



**Harney County Restoration Collaborative Meeting
February 12, 2015 - Pine Room, Burns OR
Meeting Highlights**

Highlights:

Wolf Vegetation Management Project – it is currently out for comment ending March 6. Key points discussed were:

- Three alternatives have been proposed with Alternative 2 the preferred.
- Gaps and skips and how this was to be determined by the timber contractor –USFS will lay out skips and gaps.
- Road closures and how these are determined. Generally group satisfied with road issues.
- Prescribed burns and how these will be conducted and if they will be conducted and wildlife (big game) impacts –ODFW said they would meet with USFS.
- How the process of Eas are changing with less specificity and assurances of how projects get implemented on the ground.

Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team update:

- This group is doing large scale NEPA to accelerate forest restoration. They are on a 3 year timeline and hope to stay engaged with the forest collaboratives for input.
- Currently have a 100,000 acre project out for review Joseph Creek in Wallowa-Whitman forest.

Update on Dove Project Planning:

- Still in analysis phase, hope to have it out for comments in May.
- Looks to be 7000-8000 acres for harvest. This area has been cut heavily in the past, strong restoration component.

Planning Session:

- Comments received from the group in answer to 3 questions posed by Jack Southworth, indicated HCRC is doing good things and is well worth the time and effort.
- The group generally would like to see more engagement with environmental groups and the general public and keep tackling the really tough issues.
- Ideas to be successful into the future – complete more projects, consider some grazing projects/NEPA , create infrastructure for wood products, work on more zones of agreement, and keep monitoring to determine progress.

Specific Notes:

Meeting Began with Lunch – sponsored by High Desert Partnership

Attending: Jeff Maben, Malheur Lumber Co.; Phil Jenkins, King Williams – Iron Triangle

Melissa Ward, Lori Bailey, Josh Giles, Jason McGovern, Roy Sutcliffe, Pete Cadena – USFS

Barb Wales, Jennifer Farriel - Blue Mtn Restoration Strategy Team

Fred Hellbusch

Dan Haak – Solider Creek Juniper

Jack Southworth - HCRC facilitator

Rod Klus, Tom Segal -ODFW

Travis Heipel, Glen Johnston– Timber harvester

Jim Campbell – Farmer

Brenda Smith – High Desert Partnership

Note from introductions: Timber operators commented that snowpack matters if contracts stipulate we have to log over snowpack. This can impact our ability to complete contracts.

Overview of Wolf Vegetation Management Project Environmental Analysis:

Melissa will have some printed copies to hand out. Everyone received a copy of the “project brief”.
Purposes of the Project

- Improve native vegetation resilience and resistance to insects, disease and wildfire.
- Restore meadow habitat, aspen stands and riparian hardwoods
- Enhance sagebrush steppe habitats
- Reintroduce fire on the landscape as a natural process
- Reduce road related impacts
- Capture economic value of harvested timber

Through the scoping effort 2 main issues were identified: The effects on big game cover and habitat connectivity.

As a result of the scoping issues, USFS proposed alternative 3.

Several other activities proposed are listed on the “brief”.

Comments/ Questions: Alternative 2 is the proposed action

Q. If roads are not being used why being closed? A. To meet forest plan standards. We are told to close roads in the forest plan standards. We currently don’t meet forest plan standards for roads so we must reduce roads.

Q. Are harvest prescriptions identified? -A. In the EA, the treatments are briefly described. Are they simplified or more complex? A. They are more complex.

When prescriptions are more complex, as a timber operator it becomes more difficult for my people to carry out on the ground. USFS: Gaps and skips are already laid out – you don’t have to figure that out.

This is a new concept. New measurement specialist is Pete LeDuke will be able to help you.

It will be critical for the contractors to work on this. These gaps and skips are laid out beforehand because USFS needs it to get an accurate cruise to prepare contracts.

Q. What is designating old growth? We are designating “replacement old growth”. Most alternatives do not designate old growth.

Q. Are not roads closed seasonally by weather events?

When we close a road it means just taking a sign down. Might have to open to do the logging. Spread slash to disguise the entrance.

Q. What type of logging system for 35% slopes? A. It will be skyline.

Q. What is slash treatment? A. Grapple, hand pile- very little of this or biomass removal.

Q. Cover estimates are not clear to ODFW? A. analysis is done vertically.

Q. Thought you were going to use horizontal analysis? A. Only doing it in the Dove project,

This project is only on forest service managed land not private owned land.

We pretty much stay out of draws this is mandatory

We are not even touching 2000 acres of Duck Creek – ODFW will get some maps and get together with Josh.

Discussion on the Prescribed Burning treatments:

For prescribed burn treatments - Estimating burning about 55% of the sites – only dry pine areas, not touching lodgepole pines. We have wildlife treatment areas and the goshawk - look at Nickel ridge in the plan, this spring is 6000 acres burn over 3-5 days will get a variety of effects. I don’t ever do anything in sagebrush – not a fuels concern. It is not clear that you won’t burn in sagebrush – this is a 40K planning area with one person doing the burning? The focus is on SW aspects with trees large enough that we don’t do a stand replacing burn. The way this is written is a blank check, we don’t want

you to burn in winter range. Would like a few more boxes. What is the expectation that you will be able to burn 20,000 acres in the next 10 years? We have a lot of areas to burn, I talk to all the specialists before I burn – and bring wildlife concerns to me.

Q. Do you think you will get to this in 10 years? A. We have a strong fuels program, administration has a commitment to this, and Oregon has committed resources. We are trying to create jobs in the woods, keep the mills operating. I think we will commit to doing what we say we do. I think we have a good team on the district. You have smoke constraints that will limit us – have to keep smoke out of towns. And follow state guidelines.

Concern of Lack of specificity in this EA. They are supposed to be site specific. How about more specific management objectives – measurable? My focus is not to reduce fuels it is about restoring processes in the systems. Not all fires are the same. Try to limit specificity of the NEPA documents and this is what the collaboratives are trying to do. The attempt because the size and scope we have to rely upon forest wide directives.

What is timeline for project? Comment period ends March 6 depending on the comments received as soon as possible – final EA in April/ May. Objection period will start sometime in May. There will be an objection clarification meeting – a lot of the time we get things cleared up during this meeting. It will depend on comments when we get through this. There is a 45 day objection period and a 45 day objection resolution period.

Comment: The road plan looks good from a roads prospective. The progress I see is in how you are doing this and being much more open about this. The 4-wheel community is not feeling as shut out as past years.

What are cover estimates – just after mechanical treatments? What do you end up with after fire?

Appreciate the discussion around site specificity and this is the trend and how do we get to the next step and move through the implementation? Specificity is not in the NEPA documents but must be in implementation guides.

Plan to do the Dove Project similar to Wolf Creek.

Site specificity has not been tested in the courts

Summary of the specificity discussion: USFS thinks it is site specific not as much as others think.

Jennifer Farrel – update on the Lower Joseph project: Tasked with– Dry Forest Resiliency across Blue Mtns, Strategic Fuel management – lines where to contain fires.

We decided to combine the 2 projects. Figuring out where to prioritize – won't be working in areas where recent work has happened or will be happening.

Coming up with a framework – strategies to help manage – working with Alan Agar to filter through priorities. We need to engage with all collaboratives in the region and how do we do that. Is there an agreement where we can go across all zones of the collaboratives?

Process dictated by priority of each collaboratives? There are some reoccurring themes in each collaborative.

Q. Why take on such a big area? A. We are doing accelerated restoration on very large areas and we have 3 years. What are your boundaries – the 4 national forests want to move at a faster pace for restoration and we have to have NEPA done and then how to implement.

Our goal is not to be programmatic but go ahead and implement. As areas get larger it gets increasingly difficult

A. How are you delineating boundaries? It will be very spotty. But we do expect to have a project area. Looking forward to see NEPA done and implementation. Archeologists get nervous; will be interesting to see processes coming up.

A. Where would this work be done – in Baker? Q. Don't want to do this in a vacuum. Have to be outreaching with the collaboratives. We don't want to be in Baker and write NEPA.

Q. Wildlife habitat – will that all be done with modeling? How are you going to analyze that? A. Don't exactly know how that is going to work. Implementation will be much more intense.

Update on Dove Project – Josh Giles

Dove project – south of Murderers Creek - Take Hines Logging Road - close to 5000 acres projecting maybe another 1000 acres. 160 acres of conversion treatment – cutting large fir.

Not going to cut large trees in aspens for Dove

Still in analysis phase

May end up with 7000-8000 thousand acres for harvest.

No road analysis has been started. There is Utley Butte inventory Roadless area. Green area on the map is where potential harvest will occur.

Q. Will more treatments be conducted in non-commercial timber areas?

There is some mixed conifer – lodgepole and larch in the north and also dry pine, a large meadow and a scab flat. Haven't collected all data on the area yet.

Q. Timeline? A. scoping in a couple of months, before summer.

Q. Any road density analysis? Yes, east central area will need to bring roads down, most are naturally closed now. One road is washed out.

We may need to remove some area west of Corral Creek because of potential wilderness. We are required to analyze for wilderness. We just analyze for meeting criteria for wilderness and if our actions will change this. Had that problem on Galena where we had to drop a bunch of this area.

Concern: Wilderness just keeps expanding because it is next to a Roadless area. Would like to discuss this because it keeps going down the slippery slope. Washington needs to be aware of this.

8000 acres out of a 44,000 acre planning area, ¼ is non forested, has been cut over before. A lot of winter range in there; it was hit hard the last couple of harvests, some problems out there. Lowest harvest acreage of projects so far. Haven't started on wildlife stuff.

Won't be aggressive aspen treatments but maybe will plan some mahogany treatments

This area is prime for restoration – accelerate the restoration

There has been a forest wide aquatics restoration EA can do pre-commercial removal – i.e. juniper, mahogany this would be up to 8-10 inches. This is very preliminary assessments of commercial harvest.

What about lodgepole pine – what do we want to do with this? Let's put it on the table there are smallish type markets that can use it. There are markets all over the state for lodgepole and is in high demand. Not controversial, not the traditional timber sale. Get an ecology group out there – if you cut it what will happen? In growth after overstory removal. Not very big stuff. Send a request in for an ecologist to look at it. You don't want to get more lodgepole.

Comment: We did a pre-commercial thinning and it looks exactly the same as we treated in 1985 – throw a lot of money into it to actually get it out. We had an assortment of post and pole sales.

What about bug epidemic? Entomologist says the insect activity is increasing.

Cut all lodgepole and sell it and protect the Ponderosa.

It is a small component in Dove but part of much larger out of project area.

Lodgepole in frost pockets outside of riparian.

Projects in wilderness will require an EIS.

Round Table Discussion: Answer 3 questions on the cards.

How is HCRC doing as a collaborative?

- Good +
- Excellent as long as Jack is the facilitator
- Making headway

- Works well but need more environmental group input
- Good open honest discussion
- Doing very well
- Working well in general
- Good, wish BLM would do something similar
- Seems like people are communicating
- Good progress On Track
- Doing an incredible job. Has increased ECRDs planning decisions immensely, helped build trust
- Great
- Pretty well!
- Doing well, these questions are a good example, Good communication, respectful, consistent.
- Good notes, good at including all parties who express interest, excellent lunches

What could we be doing better?

- Don't know, first meeting
- Need more diversity in the group, we had a larger group in past years.
- More field trips with greater donut selection
- Need more environmental group component or include them via technology
- Lacking serious environmental group perspective
- Continue monitoring, share the science, grazing projects?
- Training exposure to hot topics or management techniques
- Continue what we are doing but tackle more difficult topics.
- Better if we had more diverse groups attending.
- Need to revisit treatment areas as a group to discuss results
- Longer meetings to dive into details, need to meet more often to help guide planning
- Need larger maps with treatments laid over satellite imagery.
- Continue dialogue and bring up ideas that make people uncomfortable.
- Maybe try a few evening meetings to get more involvement
- Nothing
- Challenging the envelope on some controversial issues for zones of agreement.
- Haven't been to enough meeting to know
- More involvement from citizens, lots of agency, industry. I would like to see more public at the meetings.

If we're really successful, what will we accomplish in the next couple of years?

- Better forests and provide more jobs
- Multi-resource oriented projects
- Healthy forest with good habitat
- Helping FS get NEPA done, continue community outreach like High School Contest
- Quality projects which benefit diverse interests
- Crank out a grazing NEPA
- Expand zones of agreement to more than just dry forest types
- Manufacturing facility for wood products in Harney County
- Continue to grow and adapt and be innovative as we learn what works what doesn't.
- A diverse forest
- Begin implementing activity that some people might consider outside the box or at least testing them small scale.



- Keep up with the pace and scale of the MNF restoration goals
- Decisions on Dove, Flat and Rattlesnake
- Great work on landscapes, logs to the mills, and job
- Develop zones of agreement surrounding /dealing with large trees
- Develop zones of agreement on wildlife corridors and relationship of % of untreated areas, gaps, skips in project area.
- Seems like a lot to do to bring together diverse interests.
- We will achieve consensus on more controversial topics. It seems we tend to avoid certain topics to play it safe. This is a good group, good dynamics, HCRC can lead by example.
- Hold a HCRC Restoration Day – group does an Aspen Restoration project. (In conjunction with high school or middle school students?)