notes @ <http://sofarcohesivestrategy.org/meetings/>
2. Link to [Project Priorities Development List](#) (on Google Drive)
3. Link [Desired Conditions Zone Table](#) (on Google Drive)