

Tongass Futures Roundtable  
Framework Committee Meeting  
July 23, 2008  
Ketchikan – Southeast Discovery Center

Participants:

Chris Maisch, Chair and State DOF  
Norman Cohen, TNC  
Owen Graham, AFA  
George Woodbury  
Dave Albert, TNC  
Jason Anderson, FS  
Dale Rabe, ADF&G  
Keith Rush, TNC  
Charley Streuli, FS  
Forrest Cole, FS  
Clarence Clark, State DOF  
Kent Nicholson, FS  
Cynthia Sever, FS  
David Person, ADF&G  
Rob Bosworth, TNC  
Tricia O'Connor, FS  
Doug Wachob, TNC  
Niel Lawrence, NRDC

Telephone:

Erin Dovichin, TNC  
John Sisk, TNC  
Mark Kaelke, TU  
Evan Hjerpe, TWS  
Karen Hardigg, TWS

Meeting was called to order at 9:20am at the Forest Service Discovery Center in Ketchikan. We had difficulties with the teleconference system despite our best efforts, sorry to those of you trying to participate on line, I know it was difficult to follow the conversation, so I hope these minutes help capture the main points.

We established and reviewed the agenda for topics and order for which we would proceed.

Agenda:

Staney Creek – Unit Pool  
Sales under Litigation

5 year Schedule – 2011/2012  
IRMP  
Cooperative Agreement  
Yakutat Meeting

At our last committee meeting, we asked the economic and conservation foresters to put together a unit pool for the Staney Creek sale utilizing the concepts we have discussed over the past year. The charge was to use both an economic timber and a conservation perspective in developing a unit pool that could be given to the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) to begin work on the NEPA process.

Staney Creek Presentation – Keith Rush

Discussed the collaborative process between The Nature Conservancy and the Division of Forestry in developing a collaborative unit pool that included the original FS LSTA unit pools and overlaid the TNC/Audubon map. The LSTA unit pool map excluded from consideration: all buffers, all unsuitable soils, old growth reserves, beach fringe, high vulnerable karst, and areas of special consideration. The collaborative unit pool further excluded units that were in core conservation areas and units that required extensive new roading. The collaborative unit pool proposal placed the majority of the units under selective harvest restrictions (25% basal area for specific species in helicopter units and 50% for ground based units). Other considerations were:

- Minimize roads whenever possible and make use of helicopter harvesting units to keep road building costs down and protect conservation values
- Utilize temporary road standards and forwarder roads in ground based harvest units when possible to keep costs down and protect conservation values.
- Pick up small patches of timber along the current road system to increase volume
- In partial cut prescriptions, leave structure in stands, but capture value both in ground based and in helicopter harvest units

The Forest Service LSTA for the Staney project area comprises 17,000 acres and up to 280 mmbf of timber in the suitable, phase 1 landbase. The collaborative unit pool developed includes 12,000 acres and up to 72 mmbf (net after a 28% falldown factor was included). A rough appraisal using George Woodbury's appraisal tool was used by the collaborators and indicated that a timber sale based upon the unit pool would be positive at approximately \$8.00/MBF stumpage. While representing a significantly smaller volume than what is available in the TLMP LSTA, the collaborative effort resulted in a potential volume similar to what the Ranger District would have expected given anecdotal observations from recent planning efforts and subsequent timber sale contract offers. The District has seen as much as 85% of the available LSTA volume in some project areas not make it through the planning and timber sale process; predominantly as

a result of 1) the limited time and funding available to develop and plan a timber sale, and 2) economic constraints at the time of appraisal and contract offer. Note: The collaborative unit pool is for Gate 1 purposes only. An actual timber sale based upon this proposal could include all or some of the units. The proposal was not intended to infer a final timber sale resulting from the Gate 2 analysis.

Discussions on the collaborative unit pool proposal included:

1. Potential to use the proposal as the proposed action or as an alternative to the FS's proposed action.
2. Since the proposal includes about 1/3 of the total timber potential in Staney Creek (according to FS estimates in the 5 year schedule), questions were raised as to whether it would be possible to get the remaining value out of the units in subsequent sales.
3. The proposal does not include 2<sup>nd</sup> growth stands.
4. That there is a lot of deer harvest that comes out of Staney Creek and that the area has seen extensive timber harvesting in the past. The access developed by the timber harvest may be one of the reasons that the area produces such consistent deer harvest numbers.
5. That the results of the process in Staney would be different in other areas based upon the conditions in those other areas.
6. Concern was expressed that the large amount of selective harvesting was really high grading and this would compromise the future management of young growth since little would develop with this type of harvest method.
7. Restoration work on roads in the units could be done via an EA process.

The answer to the question as to how the FS would treat the proposal was not definitively answered. The committee requested that the IRMP working group review its recommendation that Staney be the first area for the IRMP process in the south Tongass. If it is part of the IRMP process, then the process will determine the final unit pool in Gate 1. If not part of the IRMP process, then the FS will make the decision on its proposed action and alternatives.

Niel Lawrence requested time for review of the collaborative unit pool proposal before it be forwarded to the full Roundtable.

#### Integrated Resource Management Planning (IRMP)

The FS has committed to two IRMP areas on the Tongass. In the north, the IRMP working group recommended the Starrigavan, Peril Straits, and Sitkoh areas for the north end and Staney Creek for the south end (with the understanding that the Staney proposed sale would have to slip for some period of time in order to accommodate the process). The FS accepted the north area proposal and requests the IRMP working group to take another look at its south end recommendation. The question is whether given the 5 year schedule and the difficulty in finding timber for immediate needs, does the working

group still want to take on Staney or let Staney go through an internal FS IRMP process only and stay on its current schedule.

Some concern was expressed about Staney as the IRMP candidate as it was needed to fill this immediate timber gap. On the other hand, there is the potential to move North Thorne/Rio Beaver earlier in the schedule and Staney has all of the components of an IRMP (e.g., old growth, thinning, restoration, recreation, culverts, road closures, and campgrounds, etc.). There was agreement that Staney does require a holistic approach.

### TLMP Appeals and Lawsuits

There have been 14 appeals to the new forest plan. There have been requests for resolution meetings for 3 of the appeals. Four meetings have been held in regard to the Iyountag appeal. There is potential for a resolution of that appeal soon. Niel Lawrence noted that there will be an appeal on Kuiu this week. FS expects a decision on TLMP by October or early November.

David Person made a presentation on the deer model that has been the subject of lawsuits on four timber sales. (Traitors Cove, Soda Nick, Overlook and Scotts Peak, which is also the subject of a second previous suit. Soda Nick is a series of small sales, Traitors Cove is a sale needing pre-roading and is probably deficit and Overlook is out to bid now, however it is in three small units and only a small amount of volume. Scotts Peak is also a deficit sale). He described the genesis of the model and how it has been modified and updated over the years. He described his work to verify the assumptions in the model. Originally, the model was intended to provide a basis to analyze various sale layouts. It was then modified to estimate carrying capacity for deer (and wolves) across certain landscapes.

Other points discussed:

- State role in the lawsuits if any and will they consider intervention?
- TLMP language and how the model should be used, three components to consider, wolves, subsistence and hunting when discussing deer numbers and impacts on them
- Model is winter based
- Will the deer and wolf theme become the basis for future lawsuits on sales in the 5 year schedule?

### 5 Year Timber Sale Schedule

After reviewing the schedule, it is apparent that in the short term a real crisis is in the making for log volume. There is a good chance that the shortage could be so severe that the remaining mills will not have enough volume in 2009/2010 to remain in business or they will have to severely curtail their current activities.

State volume will remain consistent with the accelerated “bridge” timber program, but is not enough to meet mill needs without some federal volume in addition.

FS suggested that to solve some of these issues it may take a legislative path as the NEPA process does not appear to be working.

There is a proposal to change the interstate commerce rules to allow for more export of unprocessed timber (and to change the specifications for what constitutes processing) in order to have more sales appraise positive. A decision on the proposal will be made by the Regional Forester. If adopted, it would go into affect for one year only.

Discussion of the available timber included Logjam, Staney, North Thorne/Rio Beaver, Central Gravina, and sales that had been subject to the settlement agreement. Once the Regional Forester makes a decision on the export policy, there will be reappraisals of these latter sales to see if they appraise positive. There also will be an indication from the parties in interest as to continuing level of controversy for these sales.

Once the outcome of the export provision is decided, the committee agreed to the following work plan for “shelf” volume sales.

1. USFS will provide a list of shelf volume sales and general status
2. Niel will do a quick screen for sensitivity to environmental issues
3. AFA/State will do a sale appraisal to see if any previous deficit sales appraise positive with the export changes

There was some discussion of linear grading of roads and whether this was costing more money than the flag line or composite road and whether it was scaring away road builders.

The group adjourned at 3:00pm for travel needs (flight south) and didn’t have time to hear the update on the State/USFS Cooperative Agreement.

The next meeting of the Framework Committee is scheduled for August 20<sup>th</sup> in Juneau. Location in Juneau to be determined and announced.