



HARNEY COUNTY RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE

Meeting Notes from: Tuesday, Nov 15, 2016 Harney County Community Center - Burns, OR

Jack Southworth began the meeting and asked participants answer the following questions: Who are you, where are you from, best thing you've done this fall and/or how will you know winter has arrived and/ or what is a sign of climate change in your life? Participants included: Kerry Kemp – TNC, Ben Cate, Calla Hagle – Burns Paiute Tribe Natural Resource Dept., Kendal Martel- Sustainable Northwest, Jim Campbell- farmer, Tom Segal – Or Dept of Fish & Wildlife, Dan Haak – Harney Co. 4-Wheelers, Dan Bishop- DR Johnson Co., Zach Williams – Iron Triangle, Jeff Maben - , Jason McGovern, Scott Frost, Jordan Van Sickle, Craig Hempy, Melissa Ward, Travis Swaim, Amy Mathis, Justin Hadwen – USFS, James Johnston – OSU (presenting), Jack Southworth- facilitator, Brenda Smith – High Desert Partnership (recorder of the meeting)

Justin Hadwen - Update on the Cliff Knox Project that has acreage in the Emigrant Creek District. This is a cooperative stewardship project with Prairie City. Purpose of attending the meeting today is to keep the HCRC up to date on this project. Maps were handed out. Approx. 25,000 acres of general forest, 1,900 acres of old growth, and 3,600 acres of big game winter range. The whole project is 40,000 acres. Looking to do some commercial work, restore ecological functions, and reduce roads but won't see big changes in the roads. Cliff Knox has been heavily managed in the district. There will be plantation thinnings and are looking to take out 21 inch trees. Some closed roads – looking to plant grasses, forbs create more open forest, looking at a bird trail system. Connect closed roads with loops – hiking primarily.

Questions/ comments from HCRC:

Q. Official visual management going away? In the general forest plan? A. Don't know much about new forest plan

Q. On closed road trails will there be some potential brushing on there? A. In other areas it worked well

Q. Timeline? A. Haven't scoped. Right now proposed actions by Dec. 7 and aim for scoping end of Jan. signed document by Oct. 1. Will update the group in February.

Q. Commercial harvest in RHCAs? A. We have tried it in the past. It is something we are always looking at Cat. 4s – Hazel is the hydrologist.

Q. No treatments in year around streams? A. No not really, but looking at small diameter conifers in year around streams? Looking at 50-60 basal area as a target.

Additional information from Travis Swaim: The take away from our last tour is to go lower in our dry pine sites. Trying to go closer to 40 or even 30. Justin indicated that Cliff Knox is a dry pine site.

Q. More info on roads? A. Decommissioning – not a lot of that. Just stay closed. A couple along riparian areas that will close. Similar to other projects. They had a good road tour from BMFP.

Q. On the plantations -Hard edges on thinnings? A. No, would expect smoother transitions. Hasn't really been discussed.

Q. Big game winter range? A. Will open it up a lot. Part of Blue Bucket range project. They want to see it opened up. Opening up meadows around historic photos.

Q. Hiking trails? How many miles? A. Just want to try in this project. Small loop – it would be a GPS point people could get from the ranger station.

Q. FPA for 21 inch cut? A. Just thought about this and need the information from the silviculturist – mostly Grand fir. Won't be too much at all.



Glad to hear about fire suppression – borders Wolf that has prescribed fire assigned to it. A lot of work has happened on BLM on Otis Mtn. A lot of adjacent work. Northwest boundary is a watershed boundary.

Project area similar to a lot of projects in Emigrant creek. Great opportunity for adaptive management on Cliff Knox. Any way the collaborative can help with that the better. This project will connect Elk 16, Summit and Wolf – it will be connectivity corridors.

Q. What can be learned? A. On our last field trip to Marshall Devine we discussed lessons learned. We should review again and decide if changes should be made on how projects are designed.

Mule deer initiative funding may be available for some of this work. ODFW – rolled out money for Malheur river to address mule deer concerns in the elk/ deer mountain transition zones. ODFW will continue to manage for mule deer even with reports of white tail moving into the area.

Q. On the 21” trees – what is wrong with Doug fir or pine? Doug fir can go, but pine is a bigger concern. If there are areas, we can look at with pine. I am open to that. Pine is not sacred. Good example is last stop on last field trip in an area that could be made into a meadow again. Pine has encroached into so much meadow we need to open them back up.

Roads are hot button issue – any plan on that. BMFP had a roads tour. If someone has a road, I need to know. Problem on the road issue is getting the info out to folks outside of the area. It is difficult to get the public to comment in a 30-day period. They need to see the proposal. It impossible to get meaningful input in 30-60 days. Moved roads to the top of discussions. Proposals up before document is written. The earlier in the process the better input we will get.

Road planning 40, 000 acres at a time, which is not useful. Who is writing the road plan? Jonathan Gill – can go through Justin on this.

Action item: Dan and Justin will work together to get the info as soon as possible.

Q. Any sense of logging systems yet? A. Don't know, assume ground based.

We have learned from previous projects that we need to see what is on the ground and we have done that this summer. (Feb. update) – Amy and Justin. Can you also invite the silviculturist and roads person – yes will invite them to the February meeting.

Jason McGovern update on burning. Jason accepted fire ecologist position in western Oregon and will be leaving Emigrant Creek RD within 2 weeks. Haven't done any more pile burning, too wet. A lot of our people are out in the eastern states, which are experiencing extensive fires. We will lose temporary employees before we are out from snow.

Melissa Ward – Review draft scoping document for the Flat Project

- Does this document reflect the recommendations provided by the HCRC?
- Does it move the forest vegetation in this project in the direction we want?

Maps and information about the project can be found at ECRD website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=47364>

Scoping period will be open soon (began December 15, 2016).

This project will be similar to Dove. Important to remove ladder fuels. Pre commercial thinning (PCT) is similar to stand improvement (biomass thinning). There is proposed 12% commercial harvest.

Q. Purpose and need statement – Where does economics become a by-product of the forest? This is a concern of Zach Williams. Economics is a driver and helps see that there are funds for the stand improvements to be conducted. “Don't try to soften the blow, we need to support the economic part of

the equations”. Let’s be straightforward and transparent, there is a purpose and need and it is OK for people to get a paycheck, that is not a bad thing. Collect a commercial old-fashioned timber sale and then use the stewardship as the restoration piece.

Is this a slippery slope? Timber sale in sheep’s clothing? Don’t sugar coat it. Are you designing for an economic output and to maximize harvest or is it a restoration project? How else do you pay for a restoration project? You have to have commercial value to get the restoration done. There is \$4-5 million of restoration and best case scenario is \$2 million commercial sale. Capturing the economic value that is there and now restoration is “baked into the cake”.

Q. What are the characteristics of a good project? A. A lot of restoration work improves rangeland.

Q. What is the expected volume on the logging? A. It will be questionable to get 4,000 board feet.

This is an important topic. The sale folks usually throw out some of these areas, but it would be helpful to have a conversation with the pre-sale crew and agency but should also include the timber folks to make the most efficient harvests. It would be great to have the pre-sale folks in the collaborative.

There is a need for the industry presale and planning to look at this prescoping. (Note: Travis Swaim scheduled a field trip the following week but was cancelled due to snow and road conditions).

Another place where we drop the ball is in getting units together to have a package of sales together to log all sales at once.

ODFW – Tom said the agency feels good about opening up the stands as it usually releases the brush from competition. When a short fire return cycle starts occurring the brush/ shrub species fall out of the system. This project is the most aggressive to date on the aspen. They will cut in the buffer up to 30-inch diameter of all species in aspen stands.

Q. Is there enough commercial to get the restoration done? A. Will try to thin by fire. Thinning by fire looks good. If they can’t burn a big enough block, then it’s not worth it. You can’t pay for 30% restoration from the commercial logging – so where are these funds going to come from?

Other aspects of the project: There are Riparian habitat conservation areas with 50’ buffers on each side of intermittent streams. Roads in this project are more set, need to close for wildlife activity and road density reasons. Dropped basal area to 40. Looking to create more savannah on the forest.

Presentation by James Johnston: *Openings and old growth: Dry forest restoration on the Malheur National Forest (powerpoint presentation)*

Q & A from the group:

Q. Anything published on this? A. Most of this presentation is written up for scientific journal publication and is now in the peer review period and should be available in the next few months.

Q. White fir has been labeled a “bad tree”, but also Doug fir? - What is the ecological role of Doug fir?

A. Somewhat drought tolerant, fire resistant close to ponderosa pine. Much higher water user, but old growth is usually in higher and wetter sites. Really don’t find Doug fir stands in the forest. Always in association with other species and usually a minor species. Does it belong in limited numbers?

Ecological niche? Not sure. They are better seeders than pine.

Comment: Log healthy fir and leave decadent fir. Fir was a planted species.

Q. Over story die offs from beetles; could you decide on size of die offs? A. No is the short answers. Up to 50 hectares with some residual pine left.

Q. What gaps interfere with disease or insects? A. No idea of size for resilience in the forest. Rock Springs campground almost every tree is dead or almost dead.

Q. How do you think national forest lands are being managed and how to make more resilient? How will stand density – climate variation will impact us? A. There are 2 broad scale periodicities – el Nino and a longer 30-year period. When those 2 coincide it can have an impact on the forest. Manmade climate

change hasn't impacted us heavily yet. If change in amplitude is fairly constant, then this is a lot to do with nothing. What does our management role play in this? Hard to say.

Q. The meadow margins – what are the soil characteristics that historically kept trees out of the meadows? A. Trees were excluded from mollisols. Historically associated with heavy native bunch grass and could be associated with over grazing.

Q. Concept emerging in your research that is being brought up in our collaboratives. A. I have been saying things that folks here already know. Thin the heck out of it young, thin all or most of Doug or Grand fir, and leave behind widely spaced pine and leave heterogeneity. This is what Phil would have told you.

In Calif. There is an extraordinary amount of brown trees. Massive drought related die off.

Q. Is this a healthy forest that survives and also create economic and social benefits? Questions asked and answered about emerging new markets and if the counties can handle it or be ahead of it. What if we were build a mill tomorrow? I don't know and would think long and hard about what products could compete in a global market.

Q. Historically do you have a feel for why trees establish in clumps? A. Primarily to do with soil types. Not always related to water availability.

Lag effects that the data show indicate the die off was not from fire, it indicates the trees did not survive the insects that follow the fire. Why not a stand replacing fire? Convinced by cross dated fires that burn and not associated with decrease in growth rings

Have seen a shift in 1 degree in Pacific Northwest. Climate change might not manifest itself same as past drought events. Mortality linked to warmer droughts, not drier droughts. Don't think we have seen the impacts. To only leave pine on landscapes would be hedging bets and there would be less diversity to respond to the changes we don't know. Not analogs for current and future droughts.

Kendal Martel of Sustainable NW: Kendal handed out a survey to the group to fill out so she could get a better idea of the main concerns of the HCRC. Kendal asked if there was someone from HCRC who would be interested in being a liaison for the Blues Network.

What are the main roadblocks to accomplishing the goals of HCRC and what can SNW do to help remove them? We would like to fully develop a learning network of the collaboratives. It was stated that HCRC would want to take advantage of a network to have a workshop on profitable ways to get small diameter wood to get out of Harney county. Already a long distance from Portland and lack of time. Kendal stated that SNW works really hard and working for HCRC. Kendal also asks us to be respectful of their time and distance.

Advocacy part – we are pretty specific and local. Transparency is important but need to be careful Melissa Ward stated we used to have more environmental groups. She asked if SNW could reach out to these groups. Asked how they would get more participation from the environmental stakeholders? Outreach is a big deal and we do a lot around that but people are unaware. We are doing these good things and don't share it.

Kendal said her main point is creating a bridging organization to help transfer knowledge. She participates in 3 collaboratives and interacts with another 5. Needing people rooted in the place-based collaboratives is a key. Where Kendal sees Sustainable Northwest is in a pivotal role for an advocacy realm. There are barriers to our process and they are regulations that we can't change and we need to advocate for this at a bigger level. Networks serve constituency or constituency serve the needs of the networks. Networks are not a virtue onto themselves. Time, money, resources. Are people on the ground expected to do the work or is the network going to help them with time, money, resources?



HCRC thanks Jason for his contributions to the collaborative, they have been very appreciated.

Next meeting February 21, 2017 at High Desert Partnership office 242 Hwy 20 S, Hines, OR – directly across the street from ODFW.