Solutions Table Riparian Management Discussion
October 16 Conference Call Notes

Attending:
- Solutions Table: Miguel Perez Gibson (WEC, replacing Lisa Remlinger), Patricia Jones (Olympia Forest Coalition), Paul Jewell (Associate of Washington Counties), Connie Beauvais (Port of Port Angeles), Matt Comisky (AFRC, replacing Travis Joseph).
- DNR: Andy Hayes, Angus Brodie, Tom Bugert, Cynthia Catton (DNR Aquatics), Steve Ogden (Pacific Cascade Region).
- Ross Strategic: Elizabeth McManus, Dana Stefan.
- Other/Public: There were 1-2 additional attendees on the call that did not announce themselves.

Call objectives:
- Learn more about the current DNR Riparian Management efforts.
- Understand the potential needs and opportunities to improve DNR Riparian Management, including areas that would benefit from the Solutions Table’s support.
- Explore if Solutions Table members would like to develop and propose a recommendation on DNR riparian management.

Presentation highlights:
- The State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) has its own riparian strategy that is different than the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan. HCP is a multi-species strategy, while the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan has fewer provisions on incidental take.
- HCP includes provisions for:
  - The Riparian Forest Restoration Strategy (RFRS) for the five west-side planning units. RFRS has a prescriptive approach for a desired future condition of a structurally complex forest at the stand scale.
  - The Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF) planning unit. OESF has an experimental approach with an objective to maintain/restore riparian functions at the watershed scale. The OESF encompasses approximately 270,000 acres and focuses on class 3 watersheds; the watersheds managed within OESF can vary in size.
- Total forested area of DNR-managed lands in western Washington is of 1.46 million acres. Current land classes (land is defined into classes for planning purposes) and percentage of DNR-managed lands are: deferrals (30%), riparian (15%), uplands with specific objectives (24%), uplands with general objectives (31%).
- In the 2004 planning decade, riparian and wetland management zones of state trust lands on the west side was 470,000 acres or 32% of the land base. Projected harvest for 2004-2014 was 10% of the area, 394 million board feet (mmbf) of timber. Only 39 mmbf was harvested.
- 48mmbf was the riparian harvest over the last decade, which is about 20% of the initial forecasted level. The main reason for this shortfall is the late implementation of the RFRS and the financial crisis during 2007-2009. Since 2012, riparian harvest volume has generally ramped up.
- Riparian timber harvest volume and the Sustainable Harvest Calculation (“SHC”): Potential alternatives considered in the EIS that will apply to the 5 planning units (OESF is not part of this discussion) include:
  a. Not to include riparian volume in the SHC
  b. Do 1% of the harvest volume from uplands: This will maintain the riparian thinning level the 2015-2016 level. This potentially contributes 1-2% (or 6-7 MMBF/year) of the total harvest during the first decade.
c. Up to 10% of riparian area over the decade: More than doubles level from 2015-2016 level. Potentially contributes 4-5% (or 16-20 MMBF/year) of the total harvest during the first decade.

- DNR’s recommendations include:
  - Continue to conduct riparian harvest activities based on their ecological value. The main intent is restoration of these areas, they are not long-term timber producing areas.
  - Harvest volume from riparian areas will not be included in the SHC
  - Timber volume obtained from riparian harvests should not necessarily count towards meeting the sustainable harvest target

- Arguments for separating riparian harvest volume from the SHC:
  - The primary purpose of the Riparian Forest Restoration Strategy is ecological.
  - Treatment viability fluctuates greatly, based on forest conditions, markets, access, costs, and other factors. Conducting unviable treatments provide no benefit to the trusts.
  - A target within the Sustainable Harvest Level may result in increased upland harvest to avoid arrearage, if riparian targets are unable to be met.

- The relative impact of riparian harvest volume (in western WA) is of 3% of the harvest volume in the planning decade.

Discussion highlights:

- Overall, the ST members expressed the need to review the information presented by DNR and have further conversations to better understand the various aspects of riparian implementation and identify specific concerns they may have.

- The three alternatives included in the EIS are to: not include riparian volume in the SHC; do 1% of the harvest; do up to 10% of riparian area. The ST is not expected to be involved in the current Board of Natural Resources discussions on SHC alternatives, but it can focus on a recommendation to include an estimate of riparian timber harvest volume in the SHC and allow DNR to credit riparian volume timber harvests towards achievement of its stated SHC. The ST could also consider potential incentives to increase the volume of harvest from riparian areas the desired state under the third alternative (i.e. do up to 10% of riparian area) is to potentially contribute 4-5% (or 16-20 mmbf/year) of the total harvest during the first decade.

- Some members indicated that the first option considered is not viable and that the second option of 1% will at least ensure that the region is working towards a target.

- Overall, members were not supportive of potentially looking at upland areas to avoid arrearage if riparian targets are not being met. One participant noted that, from a forester perspective, increased upland harvest to avoid arrearage if riparian targets are unable to be met will not be productive and not result in increased harvest level, and it violates the SHC provisions.

- One conservation member expressed support for riparian harvests to be conducted based on the ecological value and for differentiating between timber volume obtained from harvests in riparian areas and harvest volume from riparian areas. He suggested that instead of looking at upland areas to avoid arrearage, to potentially explore the possibility of taking a silvicultural approach and account for riparian harvest that can be merchandisable so that foresters also have a certain target to work towards.

- There are not specific timeframes in the HCP for meeting the target future conditions in managed riparian areas. The focus is mostly on measuring progress of the desired trajectory through metrics and evaluation criteria. Also, not all stands are in the same conditions and they have different trajectories.

- Members asked if there are any opportunities to avoid forest treatments in some cases because they might not be cost-effective. DNR explained that before conducting any forest treatments, DNR looks at the ecological functions and whether a treatment is financially feasible. In some timber sale bids, the riparian volume is optional; however, bids are done on the entire sale, so subsidies cannot currently be offered for only parts of the sale.