

UWPP Discussion of Alternatives, Path Forward:

The OWNF presented details about Alternative 1 vs. Alternative 2 and the importance of setting direction to 1) finalize the Late Successional Reserve (LSR) Work Group piece and 2) get a Biological Assessment (BA) to the Services (NMFS, USFWS) to initiate consultation.

Alternative 2 treats all owl circles as high priority and does not include laminated root disease treatment in the LSR. Alternative 2 would not address LSR high priority WUI areas and specific stand needs that are part of Alternative 1. Because Alternative 2 is most conservative and prescriptions are mostly consistent with the LSR Assessment (LSRSA), no update to the (LSRA) is required and the OWNF may request consultation with the Services. The Alt 2 timeline would add about 1 month to the previously estimated timeline (below). Uncertainty remains around condition-based approach, timeline for Level 1 Team concurrence.

Estimated Alt 2 BA/ Consultation Timeline:

- OWNF provides BA to Services by mid-Dec
- Services issue BO by early April
- Final EA and Decision in May 2022 (previously targeted for April 2022).

A suggestion was made to develop a modified Alternative requiring a limited LSRA update, EA revisions and re-review by the LSR Work Group. This approach would require OWNF reengagement-review by the LSR Work Group before modification of the EA, and BA to initiate consultation with the Services. While a feasible, the timeline extension for this approach is uncertain because scoping has not occurred re: what OWNF time-resources are needed/ available to conduct a 'limited' LSRA update.

The OWNF noted Initiating a LSRA update will impact the Chumstick to LP project; however, it will help project discussions and could help condition-based challenges.

Most participants agreed the NCWFHC should support a 2-pronged approach:

- 1) Immediate: Support OWNF decision-making based on Alternative 2
 - a. The difference in treatments between alternative 1 and 2 will likely have a wider spread than the calculated acres indicate. This is due to the additional NSO priority areas in Alt 2; blocking otherwise treatable ground, and reducing unit size to non-implementable.
- 2) Scope/ Support OWNF initiation of a LSRA update and work on a subsequent decision to treat WUI areas and address site-specific unit needs from Alternative 1 asap.
 - a. An LSRA update completed by the forest would likely impact upcoming planning projects – further discussion needed on those timeline impacts. A revision effort

was initiated in 2017-18 and might be appropriate to pick that up and continue the effort.

- b. An LSRA update would likely help upcoming projects by using the best available science that supports increased landscape resilience (Upper Swauk Restoration, Chumstick to LP, etc.)

PWG participants were unable to reach full consensus during the allotted topic time; however, follow-up discussion and a decision request will be carried forward to the Dec 1 Steering Committee mtg.

Twisp Restoration Project

After NCWFHC members supported the MVRDs proposed path forward for the Twisp Restoration Project (smaller project footprint/ less-complexity/ modified EA), the MVRD asked the NCWFHC/ PWG a follow-up question regarding interest in partner-led support, which Sarah summarized for the group because Ranger Furr was unable to attend:

- Does the NCWFHC want to develop a strategy to leverage the 70%-80% of work done to date with outputs from DNR NEWFIRE reanalysis to ID/ prioritize areas within the original Twisp Restoration Project area that will not be covered under new EA but that still need restoration, and take on partner-support for this priority work (e.g., via a second EA/ contracted NEPA)?

Participants shared ideas and thoughts about remaining priority areas-needs. Some participants questioned the need for more treatment in the Upper Twisp. Participants agreed a reassessment of road decommissioning in the Middle Twisp was needed. TWS can provide technical support for any supplemental analyses regarding large tree specificity. DNR is proceeding with NEWFIRE reanalysis work; data will be available.

A few participants indicated OWNF has Programmatic tools available to support full Aquatics package timeline and address remaining restoration priorities and did not agree with exploring partner-led support for a complementary EA, contracted NEPA at this time. Other participants understood a second EA may be necessary ensure priorities in remaining areas (including areas in the Upper Methow, Twisp and Wolf Creek) stay on track.

A few participants proposed shifting work altogether to look at other potential areas-priorities on the landscape and develop a different project with MVRD, from “start-to-end”. A few participants felt the PWG-NCWFHC should wait for outcomes from the Forest Restoration Strategy Refresh [Target: June 2022] to support discussion with MVRD about new or planned efforts, including the next-scheduled Upper Methow planning area.

During allotted time, PWG participants were unable to reach agreement to take on development of a near-term, partner-led, additive strategy for Twisp project restoration.

Follow-up/ clarification with MVRD re: Programmatic tools, applicability and additional SC dialogue is planned for the December 1 meeting.

A summary of “over-time” discussion is provided by Mike/ PWG Co-Chair, below:

- MVRD clarification needed re: whether the entire Twisp aquatic restoration proposal will move forward either as part of the new/smaller Lower Twisp BA or under ARBO II, and whether aquatics includes road decommissioning, especially in the Little Bridge sub watershed.
- Some PWG participants want to provide input to the MVRD on Matrix treatments proposed in the current-revised project EA, either in writing or via another meeting.
- Although the PWG could not reach consensus to explore Twisp Restoration Project area reassessment and options for partner-supported NEPA, some participants will be investigating the concept (scope, cost, etc.) further given previous/ ongoing investments in the project and ask from MVRD.
- Future PWG Agenda topics related to MVRD will include: 1) NCWFHC interest in engaging in the post-fire treatment EA and 2) potential to help district keep on schedule for the Upper Methow landscape assessment.