

Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative
General Meeting
Wednesday, May 28, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
La Grande Ranger District Conference Room

Participants: Raymond Osipovich, Lindsay Warness, Vince Naughton, Bill White, Bob Brown, Bruce Dunn, Chris Heffernan, Mark Jacques, Paul Oester, Larry McCalden, Roy Gavten, Mike Billman, Steve Hawkins, Jodi Kramer, Gunnar Carnwath, Brian Kelly, Rob Klavins, Dick Fleming, Darlene Rochna, Ron Rochna, John Laurence, Mike Haywood, Gary Miller, Katy Nesbitt, Bill Gamble, Cindy Christensen, Bob Clements, Dana Taylor, Ayn Shlisky, Nils Christoffersen, Jennifer Ferriel, Lori Baird

East Face Project Update – Bill Gamble

The preliminary purpose and need statement for the East Face Project can be found at http://www.wallowaresources.org/images/East_Face_Project_Preliminary_Purpose_and_Need.pdf.

The key tenants of the statement include: Historic Range of Variability (HRV), cohesive wildfire strategy principles, white bark pine resiliency and restoration, wildlife enhancements, and structures condition.

The needs as stated are:

- Restore and promote forest structural and compositional conditions reflective of historic ranges across the planning area.
- Enhance overall landscape resiliency to future wildfire, insect and disease risk, and opportunity to apply cohesive wildfire strategy principles across land ownerships.
- Maintain and enhance the overall representation and resiliency of threatened whitebark pine stands in the planning area.
- Enhance the diversity and quality of habitat conditions across the planning area to assist with reducing impacts to agricultural lands and improve overall diversity and distribution of wildlife habitat.
- Maintain and enhance connective corridors to provide for resilient and sustainable local and landscape level connectivity. (some discussion of possible future corridors over or under the interstate to allow for movement, although that is not in the current plan; also some corridors established in riparian areas – X number of feet on either side of every stream/river to allow for movement)
- Support local communities and economies by providing a diversity of resource management activities, recreational opportunities and commodity outputs from public lands. (this project can play a key role in local and national socio-economics by providing a variety of goods and services)

A planning timeline for the East Face Project was also presented. Currently in field season of 2014. By end of October, the USFS will draft a proposed action, which will be submitted to the Collaborative in November, then disseminated to the public. The process will run similar to that for Lower Joseph Creek – public will comment, comments will be analyzed and used to start developing alternatives, present

range of alternatives and invite comments. The USFS will work with the Collaborative and other stakeholders to establish preliminary effects analysis and release analysis or comments by late summer 2015.

Jodi Kramer, Public Affairs Officer, discussed the collaboration between ODF, NRCS, BLM, and USFS regarding public outreach on this project. Working on putting together a display to take to community events that tells a story about partnerships, the goals of the project, etc. Other pieces of public outreach include brochures, news releases, video, and an interpretive kiosk display. Some state funding available is through EcoTrust for communication and outreach for collaborative projects.

The group discussed the cohesive strategy and the link between state/federal land treatments and treatments on bordering private lands. Property owners work with Forest Services, ODF, and ODFW; each agency is communicating with landowners regarding the status of projects and activities. Landowners closer to public lands have received higher priority for funding – the first round of funding is available July 1. It is anticipated that that management activities will begin this summer on some of those private lands.

Lower Joseph Creek Project Update – Ayn Shlisky

Currently in the process of creating alternatives, which will attempt to balance road disturbance, vegetation treatments, riparian habitat conservation, and wildlife protection. The team has met with the Nez Perce tribe. There has been a lot of data clean-up, including transfer and interpretation of data from outside sources. The team has also secured results from burn-probability monitoring, which can help when planning treatments. The alternative development is revealing some deviation in impacts and trends.

The White House Council on Environmental Quality will visit Eastern Oregon (June 18-19) and the Lower Joseph Creek project is on their agenda to explore NEPA efficiencies and the lessons for accelerated timelines. The visit present an opportunity to discuss with leadership on the collaborative process and well as the overall landscape management process.

A field trip is scheduled for June 25th. Participants should meet at the Cloverleaf Hall in Enterprise. Transportation is arranged. The team is exploring options for the stops, and seeking feedback from the collaborative. Suggestions included:

- treatment areas for RHCA's
- "flag out" what a treatment would look like – what would we leave? What would we take?
- Would be helpful to have a map of where/what treatments are planned prior to the field trip
- Look at areas that collaborative partners are in agreement on, as well as treatment areas that are more controversial (i.e. roadless area, riparian habitat, old growth)
- Would like an opportunity to return after treatment to determine if treatment meets the prescription (multi-party monitoring)
- Would be helpful to show an example of a successful treatment area ("this is what we are trying to accomplish")
- Range issues – continuing maintenance/improvement

Strategic Fuel Breaks Project

The purpose of the SFB Project is to identify the specific needs/locations for strategic fire breaks in the Wallowa Whitman and across the Blue Mountain National Forests. There are four main focus areas: 1. Move forest toward desired conditions (reintroduce the role of fire; structural treatments of land to try to change fire behavior; get fire back on the landscape). 2. Prioritize where we need strategic fire breaks and develop a strategy that allows for safe and effective fire management. 3. Help offset future fire suppression costs. 4. Be more proactive about using fire as a management tool.

A SFB is a natural break (ridge, road) that restricts fire from burning through. If there is less connectivity between crowns, the fire is less likely to impact large landscapes. This applies not only to wildfires, but also to prescribed burning.

Prescribed burning: there are a lot of challenges to implementing the prescribed burning program. It is difficult to keep up with the planned actions. It is important to prioritize the needs for strategic fire breaks, prescribed burns, and mechanical maintenance. It is also important to work with private landowners and provide connectivity and consistency in fire treatment. Fire treatment is expensive and man-power intensive, and proactive fire treatment has little perceived commercial value, so it is difficult to do all that needs to be done.

There was a question about whether mastication (shredding slash and ground fuels and spreading it back over the ground instead of using fire) is being considered for management as opposed to fire. Fire presents a significant danger, and is limited due to costs/manpower and smoke issues. Mastication can be done any time of year, is effective, needs less manpower, and is good for standing vegetation.

The Collaborative would like to hear more about strategic fire strategies on an ongoing basis – possibly as part of upcoming field trips. The group asked to be kept up to date on the creation of the plan and how it will be integrated with the overall management plan, particularly in regard to the East Face project.

The Strategic Fuel Breaks project encompasses four national forests – not just the Wallowa Whitman – so the involvement of this collaborative is limited.

WWF Collaborative Check In

The Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative was originally created by the convening of county commissioners. The purpose of the Collaborative is to facilitate communication and feedback in regard to forest management. The point of contact for any concerns, questions, or suggestions is the operations committee. Information about the collaborative, including meeting minutes and other documents is available at: <http://www.wallowaresources.org/index.php/what-we-do/stewardship-work/community-planning-process/forest-collaborative>. Wallowa Resources is the primary staffing entity for communications and meeting minutes. There is periodic opportunity to solicit grant funds to continue staffing the collaborative. There is currently \$8000 available as an operating fund from Sustainable Northwest that can be used for whatever need is determined by the Collaborative. Any ideas or priorities regarding the use of those funds should be given to the Operations Committee.

How are people feeling about the basic foundation of the WWFC? Meeting times? Process? Facilitation? General support was expressed for the way things are being managed. Members of the collaborative were encouraged to provide additional feedback to the Operations Committee members.

Meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.