



MEETING SUMMARY

Date: January 17, 2007 - 9:00 AM
Re: SR 40 PD&E Study
Fire Management Meeting No. 1
US Forest Service Ranger Station

Attendees: See sign-in sheet

Bill Walsh began the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Alex Hull then explained that the purpose of the meeting was to receive input from the land and fire managers for the various public lands along the SR 40 corridor. He also briefly discussed the input from the Task Force related to this issue which was attached to the meeting agenda. Alex then explained the proposed improvements along SR 40 which include widening to 4-lanes between Silver Springs and SE 183rd Avenue, intersection improvements at SR 19 and US 17, possible three lane widening in Astor and the Volusia area east of the St. Johns River and the potential wildlife crossings.

Following this overview, Alex asked for input from the group on fire management issues and an open discussion began. Rick Lint indicated that it is getting harder to get a permit to perform controlled burns along SR 40 because of smoke issues. He indicated that the flatwoods areas need controlled burns much more than the scrub areas of the forest. The biggest issue with smoke is at night when it settles back to earth, particularly during the winter.

Rick Lint suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding be developed that would outline the various roles and relationships between the various land management agencies, FDOT and law enforcement agencies. This MOU should also include agreements on costs for services provided by these agencies.

The following issues were discussed by the group:

- The USFS is particularly concerned with upcoming RCW habitat expansion efforts in the area west of CR 314A and the controlled burns that will be required as part of this effort. This area is low and wet and may put out smoke for weeks after the initial burn.
- The USFS is also concerned with the fencing that is being proposed as part of the wildlife crossing plan and how fencing will affect access to the forest for fire management purposes.
- There are relatively few windows available to conduct burns from a weather standpoint and if smaller burns are done to reduce smoke issues, less number of burns can be conducted. It is hard to keep up with the fire management needs.
- Because of the need for south winds, it is very hard to conduct winter burns on the north side of SR 40. OGT, USFS and DOF all have heavy fuel loads on their lands north of SR 40 because of this issue.
- Winter burns need to be done to remove heavy fuel loads so that proper summer burns can be conducted. If winter burns cannot be conducted, the ability to conduct summer burns is reduced.

- Who decides if a road needs to be closed due to smoke/safety was discussed. If a burn boss decides that a road should be closed, the local law enforcement agency typically closes the road.
- USFS has four portable variable message signs. The DOF does not have any. FDOT (Ocala Maintenance) has supplied additional variable message signs to the USFS when requested.
- DOF indicated that one of their concerns is a need for signage (variable message signs) and monitoring during overnight hours. If staff is needed for monitoring, it limits their manpower for additional fire management duties that may be required the next day. USFS also expressed concern with manpower availability due to work/rest requirements.
- Carrie Sekerak expressed a need for SR 40 to have better roadway lane delineation (reflective striping) to make the road safer during smoke or fog conditions.
- Some suggestions for safety related improvements were made including the addition of a low power AM radio station and addition of permanent variable message signs as part of forest entrance signs. Rick Lint indicated that at one point, the Task Force report included language regarding permanent variable message signs which was removed by FDOT.
- Cathy Lowenstein indicated that although the SR 40 PD&E Study ends at US 17, the fire management issue extends much farther eastward along SR 40 and the MOU should consider the entire corridor, not just the PD&E limits.
- In addition to the representatives at this meeting (Silver River State Park, OGT, USFS and DOF, the St. Johns River Water Management District (Steve Miller) should be involved with this fire management issue.
- Alex Hull suggested using something similar to the rolling roadblock that is used by FDOT during construction. This concept would involve law enforcement vehicles leading, or escorting, platoons of vehicles through heavy smoke conditions at low speeds.
- A suggestion was made to consider sharing resources (manpower) between the various land management agencies during burns.

Following this discussion, it was agreed that FDOT would facilitate the preparation of an MOU. Each agency will provide copies of existing MOU's and agreements to Alex Hull who will then develop the first draft of the Fire Management MOU for SR 40. Alex would like to work with a more condensed version of today's group (one representative from each land management agency) on the preparation of the draft MOU. After receiving any existing MOU's and agreements from each agency, Alex will prepare a draft MOU for SR 40 Fire Management. Once the first draft MOU is developed, it would be reviewed by the smaller group and revised as necessary before it is given to the larger fire management group for review. It was suggested that the local law enforcement agencies be invited to the first meeting of the group to understand the concept behind the preparation of the MOU.

Following the discussion of the action items for the MOU, the wildlife crossing locations and fencing issues were discussed. Rick indicated that there may be some issues related to the fencing that need to be tied in to the MOU. He mentioned that the MOU should include protocol for if fencing needs to be removed/knocked down, who gets notified and who pays to have it repaired.

Carrie expressed a need for research on wildlife fencing. USFS does not want chain-link fencing used. Possible solutions include electrobraid, although there are vegetation issues with it, and fencing with removable panels.

Carrie indicated that other wildlife crossing experts should be brought into the study. Sandy Jacobson will be available now that the MOU with FDOT is in place for her travel. A wildlife crossing meeting will be scheduled for the time that Sandy Jacobson is in town. Inwood will look

to schedule this next wildlife crossings meeting on February 6, the day prior to the February 7th Steering Committee Meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11:10 am.

*Note: The above reflects the writer understands of the contents of the meeting. If any misinterpretations or inaccuracies are included, please contact **David Dangel (407) 971-8850** as soon as possible for resolution and revisions if necessary.*



Sign-In Sheet

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