

DRAFT - SUMMARY
STAKEHOLDER SCIENCE AND STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY COMMITTEES
LAKE TAHOE WEST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Wednesday, December 11th, 2019

*All meeting materials are publicly available on the Lake Tahoe West website
<http://nationalforests.org/laketahoewest>.
For questions please contact facilitator Julia Golomb at jgolomb@cbi.org.*

Meeting In Brief

At the December 11, 2019 meeting of the Lake Tahoe West joint Stakeholder Committees, stakeholders provided input on the latest set of draft planning areas and operational units, which will serve as the foundation of the Lake Tahoe West Proposed Action. Participants discussed approaches to prioritizing implementation on the landscape. Additionally, Blue Earth Consultants presented and stakeholders provided feedback on draft Goals and Guiding Questions for the Lake Tahoe West Monitoring Plan.

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Action Items

1. **IADT** will update attribute table to include distance to planned treatments, accessibility, and level of ease to bring into state of resilience.
 - **Stakeholders** will send ideas for additional attributes to Jen Greenberg or Julia Golomb.
2. **IADT** will code zones within the Lake Tahoe West landscape that are excluded from planning polygons, to identify why these areas are excluded from treatment (e.g. steep slopes, soil type, etc.).
3. **IADT** will consider pairing operational units maps with aerial imagery.
4. **IADT** will update the operational units maps legend to define Landscape Restoration Strategy Goals 1 and 2.
5. **Blue Earth Consultants** will refine the Monitoring Questions based on Stakeholder input.
6. **IADT and Blue Earth Consultants** will share with stakeholders a revised version of Monitoring Plan Guiding Questions. The Monitoring Team and Blue Earth will provide a timeline clarifying stakeholder input opportunities during Monitoring Plan development.

7. **Stakeholders** interested in participating in the Monitoring Team should reach out to Julia Golomb.

Updated Draft Polygons and Prioritization Approach for Proposed Action

Draft Polygons

The Interagency Design Team (IADT) used the Lake Tahoe West (LTW) Landscape Restoration Strategy (LRS) goals and objectives to identify ten priority planning areas on the LTW landscape, each of which are divided into operational planning units. Operational planning units typically represent a single treatment type. Data associated with operational units are contained in the corresponding attribute table; these data include acres and primary objectives (i.e. aspen restoration, fire break, etc.). Following the November 12 joint Stakeholder Committees meeting, the IADT further developed the planning areas and operational units. A single planning area covers Desolation Wilderness, as prescribed fire is the primary treatment within this area. The IADT will continue to refine planning areas, operational planning units and proposed treatment type as development of the proposed action progresses.

Discussion – Draft Polygons

- How did the IADT develop boundaries for the ten planning areas?
 - The ten polygons referred to as priority planning areas (a partial misnomer at this point) were the IADT's first attempt to narrow the focus of the LRS. The IADT used data such as non-resilient trees per acre and risk of high severity fire to determine boundaries. These priority planning areas do not exclude treatment in other areas.
- On the legend, how are PAC/PAC buffer areas distinct from Goals 1 and 2?
 - Areas labeled Goals 1 and 2 may undergo different treatments than areas designated PAC and PAC buffer. Many of PAC buffers are adjacent to existing late seral habitat; the concept is to improve habitat around PACs before treating PACs. PAC analysis will require significant site specificity.
- Stakeholders hoped that polygons would indicate the locations of strategic fuels treatments.
 - The IADT struggled to define "prioritization."
 - Stakeholder suggestion: The map outlines planned projects; it could be strategic to build off of these planned project polygons as an approach to prioritizing treatment areas.
- Why are some areas on LTW landscape not outlined for treatment?
 - The IADT will add a column to the attribute table that describes why an area received no proposed treatment. This will aid in tracking implementation.
- It would be helpful for these maps to include aerial imagery from Google Earth.
- In the legend, specify what Goals 1 and 2 represent.
- The IADT intends for the scoping document to remain fairly high level. Additional site specificity will come during the environmental analysis process.
 - The LRS started with the 59,000 acre LTW landscape. The IADT has narrowed this to 17,539 acres for mechanical thinning and 2,726 acres for hand thinning. The NEPA and CEQA teams will further refine these areas as they hone in on the landscape and determine operational feasibility.

- Recreational and backcountry access are additional categories that will undergo future analysis.

Prioritization Approach

At the November 12 joint Stakeholder Committees meeting, stakeholders highlighted the need to develop a clear prioritization scheme for treatment areas. The IADT highlighted a particular challenge in prioritization: WUI areas and areas at high risk of high severity wildfire represent a majority of the LTW landscape.

The IADT asked Stakeholders to reflect on the following questions:

- Is it better to prioritize treating less of the landscape with more benefit per acre/the highest risk vs. more of the landscape with less work needed but maybe not the highest priority areas?
- Is it better to treat a whole watershed (or Planning Area) which will have more impacts but may be easier logistically vs. spread out treatments each year and be more logistically difficult but less ecologically impactful?
- Are there particular forest types or geographical parts of the landscape that warrant early attention? (i.e. protect the limited area of red fir vs. decrease mixed conifer)

Discussion – Prioritization

Stakeholders offered the following guidance:

- Remember that the LRS emphasizes increasing pace and scale of restoration.
- As areas outlined on the map as “Planned Projects” are treated, priority areas adjacent to these sections could be cued up for implementation.
- Focus on community protection. Beyond community defense, prioritize:
 - Streams
 - Meadows
 - Aspen
- Add attributes to the table such as:
 - Adjacency to planned treatments
 - Accessibility
 - Ease of bringing the polygon into a state of resilience
 - Consider assigning a prioritization score based on all of these attributes
- How important is the prioritization process?
 - Stakeholder response: While a formal, strict process is not critical, there should be a process that builds on existing plans and points implementation in a specific direction.
- Other factors to consider when prioritizing:
 - Implementation will need to meet certain sedimentation requirements. It would probably not be feasible to treat a watershed in one year.
 - Should LTW treat an entire PAC in one year or space out treatments? Should LTW treat neighboring PACs all at once?

- Implementation around neighborhoods should probably be carried out as quickly as possible.
- While the team should not simply select all of the easiest projects in the beginning, there is some value in obtaining success early on.
- Past experience with Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program: Starting with the easier projects helped keep the partners together. Perhaps don't start with PACs in year one.
- Will stand exams be part of NEPA? Will there be stand exams in PACs?
 - Combination of 2018 EcObject data and stand exams. Should have 2018 EcObject data by end of January.
 - The NEPA team will decide how they want to gather data in PACs.

Summary of strategic ideas for prioritization:

- Treat areas around neighborhoods quickly; remove material as quickly as possible.
- Prioritize areas adjacent to already-planned treatments.
- Start small and build success.
- Prioritize smaller areas that would have larger benefits and then plan treatment adjacent to these areas.
- Remain attuned to funding opportunities.
- Consider operational constraints such as the water quality threshold; treatments must be scheduled so as not to exceed the water quality threshold.

Next Steps:

- IADT will refine the attribute table. Stakeholders can send any additional ideas for attributes to Jen Greenberg or Julia Golomb.
- IADT will code areas that are omitted from the planning area to identify why these areas are not receiving treatment (e.g. steep slopes, soil type, etc.).
- IADT will consider pairing aerial imagery to the operational units maps.
- IADT will change the legend on the operational units map to clearly define Goals 1 and 2.

Stakeholder Input on Monitoring Plan Goals and Guiding Questions

Executive Intent for Monitoring Plan: The Executive Team wants a narrow, focused scope for a strategic LTW monitoring plan that leverages data that is already collected in the Basin.

LTW Monitoring Plan Goals

1. Evaluate whether LTW is increasing social-ecological resilience.
2. Evaluate whether agencies are implementing the LRS as intended.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of new or expanded management techniques.
4. Evaluate the performance of LTW modeling.

Each Goal has multiple Guiding Questions, and each question would have multiple indicators. Jennifer Lam of Blue Earth Consultants reviewed the Goals and Guiding Questions with stakeholders.

Key Discussion Questions:

- Do the monitoring plan Goals and Guiding Questions define an appropriate scope for the monitoring plan?
- If you could only monitor two goals and four questions, which goals and questions would you prioritize?

Discussion – Monitoring Plan Goals and Guiding Questions

IADT and Stakeholders agreed that these Goals and Guiding Questions are generally appropriate, but needed refining. Stakeholders approved moving forward with a refined version of this document.

Blue Earth Consultants asked stakeholders to select two priority Goals and four priority Questions:

- Stakeholder 1: Goal 1 and Goal 2.
 - Individual questions:
 - “Have risks associated with high severity fire been reduced?”
 - Rephrase fire management question two: “Are fires occurring the way we want them to?”
 - Landscape function as an overarching question, perhaps captured under “Is the treated landscape trending towards NRV?”
 - “Are monitoring efforts informing adaptive management & helping LTW meet our goals?”
- Stakeholder 2: Goal 1 and Goal 4.
 - Modeling was such a big-ticket item, if we're going to use modeling again we should definitely use monitoring to decide if it was worth it.
 - “Have risks associated with high severity fire been reduced?”
 - “Is the treated landscape trending towards Natural Range of Variability (NRV)?”
 - “Are implemented projects meeting multiple goals and objectives of the LRS?”
- Stakeholder 3: Goal 1 and Goal 2.
 - Rephrase Economic Opportunities question 3: “Is biomass removal creating economic benefits?”
 - “Is the treated landscape trending towards Natural Range of Variability (NRV)?”
 - “Is pace and scale of restoration increasing?”
 - “Are monitoring efforts informing adaptive management & helping LTW meet our goals?”
- Stakeholder 4: Goal 1 and Goal 2.
 - “Is the treated landscape trending towards Natural Range of Variability (NRV)?”
 - “Has the social acceptance of treatment (including prescribed fire) increased?”
 - “Is pace and scale of restoration increasing?”

- “Are LTW agencies working effectively with each other and partners (e.g., the Washoe Tribe, Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, others)?”
- Stakeholder 5: Goal 1 and Goal 2.
 - “Has the social acceptance of treatment (including prescribed fire) increased?”
 - “Is pace and scale of restoration increasing?”
 - “Are measured indicator values aligning with modeled predictions?”
- Stakeholder 6: Goal 1 and Goal 3.
 - “Have risks associated with high severity fire been reduced?”
 - “Has treatment increased the function of stream, meadow, and riparian habitats?”
 - “Are LTW restoration activities helping impaired waters in the region improve water quality and meet their Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) recommendations?”
 - “Is prescribed fire achieving ecological benefits?”
- Stakeholder 7: Goal 1 and Goal 2.
 - Rephrase fire management question 2: “Are fires occurring on the landscape in ways that confer desired outcomes?”
 - “Has the condition of habitat been maintained or improved?”
 - “Is the treated landscape trending towards NRV?”
 - “Are monitoring efforts informing adaptive management & helping LTW meet our goals?”
- Stakeholder 8: I cannot only pick two goals.
 - Goals should not be eliminated; the monitoring plan should be as comprehensive as the LRS.
 - IADT response: The goal of this meeting is not to pick two goals and solely move forward with those goals; rather, the IADT is trying to get an idea of what people care about and which areas to focus on.
 - There is a significant difference in feasibility for some monitoring questions as opposed to others. What is realistic to monitor within the capacity of the group?
- IADT Members:
 - I think all of these goals and questions are important; some questions could be structured differently.
 - The Monitoring Team needs to determine which are even possible to implement.
 - Water quality is very important to monitor.
 - Are indicator values aligning with modeled predictions?
 - Goal 2 questions would be simple to answer. It is also likely that these questions will be answered naturally as the project progresses.
 - Goal 3 questions are important for managers.
 - State Parks - Items important to us for monitor include:
 - Streams, meadows, riparian habitats.
 - Biodiversity.
 - Cultural resources.

Additional Comments:

- Rephrase the question, “Are opportunities to sequester carbon through biomass removal being maximized?” as “Are opportunities to leverage economic benefit through biomass removal being maximized?” (or something along those lines).
- Clarify the question, “When a fire occurs, is it burning within the Natural Range of Variability (NRV)?”
- Add a question such as, "What mistakes are we making now?" or "How can we modify this so we can do better on the next project?"
- Add a question such as, "What are the barriers to implementation? Is it money? Is it a specific policy?"
- The monitoring plan should be high-level.
- There will be priority monitoring goals, and there will also be project-specific monitoring in response to regulations, permitting, etc. Items that are already regularly monitored/required include:
 - Were BMPs implemented correctly?
 - Lahontan regulations.
 - NEPA monitoring requirements.
 - Forest Plan monitoring requirements.
- Stakeholders advise that it is more strategic to first identify key monitoring questions and then consider what monitoring is already happening in the Basin (as opposed to the other way around).
- Stakeholders recommend that the IADT conveys to the Executive Team that Stakeholders do not want the goals to be narrowed, but rather all goals should be represented.
 - IADT response: The Executives want a comprehensive package that is also the most effective package possible.
 - Executives were in agreement that all of the goals were important.
- The Monitoring Team may develop a set of criteria for the monitoring protocol. Indicators can then be scored accordingly. Criteria could include:
 - Utility
 - Cost
 - Ease

Next Steps

1. Blue Earth will refine the Monitoring Questions based on Stakeholder input.
2. IADT and Blue Earth Consultants will share with stakeholders a revised version of Monitoring Plan Guiding Questions. The Monitoring Team and Blue Earth will provide a timeline clarifying stakeholder input opportunities during Monitoring Plan development.
3. Stakeholders are invited to participate in the Monitoring Team if desired.

Meeting Participants

Organizing and Participating Agencies

CTC – California Tahoe Conservancy
FWS – Friends of the West Shore
NFF – National Forest Foundation
USFS LTBMU – U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
NDF – Nevada Division of Forestry
KTB – Keep Tahoe Blue/The League to Save Lake Tahoe
SPF – Sugar Pine Foundation
TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
CBI – Consensus Building Institute
CSP – California State Parks
TF – The Tahoe Fund
EPA – US Environmental Protection Agency
UCB – University of California at Berkeley
CF TFFT – CalFire, Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team
TAMBA – Tahoe Area Mountain Bike Association
BEC – Blue Earth Consultants

Stakeholder Science Committee Members

1. Zach Bradford, KTB
2. Sue Britting, SFL
3. Jeff Brown, UCB
4. Maria Mircheva, SPF
5. Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS
6. Roland Shaw, NDF

Stakeholder Community Committee Members

1. Skyler Monaghan, TF
2. Patrick Parsel, TAMBA

Staff

1. Christine Aralia, CTC
2. Sarah Di Vittorio, NFF
3. Brian Garrett, USFS LTBMU
4. Jen Greenberg, CTC
5. Julia Golomb, CBI
6. Shana Gross, USFS LTBMU
7. Silver Hartman, CSP
8. Jennifer Lam, Blue Earth Consultants
9. Kat McIntyre, TRPA
10. Nadia Tase, CF TFFT
11. Bri Tiffany, NFF