

## UNCOMPAHGRE PLATEAU WORKING GROUP

### UP Meeting Notes

January 22, 2003

Facilitator: Maggie McCaffrey

Attendees:

Bob Welch, Technical Committee

John Moore, Technical Committee

Rick Sherman, Technical Coordinator

Jim Garner, CDOW

Chuck Finch, DMEA/Montrose

Mac Fellin, Tri-State GJ/Montrose

Allen Culver, San Miguel PA/Montrose

Bruce Krickbaum, BLM

Amanda Clements, BLM

Craig Grother, USFS

Objective:

To delineate the existing conditions in the two watersheds, identify potential projects for 2003, and overview the EA process.

Decisions/Accomplishments:

Existing Conditions:

The decision was made that the maps of the existing vegetation seral stage conditions need to be revised to include the USFS CVU data to develop a more precise map of vegetation types and seral stages.

Another look should also be taken at the BLM woodland inventory to see if more old age classes can be pulled out from the areas identified as nonproductive PJ. For the map showing the vegetation mosaic objectives, some of the Tri-State lines (345 line and the 115 line) need to be included into the WUI category. Once this is done, the analysis of existing conditions should be rerun. Additionally, the analysis of existing conditions as compared to the mosaic objectives should include an analysis of conditions on private land polygons.

Amanda Clements and Jim Garner overviewed the process they had used to date to:

- Complete the mosaic objectives map
- compile maps of the existing vegetation seral stages
- compare those to the mosaic objectives map via a GIS analysis

- generate a map which identified areas that need treatments to move the seral stages into conformance with the desired conditions.

1) To develop the mosaic objectives map, the following steps were taken  
ww A. They used the TM landsat vegetation classification map data to show general vegetation distribution, and then hand drew in lines around zones the corresponded to the vegetation types identified by the group. Agricultural and residential lands in the watershed were not included.

ww 7 Vegetation Types:  
salt desert shrub  
Low pinyon juniper/sage  
High pinyon–juniper/shrub  
Mountain shrub  
Ponderosa pine–oak  
Aspen/Spruce  
Riparian

B. Next, they overlaid the various mosaic–dependent issue–driven polygons identified by the group which met in early December. Issues were overlaid in reverse order of their priority so that the most crucial issues would “trump” other issues that occurred in the same area. Issues in order of priority were:

Threatened and Endangered Species habitat: lynx and Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat. (Mapped polygons for these came from the USFS and CDOW respectively)

Wildland–Urban Interface—this includes electric transmission lines, as well as private and public land structures/ residences and utilities (Polygons for this were derived by using a complex system that combined a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile buffer between private and public land interface, density of structures, slope, aspect, and frequency of historic fires, and vegetation flammability. Each of these factors was given a priority for fire risk or damage. Combinations with the highest combined risk values were considered to be the final urban interface polygons. The same approach was taken with the electric transmission lines, although a mile wide buffer was used. Transmission and urban interface polygons were combined to create a final WUI polygon.

C. Mosaic prescriptions for each type of polygon (vegetation zone, sage grouse, lynx, and wildland–urban interface) were developed that laid out proportions of vegetation seral stages and patch size ranges for each polygon type. These were done in meetings held by biologists,

ecologists, some researchers, and fire managers. Assumptions made were documented, as was the group's rationale for each prescription.

2) Next, they developed an existing vegetation seral stage map. This was done by:

A. Using the Landsat TM vegetation map, and reinterpreting it into vegetation seral stages through stages through a crosswalk that relates vegetation type to seral stages described in the mosaic prescriptions.

B. Overlaying this map with polygons of later seral PJ woodland on BLM. These polygons were derived from the BLM woodland inventory map (stands that are typified by trees having diameter of 9–15" on productive sites). These polygons were classed as "late or old " seral stage.

C. Overlaying the treatment polygons which had occurred since 1993. Polygons that were rollerchopped or hydroaxed were classified as "early–mid", and polygons that were burned were classified as "early" seral.

4) The map of the existing conditions was analyzed within each mosaic objective polygon type. Acreages of each seral stage were calculated within each polygon type using GIS. These were then converted to proportions of seral stages, which were compared with the appropriate vegetation mosaic objectives (described in 1C). This information was used to generate a map of areas where there was a disparity in the percentage of seral stages. Categories included:

- too high in mid and too low in early – need to move back to more early seral vegetation to remove brush and get more grass and forbs.
- too high in mid and too low in late – no problem with early seral, but need to set aside areas to allow mid to progress to late – maybe a few conversions to early
- too high in early and too high in mid–, low in late – need to set aside areas to progress naturally or do treatments to push toward late (avoid treatments in older PJ)
- too low in early – do treatments that push all the way back to early
- too high in early and too low in mid in PJ – need to be advancing early and mid stages upward (maybe through treatments of off–site locations) some of the plantations of Ponderosa pine that were planted need to be assessed in terms of "natural processes"
- too low in early and too high in late in the spruce fir – some concern with how accurate this data is – need to check these numbers against the USFS CVU data.

5) Another set of maps was generated for the MIS/obligate species that will be used in consideration in planning treatments. These maps showed potential habitat for MIS species and obligate species. These

maps were generated using the vegetation maps, and the scientific literature that identified habitat requirements per species. Attribute data with this data set will include the following categories: (It became clear that old growth sagebrush is a significant vegetation type for many of the MIS/obligate species.)

- Author: Jim Garner
- Source: Vegetation layer and the literature about habitat requirements
- Key Vegetation Type: Based on the primary veg types defined
- Method: either mapped on screen data
- Rationale: Assumptions he made in generating the maps
- BMP: Based on the scientific literature

#### Potential Projects for 2003

Projects will be identified/selected and evaluated based on the following criteria:

#### Identification Process:

- 1) First identify areas where there is a need to adjust the seral stage to move it more in line with the desired percentage for that veg type of constraint.
- 2) Next evaluate projects that have already been proposed for this year and have some of the clearances/NEPA done on them to see if they are in line with the landscape restoration goals or can be changed to meet the goals.
- 3) Identify new projects based on resources etc. that will meet the landscape goals
- 4) Prioritize projects to determine sequence of implementation

#### Evaluation Criteria:

- 1) Treatment will move the seral stage (backward/forward) to be in line with desired percentages.
- 2) Treatment will improve the condition within the current seral stage.
- 3) Treatment will move landscape toward the constraints for T&E or WUI.
- 4) Treatment will provide the best cost/benefit ratio.

Project identification will be delayed until the next meeting (see Conclusion/Upcoming Meetings section) so that Amanda and Jim will have time to incorporate the USFS CVU data and the Tri-State line data and incorporate private lands. Assignments were made for group members to compile necessary information to develop the map and matrix tables (see Assignments).

Potential treatment tools were assessed for their ability to set back or advance seral stages. The tools assessed were as follows:

Tool	Improve	Set Back	Advance
Prescribed Burn/PNF	Improve ppine stands	Yes	
Hydro-Ax/Fecon Flailer	Improve shrub vigor	Yes	Thin/some veg
Roller-Chopping	Improve shrub vigor	Yes	
Chaining	Improve shrub vigor	Yes	
Thinning	Yes	Yes	
Inter-seeding	Yes		
Lausen Aerator	Yes	Yes	
Brush Beating	Improve understory vigor		Sage/PJ
Dixie Harrow	Improve understory vigor		Sage/PJ
Grazing			
Chemical	Weeds killed		
Fertilizer	Yes		

#### The Environmental Assessment:

The EA will have 2 alternatives: the no action alternative and the proposed action alternative. A Landscape Restoration Plan will be written, which will overview the conceptual basis of this multi-agency, landscape level approach to ecosystem management. The Plan will include a description of the existing environment and the desired future condition. It will also contain a map, which identifies areas where there is departure from the desired future condition and a discussion of the process by which the group derived the existing and desired future conditions. The no action alternative will be to continue implementing treatments under current regulations. The proposed action is to implement the plan.

The EA will only address federal lands, but it will make recommendations for private. The recommendations will be handed off to agencies with jurisdiction on private land, such as HPP, RC&D, CDOW, CSFS, and NRCS.

#### Assignments:

- Jim Garner and Amanda Clements will get the USFS CVU data and crosswalk it with the BLM landsat data to develop the base layer/seral stage data.
- Mac Fellin will get the Tri-state data to Amanda for the missing lines. Amanda Clements will be responsible for getting the urban interface data to Jim Garner.

- Amanda Clements and Dan Huisjen will meet with John Moore and make a determination on what density data needs to be used to generate the WUI polygons.
- Determination will be made at the next meeting how and when to include the private land owners in identifying and prioritizing treatment projects.

Conclusion/Upcoming Meetings:

Wednesday, February 12 – Coordinator/Recorder: Jim Garner (252-6016)  
(Jim Garner will record and produce minute notes)

9:00 – 4:30

WSC Conference Room

Montrose Public Lands Center

Attendees: Core ID Team Members

The purpose of this meeting is to identify and evaluate 2003 projects  
(and additional projects for the next 3 years, if possible)