

N Blues Forest Collaborative - Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 24, 2021

Location: online

Approved: April 28, 2021

In Attendance:

NBFC Members and Guests:

Mike Billman (ODF)
Nils Christoffersen (WR)
Brian Dill (U. of Illinois)
Steve Edwards (BRC)
Pam Hardy (WELC)
Kerry Kemp (TNC)
Rob Klavins (OW)
Laura Navarrete (USFWS)
Katy Nesbitt (Wallowa Co. NR/Econ. Dev. Dir.)
Jacob Putney (OSU Extension)
Susan Roberts (Wallowa County Commissioner)
Darlene Rochna
Caitlin Rushlow (Wallowa County NRAC),
Lindsay Warness (Woodgrain)
Eric Wunz

Forest Service:

Anthony Botello
Jim Brammer
Brianna Carollo
Peter Fargo
Bill Gamble
Richie Gardner
Lucas Glick
Brian Goff
Paula Guenther
Bob Hassmiller
Amber Ingoglia
Christy Johnson
Heidi McRoberts
Alan Miller
Tom Montoya
Nathan Poage
Jamie Ratliff

Facilitator: Jeff Costello

Important Topics Discussed:

- Presentation by Dave Powell & Brice Hanberry re: GLO records on the Umatilla NF
- Draft Zones of Agreement
- Tom Montoya will be retiring

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 typically those that require follow-up.
(Usually suggestions for future agendas)

Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Agenda Review
Approved, no updates
- Rob Klavins announced that he will be recording our meeting pursuant to his alleged right under Oregon law. He would prefer video, but only has the technology for audio right now. He did not ask for consent, and none was given.
- Upcoming Meeting Dates:
 - Apr. 28-29, 2021
 - May 26-27, 2021
 - Jun. 23-24, 2021 field tour likely
 - Jul. 28-29, 2021 field tour likely
 - Aug. 25-26, 2021 field tour likely
 - Sep. 22-23, 2021 field tour likely
 - Oct. 27-28, 2021 field tour likely
 - Dec. 1-2, 2021

During Covid, these will likely mostly be morning meetings.
Times will be announced as the date draws near.
- Approval of last month's Minutes?
Approved, no updates

Forest Service Updates

Umatilla SO – Reported by Brian Goff

- Welcome to Heidi Mc Roberts: new Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Umatilla
Spent over 20 years with the Nez Perce Tribe.
Most recently on the Nez Perce Clearwater NF.
- Richie Gardner – Forest Silviculturist
 - The LARP: Landscape Prioritization project
We have the data about what's out there (some imputed) in the system.
Now considering how application of different priorities might change outcomes.
Values considered:
 - wildfire transmission risk
 - opportunities for improvement in resilience
 - trying to maximize contiguous burn blocks.
 - opportunities to limit crown fires
 - Umatilla NF is working with CTUIR & NRCS to align activities

- New All lands tool
- Looking forward to
 - seeing ZOAs get written down
 - seeing the All Lands council get stood up

Pomeroy District – District Ranger Susan Piper – no report

Hepner – District Ranger ~~Brandon Houck~~

- Brandon Hauck has taken a new assignment closer to his family.
 - Going to the Medicine Wheel District in Wyoming
 - Paula will be lead ranger on Ellis
- Ellis – Preparing the DEIS
Feeling good about a solid project.

N. Fork John Day (aka Ukiah, aka “the South Zone”) – District Ranger Paula Gunther

- Davis Farm Bill CE – Forest health & insect issues
Close to completion
- Personnel:
 - added a new archeologist: Micelle Hanum
 - fisheries biologist position is open. Using STEM authority.

Walla Walla RD – District Ranger Aaron Gagnon – no update

Wallowa Whitman SO

- Personnel:
 - Noah Livingston Fire Staff has announced retirement at the end of summer.
- Tom Montoya will be retiring at the end of May
Will be staying in the area.
Anthony Botello will fill in until a regular is selected.
We have appreciated Tom’s steady and compassionate leadership and are going to miss him.

La Grande RD - District Ranger Bill Gamble

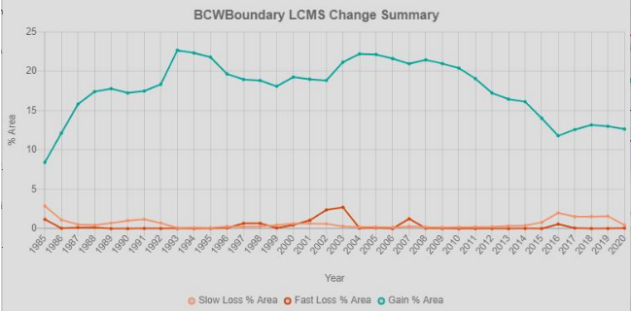
- Five Points WUI Project HFRA CE:
Completed scoping last week received 5 thoughtful comment letters, 4 from entities who engaged in field collaboration on the project. Evaluating comments and preparing responses before signing the DM for this 3000-acre HFRA CE in the La Grande Valley WUI later this spring
- Sheep Creek:
Awaiting a few more specialist reports to complete the effects with goal of having preliminary EA out for comment next month with signed decision late summer/early fall this year
- Starkey/PNW Research Station:
encouraging opportunities for monitoring together.

The monitoring team is being led by Jean Jancaitis.
Draft Plan expected in September
Working with RO re: national questions
Going to be reaching out to others for suggestions on additional questions

- Personnel
 - New Wildlife bio – The forest welcomes Julia Boland (vice Laura Navarrete) as the new wildlife biologist supporting the LG and Joseph offices
 - Sarah Brandy – returned from detail
 - Interviews have been completed for new Joseph ranger with selection/announcement expected any day
 - Forest will be hiring a fish biologist to assist with project work on the Whitman RD
- New interpretive trail & signage for Bird Track Springs
Working to establish interpretive trail with interpretive signage centered on aquatic restoration efforts as well as working with CTUIR on integrating First Foods and River Vision information as part of the overall restoration/conservation education message

Whitman RD - District Ranger Kendall Cikanek presented by Bob Hassmiller

- Project Planning Notes
 - Patrick EA for draft review in early April.
 - Powder Valley Mining EIS for draft review in June.
 - Draft Pine Valley Range EA will be brought forward around these other priority project timelines. Waiting on a few reports.
 - Scoping on Bonanza Mine EA has gone out.
 - Scoping on Baker City Watershed Fuels Reduction EA will go out in April. Developing the proposed action with an extended team in the SO.
 - Clark's: Initiating data collection for silviculture, engineering and other resources this field season.
 - Whitman District reforestation stand improvement thinning CE: We are finalizing a proposal for the entire Whitman district. This will address the backlog of thinning needed.
 - Road Maintenance CE is in the early stages of development.
- Implementation Notes.
 - Getting prepared for tree planting season with approximately 1,800 acres of the Cornet/Windy and Rail Fires.
 - Administering several stand-improvement thinning contracts this FY.
 - Recon and layout of out-year stand improvement thinning.
 - Monitoring reforestation success of past tree planting and natural regeneration: Cornet/Windy, Rail, Eagle, and Dry Gulch fires.

- Staffing Changes
 - Readvertising the Silviculture Position. Did not get good list of candidates when pooling the job vacancy with Malheur and Gifford Pinchot. Position has not received a timeline for advertisement on USAjobs. Joe Sciarrino is detailed into his former position.
 - In outreach mode for PFT GS 10/11 Special Uses/Minerals Staff Lead and for PFT GS 9/11 Fish Biologist.
 - Sarah Riutzel has been on the district as our wildlife biologist. Sarah has hit the ground running with understanding wildlife uses in project areas.
 - Monique Adler has started on the district as a range conservationist. She is transitioning back to full time after having a baby and is assisting with range billing for turn out.
- Other Fun Facts about the Whitman District
 - The Whitman Ranger District has restored approximately 200 aspen stands over the last 20 years.
 - Excited about engaging with Nicole Sullivan’s Biology Class in April for helping high school students understand post wildfire conditions in the Cornet/Windy Fire Area and how the USFS replants trees after the disturbance. Thanks to Nicole Sullivan, Bill Mitchell, Steve Edwards, Tim Bailey and Jake Putney for their hard work on getting school students out on the Whitman RD’s laboratory. Trying to enhance an opportunity to help in May with a fungi trip to McCully Forks. I wanted to thank Steve Edwards for his commitment in wanting school age kids to understand current forest issues in their backyards. Connecting two important natural resources.
 - Recently came across a tool called the Landscape Change Monitoring System (LCMS) that collects satellite images from 1985 to today for looking at landscape cover changes. This is publicly This tool was recently developed by our Geospatial Technology and Applications Center (GTAC) and illustrates gains in vegetation cover over time, slow losses caused by insect or disease and fast losses caused by timber harvest or wildfire. Very interested in sharing with the collaborative and our research partners are interested in pilot opportunities. Have fun!
<https://apps.fs.usda.gov/lcms-viewer/>
 Please ask if I can help provide you with a quick tutorial on the application. Playing with it we stratified cover conditions for the Baker City Watershed and observed this graph:
 

Year	Slow Loss % Area	Fast Loss % Area	Gain % Area
1985	2	1	8
1986	1	1	16
1987	1	1	17
1988	1	1	17
1989	1	1	17
1990	1	1	18
1991	1	1	18
1992	1	1	18
1993	1	1	23
1994	1	1	22
1995	1	1	20
1996	1	1	19
1997	1	1	19
1998	1	1	18
1999	1	1	18
2000	1	1	19
2001	1	1	19
2002	1	1	19
2003	1	1	22
2004	1	1	22
2005	1	1	21
2006	1	1	21
2007	1	1	21
2008	1	1	21
2009	1	1	20
2010	1	1	20
2011	1	1	18
2012	1	1	17
2013	1	1	16
2014	1	1	16
2015	1	1	12
2016	1	1	13
2017	1	1	13
2018	1	1	13
2019	1	1	13
2020	1	1	13
2021	1	1	13
 - We are in the process of stratifying by aspect and riparian area to further examine where the changes in cover are occurring at and how they occur over time.

Wallowa District – Acting District Ranger Alan Miller

- Morgan Nesbitt
work is continuing
field trip coming up in May (Date to be announced, soon)
- Great Am Outdoors Act
Got \$400,000 for trails

- Lostine project has been moving forward
- Personnel:
 - Tony King, archeologist, left. Detailer expected.
 - New Ranger selected, but can't announce publicly until some internal announcements are made. News coming out soon.

CFLRP – both forests - Amber

- Moving well with CFLRP contracts with over \$980K already committed, met with PNW/Mike Wisdom and Jim B on integrating PNW scientists in to our multiparty monitoring effort.
- Rec'd \$3 million per year.
Originally \$4 million – based on budget modernization.
Contract awards are already out.
- All Lands Partnership group has been pulled together to coordinate cross boundary work.
- Q: Distinction between All Lands Council & CFLRP
A: CFLRP is based on the application submitted in January 2020
The All Lands team is about coordinating cross-boundary work.
CFLRP funding will only be used on federal lands.
But CFLRP needs to track & record matching funds
... including work adjacent to the forest
There are other funding opportunities
on both federal and private lands that this will help us attract.
It's about regional communication & vision.

Presentation by Dave Powell & Brice Hanberry

- Link here to folder containing their paper, slides, and recording of the presentation to NBFC:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13567X_wKO5omImqfxHZgqyU--lnX7o3B?usp=sharing
- This presentation describes discoveries found in a deep dive into GLO notes on the Umatilla NF.

The FS is required under the Eastside Screens to manage toward HRV, but how that's determined is not consistent across all projects and Forests. There is likely a problem with a "shifting baseline." This project was designed to help provide a reliable, external source of information for determining HRV on the Umatilla.
- Dave Powell: "Munger's 1917 Bulletin is my "go to" source for historic conditions."
- Described how GLO records were taken.
And why they are a good source of information to establish a reliable baseline.
- Discovered more open, Douglas Fir, forests than expected on the North Unit of the Umatilla.
They seem to do particularly well in steep areas.
- Q: How did you define closed forest?
A: >250 trees/acre

- Q: Did you characterize your results by anything besides trees per acre?
A: Yes. It's in the paper.
The instructions to the GLO surveyors was to record "moderately sized trees"
Theory: big ones would be dying. And small ones would not be valuable.
- Q: Did we learn anything about hardwoods?
A: There were 18 tree & shrub species including birch, aspen, maple, alder, cottonwood recorded.
but there were so few of most of those that we couldn't make inferences at a landscape level.
- Q: Re: the maps of species distribution:
How homogeneous were those patches? Were some mixed?
A: might have been "more art than science" was a lot of judgment involved.
Could look back at the original data – there were not firm thresholds set.
- Q: were the 16 ecosystem types aligned with the Landfire models?
A: not sure ... much of this was done before those Landfire types were determined.
- Q: More closed conditions in the southern part of the forest
Seems counter intuitive. Can you elaborate?
A: North Unit was a surprise. Didn't expect to find an open Doug Fir dominated system.
Possible clue: 1855 fire
- Q: You mentioned more open Doug Fir on the Steep slopes ...
did you generate the stats about density/basal area
to show the exact differences between flat & steep?
A: The N Unit is mostly steep slopes ... so flat samples were too few to be very reliable.
The data is in the paper.
- Q: What sort of relevance do you think this has given climate predictions?
How should we apply this information?
A: We know historical forests have withstood the test of time: 5-7000 years of stability.
They lasted through the medieval warm spell.
We know that these new forests are already experiencing trouble with insects, drought etc.
Already more fire. And, if we want to support our wildlife, we probably want something more
historical. EG: mule deer lacking forbs. This still suggests moving toward fire-tolerant species.
Re: density: National Research Council in 2011 said the Blues may experience 6x as much wildfire by
2050 ... we should be looking at the composition & structure. Density may be more accurate than
species composition. We have a lot more trees on the landscape now than we did in 1880.
- Q: Feedback Loops: is there a rough threshold where you start to set up the low-intensity fires to
start playing their historic role.
A: herbaceous layers are good for low-intensity fires.
Forests with ladder fuels are more likely to see crown fires.
Shrub layers will be somewhere in the middle.
- Q: Densities here are very similar to what Baker found.
But your interpretation about the fire regimes is very different.
They say mixed and high-severity fires.
You talk more about low-intensity.
Can you speak to that?
A: They assumed that density meant long fire return interval.

That's not necessarily the case.

Densities were in line with long leaf pine woodlands that have 2-7 year fire return intervals.

- Q: Some of the old timber atlases on the Malheur had some of those old tables that Munger may have even put together. Did you get to use any of those to validate this data?

A: That's a great idea. I might make that my next project.

After some of those fires on the ECRD in the 40's they decided not to replant some acres because the atlases said that some of that land was historically sage brush.

On the Umatilla we have 1914-16 maps that cover the entire forest. That's in GIS.

We have the 1930's County-level mapping by the PNW Station.

That could be useful as a cross reference.

By this time there had already been a lot of change to grand fir.

This was just before the photo flights.

- Q: Was any soil sampling done with the GLO?

A: very course. Only in general comments.

Lunch Break

- After Lunch Jeff asked that people not record the meeting.
Rob stated that he would be willing to stop recording for the time that he's here, but he plans to record the parts that he is not present for. He has stated that he would be multi-tasking while we're talking.

DRAFT Zones of Agreement

- Pam (note taker) took notes directly in draft 8.2 of the ZOAs.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DG4CrZqnOi7Bis8u6dsZPArBnnH2qLbg/edit>
- Process: address some of the sticking points, sleep on them, and see if we can resolve them tomorrow.

Adjourn: 2pm