

Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group

December, 2011 Meeting #3 Notes (33 Participants)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Elaine Eisenbraun, executive director, North Fork John Day Watershed Council, provided introductions and a history of the group which began with a listening tour on July 17, 2011 that led to the initial meeting held on September 26, 2011 to identify collaborative opportunities.

Scott Aycock of Oregon Solutions provided an overview of the agenda and notes from the September meeting in which the group agreed to pursue a combined Kahler/5 Years of treatments project and the Young Stand Development project.

II. Operating Principles

Scott Aycock presented an overview of the draft Operating Principles Framework. These included guiding principles from other organizations-charters, expectations for conduct, etc. They won't be completed in this meeting – will take longer.

The group discussed Section II: Group Values. The following concepts will be integrated into the values or other parts of the draft Operating Principles:

- Recognize that projects need to be economically viable
- Strive to have projects pay for themselves, but acknowledge that not all will be able to. When not economically viable additional funding would need to be sought – strive to balanced bottom line
 - Stewardship contracts can be a tool for this, but must understand all implications of it.
- Incorporate concept of a shared group “vision” (partially stated in bullet 3) of desired future conditions.
- Bullet 2 - add “continuous economic benefits” - sustainable long term condition
 - Comment – add word, “utilizable” in II bullet 2
 - Bullet II, add “and ecological outputs”
- Recognize that there are other economic benefits than timber of restoration – restoration contractors, hunting, recreation
 - But also recognize that some elements of this produce more benefits than others – e.g timber sales provide not only contracting, transportation, and processing jobs, but also county receipts to help pay for schools, roads, etc.
 - Remember to keep things like biomass energy in mind too – potential up in Boardman.
 - Research actual economic benefits of different economic activities
- Find the balance point where economic and ecological benefits meet
- Restoration projects are hard to measure but any # of jobs are a major difference in small counties
- Capture ecological restoration
- Group makes no rules only recommendations. Private land is different.

In response to a question during this discussion, Scott emphasized that honestly representing your values at the table is not only OK, it's encouraged and essential.

Scott suggested the formation of an administrative committee to further develop language for the Operating Principles. The group then discussed decision-making:

- Strive for consensus, but have a fall-back mechanism (Push hard for full consensus first.) Historically, closer to consensus means more weight to final decision makers. Remember how USFS fits into decisions made.
 - If we use fall-back voting, we will need to document voting record, describe majority/minority opinions, and have minority state what they are going to do.
 - Potentially use electronic means when need to make decisions not in person? Discussion - electronic communications to keep members informed, but regular face-to-face meetings are important
- Develop a method for dealing with member attendance- people who aren't present need to stay abreast of actions – everyone must be actively engaged.
 - Proliferation of collaborative groups in eastern OR. Could coordinate, set up a network.
- Keep members engaged. Need communication between meetings.
- Define Forest Service role = listening not decision-making
- Social media and website for member exchange and public outreach

Decision: Mark Davidson, Tim Lillebo, Lindsey Warness, Kevin Martin, Todd Bucholz and Mike Rassbach volunteered to serve on the Administrative Committee (1 Meeting/Month) (USFS will participate but not make decisions as requested by group) with the following duties:

- Plan and organize meetings
- Refine operating principles
- Manage and pursue funding for group
- Conduct monthly committee meetings

Decision: Full group meetings will be held the first Thursday of every month, in Pendleton unless otherwise determined, and Admin Committee meetings will fall between full-group meetings. All full group meetings will be announced publicly. Discussion about having a sign-on to the Operating Principles to be able to be a part of decision-making in the meetings.

The group will use electronic communication, but will emphasize in-person meetings for the next few months at least.

Group activities will be mainly mapping and in-room during the winter months, with potentially some field tours from the highway in the Kahler area?

III. Potential Oregon Solutions Designation

Elaine outlined the Collaborative Group's needs:

- Freedom to make decisions within the group
- Access to decision makers
- Collaborative expertise
- Funding
- Dedicated group members

Scott Fairley, Governor's Office, explained how Oregon Solutions had clout with the Governor's Office and was effective in assisting with decisions. Elaine then outlined elements Oregon Solutions brings to the groups

- Connection to the Governor

- Agency presence and commitment
- Potentially a shorter timeframe - Momentum
- Leadership
- Funding
- Model for group to follow
- Succession (OS involvement not permanent)

The group then discussed the letter to the Governor from the Oregon Regional Solutions Committee requesting that the Umatilla National Forest Collaborative group be designated an Oregon Solutions Project. There was concern the letter only addressed the Solutions Committee priorities and not the Collaborative's concerns.

Decision: Collaborative will send separate letter drafted by administrative committee

Decision: By full consensus the group agreed to continue using Oregon Solution

IV. Dry Forest Project Proposal – See presentation notes

Carrie Spradlin, Heppner Ranger District, gave a presentation on the proposed Kahler Project, a dry forest project. Features and dynamics: incorporates the Wheeler Point Fire; plantations; developed roads; 6 grazing allotments; recent Doug Fir/tussock moth mortality; bark beetle mortality is expected to increase; predominately General Forest land allocation; includes portions of the Lower John Day and Kahler Creek watersheds. Has been heavily managed in the past and is probably the driest portion of the Umatilla National Forest.

Discussion:

- Opportunities on adjacent private lands
- Opportunities for by-products and jobs
- Fire risk reduction

Questions:

- Wildlife - are standards attainable or are there better ways to benefit elk? Do management guidelines make sense for thermal cover guidelines? Can the standard be met? Otherwise, it will need a Plan amendment.
 - ODF&W would like to manage the forest to promote keeping elk on federal land in the summer. This is a disturbance issue, there is more disturbance on USFS than private.
- What is the historic range of variability? Should this be a management/analysis tool? Is it first order or lesser?
- NEPA - timeframes and what needs to happen? Will this project be under the new or old Forest Plan? How can it meet both plans concurrently? – All three Blue Mtn. National Forests have a new forest plan w/ separate records of decision. The Kahler project is slated for implementation in 2014.
 - Should we speed up the process? Or hold back to assure that the project is under the new plan and to avoid some restrictions (HEI) that are in current forest plan but not in new.
 - The new Forest Plan has heavy emphasis on desired future condition. (Habitat Index – Old Forest Single Story?) How much old growth multistory used to be single story but moved into multi? Create a table of current stand structure vs. historic structure.
- Adjoining lands -where are the opportunities? How to incorporate into NEPA? Use landsat images and questions to landowners. Then incorporate cumulative effects. Agencies that might fill gaps - SWCD, Watershed Councils, NRCS, others?
- Map of Community Wildfire Protection Plans

- Map of 303d listed streams.
- Road mapping
- Maps of past and current conditions?

V. The Young Stand Development Project See presentation notes.

Walla Walla Ranger District outlined broad stand characteristics of this potential project which would address forest treatments needed on a wide variety of clearcut/regen harvests conducted in cool/moist forest types in the 1950s-80s, averaging 30-40 acres/unit. The presentation then moved to the Thomas Creek Young Stand Development Area as a potential pilot project. Total area is 728,000 acres on two districts. . 58% Wilderness/IRA. These young plantation stands are 70,000 acres across entire forest.

Discussion:

- Look at all plantations or choose a small scale site with information that can be applied to other sites?
- Thomas Creek area - +/- 3,500 ac. NEPA would occur in 2013 or 14. Some areas are going to be too inaccessible. Does group want to focus on small T.C. area or whole forest? Will small scale be transferable or is it easier to go from large to small?
 - Which is better for USFS? Value to USFS from either scale.
 - Are plant associations the same in both places? Does this extrapolate to other sites?
 - Larger potential for fiber from full area.
 - Discussion at last meeting was plantations posed less potential conflict.
 - Opportunity for major learning-small scale. Small scale might guide toward other projects.
 - Used tools to look at fire suppression, high stand density. It's "out of whack" and represents highly manipulated forest stands.
 - Can't extrapolate to moist old growth natural stand next door? Learn from Siuslaw/Pomeroy thinning examples.
- How much natural vs. artificial regeneration on the sites?
- Is historic data on stand management prescriptions available? Need more characterization of past management.
 - Can we look at PCT also?
- Opportunity to manage a highly manipulated site
- Use this as a learning tool to create intent, develop management practices and create outcome.
- Can we look at 1990's and 2000's stands too?
- P. Pine has lots of armillaria root rot – out of its range.
- HRV available?
- Pilot project to move to larger restoration sites
- Define what a natural stand would look like
- Extend findings to natural sites?
- Forest plan revision has much composition, structure, density compared to desired condition at HUC 4,5,6.

At the end of the meeting, one of the participants stated that just going into plantations would be a missed opportunity. A pine plantation in cool/moist isn't applicable to natural stands. The group discussed the fact that they selected this project in part b/c of the lower controversy potential in plantations stands. However, the "desired future condition" for plantation stands wouldn't necessarily look different than such for "natural stands" that may also be out of whack. Jerry Franklin, Norm Johnson could help us define "restoration" in such stands. Are we going to develop management recommendations or just dialogue and study cool/moist issues.

Decision:

- Resume discussion at next meeting on January 5th
- Admin meeting: Friday Dec. 16th 9:00 AM

Meeting adjourned at 3PM