

## Eastside Restoration Strategy Update # 10

December 18, 2014

### *Operating differently to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration*

This is the 10th edition of the ERS Update. The intent of these updates is to keep agency employees, our partners, and collaborators up to date with our current thinking and progress at the important work of restoring resilience to eastside forests in the PNW. As ERS Coordinator, I have frequent opportunities to give presentations and have good dialogue with both internal and external audiences, from individuals to large conferences, and this causes me to constantly “re-center” on the why of this work we are trying to accomplish – namely, leaving our forest landscapes in a resilient condition, ready to provide for future generations of forest users.

The bulk of this update provides quite a bit of detail about what is happening with the ERS (thank you, Glen Sachet!), but let me touch on a few points.

First, I find that it is helpful to think of the ERS as having several key pieces:

1. **Individual Forest programs** – we are all about increasing pace and scale of restoration, and each forest has their own, locally developed and tuned approach - from the Mill Creek A-Z project on the Colville to the Fremont-Winema Accelerated Restoration Strategy, and every Forest in-between. The Malheur effort, the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Pilot on the W-W, Great thinking and innovation – so what can we learn from each other, and how can the ERS facilitate this learning?
2. **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration** – we have 5 CFLR projects in the region, and last year this program brought in \$9.0MM to implement these collaboratively developed landscape projects. Combined, we reported 90K acres of hazardous fuel reduction, 120MMBF of timber volume sold, and 45K acres of improved wildlife habitat from these projects.
3. **The Blues Strategy** – the purpose of the Blues Restoration IDT is to help us learn how to do planning at a larger scale, using projects in the Blue Mountains as proving grounds. They are challenged to Discover, Develop, and Demonstrate methods of planning at the 100K+ acre scale, and they recently released their first DEIS – 10 months from the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register. They are sponsoring a series of LiDAR workshops for ID Team members this winter - space is still available!
4. **State support** – the State of Oregon has contributed significantly to the ERS effort, through the financial support of collaboratives, providing science and technical support, and funding work on the ground for planning and implementing projects in the Blues. The next biennium budget proposal would nearly triple this support while broadening the geographic scale outside of the Blues, and the State of Washington is considering their own version for their next biennium. I would be remiss if I didn't also point out the support of the PNW research station, our university research community, and our NGO cooperators. It's great to have that kind of support!

When we roll up our sleeves and get busy at the critically important work of resilience restoration, we should start with remembering the why – then when we deal with the tougher questions of the how, or the what, we will at least start with a common foundation.

I wish you a wonderful holiday season, well-deserved time with family and friends!

Bill Aney, Eastside Restoration Coordinator

[waney@fs.fed.us](mailto:waney@fs.fed.us)

USDA Forest Service is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



for the greatest good

## What we're accomplishing with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

### ❖ **Blue Mountains Restoration Team:**

- ✓ **Lower Joseph (LoJo) Creek Restoration Project (Project #1):** The Lower Joseph Creek Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published for a 90-day public comment period. This project was developed in cooperation with the Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee.

On Nov. 15, 2014 Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya announced the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was available for public comment. "I am pleased to announce the release of the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. After ten months of working with the Tribe and public, and in collaboration with the Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC), the DEIS is available for everyone to read and submit comments over the next 90 days," said, Tom Montoya, Forest Supervisor. "Collaboration has been an important and valuable part of the development of the DEIS and this project really strives to provide the greatest balance of resources, while moving this landscape to a more resilient condition," added Montoya.

The 100,000 acre Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project (LJCRP) is located on the Wallowa Valley Ranger District of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, 20 miles north of Enterprise, Oregon. The project proposes restoration thinning and other vegetation treatments on about 22,000 acres, and prescribed burning on the majority of the project area. The project goals are to:

- Contribute to local economic and social vitality.
- Reduce the risk of wildfire.
- Restore forest health.
- Enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Improve future forest, range, and fire management opportunities across the project area.

Those interested may view and download the DEIS at the following internet address: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5445293>. The website also provides details about how to submit comments on the DEIS.

The Wallowa-Whitman and Blue Mountains Restoration Interdisciplinary Team hosted an Open House on December 2 in Enterprise, Oregon to help provide information and answer questions about the DEIS.

- ✓ **The Blues-Wide Forest Restoration and Resiliency Project:** This project will analyze strategic fuel treatments, dry forest restoration and resiliency treatments across approximately 500,000 acres. The purpose is to restore fire adapted forest ecosystems through direct restorative treatments that move forest structure and composition toward desired conditions, and indirect treatments that create large landscape fire "containers" for safe management of planned and unplanned fire. Strategically placed restoration treatments tied to broader upland forest restoration toward desired forest density, structure, and composition would provide fire managers and decision-makers flexibility in the use of planned and unplanned fire to achieve restoration and fire management objectives more safely, and at larger scales.

This project would:

- Proactively reduce fire behavior and facilitate control.
- Provide for public and firefighter safety.
- Protect high resource and social values.
- Support the increased use of prescribed and unplanned wildland fire, where appropriate.
- Restore dry forest density, composition, and structure across ecologically-appropriate extents.

Natural resource information is currently being collected for the Blues-wide project, using state and federal funds for LiDAR, heritage resource, and biological data collection.

- ❖ **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program:** Five forests in R6 have CFLR projects, and with their local collaboratives are restoring their landscapes. In FY2014, these five projects accomplished 90,000 acres of hazardous fuels treatment, 40,000 acres of terrestrial wildlife habitat improvement, and over 120MMBF of timber production which exceeded the Region's CFLR program expected outputs. We matched a CFLR investment of \$9.0MM in 2014 with another \$13MM in other funds, partner contributions, and reinvested product value.
- ❖ **East Face Project - Cohesive Wildland Fire Policy Pilot:** The Northeastern Oregon Cohesive Wildfire Strategy partners (NRCS, ODFW, BLM, ODF and USFS) continue to coordinate on project design, funding and communication strategy. The La Grande Ranger District has presented their draft Proposed Action to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative. The Proposed Action is anticipated for public release in January 2015.
- ❖ **Malheur National Forest:** The Malheur effort has more than doubled the pace of their restoration program, both in terms of acres treated and timber delivered to local mills. The second stewardship contract Task Order has been awarded and supports restoration and commercial harvest on nearly 27,000 acres across the Malheur including removal of nearly 53.57 MMBF of saw log and biomass material.
- ❖ **Broadening the Eastside Strategy:** Forests across the Region are accomplishing accelerated restoration in approaches and methods unique to their capacity, communities and ecosystems. For example, the Fremont-Winema NF aims to double their restoration program with a wide variety of innovative approaches to project planning and contract preparation, including a new End Results Stewardship Contract. The Colville NF is experimenting with a "cradle-to-grave" restoration project, with a contractor responsible for NEPA analysis, project preparation, and implementation.

### **How we're engaging in the Eastside Restoration Strategy:**

- ❖ Regional Forester Jim Peña has been directly engaging in Eastside Restoration Strategy efforts. As seen below in the reporting of U.S. Representative Greg Walden's summit in La Grande and the Oregon State Legislature's forest health field tour in Central Oregon.
- "U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, and Region Forester Jim Pena met with stakeholders recently to discuss management practices in the Blue Mountains National Forests."

[http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/Local\\_News/20141028/management-communication-at-heart-of-forestry-summit](http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/Local_News/20141028/management-communication-at-heart-of-forestry-summit)

- Eastside Restoration and Oregon Governor’s Natural Resource staff, and the Deschutes and Malheur NFs and their collaboratives participated in a field tour with the Oregon legislators and local officials regarding the implementation of the Governor’s funding to increase the pace and scale of restoration on the eastside Oregon National Forests. About 50 people attended, with good discussions about restoration needs, collaborative engagement, and use of state funds to support collaboratives, encourage innovative planning, and plug some critical gaps in planning and implementation. Press coverage included the following:

- “SISTERS - Hoping to increase the pace and expand the scale of forest restoration projects around the state, the Oregon Department of Forestry is asking Gov. John Kitzhaber for more money to support collaboratives. Forest collaboratives, which include representatives from local, state and federal leaders, as well as timber interests, environmentalists and other stakeholders, focus on federal forest management.”

- State will again be asked to pitch in on federal forest restoration Video: Oregon Department of Forestry asking Gov. Kitzhaber to budget \$6.5 million

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/home/2515776-151/state-will-again-be-asked-to-pitch-in>

- Editorial: State should put money into federal forests, Published Oct 26, 2014 at 12:02AM

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorials/2520530-151/editorial-state-should-put-money-into-federal-forests>

- “Lawmakers tour Deschutes Forest health projects Discuss measures taken and future funding”

<http://www.ktvz.com/news/lawmakers-tour-deschutes-forest-health-projects/29291036>

- ❖ The Washington DNR finished their report to the legislature about forest health and forest management in the state, including some budget proposals for the next biennium, supporting more work on federal, state, and private forests on the eastside. Eastside Restoration and Regional Natural Resources Staff worked with DNR on the portions related to federal forests.
- ❖ Washington Forest Collaboratives Summit: The Washington Forest collaboratives met as a collective in September in Wenatchee, WA. 40 people attended from all five national forests and seven collaborative groups in the state. The meeting was successful in meeting most of the goals and outcomes. Below are the specific ways they were met and areas that we need to follow up on.

**Goals:**

Members of the Washington forest collaboratives will:

- Get to know each other, the landscapes they work in and develop relationships that will be useful in future networking.
- Share the challenges and successes of their collaborative and engage in candid shared learning.
- Develop shared understanding of restoration needs in WA and how to effectively increase the pace and footprint of restoration in the state.
- Identify shared goals and opportunities in which to engage.

### ***Outcomes:***

Participants will:

- Have ideas to take back to their forest collaboratives to advance their work.
- Have new connections and know who to follow up with for a certain idea or need.
- Have draft purpose and goals for ongoing WA forest collaboratives networking.

### **How we're learning with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:**

- ❖ **What does “completing the job” look like?** Pre-treatment stand and landscape condition photo points have been established on the Ochoco, Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman Forests. Following initial treatment, the stands will be revisited and photo documented at the same, exact location to create a visual “before and after” comparison, and effective learning and communication tool. More photo point establishment and monitoring is planned for next year.
- ❖ **Training:** LiDAR Workshops – Feb 9-13 (Bend, OR) and March 2-6 (La Grande, OR): The use of new technologies to collect and analyze natural resource data is a very promising arena for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of restoration planning. Towards that end, the Eastside Restoration Strategy is sponsoring two LiDAR workshops in the region this winter.

These workshops are being developed and presented by staff from the FS Remote Sensing Applications Center (RSAC) our regional remote sensing staff, and the Blue Mountains Restoration team. The workshops are a week long, but they will also include an introductory two-hour session that will provide a more general overview of LiDAR.

The team is exploring options to offer the 2 hour overview portion of the workshop via a webinar as well.

- ❖ **9.5 Million Acres of Forests Needs Thinning and Burning**

*New study by Nature Conservancy, Forest Service shows extensive forest restoration needs in Washington and Oregon*

SEATTLE — More than 11 million acres of dry forest in Oregon and Washington are in need of restoration, a new study by scientists for The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service shows.

The study, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Forest Ecology and Management*, is a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of where, how much and what kind of activities are needed across the fire-adapted forest landscape of eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and southwestern Oregon to restore ecological processes.

A team of ecologists from The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service Region 6 found that:

- The scale of restoration need is big. About 40% of all forests within the study, 11.8 million acres including federal, state, and private forests, are in need of restoration.
- Restoration can include disturbances such as thinning and burning and or time to grow larger and older trees.
- Restoration thinning and burning are immediately needed on about 9.5 million acres.
- Thinning and burning alone cannot restore our forests. Following thinning and burning 5.7 million acres will subsequently need time to grow larger, older trees.

- An additional 2.3 million acres of forest land do not require disturbance now, but simply need time to grow larger, older trees.
- Restoration needs vary greatly with vegetation type and landscape context.
- Ongoing maintenance, such as the use of regular controlled burns, will also be necessary to sustain healthy, resilient forests.
- To be effective, restoration efforts must be regional in scale and collaborative across governments, agencies and land owners.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378112714005519>

## **In The News:**

### **Editorial: Collaboration helps forest thinning project**

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorials/2654370-151/editorial-collaboration-helps-forest-thinning-project>

### **Cooperation between county and Forest Service expedites project**

Involved parties view release of Lower Joseph Creek DEIS as important step toward restorative work on the ground.

[http://www.wallowa.com/local\\_news/20141205/cooperation-between-county-and-forest-service-expedites-project](http://www.wallowa.com/local_news/20141205/cooperation-between-county-and-forest-service-expedites-project)

### **Forest Service: 100,000 acres of Oregon forest must be thinned**

The Associated Press /

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/2653014-151/forest-service-100000-acres-of-oregon-forest-must?entryType=0>

### **Forest team eyes 100,000-acre Wallowa-Whitman restoration project**

The Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team is looking at a 100,000-acre project in Lower Joseph Creek north of Enterprise to boost resiliency against large wildfires.

<http://www.wallowa.com/business/20141203/forest-team-eyes-100000-acre-wallowa-whitman-restoration-project>

### **East Oregonian: Forest Team Eyes 100,000 Acre Restoration Project**

A team of experts charged with accelerating the pace of forest restoration in the Blue Mountains is ready for feedback on its first major proposal in northeast Oregon.

<http://www.opb.org/news/article/east-oregonian-forest-team-eyes-100000-acre-restoration-project/>

### **Forest team eyes 100,000-acre restoration project**

The Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team is looking at a 100,000-acre project in Lower Joseph Creek north of Enterprise to boost resiliency against large wildfires.

<http://www.eastoregonian.com/eo/local-news/20141202/forest-team-eyes-100000-acre-restoration-project>

### **Lower Joseph Creek gets another look**

ENTERPRISE — Restoring more than 20,000 acres of northern Wallowa County forest is closer to reality with the publication of the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project. The nearly 500-page draft released Nov. 14 will be available for public comment for 90 days.

<http://www.lagrandeobserver.com/News/Local-News/Lower-Joseph-Creek-gets-another-look>

**Contact Points:**

W.C. (Bill) Aney  
Eastside Restoration Coordinator  
541-278-3727  
waney@fs.fed.us

Ayn Shlisky  
Eastside Restoration Team Leader  
541-278-3762  
ajshlisky@fs.fed.us

Glen Sachet  
Public Affairs Spec.  
503-808-2790  
gsachet@fs.fed.us