



Eastside Restoration Strategy Update 4

6 June 2013

Our objective should be to care for the land in such a way that future generations are grateful for what we have done – Regional Forester Kent Connaughton, addressing the PNW Collaborative Network, 4/16/2013

Background

The focus of the accelerated eastside restoration effort remains on doing things differently in order to increase the amount of active forest restoration in the Blue Mountains. We want to build on, not replace, the good work that is already underway on the four National Forests of the region, in cooperation with their respective public collaborative groups.

We are focused on four main goals: hiring an interdisciplinary team, developing a collaborative model with a coalition of the five collaboratives in the Blues, implementing a communications strategy, and developing ideas for large-scale restoration projects for interdisciplinary team and collaborative work.

Current Status

- 1) Team hiring – the vacancy announcements are out! There are 10 simultaneous vacancy announcements on www.usajobs.gov for the restoration interdisciplinary team. We intend on hiring 5-7 people for the team, depending on the skill set in the applicant pool. These are PFT positions, located in either Pendleton or La Grande. The merit promotion application period closes on June 14, the two DEMO authority application periods close on June 7. Based on the number of inquiries for more information, the interest in these positions is high and broadly distributed across agencies and geography. We anticipate a heavy workload soon after the certificates are issued by ASC.
- 2) Collaborative model – a steering committee met to plan the first meeting of the Coalition of Blue Mountains Collaboratives, and made good progress. We have set July 22-23 for this first meeting, with a tentative location of Baker City. The agenda will include goals and objectives for the restoration effort, presentations and discussions about project ideas, and ways to improve communications between the collaboratives and the Forest Service. The Eastern Oregon Regional Counties Organization is convening this meeting, and will be working through the 5 collaboratives to ensure representation of each in the coalition.
- 3) Communications strategy – the internal website is now up and running, and can be reached at <http://fsweb.r6.fs.fed.us/eastside-restoration/>. The overall strategy is to put this site up internally first, then transition to an external website accessible by the public (and our partners). We expect to move this to an external site this week. The site includes background information, all of the briefing papers, the “info-graphics” explaining the restoration need for a variety of resources, a set of FAQs, and a mechanism for asking questions about the program.
In the past month, we have met with Forest Leadership Teams, several of the Blue Mountains collaboratives, tribal interests, the Oregon Federal Forests Advisory Committee, user groups, and the annual meeting of the regional fish, water, and soils group. We continue to share information with these groups about this effort, and to gain their ideas and concerns about the strategy.
- 4) Project ideas – in the last update, we shared the four types of ideas we were developing for the team:
1) a single large landscape, 2) “conditional” NEPA resulting in decisions that could be applied wherever certain conditions existed (aspen, dry pine, etc.), 3) a four-forest strategic fuels treatment



- plan, and 4) creation of diversity in young forest areas (regenerated clearcuts) in the northern Blues. After soliciting project ideas from the forests and others, several new ideas have come up:
- a. Forest plan amendments – related to eastside screens (21-inch rule), big game winter range standards, etc.
 - b. “Fished” analysis, implementing cohesive strategy projects – not just restoration, but also protection of communities and infrastructure
 - c. Adaptive NEPA, preparing us for future post-fire salvage projects - analysis that would expedite the process for implementing salvage work, similar to approach done by the Black Hills for pine beetle salvage.
 - d. Insect response – there is an area on the southeast end of the Wallowa-Whitman and northeast portion of the Malheur where there is a fair amount of mountain pine beetle activity, affecting mostly lodgepole pine but also ponderosa pine. Is there a need/opportunity here to salvage dead trees and treat stands that might be in harms’ way?
 - e. Restoration of LOS, conversion of multi-story to single-story – because of controversy, is there a need to do this at a small scale and monitor results before going larger scale?
 - f. Thinning in snow zone to retain snow longer, reduce interception/sublimation losses
 - g. Restoring species composition where early successional species (pine/larch) have been removed and grand fir left to stock site.
 - h. Long term sustained yield implications of restoring single story LOS conditions and maintaining this with prescribed burning
 - i. White-headed woodpecker habitat restoration and development
- 5) Agreements – we are in the final states of developing two agreements with TNC – one to produce and publish a dry forest restoration field guide (Franklin and Johnson) for distribution to eastside forests, and another to enlist help of TNC for spatial data analysis.
 - 6) We now have a single point of contact in DRM for additional GIS support for this initiative
 - 7) PNW Rapid Research Response has prioritized at least two projects in the Blues to address restoration needs – climate change models and LiDAR applications.

LiDAR Data Collection Opportunity!!

We allocated \$200K for LiDAR data collection for the Eastside Restoration Project, and wanted to identify the specific project area after meeting with the Coalition of Collaboratives. Unfortunately, the “drop dead” date for identifying the project area boundary has moved up, and the Coalition will not be meeting in time to select the first project area. So...we have let the Forests know that this is an opportunity to get LiDAR data collected on about 200K acres at no cost to the Forest.

Summary

The main focus for the next several weeks will be on hiring and supporting the interdisciplinary team, preparing for the upcoming Coalition of Blue Mountains Collaboratives meeting, and continuing the ongoing communications within the agency and with the collaboratives, other agencies, and the general public.

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