USDA for the greatest good

blue mountains FOREST RESILIENCY PROJECT

BLUE MOUNTAINS RESTORATION STRATEGY | NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

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designing the proposed action

Example of overstocked Forest conditions in the Blue Mountains

Dry Forest Restoration

Based on a large scale assessment of restoration need and management opportunities across the Blue Mountains ecoregion, the Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team is identifying priority project areas that have the greatest departure from desired conditions (thus making them the most prone to uncharacteristic wildfire or insect/disease outbreaks). The analysis footprint for the Forest Resiliency project is approximately 1.5 million acres on the Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. Project areas will range anywhere from several thousand acres to 100,000 acres in size.

The bulk of the restoration need across the Blue Mountains is the mid-seral closed tree category (mid-size, 5-20" dbh trees), however the Blue Mountains are departed from desired conditions in all seral classes (seral classes are described below). Identifying the priority project areas will inform ecologically appropriate treatments where active management will have the greatest impact on restoring resiliency in these departed areas.

Once all of the project areas are finalized across the three national forests, the team will use site-specific information to design treatments for each project area. An example of these treatments could be a combination of mechanical harvest and non-mechanical thinning , with fuel reduction treatments designed to reduce crown densities, followed by prescribed fire to reduce the surface fuels.

Beyond meeting the restoration need in the dry forests, treatments designs will provide commercial products, firewood, and employment opportunities for local economies. Any proposed treatments will also be compatible with the Cohesive Wildfire

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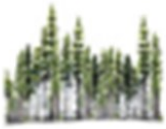
what are "seral classes" and what do they look like?

 Early	 Mid-Closed	 Mid-Open	 Late-Open	 Late-Closed
Grass/Forb	Tree size of 5-20" DBH		Tree size of greater than 20" DBH	
	Greater than about 40-60% tree cover	Less than about 40-60% tree cover	Less than about 40-60% tree cover	Greater than about 40-60% tree cover

designing the proposed action *continued.....*

Strategy, particularly focused on the public/private land interface and minimizing the risk of wildfire transferring from national forest lands to private lands.

Prescribed burning treatments
Photo credit: Wallowa-Whitman NF

Strategic Fuels Treatments

The team is using a landscape scale, ecological approach for modifying undesired fire behavior. These strategic locations were built off local Forest input and the vegetation data from the restoration needs assessment. The team has developed analysis areas for the strategic fuels treatments that overlay all forest types and meet the purpose and need of the project. In the cold and moist forest types, strategic fuel treatments will be focused on stands with the potential to create adverse fire behavior. The ultimate goal of the strategic fuel treatments is to reduce the effects of uncharacteristic and severe wildfire transmission to high value resources and reduce risk to firefighter safety. Potential treatments could include raising the canopy base height of a stand and harvest and thinning from below. These strategic treatments will also contribute to the forest resilience in those cold and moist forest types.

Understory thinning treatments
Photo credit: Brett Johnson | Umatilla NF

Integration of Dry Forest and Strategic Fuels Treatment

The integration of dry forest restoration and the strategic fuels treatments across the planning areas of the three Blue Mountain National Forests will create future forests that are more resilient to changing fire regimes, climate, insect and disease outbreaks, and will reduce the exposure of homes and sensitive habitats to the unwanted effects of fire. The project will provide land managers with more options to use fire, both planned and unplanned, to restore and maintain landscapes in a safe, cost-effective, and ecologically sound manner.

benefits of the forest resiliency project

- **All lands integrated assessment of restoration need**
- **Greater forest and community resiliency to fire under a changing climate**
- **Increase in open canopied habitats that are currently under represented on the landscape**
- **Restoration of forest structure and wildlife habitats**
- **Jobs and supplemental economic benefits to communities**
- **Data and tools to support multi-partner planning, implementation, and funding of landscape scale restoration**
- **Improved wildfire management decision-making**

blue mountains forest resiliency analysis process