



Carbon and Forest Management Work Group

Questions and Comments From the December 6, 2023 Meeting

Work Group Composition

Comment: I know the current make up will not change but wanted to flag the lack of beneficiary representation. Do not need to go further.

Comment: What about fire districts?

DNR Response: To form a work group comprised of a balanced representation of Tribal interests and stakeholders, DNR sent over 200 invitations to a broad range of organizations and received 25 applications. To encourage more participation, DNR extended the original application deadline, sent reminders, and reached out to individual groups.

DNR wanted to meet the intent of the proviso while also keeping the work group small enough to be effective. After carefully screening applicants for their experience, knowledge, and expertise, DNR selected three members each representing trust beneficiaries, conservation organizations, and the timber industry. DNR accepted all Tribal and environmental justice applications received, resulting in a 12-member work group.

The trust beneficiaries in the work group were selected because of their experience and their ability to provide a broad representation of trust beneficiaries. For example, Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt represents both the Common School Trust and the Washington State School Directors Association. County representatives can reach out to taxing districts within their counties as part of their involvement in this project, and any member of a taxing district is free to attend the meetings or review the meeting summaries, presentations, and recordings on the project website.

Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet Conservation Strategies

Comment: Murrelet numbers are declining by 4.9% per year, spotted owls by 2.9%, it would be good to hear DNR's explanation of why it continues to log off the best replacement habitat.

Comment: For those not aware the timber being harvested that is of concern for some members of this group were stands released by the MMLTCS and deemed not needed by USFWS and DNR under the HCP Amendment. There was an attempt to take these acres off-base during the Solutions Table. That effort failed. So here we are.....

DNR Response: DNR manages state trust lands according to the State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP is a contractual agreement between DNR and the Federal Services (NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The HCP includes conservation strategies for both northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets.

DNR is committed to providing habitat to help maintain nesting and foraging areas for northern spotted owls, and to facilitate the owl's movement through the landscape. To meet this goal, DNR maintains thresholds of northern spotted owl habitat in areas called spotted owl management units (SOMU), which are located in specific areas designated to support northern spotted owl conservation. Target percentages of habitat maintained in each SOMU range from 40 to 50 percent, depending on the HCP planning unit in which they are located. Within SOMUs, DNR can only harvest northern spotted owl habitat that is not needed to meet and maintain thresholds. In general, harvest activities must not increase the amount of time required to achieve habitat goals beyond what would be expected in an unmanaged stand. To ensure that procedures are being followed and goals are being met, DNR tracks the types and amounts of management activities in these areas.

In 2019, DNR adopted the Marbled Murrelet Long-term Conservation Strategy, which is an amendment to the HCP and replaces the interim marbled murrelet conservation strategy in the HCP. Under the long-term strategy, conservation is concentrated in 20 "special habitat areas" on DNR-managed lands. Special habitat areas are designed to improve murrelet nesting success by reducing habitat fragmentation and disturbances to nesting birds. Located in areas that are strategically important to murrelet survival, all but one special habitat area includes one or more occupied sites where murrelet presence has been documented through field surveys. In addition, the strategy includes conservation measures to help prevent disturbance from ongoing forest management and land use activities such as road building. By protecting strategically important areas and minimizing disturbances to nesting birds, DNR expects to contribute to the long-term conservation of the species while providing certainty for timber harvest and other management activities on DNR-managed lands.

Stand replacement harvest is not allowed in special habitat areas, occupied sites, or occupied site buffers. Marbled murrelet habitat that is located outside of marbled murrelet conservation areas can be harvested consistent with other HCP conservation strategies and state and federal laws.

Comment: Where is DNR in spotted owl habitat management in regards to HCP goals?

DNR response: Some SOMUs are above threshold and others are below. DNR reports on thresholds every year in its annual report to the federal services, which can be found on [DNR's website](#).

Meeting Logistics

Comment: Are these slides available on the website?

DNR Response: Powerpoint slides shared during the work group meeting will be posted on the [project webpage](#).

Comment: [I recommend] An email with all materials sent a week in advance. Not links but attachments.

BluePoint response: Emails about upcoming meetings will include meeting materials as attachments and will also include a link to where these materials are posted on the [project webpage](#). Meeting materials will also be linked in the calendar invitation, and both the email and the links will be provided a week in advance.

Comment: So, does Csenka comment mean a member of the group can be another member's alternate for voting? I think that's what I heard. I would be much more comfortable with this approach...

DNR response: Under the project charter, a work group member who cannot make a scheduled meeting may send an alternate in their place. However, work group members would like the flexibility to assign their vote to another work group member instead of sending an alternate to the meeting. That member would cast two votes: one for themselves, and one for the work group member they represent. This change was adopted by the work group.

Comment (in regards to using Mentimeter for voting): That's an interesting app. In the future we should use a tried-and-true physical vote. Votes don't need to be anonymous, and we've wasted multiple minutes with this exercise.

BluePoint response: BluePoint can adjust the voting mechanism. For example, we can use alternatives to Mentimeter, such as a roll-call voice vote or the use of the Zoom chat. We do want a record that shows a count of the votes, to ensure that decisions have met the supermajority threshold.

Best Available Science

Comment: A question for DNR and BluePoint. How will the group avoid the situation I see building of "my science is better and more 'right' than your science"?

Comment: One point of this work group is to share, discuss, and debate scientific findings. We have (or will once we vote on the charter) an ultimate mechanism for dissenting opinions. We shouldn't seek to avoid disagreements about science.

DNR and BluePoint response: In early 2024, the carbon contractor will present their methodology to the work group and provide an opportunity for the work group to discuss peer-reviewed,

emerging science as it relates to the analysis of management scenarios. DNR and BluePoint have established the “thumbs up, sideways, down” polling process to enable the work group to come to agreement on these and other key issues.

Legislative Report

Comment: Can we as the work group provide input to the 2024 (legislative) report?

DNR Response: Yes, the work group may provide input into both the 2024 and 2025 legislative reports.

Stand Development Stages

Comment: Do you have an estimation of the distribution of DNR forests in these different classes? What is the ratio of structurally complex forest stands to 40-80 year old stands on DNR-managed lands? Where are the structurally complex stands located?

DNR Response: Accurately mapping stand development stages with enough specificity to distinguish the various mature classes is an active frontier in forest inventory, for DNR as well as other landowners and agencies. Refer to the newly (2023) published effort from the [US Forest Service to define and map mature forests](#).

DNR recently contracted with Resilient Forestry LLC to create a new method to delineate and map stand development stages, including mature and old-growth forests, using DNR’s existing, high-quality inventory data. This effort, which includes field validation, is currently underway and the estimated completion date is spring 2024.

Comment: What are the ways that DNR is currently or could increase the structural complexity of young forests?

DNR Response: The most valuable tool DNR has is thinning, which can be used to reduce the density of overstory trees and create gaps in the canopy to encourage a second canopy layer to develop. DNR can also intentionally down trees to create down wood.

Carbon Sequestration

Comment: What work will the Department [DNR] provide on the carbon sequestration and storage and emissions from these older stands? I am more interested in the impacts dead and down has on carbon.

Comment: What is the carbon sequestration potential of older, structurally complex forests, as compared to younger stands? How does carbon sequestration potential differ between areas of different site classes? How does carbon sequestration differ based on different management styles, DNR and private industry?

DNR Response: Questions like these can be addressed through the carbon analysis that will be completed by the carbon contractor. DNR expects to hire this contractor by January 11, 2024.

Reference Library

Comment: What we should have is a central location where all research referenced by work group members is made available for the others to review.

Comment: A site where we can all add citations so we can have a common set of literature is a great idea, thanks Csenka.

DNR response: DNR is developing a list of citations and will post it on the project webpage when ready. Please send your citations to cfmworkgroup@bluepointplanning.com.