Pinchot Partners Monthly Meeting/Yellowjacket Field Tour

October 20, 2021, 9:30am – 2:30pm

In attendance: Janene Ritchie, Pete Krabbe, John O’Brien, Anjolene Price, Sean Roome (Cascade Forest Conservancy, proxy for Lucy Brookham) Rudy Salakory (Cowlitz Indian Tribe), Sheryl Hall (GP Trash Force), Nikia Hernandez (FS), Elizabeth Robinson (FS), Dave Olson, (FS), Conner England (FS), Donovan (Anjolene’s friend)

The field trip began at 9:30 AM at the Cowlitz Valley Ranger Station. Nikia Hernandez provided a safety briefing. Elizabeth Robinson provided maps and information about the project site (see attached).

The group caravanned in several vehicle to Candidate Stand 49 on Forest Road 28, arriving just after 10am. Stand 49 originated in 1930, naturally regenerated following fire and is 51 acres, located within the Matrix land allocation. Dominant species present are Douglas Fir at 114 trees per acre and Western Hemlock at 110 trees per acres, and it was previously harvested in 1994. The desired conditions established by the North West Forest Plan for Matrix lands are stands that produce commercial yields of wood through a regulated timber harvest. Retention of moderate levels of ecologically valuable late-seral components and early-seral habitat are also desired. The proposed treatment includes thinning.

The rainy weather and slick conditions combined with steep slopes prevented us from entering the unit, so our discussion occurred in a grassy area by the road. Discussion was lively and included topics such as tree mortality and varying classes of snag decay; the benefits of regeneration harvest in creating early seral habitat; harvest methods; and more. Connor England shared information related to Northern spotted owl, and new methods that could potentially confirm that Northern spotted owls are indeed still inhabiting areas that are documented as historical nesting grounds. Rudy Salakory shared information on the Cowlitz Tribe’s in-stream restoration work on the Cispus River/Yellowjacket creek, which we drove by on the way to the site. The group also discussed the importance of sharing stories and successes. The Forest Service may be limited in how and what they share, which is where the collaborative can assist in telling positive stories. The idea of (re?)starting a communications committee within the Pinchot Partners and bringing on a student intern were also discussed. Forest Service staff also offered to connect us directly with their public affairs team.

The group departed around 11:30am for the second stop, North Fork Campground on Forest Road 23, once the group was sufficiently wet and cold. Lunch and an informal meeting occurred once the group reconvened. The group did not meet quorum, so no official business was addressed. Janene provided a brief update on the results of her contract renewal in September, including a title change from Coordinator to Executive Director.

After the meeting concluded, Nikia led us to a sanitation harvest site just to the East of the road. Here, the group discussed the harvest to address Douglas fir root rot, potential changes to the campground to accommodate larger recreational vehicles and campers, the possibility of adding yurts, etc. Nikia also shared that the FS plans to allow OHV use on a nearby loop of forest roads. This would be the first time OHV use would be permitted in the Gifford Pinchot NF. The field trip was concluded at 2:30 PM and everyone left via Forest Road 23.

Minutes prepared by Janene Ritchie