

WALLOWA WHITMAN FOREST COLLABORATION
FULL GROUP ASSEMBLY June 26, 2013
La Grande Interagency Dispatch Center, La Grande Oregon
MEETING NOTES

In Attendance: Mark Bennet, John Buckman, Nils Christoffersen, Myrna Clarke, Renee Coxen, Mark Davidson, Bruce Dunn, Steve Edwards, Dick Flemming, Dave Hannibal, Chris Heffernan, Mark Jacques, Kaerlek Janislampi, Brian Kelly, John Laurence, Tim Lillebo, Larry McCalden, Gary Miller, Toni Molina, Tom Montoya, Nick Myatt, Steve Naughton, Vince Naughton, Ray Osterpovich, Jenny Reinhardt, Darlene Rochna, Ron Rochna, Kris Stern, Rex Storm, Jeff Tomac, Lindsay Warness, Cynthia Warnock, Bill White, John Williams

Agenda Items:

- 1. Future Staffing** – Facilitation, coordination, secretariat
- 2. Lower Joseph Creek** – Update
 - Finding of initial forest reconnaissance on implementation opportunity acres
 - Other field work planned this summer (pending funding)
 - Field trip to visit implementation opportunities
- 3. Signature for the Operating Principles**
- 4. East Face Project – Presentation**
 - USFS, Bill Gamble and others
 - Wildlife Area – Nick Myatt – Oregon Dept. Fish and Wildlife
 - ODF, Mark Jacques on link with Comprehensive Wildfire Strategy and NE Oregon Pilot
 - Potential July Field Trip
- 5. Follow Up Comment on Landscape Learning** – John Laurence, WWNF Supervisor
- 6. General Comments/announcements:**
- 7. Close**

Future Staffing

Regional FS staff encouraged WR to submit a request for funding to staff the collaborative for one more year. Other requests are out for funding but no certainty from any source yet.

What are consequences of no funding.

1. Patrick will continue to Facilitate for the short-term if necessary
2. Wallowa Resources will be assisting through July at a minimum
3. Nils still waiting to hear back from Randy Jones at EOU on intern staffing availability
4. Umatilla is going through some of the same issues – possibly look at shared staffing

Governor's Plan is not looking good at the moment.

- The Ways and Means Committee did not include Collaboration Groups. Discussions are still happening regarding this.
- Representatives are: Richard Delvan in the Senate and John Buckley in the House.
- Chad Davis has a letter developed and circulating for signatures to submit.
- It may be worth having independent letters from Companies/Organizations with signatures sent in as well.

Lower Joseph Watershed

Watershed Assessment recommended approx. 18,000 acres - TOTAL Silviculture Treatment.

- First priority project area includes 9,000 acres of this total silviculture treatment recommendation.
- Next steps are to field verify the actual implementation opportunity acres.
 - * Timber/fuels reconnaissance – verify stand conditions
 - * Access
 - * Opportunities to address resource challenges
 - * Prioritize future specialist review/data gathering – support NEPA
 - * USFS estimate of approx. cost for 5,000 ac - \$25,000
- Next priority is to begin collection resource data sensitive to season/time. (ex. Botany species)

The Wallowa County NRAC initiated field reconnaissance to verify the implementation opportunities in the first project area.

Progress to Date:

- 3,000 acres forest reconnaissance by certified silviculturalist – cost \$3,900.
- Findings: 2,515 acres of implementation opportunity: 1,714 tractor ground <35% slope; 801 acres of cable ground
- Acres were adjusted for internal stream buffers, previously treated units, and non-forested ground.

Field Reconnaissance Findings: Average conditions across the 2,515 acres

- 145 Trees Per Acre
- Basal Area of 146
- 18,060 board feet per acre of saw logs (16')
- Average dbh – 13.9" (Larger trees Ponderosa Pine, smaller trees Grand fir)
- Mean Annual Increment 129 bf / acre / year
- Stand Density Index 236

Potential Output – Estimate saw log volume: Paul Ester provided Model to evaluate logs.

- 12.5 to 17.5 million board feet: 52% Grand fir / Spruce; 46% Douglas fir / Larch; 2% Ponderosa pine
- Anticipate volumes per acre > 5,000 bf
- Reduce stand density to lower management zone: 65-70 sq ft per acre in warm dry; 80-90 sq ft per acre in cool dry

Treatment Targets based on Field Reconnaissance:

- Shade tolerant species (Grand fir / Spruce); Understory (Grand fir / Spruce / Doug fir / larch); Suppressed – reduced crown, restricted radial growth
- Disease infestations: DF – dwarf mistletoe; GF – Indian paint fungus
- Release of large, dominant, healthy early seral species – Ponderosa pine, Doug fir, Western Larch
- Manage for large tree and fire resistant component

Final Notes of Field Reconnaissance:

- Maintaining the 21" limit is consistent with stand conditions and collaborative prescriptions in most of the stands.
- Radial increment growth rates are currently very low: DF 0.39" ten year; GF 0.68" ten year. (Good growth rates should range 1 – 1.25" per 10 years.)
- Few stands have 21-26" DF and 21-28" GF, < 150 years old with heavy dwarf mistletoe or Indian paint fungus, and healthier adjacent early seral trees in 18-20" range. Recommend site visit to consider removal of some of the larger trees.
- Category 4 stream buffers were ground-checked for evidence of channelization. Stream layer was edited accordingly. One additional channel found, Five buffers modified
- Assumption during field work – no management activity in riparian zones. Structures in and out of stream areas are the same. Additional data not needed if riparian density reduction decision is made.
- Roads identified on roads layer and roads profiles from earlier Timber sales were considered for access. Temp road recommendations are noted in stand description.

Ken Gebhardt provided some background and NEPA needs.

- NEPA requires data gathering for: project area existing condition, informs decision maker, helps with purpose and need.

Priorities for first 2,515 acres - Estimates from USFS W-W N.F. Wallowa Valley Ranger District

- Soil surveys: 35 days
- Botany surveys: 40 days
- Cultural surveys: 70 days in field / 140 days in office
- Wildlife surveys (management indicator species plus data management) : 25 days
- Timber / Fuels surveys: 90 days
- Engineering surveys: 30 days

Bill Aney – from Eastside Strategy Blue Mountain Restoration Team is collecting Watershed scale Project Opportunities to present at the Blue Mountain Collaborative Groups meeting at the end of July. Dates are tentatively July 22-23.

1. Purpose – Get a sense from Collaborative groups the importance level of each project.
2. Restoration Interdisciplinary Team can start with broad support of a project to work on.
3. Scale of project – they would consider entire 98,000 acres of FS Lower Joseph Boundary
4. Currently have some areas of 200,000 acres.

Outcome of Project selected

- A full Environmental Decision Document available for implementation on the ground for entire watershed area.

Lower Joseph Information sent to Eastside Strategy Blue Mountain Restoration Team

1. Full watershed boundary map
2. Integration results (table) of recommendations from all resources
3. Draft Purpose and Need developed by combined members of collaborative groups

Comment: There is concern if project approach is entire watershed it may raise additional concerns if HCNRA acreage is added. The HCNRA has it's own guidance documents and CMP.

Response: I believe these concerns were captured during the Lower Joseph Creek Watershed Assessment correct?

Comment: We can't assume the treatment prescriptions would be the same across the board. Approach should be based on Science and Policy.

Comment: The July meeting is designed to bring that information out and find out what the collaborative groups want.

Question: How was volume determined? Skips and gaps included? Was Basal Area applied across the stands.

Response: The forester doing the field reconnaissance is a strong believer in Franklin / Johnson approach, including the skips and gaps. He did not envision a uniform application of the basal area guide.

Operating Principles Framework

We have a copy of the final version and a signature page available for signing. We have some signatures from individuals and groups.

If you have not read it we can make copies available. Also there is a copy on the Wallowa Resources web page at <http://www.wallowaresources.org>

Go to the following tabs:

1. What we do
2. Stewardship work
3. Community Planning Process
4. Forest Collaborative

Or go directly to: <http://www.wallowaresources.org/index.php/what-we-do/stewardship-work/community-planning-process/forest-collaborative>

A hard copy of the Operating Principles Framework with a signature page attached was passed around for signatures during the meeting. There will be additional opportunities at future meetings to sign.

East Face Project

There were three speakers presenting information under this Project: Bill Gamble – USFS, Nick Myatt – ODF&W, Mark Jacques – Oregon Department of Forestry

Bill Gamble - Forest Service – National Forest Lands

Bill gave a slide show presentation about the Project Area.

Project overview:

- The project area encompasses approx. 44,000 acres of FS land and 4000 acres of State lands on the east side of the Elkhorn Mountains between Anthony Lakes and Ladd Canyon.
- The area straddles Union and Baker Counties
- Occurs primarily in the North Powder River and Wolf Creek-Powder River watersheds.
- Comprised of several different land management allocations including MA1 timber production emphasis (80%), MA6- Backcountry, MA15 Allocated Old Growth, minor inclusions of wildlife winter and summer range (940 acres of winter range, 1200 acres of summer range), and MA 16 administrative sites – namely Anthony Lakes recreation area.

- Adjacent to 3 inventoried roadless areas – Twin Mountain, Upper Grande Ronde and Beaver Creek.
- The project area also encompasses the ODFW Elkhorn Wildlife Mgmt Area (Nick Myatt will discuss)
- Urban Interface areas in or near project with private residents/property, municipal watersheds (Beaver Creek) and the high use Anthony Lakes recreation area. Two counties, there are 2 Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWFP) that address these WUI areas.

Natural Resource Attributes:

- The landscape is characterized by both basalt and granitic landforms with an extensive cap of volcanic ash associated with the eruption of Mount Mazama some 7000 years ago.
- Significant snowpack and a snowmelt dominated hydrograph that produces clean and cold water that supports Bull Trout as well as redband trout. An estimated 18% of the project area is within INFISH riparian habitat conservation areas. Powder River watersheds drain into the Snake River above the Hells Canyon complex of dams, there are no anadromous fish in the system.
- Fire has been and will continue to be a major natural disturbance factor in the East Face area. Several large wildfires within and adjacent to the project area including the Anthony Lakes and Tanner Gulch Fires. Over the past 100+ years, approx. ½ of the area has experienced large wildfire.
- These historic fires created large areas of lodgepole and western larch dominated stands in the stem exclusion and UR condition, and distinct landscape patches and patterns.
- Other disturbances include: insects, root diseases, mistletoe and wind/climatic events.
- Moderately roaded due to past forest management and recreational pursuits. An estimated 32% has had past harvest activities – 6% regeneration type harvests and 26% intermediate type treatments. Excellent regeneration success.
- Approx. 93% of the project area is forested: 3 primary forest types of dry, moist and cold upland forests. Dry forests 24%, moist 39% and cold 31%. Field recon is resulting in some revisions to these numbers.
- forest stand density is closely associated with fire risk assessments. Preliminary assessment of stand density data indicates:
 - * Cold 15,210 acres 4500 overstocked
 - * Moist 17,684 acres 6900 overstocked
 - * Dry 8,989 acres 3300 overstocked
- Over 50% of the project area is estimated to be substantially departed from historic stand conditions. Potential Fire Risk completed by State of Oregon is consistent with these findings.
- Social/Economic Considerations:
 - * Contributes to employment through contract work, commodity output,
 - * visual backdrop to Baker & Powder River valleys,
 - * Anthony Lakes Rec. Area
 - * Tribal treaty rights and traditional cultural practices
 - * City of La Grande Beaver Creek Municipal Watershed
 - * Wildland Urban Interface
 - * Public and firefighter safety

Opportunities in East Face Project

- Reduce fire risk within and adjacent to private lands WUI's
- Enhance public safety/reduce fire risk in the Anthony Lakes Recreation area

- Establish strategic landscape fuel breaks
- Restoration of a more resilient dry upland forests to - focus on promoting Old Forest Single Stratum
- Provide post-n-pole and firewood gathering areas for public and commercial uses
- Apply forest management activities at scales and intensities consistent with natural disturbance processes to move area towards HRV
- “Young” stand management in past wildfire areas, TSI and harvest areas
- Conserve and enhance whitebark pine communities
- Enhance big game forage/browse conditions
- Restoration of riparian hardwood communities
- On NEPA environmental document with two different agency management decisions letters.

The slide show provides several maps corresponding to the information provided. It also provides a look at stand conditions and vegetation types in the three forest types. Historic ranges were derived from the following sources: Forest Plan Revision and Vegetation Dynamic Development Tool (VDDT)

There is prospect for a Field Trip on July 24, 2013 to East Face Project and to invite scientists to discuss management options and opportunities.

Nick Myatt – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W) – Wildlife Management Area

- Since 1971 management for elk conflicts with private landowners and crop damage.
- 1800 head of elk cost approx. ¾ million dollars to manage. 10 to 11 feed sites
- Encompasses 8800 acres. 6700 department owned and 1700 under coop management agreements
- North Powder track is highest concern.
- Plans for the area include: A Management Plan and Forest Habitat Management Plan.
- # 1 objective is to minimize/alleviate conflicts with Agricultural Crops
- Winter issues are mostly solved but spring/summer is presenting problems.
- This project potentially can improve forage conditions to encourage upland movement of elk.
- ODF&W lands logged heavily prior to acquisition. No management activities on site since 1971.
- Must follow NEPA Regulations; no infrastructure to do Environmental Documents. A project across boundaries with USFS will help move management forward.
- 2009 had a timber cruise of forest habitat management to improve wildlife habitat.
- There are 2 critical Bull Trout streams through the area
- Considerations: Forest improvement, fire risk, cultural, Threatened and Endangered species, recreation, Long term source of income – sustainable yield.
- 4400 acres – est. 31 million board feet of merchantable timber; Healthy mature trees with heavy dense understory with some areas 3000 stems/acre. There is some bark beetle activity.
- Production potential of 244 board feet/per acre/per year.
- Minimal forage opportunities but great elk hiding cover. It is a transition area for the elk.
- Existing Road Systems on property are closed/overgrown except for county roads.
- Archeological/Cultural sites – a private consultant will do surveys this summer (2013)

Mark Jacques – Oregon Department of Forestry – Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Perspective

Mark presented a slide show on Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Perspective

- It was developed by a large group of state/county/federal representation.

- Chief Tidwell provided a testimony on June 4th to the US Senate Committee discussing 1600 past fire assessments of fuel treatment areas with 90% of them being effective.
- Cohesive Strategy Goals include:
 - * Restore and Maintain Landscapes – management across all ownerships
 - * Create Fire-adapted Communities – create and modify infrastructure to withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property
 - * Wildfire Response – all jurisdictional participation in safe, effective, efficient response to wildland fire.
- Importance of Cohesive Strategy
 - * More severe and larger fires & longer fire seasons
 - * Forest Health condition poor
 - * Assessment shows 90% of fuels treatments were effective in changing fire behavior.
 - * 72,000 communities at risk
 - * Fire Suppression costs increasing
 - * Fire severities having long term impacts to critical habitats

Northern Blue Mountain Pilot Project

- Our area was approved for a Pilot project. The Northern Blue Mountain Pilot Project. Includes areas of: W-W and Umatilla National Forest, Primarily in Oregon but extends into Washington and Idaho, Private and State lands, numerous counties. Map included in slide show.
- Pilot Project Vision – to increase the expanse of overlap when managing for wildfire at the landscape and community levels
- Goals
 1. Response to Fire
 2. Create Fire Adapted Communities – East Face provides this opportunity
 3. Restore resilient landscapes
- Ability to address geographic areas in advance of WUI and Communities
- Only one of two in the United States.

Opportunity to apply Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Goals to East Face Project to accomplish:

- Reduction in fire extent, severity & hazard across all ownerships through integrated treatments and coordinated suppression response.
- Implement proactive strategic landscape treatments to: enhance fire management options, assist in reducing future suppression costs and improve fire fighter and public safety.
- Increase opportunities to reintroduce fire where & when appropriate across the landscape
Improve protection of infrastructure, communities & private property. Continue to breakdown barriers of property boundaries.
- Improve forest health conditions.
- Support for local markets & processing infrastructure
- Protect & improve critical fish & wildlife habitat.
- Forest Collaborative can focus on vegetation treatments currently
- Cohesive Wildfire Strategy can cross feed information to other groups in NE Oregon.
- Widen \$'s cannot be implemented unless NEPA is completed on Private lands. This will open the door for funding opportunities.

More information can be found at the following:
Blue Mtn Cohesive Strategy Pilot Project Coordinator:
<http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/overview>.

Or Contact

Mark Jacques
mjacques@odf.state.or.us
1.541.963.3168

Landscape Learning

John Laurance – presented a slide show on Landscape Learning

- **Example of project completed in Alaska by Dr. Michael H. McClellan on Restoring Habitat Capability in Young-Growth Stands in Southeast Alaska: Tongass-Wide young-Growth Studies (TWYGS)**
- **Provided a flow chart showing: Assess, Design, Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, Adjust**
- **The study did random assignments to statistically analyze results, replication is important for statistical data.**

Experiments included:

1. Planting alder in clear cuts 0-5 years old,
2. Pre-commercial thinning in stands 15-25 years old,
3. Pre-commercial thinning and pruning in 25-35 year-old stands,
4. Pre-commercial thinning of stands over 35 years old by cutting or girdling, plus slash treatment
 - Landscape strategies will help land managers understand certainties of Prescriptions on the landscape
 - Experiments set up over time with specific questions that needed answered. Helped reduce uncertainties of future treatments.

Experiment 1: (0-5 years)

- A test of mixed hardwood/conifer stands, created by planting red alder at low and high densities in 0-5 year-old stands
- Treatments: No alder (control)
- Plant 20 alder trees per acre
- Plant 80 alder trees per acre

Experiment 2: (15-25 years)

- A test of moderate and heavy PCT of 15-25 year-old stands
- Treatments:
 - No thinning (control)
 - PCT to 222 conifers per acre (14x14 ft. spacing)
 - PCT to 135 conifers per acre (18x18 ft. spacing)

Experiment 3: (25-35 years)

- A test of moderate and heavy PCT, combined with two pruning treatments, in 25-35 year-old stands
- Treatments:
 - No thinning or pruning (control)

Thinning to 170 conifers/acre (16x16 ft. spacing)

Thinning to 170 conifers/acre, prune 1:2

Thinning to 170 conifers/acre, prune 1:4

Experiment 4: (35-45 years)

- A test of moderate PCT by conventional method and girdling, combined with slash treatments in 35-45 year-old stands
- Treatments:
 - No thinning (control)
 - Thinning to 23x23 ft. spacing by cutting
 - No slash treatment
 - Treat slash (cut boles to 5- or 15-ft lengths)
 - Thinning to 23x23 ft. spacing by girdling

Photos of various treated and untreated stands were provided in the slide show to display the different treatment approaches. The entire Research Paper called: Precommercial Thinning: Implications of Early Results from the Tongass-Wide Young_Growth Studies Experiments for Deer Habitat in Southeast Alaska. The entire research paper can be found at the following web site:

http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_rp593.pdf

General Comments/announcements:

Discussion occurred regarding the invitation of additional guest speakers. Several individuals were identified as possible options:

Dr. John Bailey – Dept. of Forest Engineering, Resources and Mgmt. -Professor at Oregon State University

Dr. Miles Hemstrom – Ecologist - US Forest Service

Dave Powell – Silviculturalist/researcher – US Forest Service

Dr. Paul Hessburg – Research plant pathologist - US Forest Service

Dr. Kerry Metlen – Forest Ecologist – The Nature Conservancy

Jack D. Cohen – Research Physical Fire Scientist – wildfire and home ignitions – Missoula Fire Science Lab

The Northwest Fire Science Consortium is available to design and assist in information sharing and field tours. They will help organize the tours.

Initial steps:

1. First identify the topics to cover:
 - a. Fire Regimes
 - b. Forest Types: cool moist, cold dry, etc.
 - c. WUI urban interface
 - d. Other topics
2. Then identify speakers that would fit the topics of discussion.

On the Wenatchee National Forest there was some mapping of wildlife habitat connectivity completed across the landscape. 2 to 3 scientists had worked on a Pilot Project there. Brian Kelly will look for more information that came out of a November conference about this.

The week of July 22nd is filled with meetings:

1. July 22 (10 am to 5 pm) and 23rd (8 am to 12:30 pm) are days set for the Blue Mountain Collaborative Groups:
 - A. To meet with the Blue Mountain Restoration Strategy Team (BMRST) (Bill Aney) to review landscape analysis opportunities for the BMRST to identify a project to take on. The purpose of this presentation would be to get from the collaborative groups a sense of how important each project is seen by them, so that the restoration Interdisciplinary Team can start with a broadly supported project to work on.
 - B. Location is in Baker City, Oregon at the Sunridge Inn Best Western address is: 1 Sunridge Lane Baker City, Oregon 97814. Reservation 1 – 800-233-2368
Book under Blue Mountain Restorative Strategy Coalition to obtain group rates of \$68 plus tax for a king and \$78 plus tax for two queens per night. Book by July 10th to get rates.
 - C. RSVP to dkruse@sustainablenorthwest.org
 - D. Announcement is attached with additional details about the meeting.
2. On July 24th there will be a field trip to East Face instead of an inside WWFC meeting. Meeting time will be announced. Field trip details under development.
3. Board of Forestry Meeting on July 25th (9 am) and July 26th.
 - A. July 25th will start at 9 am in the David E. Gilbert Event Center at Eastern Oregon University. After the meeting, you are invited to stay for an informal social gathering.
 - B. On July 26, there is a planned field tour in and around Elgin, focused on management challenges and opportunities associated with federal forests, and on the vital links between forest management and healthy rural communities.
 - C. The tour group will gather at 7:30 a.m. at La Grande's Best Western Inn & Suites, at 1711 21st Street. Lunch and transportation will be provided. If you are able to attend the social or the tour, please return the attached RSVP form by July 11.
 - D. For further information, please contact Sabrina Perez, Executive Assistant to the Board of Forestry, at (503) 945-7210 or sabrina.perez@state.or.us.
 - E. Announcement is attached with additional details about the meeting.