

Eastside Restoration Strategy Update # 13

March 11, 2016

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it”
Pablo Picasso

This is the 13th edition of the ongoing ERS Updates. There is truly a lot going on in the region in the name of accelerating restoration and facilitating resilience in our forests. In mid-February, about 60 people from around the region came together to share what they are trying and learning about restoring our landscapes. This gathering, which we called the Eastside Peer Learning Workshop, was intended to bring together practitioners in the field, working at innovative ways of planning and accomplishing our work at a larger scale. Based on the observations, informal feedback, and the evaluations from participants, I believe we hit the mark!

This workshop was successful, in-part, because participants came with a willingness to be open and honest with each other about what worked for them, and what didn't. The participants also came to the workshop eager to learn, and to take away new ideas, contacts, and connections. I also believe that the success of this effort was due to the great work of the planning team that worked for 5 months organizing the gathering, facilitating the discussions, and keeping energy in the room. Thank you Amy Markus and Judd Lehman for the idea, and to Emily Jane Davis, Aly Warren, Kevin Keown, Cheryl Friesen, and Amber Mahoney for their help organizing and presenting the workshop.

The notes from the meeting, along with copies of all of the presentations, are being prepared for posting on the Eastside Restoration Strategy web page:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=stelprdb5423597>

A follow up west-side restoration workshop is in the works, tentatively scheduled for this fall, under the capable leadership of Science Liaison Cheryl Friesen.

Shared learning is one of our region's priorities, and gatherings such as this help advance the cause. We are all engaged in accelerating restoration, with methods, approaches, and ideas that are appropriate for the social and ecological landscapes where we work. It is our responsibility to learn from those things we try, to learn from the work of others, and to share what we learn!

Bill Aney, Eastside Restoration Strategy Coordinator, waney@fs.fed.us

What we're accomplishing with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects:

All five of the region's CFLR projects are working, and gaining ground on the task of restoring resilience to the landscapes we are managing for the American people. We are now more than halfway through the planned 10-year life of the program, the Forests and their collaboratives have been able to accomplish a broad variety of work, from instream and terrestrial habitat improvement to hazardous fuel reduction to putting people to work in the woods!



for the greatest good

- Forest Vegetation Improvement 63,550 acres
- Fuels Reduction 222,398 acres
- Terrestrial Habitat Enhancement 101,505 acres
- Road decommissioning 65 miles
- Timber volume sold 847,982 ccf (cubic feet)

Of course, there's more to the story than just numbers. The connections being made between the American people, their forests, and the public servants managing those forests are significant and enduring.

Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnerships Projects:

Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie recently announced a federal investment of over \$40 million for restoration of forests near growing communities to reduce wildfire threats, protect water supplies, improve wildlife habitat and support rural economies. This is the third year of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet.

The region is now a partner in five Joint Chief's projects:

- All Hands, All Lands – Okanogan-Wenatchee NF, newly funded in FY16.
- Greater LaPine Basin Cohesive Strategy – Deschutes NF, newly funded in FY16.
- NE Washington Initiative Colville NF, first funded in FY15, and received additional funding.
- Ashland Forest All-lands Restoration – Rogue-Siskiyou NF, first funded in FY15 and received additional funding.
- East Face of the Elkhorns – Wallowa-Whitman NF, first funded in FY14 and received additional funding.

These projects work across boundaries to reduce restore landscapes, reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. Through FY16, these five projects have brought in nearly \$15 million to accomplish this work on both federal and non-federal lands, all while creating new partnerships between agencies and landowners.

Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy

The Blue Mountains Restoration Team is hard at work planning restoration work at a scale not seen before in this region. The team has released for public comment the proposed action for their second project, the Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project, which covers three of the four National Forests in the Blue Mountains. The proposed action calls for applying thinning and/or prescribed burning on over 610,000 acres of National Forest across a 1.2 million acre analysis area.

Public engagement in this project is also well underway, with both traditional and non-traditional ways of engaging the public. The team and the Forests are participating in eight public listening sessions during the month of March about this project, and are engaging with the collaboratives on these three forests. The team has begun staff-to-staff meetings with the three interested tribes, and scheduled Ranger District meetings to answer questions and continue internal scoping. The

scoping period was set at 60 days (ending April 5, 2016) to allow for adequate time to engage directly with the public, tribes and collaboratives.

The project website

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=fseprd490874>)

includes an interactive map that allows the user to learn about the project proposal at many different scales.

We are also in a partnership with Sustainable Northwest who hosts a web log (Blog) for the Forest Resiliency Project at <http://sustainablenorthwest.org/what-we-do/success-stories/features-from-the-blue-mountains-restoration-strategy>. This blog is scheduled for a series of 12 posts at monthly intervals throughout the planning of this project.

How we're learning with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

U.S. Forest Service Sustained Commitment to Accelerated Restoration and NEPA Efficiencies:

- **R6 Colville NF Mill Creek A to Z Stewardship Project:**
 - As part of the ongoing effort to increase the scale and pace of restoring forest health and sustainability of the Colville National Forest, the agency developed an entirely new way of accomplishing the work through stewardship contracting.
 - The Mill Creek Stewardship Project was designed so that each step, from pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) data collection to project implementation will be performed and financed by a contractor or their subcontractor.
 - This approach will create capacity and flexibility on the Colville NF by contracting out project work that would normally require additional appropriations if completed by NF personnel.
 - The final North Fork Mill Creek A to Z final Environmental Assessment and draft Decision Notice was released for public review and a 45-day review and objection period. Review of public comments is on-going.

The Eastside is a big geographic landscape and the learning landscape is big too. Here are a few highlights:

How we're engaging in the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

Good Neighbor Authority:

The U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region and the State of Oregon will be signing and announcing a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Master Agreement. Authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, the GNA allows the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with states to allow the states to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on National Forest System lands.

The Master Agreement in Oregon will enhance opportunities to work across private and public land boundaries, gain efficiencies, and advance partnerships that restore and manage natural landscapes, create jobs, and improve public connections with National Forest System lands. This Master Agreement is intended to deepen and strengthen the existing state-federal partnership

between Oregon and the US Forest Service in advancing the interests of the public, communities, places and missions we serve.

This GNA Master Agreement lays the foundation and overarching authorization for development of subsequent statements of work that advance specific watershed restoration and forest management projects at the local level, thus setting the stage for the work many of you are already engaged in and interested in expanding, such as:

- Reducing hazardous fuels and advancing the various benefits of tree thinning and fire resilience;
- Addressing designated Insect and Disease areas to maintain the health of Oregon's forests;
- Anticipating potential changes in climate by restoring and sustaining ecological processes;
- Improving water quality, instream habitat, fish passage, and aquatic health across land ownerships;
- Advancing common approaches to monitoring and data collection to facilitate public understanding, efficiencies, accountability, and collaboration;
- Enhancing our collective management and restoration of plant communities, wildlife habitats and populations, and Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species conservation; and
- Ensuring our transportation and trail systems are ecologically and socially sustainable.

“Forest Collaboratives - Restoring Oregon’s Dry Side”:

Ecotrust recently released a video as part of their support contract with the state of Oregon. They produced the video as a way of communicating with the public about the history and role of collaboratives in the National Forests of eastern Oregon.

Full length version: <https://vimeo.com/143402503>

“Teaser” version: <https://vimeo.com/143404598>

The State of Oregon re-affirms their commitment to landscape restoration, resilience and learning new ways to do business:

Federal forests in Oregon provide important resources for the state's economy, ecological benefit through fish and wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and social benefit through recreation opportunities. Responding to the Governor's proposed 2013-2015 budgets the Oregon State Legislature invested \$2.88 million in National Forest management to help accelerate the pace and scale of restoration, particularly in eastern Oregon. This provided critical resources for bringing Oregonians with differing views together, helping to develop larger restoration projects at a faster pace over the last two years.

Building on the 2013-15 success the legislature of the State of Oregon invested \$5 million in the 2015-2017 biennium toward continue increasing the quality, pace, and scale of collaborative restoration of Oregon's national forests. This will allow the Department of Forestry to expand the Federal Forest Health Program to support forest collaborative groups and forest restoration activities statewide.

By expanding the program statewide, state and federal forest management agencies can begin investing in strategic opportunities in western Oregon, and deliver scientifically supported collaborative outcomes to areas that have lacked social agreement on forest management.

Here's a few highlights:

- **Oregon's 2013 investment** has put boots on the ground and yielded results quickly.
- **Supported jobs in rural communities:** In total, \$1.3 million of state "implementation investments" supported 19 jobs and generated \$2.1 million in economic impact in eastern Oregon. Oregon Department of Forestry seasonal employees completed pre-timber sale layout work on 2,300 acres. In the Blue Mountain region, state investments contributed to a 54 percent increase in Forest Service timber sold.
- **Gathered new data and streamlined processes:** State funds acquired 277,000 acres of aerial forest data, contracted required botany surveys for priority projects, and contracted professional surveyors to identify private-public ownership boundaries. *State funds leveraged \$8.8 million in additional federal investment for this work.*
- **Enhanced partnerships and collaboration:** State and federal investment provided grants to nine local collaborative groups in eastern Oregon for technical assistance, governance for regional restoration projects, and strategic guidance for projects statewide. One highlighted success is the grant provided to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative Group to build agreement on the 100,000 acre Lower Joseph Creek project. The Forest Service completed environmental analysis for this project which is four times the typical size in three times faster than the national average, and has now proposed treatment on 610,000 acres in the Blue Mountain Umatilla, Wallow-Whitman and Ochoco National Forests.

Restoration News: (follow the links for the whole story)

<http://www.eastoregonian.com/eo/local-news/20160229/meetings-scheduled-on-forest-resiliency-project>

Meetings scheduled on Forest Resiliency Project

Public meetings scheduled for proposed Forest Resiliency Project on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Ochoco national forests.

Published on February 29, 2016 6:51PM

PENDLETON — The U.S. Forest Service has scheduled a series of meetings for the public to weigh in on an ambitious restoration project on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Ochoco national forests.

The Forest Resiliency Project aims to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration in the area, restoring the Blue Mountains to healthier condition and lowering the risk of severe wildfires.

Foresters would thin a combined 610,000 acres of trees and brush across the three forests, and use prescribed burns to reintroduce the natural role of fire on the landscape. Treatments would span 13 counties in Eastern Oregon and southeast Washington.

Public meetings will be held to share information and discuss concerns among residents. Project leaders will visit the Pendleton Convention Center on Thursday, March 10; the Heppner Ranger District Office on Tuesday, March 15; and the Blue Mountains Conference Center in La Grande. All meetings will run from 6-9 p.m.

Public comments will be accepted on the project through April 5. For more information, visit www.fs.usda.gov/goto/forestresiliencyproject or contact Darcy Weseman at 541-278-3755.

<http://www.theolympian.com/news/politics-government/article62557412.html>

Bill would authorize pilot project for more controlled burns

The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash.

Washington state lawmakers are considering a pilot project that would allow more controlled burning in order to reduce the severity of wildfires.

The Capital Press reports (<http://goo.gl/c0juu2>) that House Bill 2928 would give state land managers more flexibility to permit controlled burns in Central and Eastern Washington to make forests more resilient.

The Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee heard the bill on Wednesday and passed it with some changes. The bill was referred to the Ways and Means Committee.

Prime sponsor, Rep. Joel Kretz, a Republican from Wauconda, told senators the forests have grown choked with brush that fuels catastrophic wildfires.

Diverse groups have supported the measure, including the Washington Farm Bureau, The Nature Conservancy and the Washington Public Employees Association, which represents state Department of Natural Resources firefighters.

<http://ijpr.org/post/whats-helicopter#stream/0>

"What's That Helicopter Up To?"

By [Bill McLean](#) • 16 hours ago



Timberline's K-MAX logging helicopter has two main rotors. They spin in opposite directions, eliminating the need for a tail rotor.

Jonathan Paul/Lomakatsi Restoration Project

For much of this winter, residents of Ashland have heard the daily chop-chop-chop of a helicopter making hundreds of trips over the hills just outside town. It's part of a project to thin the nearby forest of smaller trees and brush that could fuel a destructive wildfire.

In keeping with the goal of ecosystem restoration, foresters are using the helicopter to remove cut timber rather than dragging fallen trees across the forest floor.

On nearly any quiet morning these last few months, distant rotor blades echo and fade as a logging helicopter bops up and down between the mountain ridges above Ashland.

<http://www.bakercityherald.com/Editorials/A-new-focus-on-the-forest>

A new focus on the forest?

By Baker City Herald Editorial Board February 12, 2016 12:07 pm

Perhaps the key sentence in the U.S. Forest Service's recent announcement of its Forest Resiliency Project for the Blue Mountains is this one: "We are shifting some of the work from planning to implementation."

The words are from Bill Aney. He's the agency's eastside restoration coordinator for the Pacific Northwest region.

Aney said the Forest Service's current workload for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Ochoco national forests is woefully inadequate. That work, he said, covers just one-thirtieth of what's needed to restore forests that are suffering from a combination of factors, the effects of which have accumulated over the past century. These include selective logging that favored the oldest, healthiest ponderosa pines, and aggressive firefighting that allowed fir trees, which are more vulnerable to insects, disease and fire, to proliferate in place of the pines.

The Forest Service is proposing to log overcrowded stands, and light prescribed fires, on 80,000 acres of the Wallowa-Whitman, 212,000 acres on the Umatilla, and 118,000 acres on the Ochoco. Those are vast acreages compared with the size of a typical Forest Service logging and burning project. But this approach — what Aney calls "landscape scale solutions to landscape scale problems" — is precisely what's needed.

We're optimistic about this approach, but cautiously so.

It's unlikely that the Forest Service's ambitious plan will go unchallenged by groups that disagree with the agency's prescriptions for restoring forests — in particular the reliance on logging.

Still and all, the Forest Service won't achieve its laudable goals if it doesn't set high standards.

The Forest Resiliency plan is a necessary first step.

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/crookcounty/4042307-151/crook-county-residents-form-a-pac-to-make>

Crook County residents form a PAC to make a land use plan Natural Resources PAC wants guidelines for management of public lands

By Aaron West / The Bulletin

Published Feb 29, 2016 at 12:13AM

With the question of how to best manage the Ochoco National Forest currently a hot topic in Crook County, a group of concerned citizens is working to provide an answer, at least from a local perspective.

The Crook County Natural Resources PAC, a political action committee formed by county resident Craig Brookhart last month, aims to reserve a place for the county government at the negotiating table when it comes to how the county's natural resources are managed. Recently proposed plans from Oregon Wild and the U.S. Forest Service concerning land use and access don't take the county's best interests into account, Brookhart said, and outside of making suggestions as to what those plans should contain, the county doesn't have a mechanism to make sure its interests are included.

The Natural Resources PAC — which drew about 150 people to its first meeting Feb. 1 — aims to change that.

<http://www.eastoregonian.com/eo/columnists/20160219/connell-pexf1a-lands-managers-value-cooperation>

Connell, Peña: Lands managers value cooperation

Published on February 19, 2016 1:26PM



Jamie Connell

Jim Peña

As employees of federal land agencies in Oregon, we are entrusted by Congress with the responsibility to help steward and manage federal lands for all Americans. This is a tremendous honor and responsibility we take seriously.

And we can't do it alone.

As public lands belong to all Americans, managing these lands is a collective effort. It is a privilege to work alongside local communities, partners, and the public to help achieve the long-term health, productivity, and protection of public lands.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, and across the country, our best work is accomplished by working with diverse partners and stakeholders — ranchers, environmentalists, sportsmen, local communities, schools, and private industries.

Though our agencies have different missions, we share a common goal of managing public lands in a cooperative manner with you, the people who own them.

The future management of public lands requires cooperation over confrontation. In Oregon and across the West, there are countless examples of collaborative groups working together to achieve positive results.

One recent shining example was the work accomplished across agencies, states, counties and ownership lines to create and implement land-use plans that avoided a listing of the sage-grouse as endangered.

Managing public lands is sometimes challenging. There are a variety of uses, interests, and opinions on how these lands should be managed, and finding balance is not without challenges.

That is why it is crucial that we listen to each other, find common ground, and work together to find common-sense solutions. Individually and collectively, we are committed to these principles of listening, talking, and working together to achieve the greatest good. We strive for these things in good faith every day.

Public lands belong to all Americans — they are yours to enjoy and participate in their management.

That's one of the reasons public lands are so special.

We look forward to continuing our work with local citizens, communities and partners to manage public lands so we can ensure the special places we love can meet the needs of today and remain available for future generations to enjoy.

■
Jamie Connell is the acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management Oregon/Washington. Jim Peña is the Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region.