

Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Morristown, Tennessee

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

December 5, 2011

Notation used in this document:

Blue highlighting – indicates changes to be incorporated in the final document.

Green highlighting – indicates items to be addressed in the response to comments.

Purple highlighting – indicates items to be addressed during direct conversations with commenters

Numbers in brackets [] indicate the identification number for follow-up items in the accompanying master list.

Committee Members Attending: Josh Kelly, at large; Danny Osborne, Tennessee Division of Forestry; Mark Shelley, Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition; Parker Street, Ruffed Grouse Society; Joe McGuiness, Cherokee National Forest (CNF); Catherine Murray, Cherokee Forest Voices; John Gregory, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; Katherine Medlock, The Nature Conservancy; Terry Porter, Tennessee Forestry Association; Geoff Call, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Committee Members Absent: Dwight King, Logger; Dennis Daniel, Wild Turkey Federation

Staff Attending: Karen Firehock, facilitator; Melinda Holland, facilitator; Steve Simon; consultant.

Observers Attending: Terry Bowerman, Stephanie Medlin, Don Palmer, and Mark Healey, CNF.

I. Welcome, Agenda Overview

Melinda Holland began the meeting by reviewing the meeting agenda, asking if the public observers had comments, of which there were none. Then she reviewed the action items from the previous meeting. Most action items were completed. Those remaining to be addressed or discussed included:

- Draft an explanation (for a committee response-to-comments letter) on ecological systems, nature of treatments proposed by the committee, and LANDFIRE definitions – Steve Simon.
- Draft revisions to explain recommendations on adaptive management and monitoring to test the results of restoration – Katherine Medlock. Ms. Medlock reviewed this section and found that the existing description of the monitoring approach is sufficient and suggested instead to add language in the response to public comments clarifying the intent of this section, as needed.
- Draft a statement explaining that, while the committee took a landscape-scale approach, it recognizes that certain species-specific concerns were not captured at this scale; they will be addressed at the project scale. Not previously assigned. Josh Kelley offered to do this.

Report change: This statement should be included in the report. [1]

Response: This statement should also be included in the response to comments. [2]

II. Review of Recent Comments From the Public

The committee reviewed the additional comments received from November 10-11, to determine if a response was needed.

Facilitator Karen Firehock reviewed the main themes that appeared in the recent public comments, including:

1. No management is needed and using logging for restoration purposes does not follow natural processes to regenerate the forest. While the report suggests using logging in some cases to remove species not characteristic to a location (uncharacteristic classes), many members of the public did not understand this as the purpose for the logging.

2. Fire is not natural. Some members of the public objected to using prescribed burns as a tool to both remove non-native/invasive species and to ensure that the correct forest types are where they should be. These commenters felt that fire in eastern forests was non-natural. One committee member noted that this should be addressed in the response to the comments, but not in the report itself. Other members noted that understanding the role of fire in the southern Appalachians is based on contributions by many experts. Another member suggested that some language should be added to the report about the role of fire. Steve Simon suggested that this could be a slippery slope, in that all disturbances should then be explained, including tornados, lightning strikes and arson, and that this document should not duplicate language that exists in the forest plan or other documents. He also noted that the models include all types of disturbances. One member cautioned that discussing fire particularly would call it out unnecessarily, and that the response to these public comments could become an appendix to the document. These comments could be due to a lack of understanding from not reading the entire report.

The committee agreed to the following:

Report change: Where language has been added about biophysical settings and the LANDFIRE model, additional language will be added to mention that this model includes information about fire return rates, too. This will address commenter concerns about whether or not fire is a natural disturbance in this system. *Katherine Medlock will add this and explain that the LANDFIRE model is not only about fire, but about disturbance generally.* [3]

Report change: Similar to low-elevation pine, the report recommendations on each ecological system where fire is a driving force (montane pine, dry oak) should have a bullet point stating that fact. In the cove, northern hardwood and spruce systems, according to LANDFIRE, there should be a bullet indicating that fire is an infrequent occurrence in these systems. Refer the reader to the appropriate appendix. Katherine Medlock. [4]

Response: In the response to the comments, it should be made clear that fire is not suggested as a management strategy for cove forest. [5]

3. LANDFIRE only works in the west.

Report change: This will be addressed by Ms. Medlock's changes to the document. Katherine Medlock. [6]

Response: A longer explanation will be included in the response to comments about what LANDFIRE is and how it is used and noting that the model utilizes the best available science and that its use has advanced the committee's knowledge substantially. It was also noted that the

model's actual name is unfortunate, since it is not simply about fire, but includes all disturbances and is based on recent literature on forest types. It was also reviewed and evaluated by experts prior to its application in the Cherokee.

The committee suggests that using the adaptive management approach, as the report recommends, will help ensure that, if the model is incorrect in some cases, management approaches can be changed. A member noted that models are a tool to represent what may happen and predict potential outcomes of various management approaches, but all of this needs to – and will – be ground-truthed during application at the watershed scale. Katherine Medlock will mine statements from previous presentations from Greg Low to help explain these concepts. Katherine Medlock. [7]

4. Concerns about other species, such as the chestnut.

One member pointed out that chestnut restoration was briefly discussed in the report and the committee agreed that the Forest Service (USFS) is already addressing this issue. In several places in the document, credit is given to the USFS for their current efforts. A similar statement should be added to the report in regard to chestnut restoration. The American Chestnut Foundation partnership and other efforts could be mentioned.

The committee did discuss the importance of chestnut restoration in prior meetings, but it was learned that there is not currently enough seed stock to conduct large-scale restoration in the Cherokee.

Another member pointed out that many species are brought up in comments, and not every comment can be addressed individually. The committee considered that a statement on extirpated species should be added. Steve Simon suggested that the forest pests and pathogens section and the endangered species section could both include bullets with examples to address this. Another member recommended adding a photo of a chestnut to the report.

Report change: Amend the Threatened & Endangered Species section to Threatened, Endangered and Extirpated Species. Add a bullet with the following language: “encourage ongoing efforts and potential future efforts of the Forest Service to reintroduce native extirpated species, for example American chestnut, butternut, spot-fin chub...,” then add a picture of a chestnut tree. Katherine Medlock. Joe McGuinness and Josh Kelley will provide historic photos of chestnut trees. [8]

5. Biomass concerns. This was discussed later in the meeting.

6. Address Water quality

Response: The Forest Plan addresses this issue and that can be explained in the response to comments. Katherine Medlock [9]

Review of Comments Submitted by Heartwood

The committee discussed the fact that Heartwood’s comments are challenging, because the report is focused on actions that can be taken, while Heartwood’s position may be that action should not be taken at all. The importance of responding to their comments and personally communicating with these commenters was discussed. The hope is that addressing concerns and listening to commenters will help to further understanding about the committee’s perspectives, even if the communication does not result in agreement with the committee's direction.

One member noted that individual members' opinions should not be aired in discussions with commenters. Those representing the committee should represent the views of the committee as a whole. The committee clarified that this discussion relates only to addressing comments. It is important to distinguish whether the committee member is speaking for the group or for his or her individual organization, and to acknowledge that each committee member's group has agreed to the committee's recommendations, although they might have a different view on a particular point. This should always be done with respect for other committee members.

Page 2 of the comment letter - *All future communications with the public should clearly communicate that this is a northern-districts process.*

Report change: On the title page, amend the description to "Steering Committee recommendations to the Forest Service for the North Zone of the Cherokee National Forest (Watauga and Nolichucky/Unaka Districts)". Add a map of the North Zone to the cover page. Pull the map from the FAQ document. [10]

Page 3 – *Passive versus active restoration.* This subject was discussed later in the meeting.

Page 5 – *Bias of Enhanced Conservation Action Planning (ECAP) and LANDFIRE.* This is a criticism about the modeling. However, modeling is the best way to understand a forest-level system, but specifics will be tested on a project level. The committee is not sure how to address this more clearly in the document, but it should be discussed in response to comments.

Response: Include explanation in response to comments that the committee used the best-available tools in order to get to landscape-scale recommendations. This will be flagged for follow-up evaluation through an adaptive management approach at a project scale. [11]

Dialogue: In conversation with Heartwood, point out the areas of the report that address their concerns, including the case statement pointed out by Catherine Murray on page 5. Katherine Medlock, Josh Kelley. [12]

Page 6. *Biomass.* This subject was discussed later in the meeting.

Page 7.

Item Number 7. *"The initiative demonstrates a lack of emphasis on watershed/aquatic/riparian habitats."* The Forest Plan addresses this issue, and that can be explained in the response to comments. Katherine Medlock. [9]

Number 7. *Consider maintaining a reasonable beaver population.* This was not flagged for response or action.

Item Number 8. *"We wish to know if an honest conversation has taken place that compares/contrasts recent on-the-ground Forest Service restoration practices with those being discussed by the group. Perhaps this conversation has taken place. If it has, the report needs to show this."* Include explanation in response to comments. Katherine Medlock

Page 8.

The commenter wants more photographs, case studies, and examples of good restoration practices, and for the committee to point out where the FS has done poor restoration. One member stated

that they do not feel that there is value in pointing out errors in the past. As far as pointing out good examples, if there were ample examples of good restoration practices, then there would not be a need for this restoration effort, as there would not be such a great need to restore the forest. One member suggested there might be some examples of particular forest types to point out from the committee's field trip, but other members disagreed, stating that these may be good examples of those forest types, but they are not necessarily the best in the forest; they were simply the easiest to access for the trip.

In setting up monitoring, the committee could suggest that the FS choose a reference site at a project level. The committee could also suggest the reference sites are utilized. One member noted that every site is different, and if reference conditions were not achieved, it did not mean that the restoration had not been successful, because site conditions can be different in different places. The model includes the reference conditions, and while they are general, it would be nice at the project level to have something to shoot for if those conditions exist within the study watershed.

Report change: Include a suggestion in the monitoring section suggesting that the Forest Service use reference sites at the project level when they are available. Add a statement that says that the biophysical settings model is an effective reference. Katherine Medlock. [13]

The draft report could be interpreted as modeling for less, rather than more, biodiversity. An explanation has been added to the report that addresses the use of surrogates and the need to promote or maintain biodiversity. This change will be noted in the response to comments document.

Pages 8-9

Xeric and mesic pine-oak communities.

Response: Katherine will draft an explanation of monitoring efforts and watershed team efforts at a project scale. Katherine Medlock. [14]

Page 9

Complexity of models. An explanation has been added to the report that addresses the use of surrogates and the need to promote or maintain biodiversity.

Page 10

Forest communities associated with the family Juglandaceae. An explanation has been added to the report that addresses the use of surrogates and the need to promote or maintain biodiversity.

Page 11

Non-oak/pine tree species and forest types. Explanation has been added that addresses the use of surrogates and the need to promote or maintain biodiversity.

This document should include explicit language that calls for the Forest Service to ground truth any data or models that it uses for projects.

Response: The need for ground truthing is specifically addressed in the report document. In the response to comments, make a reference to that section. Katherine Medlock. [15]

Page 12 – *There needs to be a process for monitoring and evaluation outlined in this document.*

Response: Point out the report’s monitoring and evaluation section in the response to comments. Katherine Medlock. [16]

Page 15

Consider the early documents of the FS and include bibliography about that. As a Committee, the group did not go through the early records. However, individual committee members have seen a good deal of this information and have brought that knowledge to the deliberative process. This report is not intended to be a literature review. The committee used 1,000-year simulations of forest systems, but did not consider all early FS documents.

Response: Acknowledge that early FS documents were not reviewed by the Committee. These records are good for particular areas, but not at the forest-wide scale, so the approach selected was to use 1,000-year simulations. There is not consistently accurate data for landscape-scale planning for the entire forest, but at the project level the early records could be a valuable resource, when they exist, at the stage where projects are developed. Katherine Medlock. [17]

Pursue chestnut restoration efforts. This has been addressed.

Include specific examples of successful and unsuccessful restoration projects.

Response: Address the lack of good examples of restoration projects in the monitoring section. Katherine Medlock. [18]

Page 16

The need for additional photos/videos on the project website. This point was discussed earlier. The response to comments will refer to the biophysical settings model. If examples are found within the watershed, the FS can flag that.

Page 17

The Initiative should incorporate current literature on fire management in its analysis. The role of fire has been discussed and suggested report changes and/or responses to comments are listed above. Steve Simon mentioned a related resource that stated good information on fire return intervals has only been available since 1996.

Page 20

The Initiative should emphasize the role of Gap Phase Regeneration. This has been addressed.

Page 21

The group should consider identifying several under-represented tree and other floral species beyond the few that are identified as major forest type components. This has been addressed and is explained in the descriptions that accompany the LANDFIRE models.

Page 22

The Initiative should have clear and definitive long-term monitoring requirements. This has been addressed, so as to be more clearly defined at each watershed planning stage.

The initiative paints an unclear and ambiguous relationship between itself and forest planning. This is addressed in the case statement, which clearly describes the role of the CNFLRI.

Response: Spell this out again in the response to public comments. Mine the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document for language. Katherine Medlock, with review by Stephanie Medlin. [19]

Dialogue: Discuss this with Mr. Mounger. Katherine Medlock, Josh Kelley. [20]

Page 23

The use of the word planning in the phrase “at the scale appropriate for this planning process.”

Report change: Replace the word “planning” with ECAP. Katherine Medlock. [21]

Response: Explain in the response to comments that this is the Committee’s planning process, not the FS planning process. [22]

Page 24

“What are acceptable restoration practices?” The management activities are thoroughly described in the management activities spreadsheet.

Response: Refer commenters to Appendix B. Katherine Medlock. [23]

Page 25

“CNF contains only 7% of net volume of live trees on forest land statewide, which should be considered in assessment of community benefits of stewardship contracting.” The committee is not able to address all forest land in Tennessee and feels that it is outside the scope of the initiative. The committee does not agree that 7% is relevant to whether or not stewardship contracting is beneficial as a way to fund restoration activities while providing jobs.

Dialogue: Discuss this comment with Mr. Mounger. [24]

Response: Point out that stewardship contracting is a valuable tool with myriad benefits. The committee is focused only on the 7% under jurisdiction of the USFS. Katherine Medlock. [25]

III. Outreach

Ms. Medlock suggested personal contact as another way to address comments, especially since the committee may use any and all possible avenues for communication, and that conversations are an effective way to achieve understanding, as compared to one-way communications by letter and email.

One thing heard early on during public outreach was that people were frustrated by not really knowing or understanding how their comments had been received and assimilated by the Forest Service in the past. That was largely because of the traditional way in which comments were requested, received,

read, and responded to. That type of response should still be done, but because the committee is not the Forest Service, it can agree to do things differently. It could benefit from encouraging a dialogue with commenters. For example, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) has given a lot of input, and having a dialogue with them about the issues they have raised could be beneficial. In addition, Roger McCoy from the Tennessee Division of Natural Heritage has commented about the LANDFIRE models and some of his concerns might best be handled through dialogue.

These efforts at dialogue may not ameliorate all concerns, but would be a good way to move forward. Ms. Medlock offered to do some of this. Education and outreach is an important element of this process. Committee members agreed that a larger dialogue should be going on to develop understanding and support.

Dialogue: Katherine Medlock and Steve Simon will contact Roger McCoy. [26]

Dialogue: Josh Kelly and Katherine will contact Davis Mounger at Heartwood. [27]

Dialogue: Katherine Medlock will contact SELC. [28]

Dialogue: Katherine Medlock will contact Perrin de Jong. [29]

IV. Items Needing Further Explanation *(The organization and numbering of the following items mirrors that found in the summary document from the Committee’s November 10, 2011 meeting entitled “Draft – Categorization of How to Respond to Public Comments”, which was distributed at the November 2011 meeting.*

REPORT GRAPHICS (page 6 of the “Draft – Categorization of How to Respond to Public Comments”)

The need for photos has been addressed in the document.

Response: Indicate that the request to add photos has been addressed in the document and refer commenters to those sections. Skeo Solutions.[30]

LOGGING/TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Response: Steve Simon has drafted a response. [31]

WILDERNESS

Response: Explain in the response to comments that this is beyond the scope of the initiative. Josh Kelley. [32]

Steve Simon suggests a map showing where restoration is being considered, so that it’s clear that the whole forest is not being considered for these active management practices This information is included in tabular form, along with a map, in the appendices.

Response: Refer readers to this appendix in the active/passive management discussion in the comments. Katherine Medlock. [33]

FIRE

Response: Josh Kelley will refer to the biophysical settings model in the response to comments . [34]

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MANAGEMENT

Report change: Katherine Medlock will address these comments in the document itself and will remove the reference to \$30,000,000 from the report, as this was only an estimate and did not account for all potential revenue sources. [35]

Response: A reference to the forest plan guidelines should be made regarding sedimentation and other impacts. The forest plan has guidelines for reducing those impacts. Skeo Solutions. [36]

Response: Josh Kelley has drafted language to address items 1 through 3. Katherine Medlock will take that language, thank commenters and refer readers to changes in the language. [37]

OLD GROWTH - Josh Kelley will draft this response. The points will be addressed in the following way: [38]

Response: Refer to s-classes and the biodiversity document drafted by Josh Kelley. That document needs to include the following statement from the meeting summary: "Thank you for your comment – the committee considered it. Please see section X where it is addressed."

Response: The committee relied on the model, which was informed by expert opinion. More research could further refine the model.

Response: Explain that some USFS data were also used.

Response: "Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Please see section X where it is addressed."

COSTS/ECONOMICS

Response: Explain changes made to the document and include Josh Kelley's drafted language. Acknowledge that some systems may improve with no management; however we believe the forest can heal more quickly, with more social benefits, using active management. Also, it needs to be clarified that the committee did model the "No Action" approach, and that for forest types that are found to have no real improvement over the 20 years (and even longer period), the committee has recommended that restoration action be taken. In one forest type there are no restoration actions because it was not found to be outside the natural range of variability. Katherine Medlock will modify her proposed language on active-versus-passive management to include cost issues and will clarify that 'no action' was also modeled and found to leave the forest in poor condition over 20 or more years. [39]

Response: Explain changes made to the document and include Josh Kelley's drafted language. Katherine Medlock. [40]

Dialogue: Dialogue may be needed with SELC regarding the fact that revenues from harvesting cannot be modeled. Only the cost of implementation was evaluated and considered when creating the committee's recommendations. Katherine Medlock. [41]

WATERSHED LEVEL

Response: This point is addressed in the document. Refer to the document in the response to public comment. Katherine Medlock. [42]

MONITORING/ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Response: Katherine Medlock will address these comments. The response will explain that the committee understands the limitations of working with models. Phrases in the response could include: This was the best-available information; needs adaptive management, watershed approach, ground-truthing, reference conditions, etc. [43]

MODELING/DATA RELATED

Response: The committee used biophysical settings and VDDT models to develop departure scores from the natural range of variability. This is the best available information and the committee reached consensus on using these models. It consulted with various experts on this issue, and their recommendations were considered by the committee. Skeo Solutions. [44]

Dialogue: This is a very technical question from the Heritage Program that Steve Simon could talk to them about. Steve Simon and Katherine Medlock. [45]

Response: The definition of “ecological systems” used in this document is different than that used by the Heritage program. Skeo Solutions, with input from Steve Simon. [46]

Response: See document for an explanation of BPS models. Skeo Solutions. [47]

Response: Explain that the committee used the best available information. These data were augmented with additional information, where available, to address the potential failings in the USFS Vegetation CISC database. This is explained in the methodology. The data will be revisited at the watershed level as part of the initiative’s watershed team process. Skeo Solutions. [48]

Response: The committee used the best available information and was not able to generate entirely new data for the forest. Skeo Solutions. [49]

Response: See the monitoring section. Regulation is beyond the scope of the committee. The committee recommends monitoring and evaluation be conducted as part of the adaptive management approach at the project scale. Skeo Solutions. [50]

Response: The committee is using proxies, but that is a factor of working at the landscape scale, not a lack of attention to detail. The committee is not trying to decrease biodiversity. This is already in the report: “Thank you for your comment, which has been addressed here in section X.” Katherine Medlock. [51]

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Report change: Geoff Call will draft clarified language. This section had been more specific before. [52]

Response: “Thank you for your comment. We have clarified this – see heading__.” Skeo Solutions. [53]

GAPS/DISTURBANCES

The committee used biophysical settings models and understands that they are a surrogate for real systems. Explain that the committee understands and discussed this issue. This is a potential short-coming in the models, but the model is useful for this process and landscape-scale approach. The committee did not make changes to the descriptive parts of the models,

Response: This is a very good point in terms of a potential flaw in the model, but the committee still sees the model as a useful tool, despite this shortcoming. Steve Simon [54]

Response: In the language about the LANDFIRE revisions, state that “Revisions were made to those sections of LANDFIRE BPS models that the committee felt were important to the modeling outcomes. The committee considered adjusting the age classes, but decided against it because the committee agreed that what constitutes quality early-successional habitat is different in different ecological systems. Therefore the BPS models were likely to be more accurate than those differentiated solely by age. The committee had similar questions. Tree diameters have no impact on the model runs.” Steve Simon [55]

Response: Committee members noted that they have reviewed technical literature concerning the need for openings used for wildlife but they were not specific for cove forest. The committee’s subgroup on gap size had long discussions on the issue of the size of openings and did develop language all could agree upon, but it was a compromise and applied a range of opening sizes. Also, the report has language on the location and arrangement of openings, slopes, etc. Skeo Solutions. [56]

A suggestion was made to explain that this issue has been thoroughly discussed. This is the best the committee could agree upon. Committee members also mentioned their desire to monitor and track data on natural disturbances below two acres that create smaller openings, with some saying it is okay to track this information, but not count it towards the measure of early successional habitat.

This was discussed personally with the Ruffed Grouse Society scientist, and the document does not make this suggestion. This has been resolved. There was a misconception about the committee’s intent and this has been addressed with the commenter.

Response: Regarding the suggestion that the document needs more discussion of disease issues, the committee has gone as far as it will with that issue. Refer to language in the Forest Pests and Pathogens section of the report and mention that, while each one deserves time and attention, it is beyond the scope of this project. The committee gave general recommendations to the Forest Service. The committee considers forest pests and pathogens issues and this response does not reflect a lack of concern. Katherine Medlock. [57]

PRIORITIZATION

This is discussed in section V following.

COVE FOREST

Diversity of the herbaceous layer.

The FS does not necessarily take into account the herbaceous layer, although they do inventory what is present. The Forest Service evaluates the presence of threatened species when selecting stands. If an uncharacteristic stand is full of rare herbaceous species, that would be considered and the stand possibly avoided to ensure no harm occurs.

Response: The committee expects that there will be specific restoration objectives for each project that take into account the condition of the herbaceous layer. Refer to any changes to the document that result from today's discussion in the response to comments. {Added later in the day: Note that this is a small part of the forest, referring to the Cove Forest language. Specific monitoring programs will be developed at the watershed level.} Josh Kelley. [58]

Response: The consensus position of the committee is that restoration of cove forests can be accelerated with active management in some cases. Josh Kelley. [59]

RIPARIAN

Response: The committee agrees that beavers are important in riparian habitats but does not propose to introduce or manage them. Josh Kelley. [60]

BIOMASS

This topic is discussed on page 16 of this summary.

MISCELLANEOUS

The issues of scale, project-level efforts and Region 8 old-growth guidance have been discussed and addressed.

This is outside the committee's purview. No response.

Response: Because CNF and the committee do not have information on the current condition of private lands, they were not considered. Skeo Solutions. [61]

V. Items Needing Discussion and Decision. *(The organization and numbering of the following items mirrors that found in the summary document from the committee's November 10, 2011 meeting entitled "Draft – Categorization of How to Respond to Public Comments", which should be consulted as a reference.)*

HERBACEOUS/SHRUB LAYER

For a better explanation of this issue, committee members suggested reference to the Heritage Commission's comment on page 11 of their document, *Uncharacteristic tree canopies might host valuable herbaceous layers*. There are two concerns here: adding light by removing the canopy, and disturbing the soil during logging. The committee discussed possible changes to the report. One committee member suggested including a recommendation to reduce soil disturbance during logging, for example locating log landings outside the forest, or using aerial logging. Another suggested that in the cove forest section of the report, a recommendation could be included that the FS take into account the herbaceous layer when restoring cove forests. It was suggested that special care should be taken for cove forests with high value for cover (90 percent) and richness of 60-70 species per ¼ acre. The cove forest restoration practices outlines priorities: if work is being done in cove forests, the first priority should be to

work under certain circumstances, and then under others.

One more type could be added to those priorities: cover below 90 percent and species richness below 60 species per ¼ acre. The committee’s report discusses the values of cove forests, their diversity, and managing them for achieving natural conditions. The Forest Service expressed concerns about how monitoring would be done in those systems. At the project level, the initiative’s watershed team will tackle specific monitoring recommendations.

Report change: Monitor the herbaceous layer in high-value-cover, species-rich cove systems with high diversity. [62]

Response: Refer to language in the Cove Forest section of the report, “Protecting and increasing the native diversity of flora and fauna found in Cove Forests should be a primary goal when managing the vegetation of these systems.” [63]

TIMBER MANAGEMENT/LOGGING/MARKETABILITY

Response: The tulip poplar issue is addressed in Steve Simon’s Uncharacteristic Vegetation discussion. Refer to that language. Skeo Solutions [64]

The committee discussed some members concerns regarding the use of the word “extensive” to describe logging. They suggested that the committee needs to consider the historical context of decisions that were made regarding forest management, and that they might have necessary to do at the time.

The committee discussed the fact that they are not trying to make a value judgment, but it might be perceived that way. What led to the poor conditions of today was a lack of proper management, and this language needs to explain why restoration is needed now. The terms “extensive” and “logging” are emotionally based and inflammatory to some people. The committee discussed a range of possible language changes.

Report change: Suggested report language revision: “Resulting from farm abandonment and lack of proper forest management, including unsustainable harvesting and uncontrolled fire prior to National Forest ownership.” This language will be polished and agreed to via email. Josh Kelley. [65]

Report change: Change the language from “should” produce marketable products to “could.” Note that revenue was not calculated, so it was not part of the modeling process to determine which actions to recommend. Katherine Medlock will work on this with Terry Porter’s review. [66]

Response: These efforts are targeting unnatural, uncharacteristic conditions, not natural conditions. Skeo Solutions. [67]

Report change: Remove “\$30,000,000” from the section. [68]

NEPA

The purpose of this report language was to allow the Forest Service to respond more quickly to changes in timber markets. The thought was that NEPA analysis was time-consuming, and that

if the analyses were ready, those plans could be expedited.

A USFS representative clarified that NEPA documents do not expire and are reviewed every five years to evaluate whether new information is available. If new information is available and there is a change that falls within the guidelines, then new NEPA documentation is required. In the USFS regulations at CFR 220 there is language regarding adaptive management that can be worked into new NEPA documents. However, when using this approach, one must explain the conditions and parameters for the use of adaptive management. Some documents allude to it, but may not be clear to the public. It should be explained that an adaptive management process can be used when the conditions are right and the effects have been disclosed.

Report change: Strike the second recommendation. Mark Shelley will draft a new recommendation about the goal of streamlining the process through early engagement by consensus and collaboration. [69]

Response: “Thank you for your comment, see rewording in section ____.” Skeo Solutions. [70]

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES/PRIORITIZATION

The committee discussed whether it should prioritize its recommendations and concluded that the recommendations should be turned into a bulleted list, since they were not prioritized. The committee also discussed the idea that this level of specificity (prioritization of management actions) could be addressed at the watershed level. It agreed that each watershed offers unique restoration opportunities and it is the committee’s intent to bring the forest back to the NRV, which requires more work in some s-classes than in others.

Report change: Change the recommendation numbers to bullets. [71]

Response: Josh Kelley will draft response to comments language. [72]

This has been dealt with earlier in the day. Insert some language about using reference conditions at the site-specific scale whenever possible. Explain the use of LANDFIRE models to determine the natural range of variability.

See Josh Kelley’s suggested response language and add the statement: “Because of this, the committee changed the numbered list to bullets to clarify that there is no prioritization.”

MONITORING/ADAPTIVE MANGEMENT

Definition of success for restoration activities.

Report change: Add points 1, 2 and 3 to the language of the monitoring and adaptive management section in the report. Katherine Medlock. [73]

Language from comment as follows:

Success, as explained above, might be defined in general terms by reference to the LANDFIRE Biophysical Settings for each forest type. At the project level, these should be translated into detailed, site-specific descriptions. The committee should therefore explicitly recommend that each restoration project include: (1) clear goals and measurable objectives for achieving restoration of ecosystem composition and structure; (2) project-level monitoring to measure

whether and to what extent those objectives are achieved; and (3) an evaluation of the results, including consideration of whether and how the project and future projects should be modified.

Response: “Thank you for your comment. See section X.” Skeo Solutions. [74]

Addressed above.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MANAGEMENT

Response: Reference the management strategies workbook appendix. [75]

This topic was discussed earlier.

GAP SIZE/NATURAL DISTURBANCES

The committee discussed naturally occurring gaps in the forest. Steve Simon suggested re-running the model to account for small gaps in old growth stands. Where there are old growth conditions, the committee could assume that there are some gaps, which the literature shows will be the case. Some committee members suggested that these gaps could account for as much as 2-4 percent new early-succession habitat per decade.

The committee had an extended discussion on this topic, in which a variety of viewpoints were expressed. Some suggested that the small amount of gaps might not change model runs, others pointed out that the discussion was not relevant to a recommendation regarding tracking, while several others felt that this discussion had already been had in great depth by the Gaps subgroup. It was noted that the language in the report is the best compromise that the subcommittee could come up with and a member recommended not attempting to change it. The facilitation team also reminded the committee that gap size was not flagged for renewed discussion and that this had already been thoroughly debated. Some committee members stated that they could accept tracking the small gaps remotely, while not counting them towards early successional habitat.

Report change: In the monitoring section, add language about small gaps in old growth forest. Recommend tracking it remotely, but not counting it; label it as openings less than two acres in size. Katherine Medlock. [76]

BIOMASS

The committee discussed commenter concerns about the biomass section. Committee members pointed out that although this section of the report was inserted as a tool to help reach restoration goals, the commenter misconstrues it as a way to cut more timber. A member suggested that this could be handled in one of two ways: by taking it out, because there would still be nothing to prevent the FS from using that tool, or by simply stating that this is a valid management option to be used to fulfill restoration needs, although it is not being advocated.

Response: The committee is not trying to create a demand that the FS will have to supply, but to make restoration efforts more financially feasible and to get projects done that would not otherwise be done. Refer to the language in the report. Katherine Medlock. [77]

DATA/MAPPING METHODOLOGY/MODEL

Response: Josh Kelley will draft the response to comments. [78]

Tabled for discussion after this meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Tabled for later discussion.

Additional items from the agenda not addressed during the 12-5-11 meeting

Changes to staffing/\$ recommended.

Review of other language changes submitted by committee members.

VI. Logistics and Scheduling for Implementation Pilot at the Watershed Scale *(Also reviewed at prior meeting)*

Katherine Medlock canvassed committee members' willingness to participate in the watershed pilot, and their schedules. The goal is to hold the first meeting in January 2012 with recommendations submitted in the summer. A UFSF staff member reminded the committee that field work would best be done in winter leaf-off conditions, before spring foliage comes in.

VII. Review of Master Document and Remaining Tasks to Finalize

The committee agreed that editorial changes to the report would be done by December 21st 2011. Draft responses to comments are to be submitted by January 11, 2012. However, personal dialogue by designated committee members with interested commenters will not be completed by that point. Committee members agreed to the suggestion that the *Response To Comments* document refer to particular sections of the report rather than to page numbers, which will change as the report goes through the editing and typesetting process.

The next committee meeting will be held in late January 2012, possibly in conjunction with the first watershed pilot meeting. January 19th and 24th 2012 were potential dates. Skeo Solutions will send a poll to committee members to choose the next meeting date. Committee members should review the response to public comments and the final report before that meeting.

Skeo Solutions will submit the template for the *Response To Comments* document in December 2011.