The following document summarizes the input received during and immediately following the 2018 Controlled Wood Regional Meetings and provides rationale for the resulting mitigation options for the Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS), along with definition of any identified gaps in the final set of options.

**Please note that almost any of the proposed mitigation options may be done individually or in collaboration with other certificate holders, or other entities that have similar desired outcomes. Collaboration is encouraged to scale up potential mitigation impact, and FSC US will seek to assist with that collaboration when feasible.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Research**

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| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Option  (#3) Invest in student research to improve knowledge of distribution and other population characteristics | Topline Input   * Need more info on population characteristics other than range * Have basic management guidance for salamanders, but need species specific * Not just students * Auditability concerns with original mitigation option * Combine with other options so that new information is used in an adaptive management cycle * Find out what USFS knows first about extent, habitat & disturbance regimes and then determine needs for research and outreach |

*Consultation Insights: Feedback from all perspectives supports research as a mitigation approach, but recognizes that it needs to build on partnerships and work that has already been done. Comments consistently emphasized that it should not be just student research, but that there are many other entities that might be able to work on research to better define the species range, if needed, establish other important species characteristics and evaluate acceptable forest management practices. Input also recognizes that research on its own is not enough, forest management activities need to use new information as it becomes available in an adaptive management approach. Additionally, input on other risk topics recognized that research on its own doesn’t mitigate the identified risk, there needs to be another action that goes with it.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as a two-part option for ‘high impact’ organizations:**

1. **Engage with and/or provide monetary or in-kind resources to an entity or alliance that is currently conducting, or has the capacity to initiate, research on species characteristics, clarifying positive and negative impacts of forest management activities on Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS) populations and/or on management practices for CBS conservation, that builds on knowledge already acquired by the USFS within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area; and**
2. **Use the results of the research to improve implementation of another mitigation option.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Education & Outreach**

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| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Options  (#2) Influence forest management practices to leave scattered down woody debris (not piles) and nearby areas of refuge, and to limit large canopy gaps  (#4) Invest in education to improve forest management practices in the species range | Topline Input   * Do not need to wait for new information, can communicate what is known now * This is about getting the information into the hands of those who are harvesting trees * Must focus on continuous improvement – incorporate new information as available * Need to clarify who receives this information – loggers, landowners, suppliers, state agencies and others who can influence management practices on the ground * ‘Influence’ is not auditable * ‘Support,’ ‘Provide’ or ‘Participate’ instead of ‘invest’ * Emphasize small landowners/family forests |

*Consultation Insights: As with other risk topics, feedback indicates that communicating information about harvesting techniques (e.g., size of canopy openings, scattering slash, etc.) and other best management practices is widely supported as a mitigation approach. Comments indicate that Organizations need to be able to demonstrate how they are contributing to the ultimate goal of getting these practices implemented on the ground. However, some input suggests that the original mitigation options are not auditable. As with the research option, comments emphasize the importance of this mitigation being part of an adaptive management cycle, with the information that gets shared being updated as new information becomes available.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Options**

**The following is offered as an option that could be scaled for any impact level:**

**Using materials (as described below), and with a desired outcome of engaging landowners, foresters, and loggers within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in conservation of Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS) populations, communicate to audiences (as described below) the conservation values of CBS, potential threats from forest management activities, and opportunities for conservation through management that maintains, enhances, or restores habitat for CBS and reduces or eliminates potential threats.**

* **Materials: Developed by, or developed in cooperation with, organizations/individuals with expertise in CBS, or FSC US, and delivered in a manner that will be the most effective in achieving the desired outcome of engaging landowners, foresters, and loggers in conservation of CBS populations, while reflecting the specific context and characteristics of the Organization. Materials should be updated as appropriate to incorporate new information as it becomes available.**
* **Audiences: Audiences will reflect the specific context and characteristics of the Organization, but communications should be directed toward those audiences where the communications will be most effective in helping to achieve the desired outcome of engaging landowners, foresters, and loggers within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in conservation of CBS populations. Depending upon the Organization’s location in the supply chain, communications may be directly with landowners, foresters, or loggers, or through intermediaries such as community members, suppliers, or in collaboration with organizations/individuals already addressing CBS conservation needs.**

**The following is offered as an option for Organizations with suppliers that are land managers or that purchase directly from the source forest:**

**Develop/adapt a procurement policy that reflects the above communications themes and clearly states the expectation that suppliers will promote conservation of Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS) populations and will not provide materials from forests where this HCV is threatened as a result of the forest management activities that produced the forest materials. This will require providing a description of the forest type (as it occurs in the supply area), potential threats from forest management activities, and the kinds of activities that would maintain or enhance CBS populations in the supply area.**

**NOTE: Actions to demonstrate policy enforcement and communicate policies on sourcing to suppliers should be audited under the Due Diligence system requirements within the 40-005V3-1 standard section 1.1**

**CENTRAL THEME: Conservation Planning**

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| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Options  (#2) Influence forest management practices to leave scattered down woody debris (not piles) and nearby areas of refuge, and to limit large canopy gaps  (#5) Develop partnerships with universities and other NGOs (trails?) that can influence land management within the species range | Topline Input   * Many proposed mitigation options will only work for those Organizations close to the beginning of the supply chain and forest * Will need to work through partnerships to influence actions on the ground * Participate in planning for lands within the species’ range to influence land management and maintain or enhance salamander populations * USFS National Forest plan revision process is just getting started * Other planning processes too – industry lands, government lands, state management plans, recovery plan, landscape-scale plans, landscape-level HCP |

*Consultation Insights: While feedback was mixed on the original proposed options (concern about auditability of the term ‘influence’ and the need for greater specificity on how influence would be achieved), there was very strong support for the participant introduced idea of getting involved with the National Forest Plan revision process. However, other input recognized that the entire salamander population does not occur on Federal lands, so other management planning processes would also be pertinent.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as an option that could be scaled for any impact level:**

**Engage in and/or provide monetary or in-kind resources to conservation planning processes and the implementation of plans that include goals, objectives and/or actions that may have an impact on Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS) populations within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area, with the desired goal of increasing and improving management practices that conserve CBS populations. This may include: federal, state and/or local resource planning and plans; industry land plans; regional planning and plans directly for CBS itself; and/or broad-spectrum regional conservation planning and plans that include some or all of the specified risk area.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Conservation Initiatives**

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| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Options  (#1) Help to provide matching funds for conservation land acquisition (establish a fund?)  (#5) Develop partnerships with universities and other NGOs (trails?) that can influence land management within the species range | Topline Input   * Don’t use the word ‘influence’ * Must include state agencies * Partnerships need to include diverse groups * Protection of habitat doesn’t require acquisition * Conservation, not preservation * Working forestland easements a consideration, but only if the emphasis is on ‘working’ and ‘as an option’ * Identify who can become champions for the salamanders |

*Consultation Insights: Feedback from certificate holders and their suppliers was very opposed to land acquisition as a mitigation approach. The comments from CBs and environmental/social perspectives was more mixed. However, there was more support for concepts around partnerships, and building on existing assets in the region who are already working in this arena*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as an option that could be scaled for any impact level:**

**Engage with and/or provide monetary or in-kind resources to conservation partnerships, organizations or similar entities that are supporting or promoting programs or projects to develop new or augment existing programs that will enhance or conserve Cheoah Bald Salamander (CBS) populations, with a particular focus on increasing and improving implementation of management practices that will conserve CBS populations within areas of the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area. These entities may include: 1) partnerships including government and/non-government organizations or non-governmental organizations working alone that have active programs/projects to conserve aquatic biodiversity or the forests important for doing so; and/or 2) federal, state and/or local governmental organizations.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Direct Influence**

*Consultation Insights: There were a number of suggestions for mitigation actions specific to Organizations that are near the beginning of the supply chain and that have a unique opportunity to directly influence the forest management activities that are implemented at supply sites.*

**Proposed Mitigation Options**

**The following are offered as options for Organizations that purchase directly from the source forest, or with suppliers that do so:**

1. **Document acceptable implementation of Best Management Practices that conserve Cheoah Bald Salmander populations during harvests that produce non-certified materials that will be controlled by the Organization.**
2. **Include Best Management Practices that will conserve Cheoah Bald Salamander populations in harvest plans and/or in contracts made with loggers for harvests that produce non-certified materials and that will be controlled by the Organization.**

**GAPS IN THE SET OF MITIGATON OPTIONS**

FSC US Staff evaluation of this set of mitigation options, through the lens of the shared criteria, did not identify any significant gaps, with the possible exception of the requirement for 'auditability.' We will be looking to your comments for suggestions on how to address this potential gap, as well as for identification of any other gaps and suggestions for their resolution. Additionally, we will be meeting with Certification Bodies during the consultation and expect that they will also provide input on improvements in auditability.