

Field Review Pocahontas TS Unit 1

Eastern Divide Ranger District, GWJ

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Background: Operator is currently logging Unit 1. We visited the site to review a temporary road that was constructed within the 100' riparian corridor of a wetland. Matt Jacobs joined us on site as sale administrator.

Observation 1: The temporary road is on the west side of Unit 1 within 60 feet of the edge of the wetland; the slope was less than 10%. It is surfaced with large erosion stone. Appropriately, the sale administrator added a section of silt fence at the edge of the road. There was no obvious sediment leaving the road surface toward the wetland. The decision to construct the road at this location was made during the logging operation on site with the contractor. It was not identified as being necessary to encroach on the riparian corridor during project planning.

Comments/Recommendations: In the Forest Plan, motorized vehicles outside of designated crossings, and ground disturbing activities, may be allowed in the riparian corridor on a case-by-case basis, after site specific analysis. Any activity allowed under these conditions is minimized and effective sediment trapping structures are required. The need for this should be identified up front in the planning process so that specialist input can be provided and adequate mitigation measures developed. In addition, this would allow for disclosure during effects analysis. Wetland is to the right in the picture below. We discussed in field that during unit close out it would be best not to disturb the loose dirt by pulling the brush back into the road, but rather stabilize it in place.



Observation 2: An unauthorized skid road was bladed into the west side of Unit 1, with a 5 foot high cut bank. This was not the skid road location previously agreed to and flagged by the contractor and sale administrator. The skid road is just outside the riparian corridor.

Comments/Recommendations: This location should be closely monitored during continued use; because of steeper slopes (particularly if there is wet weather) there is potential for rutting and erosion into the riparian corridor that could reach the perennial stream. There was discussion on how to effectively rehab this road during close out of the unit. To pull slash and soil back into the road profile would take an excavator. The pictures below depict the road looking downhill and uphill.



Observation 3: Soil was pushed into the head of a drainage, pushing aside the filter sock placed by MVP at the entrance road to the east side of Unit 1. Straw was spread on the loose soil over the bank, and straw bales were placed at the bottom of the bank. In addition, slash and soil were pushed into the riparian corridor of the same stream, under the powerline.

Comments/Recommendations: These actions were unnecessary and unacceptable. Additional erosion control in the form of silt fence or filter socks should be placed at the edge of the road and the head of the drain. Bare soil within the riparian corridor should be protected with either a thick mattress of slash, or seeded, fertilized and mulched. The first picture shows the soil pushed into the drain with the filter sock pushed aside. The second picture shows the hay bales at the bottom of the bank, and edge of the seep. The third picture depicts the slash and bare soil within the riparian corridor.





Observation 4: There was an unauthorized skid trail parallel to and then crossing an ephemeral drainage on steep slopes on the east side of Unit 1, with soil pushed into the drain. Waterbars were constructed, but pointing the wrong direction, funneling water towards the drain. There was an alternative to cross the area on a gentler grade outside of the drainage that was not utilized.

Comments/Recommendations: The bare soil should be stabilized immediately with either a thick mattress of slash, or seeded, fertilized and mulched. Erosion and sediment control measure should be taken so that loose soil does not travel further down the drainage and waterbars constructed properly. First picture is looking up the trail adjacent to the drainage. Second picture is looking down the ephemeral channel.



Observation 5: Much of the unit had bare soil that had been bladed or disturbed by heavy equipment. It is understood that the unit has not been closed out yet, but there was inadequate slash on the skid trails, in addition, there did not seem to be enough slash on site to cover all of the bare ground.

Comments/Recommendations: Winter wheat or annual rye and mulch should be used to cover exposed ground where slash is lacking to provide proper erosion protection. The first picture shows exposed ground and little slash to pull in. The second picture shows a skid trail with a waterbar pointing the wrong direction.

