

# Northern Blues Forest Collaborative Minutes

**Meeting Date:** April 28, 2021

**Location:** online

**Approved:** May 26, 2021

## In Attendance:

### NBFC Members and Guests:

Paul Anderes, Union County Commissioner  
Mike Billman, ODF  
Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Resources  
Brian Dill, University of Illinois  
Pam Hardy, Western Environmental Law Center  
John Marshall, Photographer  
Laura Navarrete, US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Katy Nesbitt, Wallowa County Natural Resources Director  
Susan Roberts, Wallowa County Commissioner  
Darlene Rochna, Interested Citizen  
Caitlin Rushlow, Wallowa Resources  
Lindsay Warness, Safety, Environmental and Forest Policy Manager for Woodgrain  
Marlee Goska, Western Environmental Law Center

Staff: Jeff Costello (Facilitator)

### Forest Service:

Brandon Houck, Heppner District Ranger, Umatilla National Forest  
Brian Goff - Integrated Veg Staff - Umatilla NF  
Jim Brammer; Wallowa Whitman NF; Natural Resources Staff Officer  
Heidi McRoberts, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest  
Mike Johnson USFS FHP Forest Entomologist  
Tom Montoya, Forest Supervisor, Wallowa-Whitman for next 30 days!  
Bill Gamble, your district ranger in La Grande on the Wonderful Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Michael McWilliams, Forest Pathologist, Blue Mtn Forest Insect and Disease Svc Center, USFS  
Mary Young, Forest Soil Scientist, Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Amber Ingoglia, NR Partnership Coordinator for the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman NF and the Northern Blues CFLRP Coordinator

## Important Topics Discussed:

- Collaborative “Charter” to share with the All lands Group
- Summer field trip & fall shared learning preferences

## 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 changes.

#### **Approval of March Minutes?**

Heidi was not listed as an attendee

No additional changes proposed. Approved as submitted with the addition of Heidi.

#### **Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

- 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

When meeting virtually, We'll usually run 8:30 – noon

Field Trips may vary

### Updates & Announcements

#### **All Lands Round Table May 6**

#### **May 27th Field Tour (Sheep Creek Project, LaGrande Ranger District)**

#### **June 24th Field Tour (Morgan Nesbit Project, Wallowa Mountains Office)**

#### **SNW Workshop series**

Link: <https://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/forest-collaboratives-workshop-series>

Lots of good topics this year.

#### **John Marshall exhibit at the Josephy Center in Joseph.**

Rave reviews - highly recommended.

Up through June 14.

May 27 screening of The West is Burning

Link: <https://josephy.org/event/fire-stories>

Will be displayed in La Grande in the fall.

#### **Film Screenings:** Blue Mountain Land Trust is screening

- The West is Burning - May 6

- Catching Fire – May 13

**BIC Updates:**

REV Center is doing great work on socio-economic status & modeling  
This Friday afternoon hybrid live/Zoom mtg.

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Grazing SC has a relatively complete product  
Forest Health is mostly complete  
Access continues to have sticking points.

**Operating Principles:**

Because we just updated the Mission Statement in the ZOAs, we'll need to update the Operating Principles. So we'll have an updated version of that shortly.

**Jeff is "retiring" from NBFC:**

We're going to miss you!  
He will be with us until the end of June.

**Union county is advertising for an Emergency Manager**

**Changing Meeting Protocols**

In order to assure a safe space for conversation among members, and to come into better conformance with recent norms, we are changing our meeting protocols regarding who can speak when.

Regular participation in meetings:

- Members
- Invited guests
- agency partners

General public will be given an opportunity to speak at the end of each section of the agenda Any member may ask the facilitator to call on any member of the public at any time if they feel that that person would contribute substantively to the conversation.

Subcommittee work will be members & invited guests & agency.  
All final decisions will be made in public.

Added current version of the 1-pager to the chat.

It's still draft, but has the meeting protocols as well as a few additional items spelled out.

**Forest Service Updates**

**Umatilla SO – Reported by Brian Goff**

- Landscape Prioritization is almost complete  
This has been a very useful tool to help decide where to go next on the landscape  
Hope to bring this back to the collaborative in the next few months.  
This is probably a new landscape model
- Much of the Forest is still inaccessible due to snow.  
But some have tried, so local search & rescue have been called out a few times.

- Looking for a new Ranger – expected in the next few weeks.
- Seasonals are coming back.

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### **Pomeroy District – District Ranger Susan Piper**

- No April report

### **Heppner – District Ranger – Brandon Houck**

- Awarded several contracts for thinning and fuels reduction for Bull Prairie and Kahler projects under CFLRP.
- Timber crew is currently marking the West End timber sale for FY21 sale.
- Range- some cattle will turn out on allotments on May 1.
- Partnership grant submission to OWEB by NFJD Watershed Council for a riparian fence in the Swale allotment.
- Ellis specialist reports are coming in from interdisciplinary team in preparation for draft EIS release this summer.
- Implementation this summer: Kahler sales, Mallory Blowdown salvage, Mountain Top Defensible Space Project, Bull Prairie.
- Brandon is moving to Wyoming and a new Heppner district ranger will be in place by July, with an acting in place from late May until the new permanent ranger arrives.

### **N. Fork John Day (aka Ukiah RD) – District Ranger Paula Gunther**

- Davis – Forest health & insect issues
- Been talking about fencing along the BLM/FS interface because BLM is considering increasing cattle to rejuvenate range.
- Implementation:
  - Ten Cent Project
- Restoration in WUI around Ukiah is being considered perhaps a Jt Chiefs proposal  
Perhaps an All Lands project

### **Walla Walla RD – District Ranger Aaron Gagnon**

- No April Report

### Wallowa Whitman SO

- Personnel:
  - Brian Anderson: new DR on Wallowa Mtn District May 23.
  - Todd Peterson is on detail to the Air Center
  - Customer Svc in SO: Kimberly Irons is going back to the Umatilla
  
- Mindy Wood will be new Admin Officer
- Linment Ambrosia: new admin on the SO
  
- Tom Montoya will be leaving at the end of this month.  
Position hasn't even been flown yet, but will be soon.  
Probably a decision in July.  
Anthony Botello will detail in until a permanent is chosen.

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### La Grande RD - District Ranger Bill Gamble

- Gearing up for another year of robust aquatic restoration work in the Upper Grande Ronde –
- Signed Middle Fly LWD decision (helicopter placement of LWD structures, riparian planting) for middle reach/section of Fly Creek (headwater trib to the Grande Ronde).
- Signed decision for wood placement in East Fork Grande Ronde and other tributaries to assist with reconnecting streams to floodplains.
- Second year of construction on Longley Meadow River Restoration – large river restoration project being implemented in partnership with CTUIR just below Bird Track Springs project. Multi-million dollar project being implemented by local contractor from Union, Oregon
- 2019-2021 – \$10.5 million invested resulting in 44 miles of stream treated, 18 agreements and numerous contracts helping support our local restoration based economic opportunities.
- Submitted 4 additional projects to GRMW board that were approved for funding in FY2022 – our aquatic restoration journey in the Upper Grande Ronde continues!
- Completing annual meetings with our range permittees. Some common themes from the meeting included increased use in the woods and lots of gates being left open, fences being breached by woodcutters/OHV's creating issues for permittees. Will be working with public affairs on news release to raise public awareness on how their use of the forest can impact grazing permittees.
- Continuing grazing research with our partners at PNW Starkey evaluating how grazing interacts with aquatic restoration work and objectives. Research will be very informative on how we can manage livestock in a manner that is consistent with aquatic restoration objectives.
- Working with partners at ODF, NRCS and Union County on a Joint Chief's proposal for the La Grande Valley West WUI which encompasses Five Points, MERA, numerous NIPF landowners. Have reached out to Umatilla to see about expanding cross boundary opportunities in the 31 road/Ruckel junction

area. Thanks to John Panches for volunteering to help compile the proposal

- Five Points Decision will be signed as soon as we complete our heritage report with SHPO and consultation with CTUIR. Appreciate the collaboration with ODFW, ODF, Union County, and Woodgrain as well as GHCC and OW in developing the project
- Sheep Creek – Presented RHCA components of project at recent Level 1 team meeting as part of our consultation with our regulatory partners. Well received and affirmation of prior efforts of IDT working with the regulatory agencies up front/early. Plan to release preliminary EA in May and would like to present to NBFC to re-engage group in the project

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- Working with Steve Edwards for another year of intern monitoring on East Face – thanks to Kerry Kemp and Lucas Glick
- Fuels/fire folks have been getting some RX fire on the ground this spring – 600+ acres in the Spring Creek area, and last week completed a 1300 acre aerial ignition unit in the Blue Fly area (part of Sheep Creek project area). Spring windows for burning are very challenging, so really appreciate efforts to get some “good” fire on the ground. Doing a great job getting contracts out/awarded.
- Excited for the field season and opportunity to get out in the woods with employees and NBFC in the coming months.

### Whitman RD - District Ranger Kendall Cikanek presented by Bob Hassmiller

#### Project Planning Notes.

- Patrick EA for draft review on Thursday!
- 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. Site visits occurred last week. Industrial scaled mining operation on Pine Creek just above Halfway.
- Scoping on Baker City Watershed Fuels Reduction EA will go out in May. Developing the proposed action with an extended team in the SO.
- Initiating data collection for silviculture, engineering and other resources in Clark's this field season.
- We are finalizing a proposal for reforestation stand improvement thinning with a CE NEPA document across the Whitman District. This will address the backlog of thinning needed. ● Road Maintenance CE is in the early stages of development.

#### Implementation Notes.

- Prescribed fire is happening on the north side of Philips Lake. Things are going well. ● Getting prepared for tree planting season with approximately 1,800 acres of the Cornet/Windy and Rail Fires. Tree planting estimated at 30% complete.
- 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.

- The certificate for the Silviculture Position closed last night on USAjobs. Excited about backfilling this critical position.
- In outreach mode for PFT GS 10/11 Special Uses/Minerals Staff Lead and for PFT GS 9/11 Fish Biologist.

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### Fun facts.

- In 1954 the Wallowa and Whitman National Forests were combined into the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. At that time there were 9 ranger districts. Baker, Bear-Sleds, Chesnimnus, Imnaha-Snake, Joseph, LaGrande, Pine, Unity, and Union.

### Wallowa District – District Ranger Kris Stein

- Morgan Nesbit:  
Will have to be bumped out an additional year because of short staff.  
Can't get the surveys done  
Decision expected in 2023.

### CFLRP – both forests

#### **CFLN Funded** Projects:

TSI/Hand Pile/Mechanical Pile/Mastication: 4,354 ac+/-  
 NFHF/RTRT/CWKV Funded TSI/Hand Pile/Mechanical Pile/Mastication: 3742 Acs RX  
 Burn piles and landscape burning: 7363 Acs About 3500 acs this spring 5000 acs of  
 commercial timber sales planned plus biomass removal  
 9000 Acs thin plus biomass removal  
 Total completed or under contract: **24,459 ac**

We still have more CFLN to spend out on contracts due to bid savings so expect more acres to yet be awarded and based on this years spring burn window have the potential to burn 1,000-2,000 acres at WMO and another 1,000 to 2,000 on the Whitman district.

- Spent more than \$2,400,000 dollars to date on contracts for veg/fuels restoration work with local contractors being award about \$900,000.00.
- We have burned over 3500 acres this spring using 6 ODF employees via the E-Board ODF funding ● Utilizing 2 local contractors for engines on spring burning
- Utilizing Oregon Youth Authority personnel from River Bend Correctional Facility ● Regional agreement with BLM providing SRV crew members out of Vale, OR ● Being assisted by Malheur NF personnel, Local IHC acres, and Grande Round Rappelers

The All Lands group is doing well.

They're hoping to have a monitoring program plan by September

Communications team is meeting regularly – planning to share stories.  
Public affairs officers are working with fire folks to create a web map of CFLRP projects.

**Jean Jancitis**, the Monitoring Coordinator, has taken a different position.  
Caitlin Rushlow will take over.  
We'll miss Jean. Big thanks to Wallowa Resources for the help.

### Collaborative “Charter” to present at the May 6 All Lands meeting

Notes were captured in the charter slide itself.  
A pdf of that slide should be in the Google Drive for this meeting.

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As a part of that the group was asked to identify field trips and shared learning priorities.  
The following were listed, and people made their comments in the chat.

These are the lists brainstormed:

#### Field Trips

- See some of the different project areas that are already up and running
- Talk to private contractors that might be investing in additional equipment (socio-economic benefits to the community)
- Show evidence of long term consistency so people feel confidence to invest
- Tribal lands CTUIR steep slopes
- Riparian & RHCA prep for ZOAs
- Sheep Creek revisit
- Monitoring Team joint FT (based on S Blues monitoring specifically to build social license)
  - do tx's actually protect large/old trees?
- Kerry's research with Laura Platt: MMC
- Kerry research as related to private landowner mgmt decisions
- Morgan Nesbitt

#### Shared Learning Series for the Fall

- what does “resilience” mean in the Blue Mtns
- MMC
- Climate Change
- RHCAs & riparian areas
- heterogeneity v. homogenous tx at a landscape scale
- management at the landscape perspective (as opposed to a stand perspective) -
- Careers in natural resources: opportunities to motivate young people to get involved? (keeping kids local)
- HRV and how departure is measured
- Adaptive Management: what monitoring results do we already have?
  - How do they inform us going forward?
- First Foods

The following are the votes that came in on chat:



- building shared understanding and renewed social license for public land restoration and management
- I like the "invest" term because it encompasses investing financially but also socially/emotionally with trust as the output.
- would like to have a field trip maybe be the stimulus to lead to questions that might be considered within the **monitoring** time.
- **Tribal** lands and **Riparian** field trips. **Climate change** and **HRV** learning
- **visit private contractors** and understand the work that is being done  
Kerry's Research with **MMC** and Laura Platt -  
Field trips

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- **Comparison of HRV to current conditions** and discussion of management required to restore / improve forest and watershed resilience
- **MMC** / management at landscape perspective for shared learning
- See project areas  
**Morgan-Nesbitt**  
**HRV** and landscape scale management
- Field trips: **Sheep Creek, Morgan Nesbitt; Shared: Climate change, HRV/departure** ●

#### Private Contractors investments

- See project areas  
joint monitoring field trip  
RHCA & riparian areas  
mgmt. at landscape perspective
- Careers
- Steep slopes and RHCAs
- Careers and landscape scale management
- CFLRP on the ground and what it means to local economy  
Sheep Creek for field trips.
- Learning - MMC/Platt follow-up  
climate change and how we integrate in to our restoration.
- Too many great choices!!
- Field Trips: Morgan Nesbit, and Sheep.  
Shared learning series: RHCAs and riparian areas, Climate Change
- Field Trips: steep slopes, private contractor investment- could be one FT, Monitoring Team joint FT
- Shared Learning: climate change, landscape scale vs. stand scale
- Climate Change, RHCAs, MMC

- Field Trips: Morgan Nesbitt, Sheep Creek, Tribal Lands & Steep Slopes
- And of course I don't want to hog the field trip opportunities but Ellis is a great place to talk about many of these topics.

And here's a word cloud I did of the substantive items included in the chat:

