Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration and Wild land Urban Interface – Comments by Dave Ensign

What I find don't like about this project is found in the title.

The word landscape implies that rather than work from individual stands the project will call a massive area a stand and design operations for a landscape stand too complex to be workable. I suggest planners go back to the stand method and not the landscape as you cannot manage for everything at once.

It looks to me that the agency has changed the tried and true method of forest management from working from individual forest components to starting from the whole ecosystem. What has worked in the past was to characterize forest components by Habitat Type into manageable geographic areas. Habitat identification of a forest area really contained all the elements producing unique phenotypes.

Genetics, weather, soil type, landforms, aspect, elevation, age all contributing to a HT which gave managers something small and unique enough to grapple with including aquatic/terrestrial/fire issues.

I suggest that planners work from a stand not the whole landscape to develop plans. I think there is a need to go back to on the ground inventory work to up date stand data and get ideas for management.

So, I recommend that current stand conditions be what drive planning rather than using a general idea called restoration be the excuse for an operation.

If stands are healthy the aquatic and terrestrial species diversity will be also.

Speaking of restoration I get the impression from the document that the Forest Service in the past failed to restore the landscapes. The FS on the Swan Lake RD has done an excellent job in the past restoring stands by tried and true silvicultural methods to a good condition. Your current interest seems to be restoring a whole landscape. My question is what condition do you choose and how do you choose and what historic period are you trying to recreate? This drive to restore seems quite arbitrary derived from value judgments. Really if there is some need to restore then let the forest restore itself letting ordinary plant succession take place. All stands are at present moving toward old growth conditions by normal successional pathways.

Your project has chosen to improve or enlarge old growth stands and discourage shade tolerant species.

WL, DF, & PP have been chosen to dominate. Why discriminate against certain species that will decrease the diversity you seek?

GF is an excellent tree to manage. It comes into under stories & regenerates readily and grows fast. It can be used as sawtimber in as little as 40-50 years. It makes excellent white wood lumber and house logs, and even firewood. This species deserves reconsideration as a very important component.

LP is another species that should be encouraged. It also grows fast and provides good products throughout a stands life. It starts by serotiny or not and from dog hair to grape stakes to rails to poles to house logs to saw timber provides many management opportunities.

Road beds also storm proof themselves as time goes by. Thus I am opposed to any closure work and destruction of public assets. The roads are important for fire access, future operations, and recreation.

If truth be known the sedimentation that has been noticed probably is small compared to what is naturally derived as seasons go by.

On the whole this project is too complicated and too expensive and too difficult to manage.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Dave Ensign 12/10/2018