Yale Forest Forum: Tribal Forestry: Understanding Current Issues and Challenges

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Yakama Reservation

Treaty of 1855:
“...for the exclusive use and benefit of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.”

1) Palouse 8) Sk’ in-pah
2) Pisquouse 9) Kah-miltpah
3) Yakama 10) Klickitat
4) Wenatchapam 11) Wish ham
5) Klinquit 12) See ap Cat
6) Oche Chotes 13) Li ay was
7) Kow was say ee 14) Shyiks
Yakama Reservation – Treaty of 1855

Forest Area

Agricultural Lands

Range Lands

1.4 Million Acres
Management of the YN Forest Resource

YN Land & Natural Resources Policy Plan
  • Sets broad policy guidelines for the management of the timber resource.

Yakama Nation Forest Management Plan
  • Provides the direction and guidance for forest land management activities.

Forest Land Management Activities By:
  • Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Forestry
  • YN Division of Natural Resources
Yakama Forestry

- BIA Branch of Forestry
- PL 93-638 Tribal Forestry
Forest Management History on the Yakama Reservation

- Prior to the Treaty of 1855
  - Land Managed by Natives primarily through fire
- 1880’s – 1930’s: Grazing of sheep by non-Indians
  - Cattle grazing from 1950’s to present
- 1900’s +: Fire Suppression
  - 1940’s + aggressive fire suppression
- 1940’s: start of first timber sales
Brief History of Forest Management

- 1870 Lumber harvest for establishment
- 1925 First Commercial Timber Harvest
- 1942 First Timber Management Plan
- 1970 90% income for the tribe was from timber
- 1998 Small Diameter Mill
- 2002 Large Diameter Mill
- 2005 Recent Forest Management Plan developed & passed
- 2012 Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification
Timber Sales on the Yakama Reservation

1940’s: 18 mmbf
1950’s: 560 mmbf
1960’s: 1,170 mmbf
1970’s: 1,460 mmbf
1980’s: 1,070 mmbf
1990’s: 1,220 mmbf
2000 – 2006: 1,070 mmbf
YAKAMA NATION FORESTRY

• Our timber resources are essential to our cultural, social and economic needs.

• The Yakama Nation has one of the largest volume forestlands within the BIA at more than 650,000 acres containing an estimated 8 billion board feet of timber.
BALANCING FOREST MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Forest health
- Forest ecosystems
- Revenue and employment
- Threatened and endangered species
- Big-game habitat
- Water quality
- Cultural resource protection
- Riparian / meadow protection
YAKAMA NATION – FORESTRY APPROACH

Reduce the risk of catastrophic forest losses from wildfire, insects and diseases by improving forest health so as to meet the cultural and economic needs of the Yakama People. (Yakama Nation Forest Management Plan, September 2005)
Annual Precipitation
Historic Conditions

- Timber/Vegetation Types
- Fire Regimes/Fuel Types
Long-term Strategy:  
Promote the development of a more resilient and sustainable forest
REVENUE & EMPLOYMENT
Challenges

Issues
• Forest Health & Climate Resilience

Impacts
• 1990s Spruce Budworm
• 2000s Western Pine Beatle
• Catastrophic Fires
• Forest Plan – Future Management
YAKAMA FOREST HEALTH

• Large insect and disease complex
• Fifteen year western spruce budworm outbreak
• 150,000 acres annual defoliation
• Bark beetle population buildups
• An estimated billion board feet of mortality
• Two tribal declarations of emergency, 1997, 2000
• Increasing risk of catastrophic fire
Short-term Strategy:
Recover value of dead and dying trees
Yakama Nation Forest – Fire Risk

2013 – Mile Marker 28 Fire
• 20,000 Acres

2015 – Cougar Creek Fire
• 40,000 acres

10% of Forest Lost in Fires
Mile Marker 28 Fire - July 24, 2013
Cougar Creek Fire

- August 10, 2015 - started in the vicinity of Bench Lake
Yakama Agency BIA Forestry

Staffing
• Critical Vacant BIA Branch of Forestry

Total Harvest Volume
• FY 2023 Less than 25 Million Board Feet Trust Timber Harvested
Yakama Agency BIA Forestry Organization Chart – 2005 Forest Management Plan

123 Total Positions (BIA and Tribal)

- 55 BIA Positions
- 68 Tribal Positions
- 31 Vacant Positions
- 24 Filled BIA Positions
- 21 Vacant Positions
- 47 Filled Tribal Positions
Challenges

Issues

• Staffing levels at Yakama Agency are having a enormous impact on BIA Ability to meet its Trust Responsibility for Timber Sale and Forest Management on Yakama Reservation.

Impacts

• Trust Revenue down, helps run tribal government
• Long-term Viability of Yakama Forest Products
  • Uncertain due to lack of Wood Supply
• Issue continues to be identified in IFMAT IV
• Legally addressing
Annual Timber Harvest
Challenges

Issues
• Forest Infrastructure

Impacts
• Mill Updates - Modernize
• Aging Workforce
  • Loggers & Heavy Equipment
  • Cost for younger folks makes challenging
• Steep Slopes – Yarder, Tether, or other Alternate Harvest
• Pulp Market Change – Residual Chip Market
**Path Forward**

**Forest Management Plan**
- Update Inventory – Single Tree Inventory Using LIDAR
- Develop Management Direction
- Develop Harvest Schedule

**Address Vacancies**
- Tribe looking at 638 Contract
- Reorganize & Modernize Forestry Program
- Working with partners/colleges to develop new work force
- Funding
Forest Management

- Update and Draft New Plan
- 2005 YN Forest Management Plan
- Evaluate
  - Annual Allowable Cut
  - Harvest Schedule
  - Forest Health
  - Climate Change Resilience
  - ESA Impacts
  - Resource Balances
Finding Path Forward

Policy:

- Yakama Forestry Organization
- Harvest Schedule
- Forest Health
- Managing Steep Slopes
- Fuels Treatments – Using Rx Burning
- ESA
- Maintaining Workforce & Infrastructure
- Off-Reservation TFPA Projects
- Carbon Sequestration
Shared Stewardship
The Treaty of 1855

- 13 million acres ceded
- 1.4 million acres reserved
  “…for the exclusive use and benefit of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.”
- Right to hunt, fish, gather is protected throughout Ceded and Usual and Accustomed use areas
- Yakama Nation has fiercely defended its treaty rights and it will continue to do so
Forestry

• **Tribal Forest Protection Act**
• 638 Contract Authority
• Stewardship Contracting
• Cooperative Agreements
The Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA)

- Authorized in 2004
- Tribes to propose projects on federal lands that are boarding or adjacent to tribal trust lands or resources, in order to address hazardous conditions that pose threats to tribal rights, lands, and resources from catastrophic wildfire, insects and disease or other threats.
- The TFPA offers a means of helping the United States fulfill its trust responsibilities to the tribes while promoting the restoration of healthy forest ecosystems on the landscape.
638 Contract TFPA Projects

• Authorized in 2018 Farm Bill
• Gave the Forest Service Authority to enter into an arrangement with Tribal partners under the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act PL 93-638
• Must be a TFPA Proposal
Collaborations

• Tapash Forest Collaborative
• Northcentral Forest Health Collaborative
• South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative
• Teanaway Community Forest
Dry Timber Sale TFPA - Tapash

• In 2016, under the TPFA, the Yakama Nation and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest entered a stewardship agreement

• Restore 548 acres
TFPA CroLo Steward Contract

• Second TFPA
• Restore 581 acres
• Yakama Forest Project also awarded another Stewardship Contract call Win Timber Sale
Collaborative Treatments

• Before and after pictures where DxD was implemented
  • All diameter silviculture prescription

Finn before photo taken by USFS

Finn after photo taken by USFS
TFPA

- Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA)
- Stewardship – Restoration Projects
  - CroLo – 10 Million Board Feet to YFP (2020 to 2021)
  - Thin, lop, and Pile – Forest D. Crew (2021-2023)
  - Uplands Stew – 17 MBF (2023)
  - Upper Swauk Restoration Project (2024)
Yakama Nation leading NEPA work on Vegetation Management Restoration Project on USFS lands in ~189,000-acre Ahtanum –Tieton Watershed

~23,000 Proposed Fuels/Non-commercial Treatment

~17,00 Proposed commercial treatment
Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatments across 993 acres in Tract D across multiple ownerships

2023-2028
Wood Fiesta Helicopter Aquatic Restoration
Multi-watershed collaborative effort

- Enhancing aquatic habitat in remote watersheds that have been greatly altered by past management practices.
- Large wood were placed in stream and on the floodplain
- Seven Yakima River tributaries using a helicopter to improve habitat for native fish species.
YAKAMA NATION FISHERIES PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Habitat Restoration 2008-2019

- 206,178 Acres: Habitat improved or protected
- 436 Miles: Habitat made accessible to fish
- 1,395 Miles: Stream and riparian habitat improved, treated, or protected
- 47,000 People: Educated and informed

11 Subbasins
1,579 Work Locations
Yakama Nation Climate Plan

Climate Adaptation Plan for the Territories of the Yakama Nation

APRIL 2016
Striving for

This

Not This
Yakama Nation Opportunities

• Forest Stewardship Contracting - 638 Contract
• Additional Work with WDFW, WA DNR, and TNC
• Long-term Resource Supply for YFP
• Expand Aquatic Restoration – Salmon Recovery
• Protecting Important Yakama Nation Resources within Ceded Area
• Co-management of Natural Resources