

Northern Blues Forest Collaborative **DRAFT** Minutes

Meeting Date: June 26, 2019...Location: Riverside Park, LaGrande, OR

In Attendance:

Collaborative Members: Paul Anderes (Union County Commissioner), Mike Billman (Oregon Dept. of Forestry), Nils Christoffersen (Wallowa Resources), Pam Hardy (Western Environmental Law Center), Brian Kelly (Greater Hells Canyon Council), Kerry Kemp (The Nature Conservancy), Jessica Keys (Senator Merkley), Vince Naughton (Retired Forester)

U.S. Forest Service: Bill Gamble, Brian Goff, Nathan Poage

Sustainable Northwest Staff: Jenna Knobloch, Trent Seager

Staff: Jeff Costello (facilitator)

Action Items:

- Pam: Add a KEY to the Forest Collaborative Minutes Template: eg. - cmt = comment, Tx = treatment.

Open Questions:

- How will we continue to engage on Sheep Creek?
- Will the NBF Collaborative want to engage on Touchet?
- Why here? Why now? ... How are we planning where to go next?
“Points of Defense” (PODs), or similar wildfire preparedness strategy, should be a part of this goal.
Might be some data from the Blue Mountains Resiliency Project IDT work to kick this off.

Minutes Key

- Meeting minutes do not represent collaborative agreements, unless they specifically say so. They are meant to record three basic things only: 1) The issue(s) discussed, 2) The major points or questions raised in the conversation, and 3) The resolution, or action plan for resolution, if there was one. Unless specifically stated, resolutions are only the resolutions of the people present at the meeting.
 - Common Abbreviations:
 - Q: Question
 - A: Answer
 - Cmt: Comment
 - Tx: Treatment
 - Rx Fire: Prescribed Fire
 - Highlighted Items are those that probably require follow-up.
(Usually suggestions for future agendas)
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Meeting Notes

Agenda Overview:

- Given our merger, and the events of last month, it's time to reaffirm our governing documents, our Operating Principles.

Announcements

- We are in the process of combining the Wallowa-Whitman & Umatilla forest collaboratives. Please keep both meetings dates on the calendar, for now. Generally, the monthly back-to-back dates will consist of one day inside & one day in the field.
- Sign-in sheets are becoming more formal
Purpose: To keep records & documentation of in-kind match for grants
- Our Grant Application to the Weyerhaeuser Family foundation has made it to Stage 2. Still not certain, but a good sign. Stage 2 applications are due on August 1st, and decisions will be made by mid-December, for release of funds by January, 2020.

FS Updates

Wallowa-Whitman NF:

- Sheep Creek: ID Team met last week.
Preliminary footprint is taking shape – enough to send people to the field to collect data.
FS would like to know how to engage the collaborative going forward.
FS wants the collaborative to maintain a sense of ownership on this project.
- Preliminary Project Map attached.
- Q: A lot of the acres are Pre-Commercial Thinning (PCT). That requires funds. There's an ever-increasing back log of PCT. Is there hope of getting the funds? Will the commercial harvests pay for the PCT?
A: Commercial probably won't pay for PCT.
We got the funds for East Face, and didn't expect it ... we might.
- Q: Why here? Why now? How do we understand this in context?
- Cmt: The collaborative asked that we address this area.
It has seen some really hard use in the past & connects some other projects.
- Might look through the lens of Alan Agar's work.
- Suggestion: Over the next several months bring in each of your specialists, so we can understand how those treatment blocks were chosen.
- There is a lot of adjacent aquatic work that is already ongoing.
The hydrologist is not convinced there is enough connection between the uplands & riparian areas to make a big change with veg treatments.
- Cmt: There is a lot going on in the PNW & Rocky Mtn. labs, as well as UC Berkeley & Merced campuses, regarding connection between hydrology & riparian. Should we bring in some of those speakers?
- Timing/Goal: Scoping in the Fall ... maybe October.
- Limber Jim Creek restoration will go across Marilyn Schiller's private land (Tony Vey Meadows Ranch). Marilyn and USFS Recently signed the agreement.
- Two Eagle EA is out for 30-day comment.
Rec facilities, some landscape Tx's
- Good Neighbor Project on Catherine Creek Summit.
70-acre dry, upland forest thinning.

- Four aquatic restoration projects currently underway, or in planning stages:
 - Bird Track Springs
 - Middle Upper Grande Ronde River
 - Woodley
 - Sheep Creek
 Two are being implemented by the tribes.
 Three of the four contractors are local.

Umatilla NF:

- Active Timber sales right now:
 - Little George timber sale
 - Godman
 - Thomas Creek & Percey on Walla Walla District
 - Collaborative was involved in this – might be good to take a field tour to this site.
 - Kahler – Henry & Whiskey
 - Heppner post & pole 4 is active.
- There are still a lot of sales to be made – about 5 before October 1.
- Glass Project and Upper Touchet (pronunciation: two-she) EA's, on the Walla Walla District, are nearing a decision
- There is a very local collaborative interested in improving resiliency across boundaries/borders on the west side of the Blues, extending from the Tucannon on the North to the South Fork of Walla Walla on the South that have been meeting/coordinating. It includes Umatilla NF, WA DNR, OR Dept. of Forestry, NRCS Oregon and Washington, OSU Extension, major local land owners. Mike Rassbach is the lead with those groups.
 - “My Blue Mtns Woodland Partnership” is involved.
 - Request to keep the collaborative informed on this
- Q: You've spoken about fire lines for wildfire management. Might this be worth discussion?
 A: We've been talking about “strategic containers”
 That was a part of the Resiliency project.
 Yes, it's ripe for discussion.
- Q: How does the Umatilla NF staff prioritize their projects?
 A: Ask districts based on a list of criteria...with Wildfire Landscape Strategy being first on that list, then stand density, and special areas.
 We rank those at the forest level, and develop a Forest program of work.
 That process is being modified to include landscape level prioritization with a quantitative risk analysis.
 UNF is working with Alan Ager who has a unique approach to modeling.
 The Umatilla is unique in having higher than average quality data.
 There will be a lot of choices, and we can ask the collaborative about some of those.
 Umatilla NF wants a 20-year plan in place.
- Q: Has the Umatilla worked with Chris Dunn on the PODs (Points of Defense) idea?
 A: not yet, but we're aware of that work.
 Cmt: They (Chris Dunn & his team) do a lot of the work.

- Cmt: Today The Governor's Wildfire Council is meeting to discuss this, including PODs. There is interest at the State level on how to reach agreement on what needs to be treated, and why it needs to be treated. Goal: to mitigate risk to forests & communities.
- Q: Could we have Alan Ager speak to the collaborative?
A: Alan did make a presentation to the collaborative and some found it difficult to understand. It's a "deep dive".
As the FS comes to understand the modeling outputs, it would be good to share.
Nathan & Kerry will be involved in setting this up, so they might be helpful.
- Willoughby on North Fork is signed
- Ellis on Heppner District is in progress (They are developing their proposed action & alternatives)
- West End CE (categorical exclusion) is in progress.
- Resiliency Project is closing down (see notes from last meeting).
Their silviculturalist is meeting with the Umatilla silviculturalist this week.
The Umatilla is discussing how to use the information gained from the Resiliency Project in future planning and implementation projects.
- Forest Plan Revision – could be a big workload at some point.
- CFLRP: We're looking into funding levels & application processes.
- Joint Chiefs projects – "came out" in August last year, do not know if or when it will be an opportunity this year.
We'll be looking for opportunities.
Walla Walla group is interested in that.

Approval of the Minutes

- We have had issues with differing memories.
It's important that we all read these, and make revisions.
- We're only including:
 - major points
 - key issues discussed
 - resolution and action plan (if any)
 That's all we'll be recording in these meeting minutes/notes.
- Please make a note that comments are just the thoughts of a single individual, and not a consensus of the whole group.
- Resolution: Send a public draft to those who were in attendance for comments and feedback, before sending out to entire listserv.
Make it clear that the minutes are a draft.
- Resolution: Minutes Approved. No changes from DRAFT.

Review of Historic Group Values

- Cmt: It's not always emotionally safe here. There have been personal attacks, and it's hard to know if those are going to happen. It makes me hesitant to show up.

- Cmt: We could use some better goals & targets to keep us moving (GSD! = Get “Stuff” Done!)
We need to make more progress.
There are only so many people who will remain committed to the process in the absence of meaningful results.
At first, there was a sense that we could get this done.
- What is the highest restoration need?
How do we define that?
How can that help us define our own success in GSD ...
- Could separate
 - forest stewardship principles (such as the Upper Joseph Stewardship Principles), from...
 - how we interact with each other (no personal attacks, etc.)
- Two ways to create more accomplishments
 - focus ... it’s hard to “contribute to everything”, or “be all things to all people”.
 - clarify what a vote means: individual buy-in, or buy-in from your group/organization?
 Maybe having everyone agree is not the goal.
Perhaps all we need is to ensure that everyone’s position is represented in conversation/dialogue.
- Perhaps we don’t need “group” consensus
- Pam’s Model:
 - Agreement from both ends of the spectrum should be our goal.
It’s the strongest, politically, and the most useful to the FS.
 - Not everyone has to sign on, but they can still shape the outcome.
 - Try to acknowledge the reason(s) why some people aren’t willing to sign on
- Cmt: Consensus-based models are becoming the minority...
Where that model is still in use, it’s too often because people left.
- Cmt: Zones of Agreement aren’t permanent, or static...
The FS typically comes back on each project and asks if they are still appropriate for that specific project.
- Striving for consensus is very important,
especially if people invest a great deal of time, energy, and resources on a project.
- It’s very important how the FS messages about collaborative involvement.
Sometimes it’s been over-stated in the past.
- Respect matters...especially when coming from different perspectives!
- having a detailed list of the concerns raised in the field, might be of more use to the FS than a consensus document that only covered 30% of the conversation
- Key to record the reasons for disagreement
 - social values
 - disagreement on science
 - different expectations on outcomes
- Minority Reports are a heavy lift for people who are “left out”.
They also set up an “us vs. them” dynamic that’s not helpful.
- It’s been useful to have both
 - areas of agreement
 - areas outside of agreement

- Another ZOA model: Just a short ZOA, and a lot of background that the group just looked at, but didn't look at so closely that we know we agree to it all.
- Reason we collaborate:
Instead of FS just having a lot of comments regarding multiple issue on their desks, there is an integrated agreement about how we'd like to have those issues resolved.
- Even a lack of consensus can be helpful for the FS to know about, because it might allow the FS to understand the issues.
EG: marten habitat. We may not have agreement, but stating that we've discussed it will cause the FS to address it thoroughly in their analyses.
- FS said they found detailed notes from field tours to be the most helpful in daylighting issues.
- Q: Why are we here? What are we trying to get out of this process that we don't think we can get more efficiently some other way? There needs to be a common motivation for collaborating.
- The notes from the RVCC process last month get to that.
(see attached handout from the meeting)
- It's important for people to understand this; both personally, and as a representative of your group/organization.
 - Some people come to keep an eye on other people. To make sure others aren't dominating. "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Not sure if this is true.
Policing discussions...
 - Is that legitimate? If you're signing on to creatively and cooperatively shape a community vision, are you really aligning with the purpose of the collaborative? Are you truly part of the collaborative, if that's why you're there? You should still be welcome to participate in the conversation.
 - After 7 years of trying consensus-based models, we're not sure this approach is working.
 - Some people are interested in increasing pace & scale, and others might not be there for that same reason. We should probably not assume anything. Oregon Wild might just want better quality.
 - Trying to convince others who don't know about timber management that it's not evil. "Sometimes I feel that I've failed in that goal ... especially when I see the meadows, or the resource industry collapse. Small communities would go away, and lose the capacity for fighting fires."
 - Tangible, lasting benefits require partnerships & relationships. Top-down approaches don't work, because they don't hit the ground in a way that people across different value systems see the benefit. Finding the co-benefits make solutions work & last. We're engaged in collaborative work across all the work that we do. We've been effective, because we work across boundaries.
 - Want to make sure our public lands are well taken care of – ecosystems are intact, fish are getting through. That message gets put at the end of the list. Flagship targets don't reflect the wildlife, and we don't want that value to be lost.
 - Can't fix complex problems if we don't share civil discourse with all the people who are affected by these problems – especially natural resource problems...they affect a lot of people.

- Antagonism is eroding the democratic system, nationally. We can be a model of civil dialogue.
- This is what should be happening on the national stage. But it's not.
- "I don't come to these meetings to feel like I'm getting beat up, either here or in the media. I don't want the social pressure to 'go along.'"
- "I'm proud of some of the projects that we've worked on. We've had successes."
- "Pace & scale: is it just about logs? If so, then I'm not in". The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision IDT was headed to litigation. It was a fine idea headed toward a train wreck. It can be taken too far, too fast. Collaboration can do the same thing.
- Can we get more concrete about "forest restoration"?
Is it just acres treated & volume? Or is it about entire watersheds and ecosystems?
Can we say "This is what we want to accomplish."?
- We're neglecting the public lands, across the board.
We need to re-invest in proper stewardship.
We need to agree about what the purpose is, or there won't be the resources to get the job done.
"Pace & Scale" may have too much baggage.
But the conditions on the land need to be taken care of.
Towns dying away ... other towns tipping into a totally different socio-ecological-economic system ... systems that might bring even greater risk to the land
- The collaborative hasn't been involved in riparian restoration.
"That's stuff that I could take home if we were actually helping it along."
- Q: Why is our focus always on the veg projects?
A: Because there already is agreement around the fish projects.
And there's money to do it. The social license already exists there.
If we know that there are others who are already getting resources behind those projects, we don't need to re-do their work.
- "What I hear from my board is not, 'Go work on timber projects.'"
I hear: "We are concerned about the impacts of cutting trees."
I hear: "What's going on? All I see out there are stumps."
- "We're involved, because we see that timber sales are an area where things could go wrong. We're involved to make sure they're done right."
- "Is my time better spent here, or writing comments?"
- SJ said: "Litigation is for stopping bad things from happening. Collaboration is helping good things happen."
- Wildlife protection & fuels treatment do not have to be viewed as in opposition.
You can get better outcomes with careful attention to both

How do we translate this into our Operating Principles?

- In the "collaborative spirit" it's not to just "get more logs" or "police discussions". It's about sharing perspectives. Do we need to change our model?
- Veg is what brought us all here.

- There needs to be co-benefits, besides volume.
eg: Can we be explicit about how the Sheep Creek Project is benefitting the riparian projects that already exist in the area?
- Normally, we see Bill Gamble & Brian Goff here.
Because we're at that level.
"I'm here to listen & to provide a voice of the Forest."
To have a nuanced understanding & ongoing conversation with interested people.
We have a mission to move ahead. We talk about flagship targets, but it's about resiliency, and a by-product of that is timber. You have an opportunity to influence how and where we increase pace & scale. That's not really a debatable thing. We have an opportunity to harvest timber & support the local community. The only goal isn't to put trees on a truck. There's a lot of room for how and where we do that. We're hoping to be as transparent as possible about what we're doing and why.
- The value is to achieve balance, given the current political & social conditions.
We need to be forward-thinking about all the issues that face us, and that guide the actions. So, when logging occurs, it's not just about timber output....there is also a resiliency target being reached here.
- Understanding why we're doing projects in different places may be more important than getting into the weeds on smaller projects...eg: fire, watershed, etc.
- Frustration: "That any increase in action is concerning to some worries me. We've hardly been getting anything done - especially on the Whitman District."
- "We're not over-cutting. Fire suppression has just increased the burns.
If we don't do something, it's going to burn down."
- There are multiple lenses to look through:
 - Fuel & Fire
 - Drought/Insects
 - Wildlife Needs
 There is lots of overlap, but people don't know about it because we use different words to describe it.
- Social values & stifled conversations are what seem to prevent getting "stuff" done (GSD), in most cases.
- Fire is a trigger word...especially "Catastrophic" fire.
Stand-replacing fires are just part of the natural deal.
We don't need to treat every acre, to prevent fire.
- We've spoken with Bill Gamble re. wildlife permeability.
They're going to continue working on that.
- If we could talk about the
 - functions & processes AND
 - the benefits they provide,
 Then we could see the co-benefits.
Then, it might be easier to get to the what, and the how of what to do.
In some cases, we can use management to get there.
Sometimes, we'll see that other methods are better.
- Summary: the Steering Committee will review these notes, and propose a plan going forward.

Adjourn: 3:05pm