

N. Blues Forest Collaborative **DRAFT** notes

Meeting Date: August 28, 2019

Location: La Grande Ranger District Offices

In Attendance:

Members of the Public: Paul Anderes, Mike Billman, Todd Nash, Kerry Kemp, John Shafer, Rex Storm, Brian Kelly, Vince Naughton, Nils Christoffersen, Rob Klavins, Katy Nesbitt (Natural Resource Officer for Wallowa County), Pam Hardy, Laura Platt, Ian Mott

Forest Service: Nathan Poage, Laura Navarrete, Brianna Carollo, Katherine Richardson, Mike Rassbach, Bill Gamble, Jim Brammer

Staff: Jeff Costello (facilitator)

Action Items:

- **Pam** to update last month's draft minutes & submit to **Jeff** for eventual posting on the website.

Key Decisions:

- Combine the existing Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman collaboratives and name the new group the **Northern Blues Forest Collaborative**.
- The Operations Committee will draft a new set of Operating Principles & Protocols that combine the Mission, Vision, Goals & operating protocols of the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla Collaboratives. That will be brought before the entire collaborative for editing before adoption.
- Monitoring sub-committee established to help define monitoring questions
Current participants on the committee are: Pam Hardy, Kerry Kemp, Katy Nesbitt, Rex Storm, Nils Christoffersen, Paul Anderes, Nathan Poage, and Jim Brammer
Contact **Jeff** for more details if you want to be on it.
A conference call/zoom meeting will be set up for September

Open Questions:

- The group would like to see the work by John Marshall who is re-taking historic panoramic photos.
- What different kinds of timber contracts are there?
- How do we monitor whether all PCT & road closures are getting done?
- Where do we house monitoring efforts & data long term?

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 discussed, 2) the major points or questions raised in the conversation, and 3) the 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)

Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Tomorrow: Field Trip to Beaver Creek to learn about Laura Platt's data collection, this summer
- Approval of the Agenda?
New items requested:
 - update on the CFLRP processNo additional suggestions. Agenda approved.
- Approval of Last Month's Minutes
 - Update: clarify on page 7 – "Concern expressed that we're considering fire ..."
 - Clarify that the conversation about the combined Ops Manuel was just ideas recorded.Approved with Amendments
- Next Month possibilities:
 - Field trip with Steve Hawkins – monitoring
 - Andrew Merschel re: research in the Deschutes

Forest Service Updates

- CFLRP Update:
Preliminary application submitted last week.
RO conference call this week to discuss which projects will be invited to Tier Two
- Walla Walla District
Thomas Creek – 2 sales sold: a little more than 8 million BF
 - Percy, IRSC, logging just completed
 - Thomas Creek, 6T (6T is a regular timber sale)Glass: 2 Timber sales:
 - Pint: it's advertised now. IRTC – using virtual boundaries ~ 10 million BF
 - Glass: will be sold 1st Q next year ~ 1 million BF
- Questions re: Contract Forms:
IRSC – Stewardship Contract:
There is commercial value removed, but it doesn't cover the full cost of doing the service work. So the FS adds a little money to get it done.
IRTC – Stewardship Contract:
The FS requires some service work in addition to removing timber. The contractor pays the FS because the value of the timber is more than the cost of the associated service work.
6T – regular timber sale

Q: How do you decide what's a mandatory & optional service item?

A: We're trying to build up our retained receipts. 20% of the value of the timber is mandatory. the next 30% is optional. The other 50% is there in case the value of the timber drops, or for additional restoration activities. If the value of the timber drops some of the optional items will not take place.

Open Question: There were additional questions that we did not have adequate time to answer. Make this an agenda item for a future meeting.

There is a concern that not all the NCT, and esp. Rx fire, is getting done.
There is a concern that not all the road closures are actually happening.

- Pomeroy & Heppner

Ellis – working on alternative development. DEIS expected Fall 2020.
Considering road closures to change elk distribution

West End – Farm Bill CE – not publicly scoped yet.

HK Complex Fire – BAER team was out last weekend.
~ 800-2000 acres. No info on severity yet.

Q: Will there be a salvage sale?

A: possibly, but we don't have people to work on it right now.

- Wallowa-Whitman

4 stream restoration projects underway
Longley Meadows is in the comment period right now.

Two Eagle is in the objection period right now

Sheep Creek – specialists are wrapping up their field work.
Field trip happened with NOAA fisheries & Trout Unlimited to discuss thinning in RHCAs.

Granite Gulch fire is in the Wilderness Area ~ 5000 acres. They're letting it burn.

Billy Meadows fire – they're only controlling with back burns from the road.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is helping with a lot of fuels work.

Lower jo – KV is being laid out right now.

Patrick Project is moving ahead

- FFRP program funding announcement will come out Sept 15.

Applications due Nov. 15.

For collaborative support, technical assistance, data collection, even NEPA contracting.

It will run through OWEB & ODF.

Resolution to combine the collaboratives

- Motion: Combine the existing Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman collaboratives and name the new group the **Northern Blues Forest Collaborative**.

Passed, no opposition.

- Motion: The Operations Committee shall draft a new set of Operating Principles & Protocols that combine the Mission, Vision, Goals & operating protocols of the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla Collaboratives and align those with the general principle that we will measure our success less in

consensus documents authored, and more in mutual respect and understanding arising from context-rich, informed dialogue.

Discussion:

Desire expressed for additional acknowledgement of

- increased agreement; find solutions
- project implementation

Cmt: We still need to better define the larger purpose of actually getting things done.

New proposed motion:

The Operations Committee shall draft a new set of Operating Principles & Protocols that combine the Mission, Vision, Goals & operating protocols of the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla Collaboratives.

This motion only authorizes the Ops Committee to go ahead and work on combining the documents. The proposed draft will be circulated to all members of the new collaborative for discussion and editing before formal adoption.

This is a simpler version, but we continue to agree that we're moving away from consensus and toward mutual respect. We will also include desire to GSD in the final.

Passed: no opposition.

Q: Our existing documents require consensus. We're not going to change that, right?

A: That conversation will take place in the process.

Multi-Party Monitoring

- Key Question for today:
What does the collaborative really want from the monitoring?
- There is interest from Wallowa County and their NRAC to play a key role in monitoring Lower Joseph
- Baker Resources Coalition, led by Steve Edwards, is considering using student interns to monitor East Face, as part of an Outdoor Curriculum.
- Handout: 2015 Monitoring "Report"
- Projects can take up to 10 years to implement.
There has to be some investment in long-term data collection to track those.
There has to be capacity and long-term tenure to do that.
Projects get started and dropped all the time.
Need to choose questions that are really useful
 - that will actually inform our discussions.
 - what form would a good answer take?
 - What would actually change an opinion?
- Q: Can you refresh us on the work that's already going on?
A: Thomas Creek & Kahler we established pre-treatment, permanent plots
~ 40 plots in Kahler, & 30 in Thomas Creek
both in treated and untreated areas, so we could see changes that are happening independent of the treatment effects. No post-tx data yet, because they just treated this summer.
Data on stand structure & species composition, fuel loads, tree regeneration, canopy cover etc.
Without additional funding, Kerry could keep taking photos, but no other data could be realistically collected.

- Q: Are we asking questions that will actually help us answer questions that are sticking points for our collaborative?
- A: This was developed with a SC.
Was based on monitoring that other collaboratives are doing.
- Cmt: there are unexpected benefits to a better understanding of what happens to the forest when these tx's happen.
- Cmt: Some of this requires trained data collectors ... which costs money.
- Cmt: It can be hard to get people to accept results.
That's why it's important to have buy-in to the monitoring questions & methods.
- Cmt: We should also be monitoring how people feel/think about the results.
If you see 30 sq feet of basal area, does that make it seem better or worse?
- Cmt: It's really important that all of these monitoring efforts be honest, in terms of what the NBFC's involvement will and will not be, as well as in defining who will actually be the lead entity(ies).
- Subcommittee established to narrow down the questions
Nathan, Kerry, Rex, Nils, Katy, Jim Brammer, Pam
Jeff will do a Doodle poll for a phone conversation.

Kerry Kemp's Research on Moist Mixed Conifer

Kerry Kemp is leading a research project on better understanding fire disturbance regimes in moist mixed conifer. This is important because approximately 70% of the Wallowa-Whitman & Umatilla Forests are moist mixed conifer. Better understanding of historic processes is expected to provide valuable insight on how best to harvest timber in those areas with the least amount of negative environmental impact. It may even provide insight on opportunities to improve ecological resilience and reduce the impacts of 100 years of fire suppression.

- See attached PowerPoint slides from both Kerry Kemp and Laura Platt
- Jointly funded by ODF, TNC & NCASI
(Nat'l Council of Air & Stream Improvements)
- Our understanding of fire regimes is limited to two paradigms:
 - dry forest (ponderosa) – fuel limited because of regular fire
 - Cold, high elevation – high intensity – weather limited, infrequent
- We understand these two systems because it's easy to use dendrochronology to determine history of fire return interval. These records can extend over 400 years
- MMC is between these two ecologically, and is harder because there is less proxy evidence. When it is there, it's not uniformly preserved or distributed.
- In the Blue Mountains only
 - 8% of the forest is in the high severity, low-frequency cold-alpine systems.
 - 23% is dry pine – low frequency, low severity
- 69% of the forest is in that middle area where we don't know the fire regime as well.
- Context Matters
 - If you're in a MMC patch nested in an area of dry forest, they burn like the dry forest.
 - If you're surrounded by MMC for miles, they probably operate differently.
 But we don't know how differently. That's what we're researching.

- This project will help answer
 - how has the scale & severity of contemporary fire departed from HRV?
 - To what degree will current fire affect trajectories?
- Q: What do we know about Native American burning?
 A: Humans were once, and still are a source of fire.
 Native Americans probably had a big influence.
 People arrived about the same time the last Pleistocene glaciers receded – difficult to disentangle humans and climate in patterns of burning. Even lake sediment cores only go back to the last ice-age.
- In fire regime analysis, ignitions are rarely the limiting factor.
 If the conditions are right, there are ignitions – whether human or lightning.

Laura Platt, Kerry's lead field crew coordinator, reported on what they've found so far

- Laura is a master's student with Andres Holz at Portland State University (PSU).
- Research Questions:
 - What are the patterns in fire frequency & severity over the past 2-300 years?
 - What has been the establishment of trees by species over the same time period?
- Polygons of similar structural characteristics were established by Paul Hessburg using aerial photographs from the 1930s. These are providing the basic forest types.
 Structural type is an important indicator of disturbance history.
 EG: stand initiation is typical after high-severity fire or severe beetle outbreak
- Research plots are located where there was little, if any, timber harvest.
 Untreated areas are thought to offer better insight on historic fire patterns because the evidence hasn't been removed or altered.
- Rot of the old grand fir has made it difficult to construct histories very far back.
- Tree cohort establishment – rather than evidence of fire scars – may be the best indicator of historic widespread disturbance. Those disturbances may have been fire, but they could also have been bugs, blow-down etc.
- John Marshall has been re-taking photos from those 1930's panoramic shots
 The collaborative would like to see his work. (John will be available to come out to NE Oregon, possibly in January or February)

Logistics for tomorrow

- Field Trip with Kerry & Laura to see some of the research plots & discuss observations.
- Going to the Beaver Creek Watershed, which is currently a back-up water source for City of La Grande.
 Meet at the locked gate (45°N09'47.4", 118°W12'56.2") at 10am; or LGRD parking lot, at 9am.

Adjourn 3:00pm