Ecological Restoration on the Lassen National Forest

The Forest has been implementing ecological restoration for the past 12 years as part of Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) Forest Recovery Act. This Act seeks to address forest health issues and limit the spread of wildland fire by treating large scale areas and returning them to historic conditions. Primary landscape treatments include fuels reduction, restoration of sustainable forest structure and size/age diversity, and various riparian restoration projects. While these projects focus largely on conifer health and restoration, significant progress has been made that restore oak, aspen, and other vegetation species. In addition, the Lassen has been planning and implementing projects that integrate multiple BLI's to accomplish treatments that meet ecological restoration goals and multiple resource objectives for at least the last five years.

As an example, the Lassen is a leader in restoration of declining aspen stands, a key habitat component for many wildlife species, through removal of encroaching conifers. We have demonstrated that selective removal of the conifers stimulates some aspen regeneration while providing valuable forest products. The Lassen has been establishing partnerships to accomplish restoration work, including the Arbor Day Foundation and others to reforest areas damaged by wildfire.

Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project

The Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project is a collaborative forest landscape restoration program proposal that was selected for implementation on the Lassen National Forest. The current plan is that restoration projects under this umbrella will be implemented over the next 10 years as funding allows.

The landscape of the Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project is complex in its geography, ecology, and ownership with considerable public forestland currently at high risk from high-intensity wildfire that could severely impact landscape integrity and community safety. The Basins area is in need of restoration to increase the resiliency of the landscape, reduce extreme fire risk, and improve forest health and diversity that sustains habitats necessary for a variety of wildlife species including the California spotted owl. This project will also improve degraded streams and meadows that have reduced ability to buffer flood flows, produce clean water, and provide vital aquatic habitat to a diminished yet prized and economically-important fishery.

This project is focused on a 400,000 acre landscape and the communities dependent on it, and involves federal and private land, and a dynamic and diverse collaborative partnership group. Restoration of national forests and wetlands in the project area will protect public and private assets (e.g., timber products, homes), provide a sustainable supply of raw material to local mills and co-generation plants, sustain and increase needed jobs, improve local community health and well-being, and reduce future fire and management costs by 11 million dollars.

Tracking our Accomplishments

The Forest has been a leader in the Region at recording core and integrated accomplishments for at least the last five years. For example, the Swains Mountain project was developed in conjunction with the Redding lab of the Pacific Southwest Research Station. This project will provide valuable research results while yielding commercial forest products, biomass, reduce fuel loading and enhance habitat for several wildlife species. These varying accomplishments will be reported as either core or contributed depending upon the funding source used to implement the project.

The Lassen routinely develops purpose and need statements and proposed actions that incorporate ecological restoration objectives. For example, the objectives of the Campbell Project are to trend conditions towards the desired conditions. The desired conditions for the project include:

1. Healthy forest conditions that are characterized by a more open forest dominated by fire-resistant tree species, and reduced surface fuel loads and ladder fuels where periodic low-intensity surface fires can be reintroduced;
2. Forest areas with reduced tree densities that decrease risk of mortality from insects, drought, disease, and fire; and
3. Restoration of functioning meadow and riparian systems that contributes to landscape biodiversity.