

**Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative
General Meeting
Wednesday, April 22, 2015
La Grande Ranger District Conference Room**

Participants: Bill Gamble, Kris Stein, Raymond Osipovich, Mike Brown, Ayn Shlisky, John Williams, Nils Christoffersen, Brian Kelly, Mark Jacques, Eric Ott, Upekala Wijayratne, Gunnar Carnwath, Larisa Bogardus, Katy Gray, Rob Klavins, Lindsay Warness, Vince Naughton, Larry McCalden, Mike Hayward, Paul Boehne, Darlene Rochna, Ron Rochna, Mark Davidson, Jon Paustian, Steve Edwards, Dick Fleming, Andrew Spaeth, Mitch Daniels, Karen Hardigg

Facilitator Introduction: Karen Hardigg grew up in Oregon and has a background in natural resource management and policy. She has worked with collaborative groups, most recently in Alaska, where she helped a diverse group of stakeholders find solutions to complex problems on the Tongass National Forest. Karen's role is to help harness the expertise of this group. It is her job to manage process and serve as a neutral representative that does not take a position. Karen maintains an open door policy and is very open to feedback about how she can best serve as facilitator. Some of the tools she is likely to use include asking clarifying questions, asking for broad participation and calling on individuals from time to time, and checking for agreement by sensing with thumbs. Thumbs up means that you can support, thumb sideways means you have a clarifying question, and thumbs down means that you don't support.

Purpose of the WWFC: Members were asked to reflect on some of the reasons the Collaborative initially was formed, and whether those conditions have changed. Responses included:

- To provide input to the Forest Service, specifically community values
- Improve decision-making
- Engage a diversity of opinions
- The old system wasn't working
- Move past conflict to achieve better outcomes
- Improve community health and jobs
- A belief that collectively the group can do more together

The Forest Service finds collaboration to be of tremendous value, in large part, because it helps the agency better understand different community values. Understanding different values and perspectives helps the Forest Service make more informed decisions about the stewardship of the national forest. There has been recognition that public forest lands management was not working in the past and collaboration is a way to bring stakeholders together to create healthy forests.

Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties came together as co-conveners of the W-W Forest Collaborative to help advance economic, social, and ecological resilience of the surrounding communities. In these three counties there are millions of acres of forest and rangeland and a handful of small communities that have a long historical connection to the surrounding federal lands, and continue to share an ecological and economic inter-dependence. This history and the ongoing importance of federal lands to the vitality of these rural communities are a core part of their identity. Restoring the health, function and condition the national forest lands is critical to the long-term vitality of the rural communities. Sustaining the workforce, infrastructure and community support for these lands is essential to achieving this goal.

A member shared that the collaborative is creating better lines of communication and trust. The perspectives are as many as there are people. The greatest asset is that people are listening and talking to each other. That is going to be beneficial to all.

Lower Joseph Creek Project (background, progress, and looking forward): In the early 1990's, Wallowa County and leadership from the Nez Perce Tribe convened stakeholders to create a salmon habitat restoration plan. That has created both a planning mechanism to address landscape restoration and conservation needs but also a social forum to build support for restoration and ongoing stewardship. Members of the group recognized early on that the landscape needs and community needs required restoration work at a bigger scale. That led to the work on Upper Joseph Creek and more recently to the work on Lower Joseph Creek. Upper Joseph Creek included a watershed assessment that was implemented over five years, which generated significant benefits to the watershed and back to the community. At the end of that process a peer review was conducted and lessons learned were incorporated into Lower Joseph Creek watershed assessment.

Once the Eastside Restoration Strategy and Blue Mountains ID Team came together, the Wallowa County NRAC and the collaborative both made a pitch to the ID Team to work on Lower Joseph Creek.

The WWFC began drafting a consensus document last year and shared the most recent version with the full voting membership on April 8, 2015. The sub-committee consists of Nils Christoffersen, Brian Kelly, Lindsay Warness, and Andrew Spaeth. The sub-committee has reviewed much of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and has been working with a number of members of the group to help shape a consensus agreement. The most recent draft consensus document highlights areas of agreement as well as some issues that members were not able to come to consensus on.

There was general agreement on the appropriateness of the general forest management prescriptions. In old growth management areas (MA-15), the sub-committee developed agreement for restoration work in dry forest old growth stands. RHCAs were discussed in detail and the sub-committee proposed that treatments in Category IV riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) be supported except those that fall into inventoried road-less areas (IRAs) and potential wilderness areas (PWAs) and those that feed directly into Davis, Joseph, and Swamp Creeks, which are Category I RHCAs. In total, the draft consensus supports approximately 900 acres of RHCA treatments. The sub-committee only found consensus around the non-commercial treatments in IRAs.

Lower Joseph Creek Project (consensus agreement discussion): Collaborative members expressed appreciation for the silvicultural design advanced by the Blue Mountains ID Team, which is based on the Franklin and Johnson prescriptions for eastside restoration of dry forests. Representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe expressed thanks to Nils Christoffersen and Wallowa Resources for keeping them engaged in the conversations. The sub-committee has received feedback from members of the collaborative regarding the draft consensus document. A member of the collaborative express concern about the broad statements included in document and how that impacts individual organizations rights in the process, especially if there are specific concerns that are not addressed in the document. The collaborative discussed this point and the member who raised the concern shared that they were comfortable with the language in the preamble of the draft document, in part, because the collaborative expects the Forest Service to continue to work with members who have concerns about the project. A member of the collaborative shared that moving forward the desire would be to achieve consensus earlier and in a way that captures the key issues of all members.

Lower Joseph Creek Project (implementation plan):

Ayn Shlisky and Mike Brown shared information on the implementation plan being put together by the Forest Service that will serve as a field guide for the Wallowa Mountains district office and its partners through implementation. It provides additional detail on how to address issues that were not fully addressed in the accelerated NEPA process, and the mitigation measures that will be implemented in response to specific resource issues found during layout and design. The Forest Service is the intended audience. The document includes silvicultural criteria, prescribed fire priorities, disturbance mitigation, botany, heritage, recreation, and a host of other things. This is separate from the EIS and not directly related to NEPA. It is considered post-NEPA. The Forest Service would like to reference the document as accurately as possible and so it will not be released until the FEIS and ROD. They will also be adding maps and a list of units with special concern and roads and their status.

Lower Joseph Creek Project (consensus agreement discussion part 2): The group decided to take a straw-poll of members to better understand the level of support for the draft consensus document shared on April 8th. There were no objections to this approach. Collaborative members were instructed to put their thumb up if they support the draft consensus document, sideways thumb if they have a clarifying question, and thumb down if they could not support the document as proposed.

Prior to the meeting, two voting members indicated that they could not support the draft consensus document. The group recognized that given those voting members were not able to be present at the meeting it was not appropriate, per the operating principles, for the group to take a formal vote. However, a straw poll of members (i.e. group sensing exercise) would help the group better understand overall sentiment on the draft consensus agreement and determine if the Lower Joseph Creek sub-committee should re-convene to continue to work on the document. During the group sensing exercise, of the membership present, one member showed a thumb down, one member showed a thumb sideways, the rest of the voting membership present showed a thumb up.

The member with a thumb down was asked what it would take to move to a thumbs up. The member expressed concern about the area of disagreement being included in the consensus document, in particular the references to other unroaded areas. The second concern was related to the statement that treatments in the IRAs should be “limited” to non-commercial treatments, which is at odds with the Lower Joseph Creek Watershed Analysis that was formally approved by the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners. The member in disagreement shared that he didn’t think he could come to consensus unless these changes were made.

The collaborative discussed having a majority/minority report or a way to outline the areas of agreement and disagreement. The Lower Joseph Creek sub-committee and other members supported the idea of just having one report because it was likely to be more productive and less divisive. The group decided that sending the draft back to the committee was not likely to result in a stronger consensus position. Members of the group agreed that the collaborative has provided significant and valuable information to the Forest Service throughout this process. Members shared that they are proud of what we’ve accomplished so far. Given that the WWFC is a relatively new collaborative, and that they took on a project already developed by Wallowa County which then proceeded through an accelerated NEPA process, it is not surprising that members could not come to full consensus on all aspects of this large landscape project. Ultimately the group decided to share the information presented and discussed to date with the Forest Service in order to inform their decision on Lower Joseph Creek. There were no objections to this approach.

As the group embarks on implementation monitoring and evaluation, we will strengthen relationships and should collectively translate the core of the draft consensus document into something more lasting, such as zones of agreement.

Monitoring: The group reviewed four broad areas in which the monitoring sub-committee has identified to monitor 1) project implementation, 2) project outcomes, 3) collaborative functionality, and 4) landscape-scale monitoring. Wallowa Resources and Sustainable Northwest have secured a graduate student from the University of Michigan, Alyssa Cudmore, to help implement collaborative functionality monitoring this summer. The monitoring sub-committee is comprised of Nils Christoffersen, Bruce Dunn, John Williams, Rob Klavins, Dick Flemming, Steve Edwards, Bill Gamble, Kris Stein, and Andrew Spaeth. The sub-committee is seeking feedback on the four broad areas identified to monitor as well as the questions that have been drafted regarding implementation monitoring and collaborative effectiveness. Do these questions align with what you are interested in learning as a group?

A member shared that implementation monitoring and project monitoring will be important because the day that the loggers move away it will look different then after the first snow and then 10 years later it will look even more different. The group is thinking about metrics to measure change and as we go through that process it will be more iterative. The question of capacity was raised – aligning with work conducted by the Forest Service is an important step. The field trips are extremely valuable just to discuss what is going on. Monitoring is important to the level of agreement the collaborative is going to achieve. Members of the group expressed interest in going to a unit after the second day or the first week to look at what's being done and learn together to build confidence.

Next steps and closing comments: In June, the WO and RO are coming out to see how the forest is doing at applying cohesive strategy principles. The Forest Service asked if collaborative contributions in this regard could be shared. There were no objections. The visitors will be coming June 16-17. If there is an interest in joining the meeting please contact Bill Gamble, La Grande District Ranger.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00PM.

Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative

Lower Joseph Creek Project

The mission of the Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative is to improve the social, economic and ecological resiliency of the Wallowa Whitman National Forest and local communities, through collaboration by a diverse group of stakeholders.

The following positions are specific to the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project as described in the 2014 Draft EIS. These positions are relevant to this project area, site specific conditions, and the social agreement that exists at this time through the W-W Forest Collaborative. They should not be considered precedent setting. No consensus should be assumed in any area where the document is silent.

Areas of Agreement

General Forest Acre Vegetation Treatments – The collaborative supports most general forest treatments outlined in the DEIS. General Forest Treatments do not include treatments in RHCAs, MA-15 Old Growth, and Inventoried Roadless Areas / Potential Wilderness Areas.

Stream Work – The collaborative supports the six proposed culvert replacements and other efforts to improve fish passage in the Lower Joseph Watershed.

Trees greater than 21 inches – The Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative supports the removal of some trees greater than 21 inches and less than 150 years of age in cases where a mid to late seral tree is within one to two drip-lines, as described in the DEIS, of an early seral tree (in particular Ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas fir). The Silvicultural Guide and Implementation Plan will be used on site to select trees greater than 21” on a case by case basis. The Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project is designed, in part, to promote large tree growth and late old forest structure.

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) and Potential Wilderness Areas (PWA) – The collaborative recommends that the Forest Service limit potential treatments in IRAs and PWAs as these areas are defined by the Forest Service to non-commercial fuel reduction treatments and prescribed burning. Preferred techniques include hand crews with chain saws using existing roads and other approaches that reduce impact on the landscape.

Inventoried Old Growth Management Areas (MA 15) – The collaborative supports the proposed commercial and non-commercial restoration treatments in MA15 Old Growth classified as dry forest. The collaborative supports the proposed retention of snags and down woody debris and recruitment of the next generation of trees within MA 15 stands. The field demonstration tree marks of the Blue Mountain ID Team played an important role in achieving consensus. There is no consensus within the collaborative on the proposed treatments in MA 15 Old Growth classified as moist forest.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) –The collaborative supports the proposed treatments in Cat IV RHCAs, except those that fall inside the IRA’s and PWA’s, and those with streams that feed directly into the main stems of Davis, Swamp and Joseph Creek. Potential treatments of less than 1,000 acres would be accompanied by an effective monitoring program.

The Lower Joseph Creek Project should comply with all applicable laws.

Areas of Disagreement

The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative was unable to come to consensus regarding the issue of other undeveloped lands as defined by the Forest Service in the Draft EIS and how this issue affects the proposed actions.

The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative also does not have consensus on a specific roads alternative for the Lower Joseph Project.