

BUTTE FALLS COMMUNITY FOREST PROJECT
Project Team Meeting #1
July 9, 2020, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Meeting Minutes (Minutes: Jennah Stillman)

Project Team Members Present:

Eddie Kessler (*Ptarmigan Trails*), Susan Bethers (*Oregon State Parks*), Shane Jimerfield (*Lomokatsi Restoration Project*), Nick Haile (*ODF*), Jana Goodman (*Butte Falls Resident and former Mayor*), Trish Callahan (*Butte Falls City Council*), Kathy Bryan (*Gordon Elwood Foundation*), Terry Fairbanks (*Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative*), Representative Pam Marsh, Dave Erickson (*Lone Rock Timber*), Greg Weber (*Rogue Basin Partnership*), Art Anderson (*ODOT*), Tim Vrendenburg (*Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe*), Alan Dobney (*Southern Oregon Railway Society*), Representative Vicki Breese-Iverson, Scott Beveridge (*Southern Oregon Education Service District*), Senator Jeff Golden, Jamie Trammell (*Southern Oregon University*)

Conveners:

Mayor Linda Spencer (*City of Butte Falls*) and Bill Thorndike (*Medford Fabrication*)

Facilitation and Project Team:

Keith Tymchuk (*Oregon Solutions*), Karmen Fore (*Oregon Solutions*), Jennah Stillman (*Oregon Solutions*), Alex Campbell (*Regional Solutions*), and Kristin Kovalik (*Trust for Public Land*)

Other Attendees:

Paige Prewett (*District Legislative Aide to Representative Pam Marsh*), Marta Tarantsey (*Business Oregon*), Wyndess James (*Congressman Greg Walden's office*)

1. Welcome, Agenda Overview and Introductions

The co-conveners, Mayor Linda Spencer and Bill Thorndike welcomed everyone to the day's meeting and thanked all for contributing their time and interest in the Butte Falls Community Forest Project. Oregon Solutions project manager, Keith Tymchuk, overviewed the agenda for the day and highlighted the objectives for this project team's process and work to come. Everyone introduced themselves and shared their representative organizations, agencies and affiliations, as well as their interests and aspirations for contributing additional resources to this community-driven project.

2. Butte Falls Community Forest Project Framing Information

Overview of the Oregon Solutions Process - Karmen Fore, Oregon Solutions Director

Oregon Solutions Director, Karmen Fore provided an overview of the Oregon Solutions process of how to help realize the outcome of a community-based project. She shared that Oregon Solutions is the State of Oregon's designated entity to work on collaborative governance that brings partners to the table with

community interests and goals in mind. Oregon Solutions was initially contacted for project support and to request the governor's designation. Then following this request, an assessment was conducted to determine the project's feasibility along with its importance to the State of Oregon in acknowledgement that it addressed one or more of the opportunities pertaining to environmental, economic, or community sustainability objectives. This project met all of those opportunities and thus successfully received the governor's designation. This process and collaboration from the project team provides multi-sector representation that will efficiently utilize resources and demonstrate clear support, which enables the future attraction of resources. The project team will work collaboratively to determine its objectives and work towards a successful completion of those goals.

Project History - *Alex Campbell, Regional Solutions*

Alex provided background information around the origins of the Butte Falls Community Forest Project and how the town's history, partnerships, and the community's vision for the future have moved the process forward thus far. He shared a brief history of the forestland and mills, recognizing that Butte Falls is a formerly timber dependent town, which due to shifts in land ownership, logging activity, mill closures, and decreased railroad function, there has been a negative economic impact on the community. The acquisition, development and sustainable management of the land could transform the town and make Butte Falls a more attractive place to reside, visit and recreate. The 430 acre property of acquisition interest surrounds the town on all sides and also includes an additional component east of the town that overlaps the cemetery. Also included in the acreage is the Butte Falls waterfall, which has had a longstanding goal of bringing this site into the town's public ownership. There are many positive components already in place for the support of this project. The Butte Falls Charter School has been established for almost a decade and is a strength of the community, with the expansion of its natural resources programs, growing enrollment and collaborative partnerships. Other identified opportunities include, but are not limited to: ecological restoration, historic preservation and tourism, and residential development.

Alex concluded that some of the outstanding issues that he felt the Oregon Solutions project team could help assist the community with include, but are not limited to: addressing the funding gap for the land purchase, detailing the financial model for forest management, prioritizing and planning of project elements, trail planning and recreational development.

Land Acquisition - *Kristin Kovalik, Trust for Public Land*

The Trust for Public Land is a national land conservation organization that does both land acquisition and park design and development. They were asked to be a partner in this project, as it aligns with the organizational priorities of community, health, climate and access to recreation. Kristin shared an overview of the acquisition timeline that started in June 2019 and has a deadline of December 2021, when the option agreement is set to expire. An appraisal was completed and established the purchase price of the 430 acres of land at \$1.15 million. So far, \$400,000 has been raised from the successful receipt of a USFS Community Forest Grant. There is still a need for approximately \$700,000 to close the acquisition gap. Additionally, TPL and the City of Butte Falls would like to raise funds for the completion of a trail plan and submit grants for restoration seed money to begin utilizing once the land is in city ownership. In other developments, a consultant has been hired to work with the community and stakeholders to develop a forest management plan that is currently in draft form and will be completed in 2021.

Community Vision - *Mayor Linda Spencer, City of Butte Falls*

Mayor Spencer shared that the efforts of this project are rooted in the understanding that the forest is an integral part of the community, with economic and lifestyle connections directly entwined to create an alternative way of living. There is hope in this process to provide a model for other small communities to prosper by using their surrounding environment, as Butte Falls is working to do. To ensure that the community drives this effort in the concept building, objective generation, and direction of work to be done, they have created subcommittees in Forest Management, Parks & Recreation, Education & Research, Industrial & Commercial Development, Marketing & Communication, Special Projects (currently focused on railroad revitalization), and Residential Development. She acknowledged that there is certainly a need for capacity building and advising expertise from the project team.

The community has been meeting regularly and integrating feedback directly into the planning efforts. Mayor Spencer is currently hosting monthly Forest Chats, outdoors, to provide a space to talk about project progress and uphold a commonly reflected vision for the forest. A draft vision and objectives document is currently receiving comments from the community members and the feedback will be shared with the project team at the next meeting. The forest plan drafted thus far has had much input from the community, reflecting the vision to create a mature, diverse forest model that is focused on establishing a bioresilient landscape, preserving and expanding recreational opportunities, bringing the falls to public ownership, supporting forestry education and research, and leveraging assets to support the health of the community and economy. The ultimate management of the community forest is currently in question, with a draft proposal to create a Community Forest Commission (composed of 7 people, representing each subcommittee) which would oversee the issues and activities and advise the City Council.

She shared that the project team is welcome to come tour the forest or attend the monthly Forest Chats, but requests an advanced RSVP, with respect to social distancing practices. The next Forest Chat will be held on August 3rd, 2020 at 6pm.

Project Team Purpose and Declaration of Cooperation - *Karmen Fore, Oregon Solutions*

Karmen highlighted the final component of the Oregon Solutions process that the group will be working towards, the Declaration of Cooperation. The Declaration of Cooperation is not a legally binding document but is a written document where the group can delineate agreements to contribute to the realization of the project. Recognizing that contribution comes in many forms, this helps bring forth the power of people coming together to consider what resources or expertise they can offer to help this project be successful in clear objectives.

3. *Questions and Discussion*

1. Question - What is the vision for the trail planning?

- a. Response - Mayor Spencer shared that there is a desire for this to be a different type of trail experience and ensure that the forest plan and trail plan are cohesive with management practices and recreational opportunities. There are also considerations within the residential area for developing trails and pathway connectivity. Recognizing the importance of the recreational component to community, trails will be the first thing to be developed in this process.

2. **Question - Are there considerations of how this opportunity might fit within the development of a Youth Conservation Corps, to incorporate hazardous fuel thinning and forest restoration? There are small, successful programs in the state as a strategy to forest management and could obtain significant philanthropic support. Maybe this could be piloted in Butte Falls? Senator Jeff Golden would be interested in discussing this further with whomever may be interested.**
 - a. Response- There used to be AmeriCorps programs run out of Southern Oregon University that was a very effective reciprocal program in teaching students about natural resources that also got participants into the field and improved the forest.
 - b. Response - There may already be a partnership in place, but if not, this could be linked into the Education & Research subcommittee and Butte Falls Natural Resource Charter School.

3. **Question - How accessible is broadband across the community? Access to technology is a strong factor when considering our rural communities.**
 - a. Response- Hunter Communication has moved into the area and started supporting some accessibility, but other than that there isn't much else. When the Forest Service was there, they had infrastructure in place.

4. **Question - What are the circumstances surrounding the additional private forestlands in the region? Proximity to the community forestland, size, ownership, and potential compatibility to partnering and integrating into the community's vision?**
 - a. Response- Dave Erickson of Lone Rock Timber shared that they are interested in working with the city and partnering to keep the integrity of the land together, being a good neighbor. Lone Rock will manage their lands with active harvest and planting, but those goals are not incompatible with what the city is aiming to do. For a holistic trail system approach across the landscape, Lone Rock would be open to considering (on an individual basis) proposals of access and development with respects to fire management and safety addressed.

5. **Comment - The Medford Water Commission recently updated their forest management plan in May 2020, which could be helpful in addressing the complexities of ownership and planning for both short term and future needs. *The plan can be found on the Medford Water Commission's website [here](#).***

3. Ground Rules and Next Steps

Keith Tymchuk shared that the Oregon Solutions Project Team Ground Rules document had been distributed to all team members in advance and was then reviewed with the group. He acknowledged that the project team members should be familiar with this information and recognize that the best outcomes depend on cooperation and collaboration by all. He highlighted that all meetings are open to public attendance and there will be time designated for public comment in future meetings. For public interest,

the meeting minutes will be posted and future meeting information will be updated on the project website page, through Oregon Solutions: <https://orsolutions.org/osproject/butte-falls>

For next steps, Oregon Solutions will be following up to schedule a second meeting for mid-late August and strive to provide a range of meeting times both during and after working hours, to encourage accessibility for all. At the next meeting, the project team can think creatively about what everyone can do to enhance the work of the community, bring capacity and resources to help achieve these goals and drive towards seeking commitment.

Co-conveners Mayor Linda Spencer and Bill Thorndike thanked everyone for their time, input and ideas contributed already in this first meeting. They recognized the tremendous amount of synergy and opportunity present and that they looked forward to working in collaboration with this team.

The meeting adjourned at 2:59pm.