GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

Technical Committee Project Evaluation

Project Name: Devil's Run & Chesnimnus Creek Water Gap Modifications

Project Rating: (High, Medium, Low)(+'s or –'s if you like) **Low -**

Limiting factors: (does it appear the proposed actions will address limiting factors)
Sediment

Watershed/species benefits: (are there tangible benefits)
Joseph Creek watershed/summer steelhead – watershed benefit would be reduced sediment inputs from grazing of domestic livestock, species benefit would be improved spawning and incubation conditions.

Benefits would accrue in the narrow water gaps provided that the livestock actually use the rocked crossings and don't just cross in a different location. It is not clear if the entire gap (narrow gaps) would be rocked or only a portion of the gap. Proposed actions are not likely to benefit habitat in Devil's Run WG3 or Chesnimnus WG1 because the livestock have access to over two miles of stream in each of these reaches. There is not enough information to evaluate the culvert removal; benefits would depend on the current condition of the culvert, the amount of sediment being delivered to the stream in the current condition, and the amount and season of use of the proposed ford**.**

Modifications to existing watergaps along 8 miles of stream should improve stream function and water quality, but it appears that a more comprehensive plan would be more beneficial.

It is difficult to assess the watershed benefits due to lack of details on the size of the current watergaps compared to the reduced size of the gaps. It appears the majority of the watergaps are not changing in size but are just being rocked.

It is difficult to determine the scale of the benefits vs cost. The proposal states 1400 additional feet of streambank will be protected out of 8 project miles. Granted any sediment reduction is usually good but is the 1400 feet of protection going to make much of a difference.

Technical merit:
Proposal would treat local symptoms of a larger problem; too much livestock use in the stream bottom. Proposed actions are technically sound for specific sites provided that livestock actually use the rocked crossings. Extending exclosures to incorporate sensitive areas such as wetlands is also sound and should provide benefits. Technical merit of the project could be improved by additional actions to reduce impacts such as modification of stocking levels, change season of use, modify pasture boundaries, or construct additional exclosure fencing. It is difficult to assess how much reduction in total sediment delivery to the streams will result because there is more length of stream accessible to livestock (according to maps) in the project area than is protected by exclosures.

Technical details are minimal but appropriate directions are indicated. There is concern that not enough is being done, or perhaps that more could be done, to improve habitat and the long-term success and

health of the two creeks. Perhaps more wood, more planting, or more control on the watergaps to improve resilience due to trampling.

During the site review in 2009 It was stated that the watergaps would be reduced to around 30ft in width. From the proposal, gaps appear to be much larger than that. The proposal does not identify the current size of watergaps so it is hard to tell the amount of benefit to be gained. Are the gaps that are not being reduced already ~30ft in width? With a break of over 2 years since site visit it is difficult to remember and the sponsor has not provided that information in the proposal.

Rock at 30 ft or smaller gaps would be beneficial, however if the gaps are much larger the cattle will still hold in the stream and rock will provide little benefit.

During the site visit is was requested to evaluate the ability to provide off channel water and close water gaps. Sponsor indicates this is not feasible due to the stream being in the middle of the pasture. It seems like more gaps could have been removed/closed. Or why were gates at the gaps not pursued enabling cattle to be pastured on one side of the fence or another.

Special considerations:

Reaches of 2+ miles should not be considered "water gaps" i.e. Devil's Run WG3 and Chesnimnus WG1.

Things you like about the project:
The project attempts to address obvious problems in areas where efforts to protect streams results in concentrated livestock use. Water gaps are a necessity and result in "sacrifice zones" when riparian areas are fenced. Any actions that can be taken to reduce impacts in these areas are a positive step.

Things you don't like about the project:
The project treats local symptoms and does not explore more comprehensive solutions**.**

Entirely different project than what was reviewed at the site visit. Cost has more than doubled, without working with the GRMW prior to proposal submittal on changes to project scope. Project was anticipated for 2011 implementation, two years between prospectus/site visit and proposal submittal makes it difficult to evaluate technical merits against new projects that are being submitted. Project previously ranked highly due to low cost for benefit to species, and ability to be implemented when other high priority projects were not competing for funding. This may not be the case now. There is minimal cost share from sponsoring agency.

Misc Comment:
It appears that the watergaps serve two functions, livestock water sources and travel ways from one side of the pastures to the other. If there were adequate upslope water sources, either in-place or developed, cattle wouldn't be dependent on the stream. Adequate upland water would also redistribute livestock more to the uplands. There is no information provided to give an indication of upland availability of water. If upland water is available, or developed, some gaps could be removed and the rest rocked and reduced to about 20 feet to serve as travel ways. Why can't all the 300 foot watergaps be reduced to 20

feet wide?

There is an example of "cluttering up an area with trees" adjacent to this project on TNT Gulch. It does not appear to have been effective. The cattle just made their trails weave between the downed trees.

Technical Recommendation:
This project has changed significantly since it was initially reviewed. This is not the same project as was reviewed previously and no contact was made to inform the GRMW and TC of wanted changes to project scope and budget. Actions proposed will provide some benefit, but a more comprehensive approach would provide more benefit.

At a minimum the proposal needs to be redone, providing answers to the above questions, and recycled with a site visit by current technical committee members next spring.

We would encourage the sponsor to develop a more comprehensive strategy and plan for these pastures that redistributes livestock more away from the streams and minimizes direct impacts to the streams. The current actions, narrowing the watergaps (an unknown amount) and rocking existing eroding areas is treating symptoms not causes.