Huckleberries on the Mt Hood NF

Huckleberries is a growing concern. We’ve seen the berry production decline over the last 50-70 years as second growth trees encroach on the old fields.

Highlights of MTH activities

**1992** - Huckleberry workshop

**1995** – Salmon River Watershed Analysis identifies huckleberry opportunities; Ethnographic study.

Zigzag Ranger District, having a large huckleberry resource, has been working with Warm Springs for years and was instrumental in moving the Forest to setting up an MOU in **1997** with Warm Springs . In the MOU, the Forest Service agrees to recognize the importance of huckleberries and to work with Warm Springs to establish long-range objectives and program for huckleberry management. This set the groundwork for developing a management plan which was drafted but never formalized.

**2003** - This was followed by a multi-agency MOU with Warm Springs that sets up a business plan to get work completed.

**2004** – The Zigzag District completed some projects aimed at huckleberry enhancement such as pre-commercial thinning and the Salmonberry timber sale up on Sherar Burn – Wolf Camp Butte area.

In the meantime, the Mt Hood Meadows Ski Resort permittee sets up a voluntary ‘exclusive use’ area for huckleberry harvesting within the ski permit area. The purpose was to protect tribal traditional, cultural and historic uses. They bused in the tribal elders to pick huckleberries.

**2008** – The Mt Hood NF and Warm Springs co-sponsor a huckleberry workshop with sponsors from NW Ecology group, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Mt Hood Meadows Ski Resort, PNW and OSU extension service. The purpose was to increase awareness within the agency of the many values and importance of huckleberries and a lot of the good work going on in various forests. Nine forests, six tribes, and various other agencies/institutions attended the workshop and shared experiences, knowledge and tools available.

After reviewing some of the successes the Warm Spring tribes had with thinning over snow, the Clackamas Ranger district implemented a ‘test’ site on a 65 acre thinning sale for huckleberry enhancement. Like Warm Spring’s results, they saw immediate increase in berry production the following season.

**2009** – The Clackamas District planned a 2,000 acre thinning project for huckleberry restoration (Summit & Huckleberry Thin EAs). The Omnibus Public land Management Act of 2009 directs the Mt Hood to complete a tribal first foods management plan with Warm Springs.

**2011** - Harvest has begun on the Huck Thin Timber Sale which is 400 acres. Soon to follow: Jam, Jelly, and Pie timber sales. Pre-harvest monitoring plots installed (by PSU professor) on the Huck TS. Monitoring will track huckleberry plant response to thinning treatments intended for huckleberry production.

Studies

Minore plots on Wolf Camp Butte – Sherar Burn. Optimum berry production after 20 years following a cut and burn treatment.

Dan Barney – University of Idaho has interest in studying huckleberry on the Mt Hood and GP NFs. He’s already did a soils study and is working on a phenology study.

PNW has expressed interest in working with Warm Springs and the FS especially with incorporating traditional and local ecological knowledge.

Challenges

Land allocations: wilderness, roadless, LSRs

Access management

Resources: funding, economics of timber sales