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# News Release

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## ***Harney County Restoration Collaborative, U.S. Forest Service reach agreement on roads***

**JOHN DAY, OR** – U.S. Forest Service officials from the Malheur Nation Forest and members of the Harney County Restoration Collaborative (HCRC) walked five roads considered for decommissioning options as part of the Dove Vegetation Management Project, recently.



Members from the Harney County Restoration Collaborative and officials from the U.S. Forest Service pause to discuss road decommissioning options during a recent field trip to review five sites.

Photo by Jack Southworth

“It’s good to be out here and actually engaged with the Forest Service,” said Jim Sproul. “The Emigrant Creek Ranger District provided the opportunity and the information to enable us to do that.”

Sproul was one of ten members of the HCRC there on hand to look at Roads 3160812/13, 3160830, 3160822, 3180841 and 3170038 located in the Emigrant Creek Ranger District.

The purpose of the Dove Project, now in the proposal development phase, “is to achieve a healthy forest with consideration to wildlife, fish, and rare plants through the management of fuels, forest products, vegetation and road use,” said Lori A. Bailey, NEPA Coordinator at Emigrant Creek.

As the project develops, public interest in the use of and access to its natural resources is high.

“I think this tour helped us get on the same page,” said Jordan Van Sickle, one of the collaborative members. The HCRC, comprised of local community members, was formed in 2005 “in an effort to foster positive outcomes for the land, rural economies and communities.”

“This is the first project we’ve gotten involved in this early and I appreciate that,” added Sproul.

The first road the group toured, 3160812/13 was “almost totally obscured by young lodge-pole pine,” said Jack Southworth, the HCRC facilitator who documented the group’s findings. “There were also large rocks



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*(continued)*

in the road near where it leaves the main road and it is partially blocked by young trees throughout its length.”

The Forest Service and Grant and Harney County residents both noted, “It’s an open road that is currently impassable.” With this observation, the committee unanimously recommended “listing the road as decommissioned, pulling the road number marker and walking away from it,” said Sproul.

The second road, 3160830, proposed for decommissioning was also partially obstructed by young trees, noted Bailey. While considering this road, the group tossed around passive or natural decommissioning ideas like pulling a nearby culvert, installing a stockwater tank at the spring, and so forth.

“This teamwork and coming together with ideas is exactly what we are encouraging and hoping for when meeting with various collaborative groups during project planning,” said Christy Cheyne the Emigrant Creek District Ranger.

Fred Hellbusch, another collaborative member added about the process, “I thought there would be more controversy than there was.”

The third road, 3160822 was closed but still in use with a stable surface, no erosion, a through road with little or no wildlife concerns and not near a riparian area. With that, the committee agreed proposing to open the road and upgrade its maintenance level from a I to a II status, according to Hellbusch.

Road 3170038, the fourth road, was less clear of an easy restoration solution with considerations like campsite access, deer and elk hunting, wildlife concerns, riparian areas and overgrown vegetation.

“The committee unanimously proposed closing the road as long as access was allowed to continue to the dispersed campsite after completion of the implementation phase of the Dove Project,” said Southworth.

Road 3180841, the last road, which is closed but currently being used “generated the most discussion with no consensus,” he said.

The group’s discussion included significant rutting and an “increased demand for elk hunters to have more unroaded areas to hunt in,” said Hellbusch.

Sproul added, “we don’t want to see every road open, but on the other hand, we don’t want to see a cumulative effect applied to every road without considering them individually.....it’s good to be out here and actually engaged with the Forest Service.”

Steve Beverlin, Forest Supervisor at the Malheur thanked the group for looking at the roads together. “It is my hope that our other partners and collaboratives could use something similar.”

People interested in learning more about collaborative forestry on the Malheur National Forest can contact the Harney County Restoration and the Blue Mountains Forest Partners. Their websites are <http://business.harneycounty.com/news/details/news-release-03-12-2015> and <https://sites.google.com/site/bluemountainsforestpartners/>.

For more information on the Malheur National Forest, please visit us at [www.fs.usda.gov/malheur](http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur) or call 541-575-3000. Be sure to follow [U.S. Forest Service- Malheur National Forest](#) on Facebook, and [@MalheurNF](#) on Twitter for all the latest forest news.

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