WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

January 14, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Sherri Felix, Forest Practices Policy Analyst, Washington State Department of Natural Resources D.M.

David Whipple, Forest Policy Coordinator, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife DW

SUBJECT: Annual Report on the Board's Voluntary Cooperative Protection Approach for Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly (*Euphydryas editha taylori*)

The third annual report on the status of the Board's voluntary protection approach for the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly is attached. This report covers the 2010 calendar year.

On September 11, 2007, the Board approved the voluntary cooperative protection approach for the state listed Taylor's checkerspot butterfly recommended by the Department of Natural Resources and supported by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. At that time, the Board also directed staff of the two departments to annually report to the Board on the status of the voluntary cooperative protection approach.

We look forward to discussing the report with you at your February 8, 2011 meeting.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us: sherri.felix@dnr.wa.gov or 360-902-1446, and david.whipple@dfw.wa.gov or 360-902-2847.

Attachment

c. Darin Cramer
Marc Engel
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2010 Annual Report to the Forest Practices Board

The Status of a Voluntary Cooperative Approach for Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly
January 14, 2011

SPECIES BACKGROUND

The Taylor's checkerspot butterfly was listed by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission as State Endangered effective March 2, 2006. The species also remains listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In Washington State, the species occurs in three highly localized areas in Clallam, Pierce and Thurston Counties. The 13 occupied sites on non-federal forestland are in Clallam and Thurston Counties. These sites consist of small grassy "balds" within the forest matrix, which have thin soils and generally are not conducive to efficient timber production. The species occupies their habitat throughout the year in various life stages, and are thus always present on occupied sites.

HISTORY OF FOREST PRACTICES BOARD ACTIONS

On May 10, 2006, the Forest Practices Board (Board) determined there is sufficient potential risk to the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly from certain forest practices to consider rule making and other protection strategies. The Board directed Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff to notify the public of its intention to consider rule making.

From April 2006 to August 2007, DNR held meetings attended by WDFW experts, forest landowners and other interested stakeholders, including the Washington Butterfly Association and The Nature Conservancy. Discussions focused on the butterfly's habitat requirements, potential effects of certain forest practices, and protection strategy options. Additionally, WDFW staff met with individual landowners and land managers to further discuss voluntary protection and management options. During this process, the handful of large forest landowners who own or manage occupied butterfly sites committed to develop management plans with WDFW.

On September 11, 2007 the Board approved the voluntary protection approach recommended by DNR and supported by WDFW. This decision recognized the work of DNR and WDFW in conjunction with stakeholders, the commitments from many landowners to develop management plans, as well as DNR's conditioning authority to protect public resources. In light of the precarious status of the species and the related need for protection and

management assistance from forest landowners, the Board directed DNR and WDFW to annually report on the status of management plans, and any butterfly protection issues associated with individual Forest Practices Applications or Notifications. Once the landowners that committed to develop management plans with WDFW have successfully done so, staff will report every 5 years.

2010 TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT SURVEYS

In the spring/summer of 2010, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) conducted butterfly surveys on most occupied Taylor's checkerspot butterfly sites. Butterfly surveys were also conducted by two Clallam County site landowners (USFS Olympic National Forest and a private landowner). Butterfly numbers in Clallam County Forest Service sites as well as the privately owned site were found to have increased from 2009. Although we detected Taylor's checkerspots at two other Clallam County sites (Eden Valley and Dan Kelly), unusually cloudy, cool, and rainy spring weather in 2010, combined with a reduction in WDFW staff time did not allow for sufficient surveys to make comparisons with survey data from other years. In Thurston County, surveys were conducted on occupied balds in the Bald Hill landscape, however no Taylor's checkerspots were found.

Additionally, WDFW made single visits to three Clallam County sites (Striped Peak Dungeness Mouth, and Highway 112) where checkerspots have not been detected for several years, and again did not detect the butterfly.

Despite continued survey efforts, no Taylor's checkerspot butterflies were observed on sites in Thurston County – except on sites where WDFW and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) have recently translocated butterflies in an attempt to re-establish populations. During the 2010 butterfly flight period for the Bald Hill sites, WDFW conducted 53 survey visits to 16 balds: 14 previously occupied and 2 neighboring balds; 12 received greater than one visit. Visits totaled 79 survey hours and were conducted between April 10 and June 8. During the 2010 survey effort, WDFW did not encounter any Taylor's checkerspots. Thirty of the 53 visits were made to the seven balds previously found occupied by greater than two Taylor's checkerspots in multiple years. For these seven sites, 2010 is the fifth consecutive year of survey without detection at two sites, the fourth consecutive year of survey without detection at four sites, and the third consecutive year of survey without detection at one site. WDFW plans to intensively survey balds in this landscape in 2011.

WDFW did not identify any additional Taylor's checkerspot occupied sites in 2010.

<u>Other actions in 2010</u>

Significant Taylor's checkerspot conservation actions were achieved by WDFW and the DNR Natural Areas Program in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and JBLM. The Department of Defense's Army Compatible Use Buffer program funds checkerspot conservation actions off of JBLM. Using this funding source; 1) WDFW restored and enhanced habitat for Taylor's checkerspot and oversaw a large-scale captive-rearing and reintroduction effort at a Thurston County butterfly translocation site; 2) DNR restored and enhanced habitat in the Bald Hill Natural Area Preserve, and; 3) a private researcher studied Taylor's checkerspot habitat selection to learn more about their habitat

requirements and improve management for the species. In partnership with the USFWS, WDFW was funded to restore and enhance habitat at three occupied Clallam County sites.

FOREST PRACTICES APPLICATIONS/NOTIFICATIONS (FPA/NS)

In the fall of 2006, DNR and WDFW initiated an interagency screening process for FPA/Ns with the potential to impact the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. Using WDFW's GIS locational data for occupied Taylor's checkerspot sites, DNR notifies WDFW of all FPA/Ns within one mile of, or within, a WDFW identified occupied site. WDFW reviews these FPA/Ns for potential impacts to the butterfly, and if necessary, works with the landowner/land manager to protect the site and species. Short of landowner action, WDFW requests protective FPA/N conditioning by DNR. This process continues today, and provides a safety net of protection.

The following is a summary of FPA/Ns near butterfly sites, from December 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010:

- Thirteen FPA/Ns were within one-mile of an occupied Taylor's checkerspot site, and no FPA/Ns were within an occupied site. Of these thirteen FPA/Ns:
    - Nine (69%) were almost one-mile from a site,
    - Three (23%) were approximately one-half mile from a site, and
    - One (8%) was immediately adjacent to a site
- Eleven (85%) of these forest practices were Class III activities and two (15%) were Class IV-General applications.
- Large forest landowners conducted even and uneven-aged harvest, pesticide and fertilizer application, and/or salvage on five (38%) FPA/Ns.
- Eight (62%) FPA/Ns were small forest landowners conducting even and uneven-aged harvests and/or salvage on their property.

None of these forest practices were conditioned by DNR with protective measures.

BUTTERFLY SITE MANAGEMENT PLANS AND OTHER LANDOWNER EFFORTS

WDFW, utilizing information developed during the stakeholder process on rules and other protection approaches, developed general guidance on what types of activities should be addressed by management plans in order to protect the habitat of occupied sites. In late 2006, this guidance was distributed to the large forest landowners who own or manage sites occupied by the butterfly, and WDFW modified the document based on landowner input. The document may be updated in the future to provide clarity or to incorporate knowledge gained relative to protection and management of occupied sites.

There are five large forest landowners that own or manage all or portions of occupied sites. These landowners are at different stages of management plan development. The recent and current economic conditions have affected the ability of at least some landowners to work on their management plans.

- Merrill & Ring Company and WDFW collaboratively developed a management plan covering the company's ownership at one Clallam county butterfly site. The plan was approved and signed on February 10, 2010.

- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages four occupied butterfly sites in Clallam County. Their management plan was developed jointly by the two agencies, and approved November 1, 2010.
- Weyerhaeuser has developed a draft plan, and continues to conduct an internal review prior to submitting it to WDFW for review and input.
- Green Crow has not initiated development of their management plan, however they have no plans for forest practices activities in that area for a very long time.
- The remaining large forest landowner (Aloha) is attempting to sell their parcel that contains part of an occupied site. WDFW is tracking this parcel, and will attempt to contact any new landowner relative to developing a management plan.

There are eight small forest landowners who own small portions of sites occupied by the Taylor's checkerspot, or who own property immediately adjacent to occupied sites. Due to budget reductions and workload issues, these small forest landowners have not yet been contacted by WDFW to ascertain the possibility of developing plans to protect and restore Taylor's checkerspot habitat.

PROTECTION BY COUNTIES

WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database with GIS locational data for Taylor's checkerspot butterflies is regularly available to, and requested by, counties in order to identify known occupied butterfly sites as they conduct local land use planning. Thurston County receives PHS data from WDFW digitally, updated on a regular basis. Clallam County receives this data upon request (e.g., WDFW fields requests from Clallam County for PHS data related to public works projects). This is the same data that WDFW biologists use to screen FPA/Ns and other proposals going through the State Environmental Policy Act process for potential project impacts to the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

On March 26, 2009, DNR and WDFW conducted co-agency training for staff from both agencies who are involved in reviewing and conditioning FPA/Ns, developing and reviewing Taylor's checkerspot butterfly management plans, etc. This training built upon a basic understanding of the species' life cycle and habitat requirements, and the potential positive and negative effects from forest practices, and highlighted the sensitivity of the species to possible impacts. It also clarified each agency's roles and responsibilities for processing, reviewing, and conditioning FPA/Ns that may have an effect on the butterfly. The training had the added benefits of creating ownership in protecting the species, as well as strengthening interagency working relationships.

SUMMARY

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly surveys for 2010 have been conducted by WDFW on nearly all known occupied sites. Butterfly numbers have increased somewhat on at least some Clallam County sites, whereas butterflies were not detected on other sites in the county. In addition, survey conditions and staff time were not conducive to make year-to-year comparisons on some sites. No Taylor's checkerspots were observed on Thurston County sites, except on sites where WDFW and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) have recently

translocated butterflies in an attempt to re-establish populations. WDFW has not identified any additional Taylor's checkerspot occupied sites on state or private lands.

In the third year since the Board approved a voluntary, cooperative protection approach for the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, there were thirteen FPA/Ns within one mile of an occupied butterfly site. This makes a total of 32 FPA/Ns within one mile of an occupied site in the first three years of the Board's voluntary protection approach for this species. There have not been any butterfly protection issues associated with these individual forest practices activities. There was one issue associated with an FPA just prior to the 2007 Board action.

Regarding butterfly management plans, of the five large forest landowners owning or managing occupied butterfly habitat, two management plans have been completed and approved. One landowner is conducting an internal review prior to submittal of their plan to WDFW, one landowner has not started development of their plan but doesn't foresee forest practices in the area for a very long time, and one landowner is attempting to dispose of their affected parcel.

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly occupied sites occur in Thurston and Clallam counties. These county governments are utilizing WDFW's GIS locational data as they conduct their local land use planning.