

Meeting Notes from the first Quarterly meeting for Forest Service/Honey Badger rollout discussion held on 10/3/24

Present: Tom Yount, Gil Rossner, Todd Walker, Chris Robinson, Ashley Nettles, Holly Hampton and Jan Wilkins.

Prior to discussing Honey Badger, there was general discussion about conditions on Forest Service lands within the watershed:

- The eco blocks moved from the borrow pit on FSR437 to help with fire equipment staging have been moved back. The damaged barrier material was not replaced, but it was removed. Shooters are shooting at the eco blocks. We will all monitor new drainage conditions now that some of the moisture barrier has been removed.
- Several new “log decks” were created as places to store timber cut as a result of the Ridge Creek fire. We expressed concern that these new cut and flattened areas will become shooting sites or mud bogging areas in the future if they are not reclaimed. We were assured that they will be rehabbed as soon as the logs are gone. (For sale now-waiting for buyer.)
- Todd asked what will happen to the site we have submitted a 319 application to rehabilitate? FS said it should proceed, and that they may have logs that we can use for the project. (“Hazard trees” that the FS will be removing because they are burned, snags, or endanger roads.). HLWA board will have to discuss. Todd says the benefit of using reclaimed cedar dock logs is that they are full of nails and bolts and hard to cut up for firewood. Much cheaper to use FS logs.
- If there are other areas that need reclamation, we can work with Chris early to identify those areas and let them know how many logs we’ll need, and where we want them. (206 and FSR437 upper and lower intersections?)
- Holly explained different sources of funds available for restoration/improvement projects: Stewardship Sales - one in Honey Badger - (\$\$ goes to work within the area.) The second is BAER money (Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation) - these funds are for long term improvements specific to repairing fire damaged areas; hardening slopes and crossings with rip rap, armored rolling dips in roads, etc.). They have one year to use it after the fire. BAER funds are only for emergency work, and only for fires that are larger than 500 acres or close to houses. They have identified 2 culverts that will need upgrades, and other road work on upper FSR437, 406 and on ridge on 1530.
- There are 1200 acres of timber within the Ridge Creek Fire area that will be salvaged. Holly said that the good news from the fire is that only 5% was identified as high severity, (with permanent or long lasting impacts,) and 40% considered moderate, 55% low impact. Moderate and low means that they predict the forest will regenerate without intervention. The fire is 100% contained.
- At this point, FS is not expecting a big increase in the nutrient load into Hayden Creek as a result of the fire. Chris Robinson has already evaluated the highest vulnerability areas. He says there was limited erosion after 1.5 inches of rain.

- Ashley noted that roads were improved for fire suppression needs. Already in better condition than pre-fire. (Like FSR437.) FS committed to improving FSR437 further, but it will not be closed. The local FS District is in need engineering support and is looking to fill a vacant engineer position. Todd mentioned that Eric Shanley of the Highway District has volunteered to do engineering design for FSR437.
- Problems with existing FSR437: original design was for sheeting water away from road. (Unfortunately, due to proximity to creek, and lack of barrier protection, the sheeted water goes into creek.). Some areas of the road can work for in-sloping, could be raised a couple of feet, moved over about 5 feet, and/or have good, armored swale (using aggregate in the bottom.). The immediate solution is to limit potholes that can splash sediment laden water down the slope. FS Looking for money for engineering and improvements. RAC funds???
- FS asked that HLWA consider a shooting site clean-up as community service project. This would be an opportunity to raise public awareness and build a bridge to the shooting community; identifying shooters that may be willing to sponsor cleanups in future. Jan will take the idea to the Board.

There was discussion about the objectives for the group. FS asked that we have one point person, (Tom Yount, since these meetings are his proposal?) Want to roll FSR437 discussions into quarterly meetings, to eliminate repetition. Jan to take to Board. FS says we need to prioritize what we can tackle.

Tom reported on Hayden Creek monitoring plan. He will submit WID/FS/DEQ M.O.U. proposal. Monitoring, which has already started, will sample nutrient concentration, turbidity, and flow. Plan to report results in 2025. TY also said that DEQ is hiring a replacement for Kristin Lowell. In the meantime, Craig Cooper or Bob Steed can answer questions. All participants have clear roles and responsibilities.

Possible future project may be rehabilitation or expansion of existing wetlands on private property just above the lake where the creek has been diverted. TY says owner willing to entertain ideas for improving wetlands viability and function.

TY pointed out that water quality is of key importance to residents on the lake, half of whom rely on the lake for domestic water. (About 350 households.) Harmful blue green algae blooms can drastically affect the health of people and animals.

HONEY BADGER:

FS schedule still on track, regardless of the Ridge Creek Fire. We can expect to see Trees coming off the hills in 2026. The only changes anticipated may be the need to leave more live trees near the burn areas. "Buried Treasure" projected for sale in the 3rd quarter of 24, "Cascade" in the 4th quarter. (This is the designated Stewardship parcel).

TY reminded the group that sediment finding its way to the waterways will get worse over the life of Honey Badger and will be improved as the projects end and roads are decommissioned. FS also noted that the modeling of sediment contribution was FOR ROADS ONLY. Other sources of sediment and erosion due to logging were not considered in their modeling.

FYI: The fire that we referred to as the "Jim Creek" fire was actually not a fire suppressed by the FS. This fire fell under state jurisdiction, even though it is FS land. Go figure. FS folks knew nothing about that fire, which is officially called the "Horse Ridge Fire."

The next meeting will be on Jan.9th at 10:30 am. If we want the zoom option, Mary Ann or Will would have to set it up.