FUELS REDUCTION AND ITS EFFECTS ON
NEOTROPICAL BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

Monitoring of the Chemult Townsite Fuels Reduction Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objectives and Expected Results: Reducing fuels in the Chemult Townsite Fuels Reduction Project benefits ponderosa pine habitats by changing the structure of the multi-strata forest. This single stratum ponderosa pine habitat is vastly underrepresented on the east side of the Cascades, and has contributed to the decline of many bird species associated with old-growth pine structure. This fuels reduction monitoring project dovetails with the strategies for achieving functioning ecosystems for landbirds in Partners in Flight's *Landbird Conservation and Management Activities Associated with Restoration of Dry Forest Habitats,* and *The Conservation of Landbirds in the East Slope Cascades of eastern Oregon and Washington* (2000) by enhancing open pine stands, and reintroducing fire. Focal bird species described in these plans include eastside old-growth and fire-associated bird species of concern, which are expected to increase as a result of this fuels project.

Monitoring: Pre- and post-treatment bird monitoring strategies were developed in collaboration with expert partners, including Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO), Partners in Flight, and the American Bird Conservatory, to be able to assess bird responses to various vegetative/fuels treatments and ensure monitoring is compatible with other bird data collected in the region. Baseline monitoring began in FY 2001 in the 3,100-acre fuels project before unit layout. Improved monitoring continued in FY 2002 and FY 2003, during and after mechanical fuel treatments, and includes songbird census during the breeding season, woodpecker callback surveys, and vegetation habitat monitoring. Because of close collaboration with KBO (a formalized working agreement is in the works) in developing protocols and data consistency, this important information can be pooled with region-wide bird population monitoring data KBO is collecting, thereby strengthening data analysis with results more useful for land managers.

Needs: The National Fire Plan paid for the initial permanent plots as part of monitoring the fuels treatments. The Fremont-Winema wildlife program has since funded the surveys, but can no longer due to appropriation reductions. Only a portion of the monitoring has been done in FY 2004 due to lack of funding. The amount needed to complete the FY 2004 bird surveys, data input, and vegetation monitoring is about $6,000 (needed immediately in order to coincide with and complete this year's breeding season).

Accomplishments to Date:

2001: Monitoring - Developed monitoring strategy with collaborators. Established permanent monitoring plots. Baseline data collected on songbirds and vegetation. Recommendation that 2,500 acres be small tree thinned in project area for habitat restoration and fuels reduction, in addition to sales.

2002: Monitoring - Developed woodpecker monitoring protocol with expert collaborators. Baseline woodpecker surveys conducted with 80 hrs of volunteer assistance. Monitored songbirds.

Habitat Improvement- 500 acres of small tree thinning; post and pole, and firewood removal began.

2003: Monitoring - Woodpecker and bird surveys enhanced to include density estimation capability, vegetation monitoring conducted.

Habitat Improvement- 263 acres of small tree thinning; Commercial logging began.

2004: Monitoring - 80% of woodpecker monitoring completed only.

Habitat Improvement- 153 acres of small tree thinning, logging, and post & pole and firewood removal.

Future Plans: After cooperative funding (HFRA funding, Joint Fire Sciences grant, etc.) and partnerships (KBO, Partners in Flight, etc.) are secured, monitoring will continue throughout the duration of the vegetation treatments and 3-5 years after the last treatment. The Klamath Bird Observatory will analyze the data. The annual cost is about $20,000.

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