

Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy

Ochoco, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests
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Feature Story

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International natural resource professionals learn about land management in eastern Oregon

LA GRANDE, Ore. – Spring weather in eastern Oregon is known for being unpredictable. And June 15, 2016, was no exception with rain and sunshine trading places throughout the day. But for the eight natural resource professionals that traveled to La Grande, Ore. from all over the world, the weather went unnoticed. This group, hosted by the World Forest Institute, was eager and thrilled to be in the National Forests of eastern Oregon learning about land management in the United States.



La Grande District Ranger Bill Gamble and members of the Eastside Restoration Strategy took the group to several recently treated sites on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to demonstrate the diverse resources that the Forest Service manages. By seeing these areas first-hand, the international professionals learned how land managers in the Pacific Northwest promote the long-term health of the National Forests by using tools such as thinning (logging and non-commercial thinning) to reduce wildfire risk and

improve forest resiliency to natural disturbance.

“We have a unique responsibility to manage the public’s land for all of the resources and services it provides” Gamble said. “Our job is to sustain the natural resources and habitats, while providing our communities forest products and continued opportunities to enjoy their national forests.”

Gamble walked the group through several sites connected with the La Grande Ranger District’s recently completed Sandbox timber sale in the Catherine Creek drainage. He showed the group how these areas were managed to achieve



for the greatest good

restoration benefits for a variety of resources, including forest vegetation, wildlife and aquatic habitats, plant habitat, water quality, maintaining traditional uses, and firefighter safety.

Members of the World Forest Institute program had many questions at each site, focused around federally mandated processes, integrated restoration approaches, and how the Forest Service works with stakeholders and the public in land management.

The group of international professionals were also intrigued by the creative ways the Forest Service is accelerating the pace and scale of forest restoration in eastern Oregon and Washington, particularly with projects like the Forest Resiliency Project, which is part of the Eastside Restoration Strategy.



“Fire is really what the Forest Resiliency Project is all about – preparing our national forest landscapes so that we can better manage with fire, instead of by fire,” said Bill Aney, Eastside Restoration Coordinator.

Standing in a recently thinned and burned stand from the Sandbox timber sale, Aney demonstrated to the group how thoughtfully planning and implementing thinning and prescribed fire facilitates the role of fire as a restoration tool – one that can be used in a safer, less expensive, and less damaging manner than is currently possible.

The World Forest Institute International Fellowship Program hosts natural resource professionals from around the world for six months out of Portland, Ore. Applicants are selected by proposing a natural resources research topic to focus on during their fellowship. The program consists of three main components: conducting a project, networking with public and private forestry organizations in the United States, and educational outreach. The focus of this program is on the Pacific Northwest, largely because of the rich natural resources that Oregon provides. The members learn through networking and opportunities to see how forest management is implemented on the ground.

“Meeting with experts and learning about their work, challenges, and successes first hand is very important to us,” said Rick Zenn, Senior Fellow with the World Forest Institute. “Also, hands-on, field based experience is always one of the best communication tools. We had a great day.”

The selected international professionals this year that visited the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest came to the United States from India, Nigeria, Taiwan, Malaysia, Spain, Poland, Nicaragua and China. For them, this is an experience of a life-time to gain a solid understanding of how natural resource management works in the United States, and to take those ideas back with them to their respective countries.

More information on the World Forest Institute International Fellowship Program and the individual participants is available on the World Forest Institute's website:

<http://www.worldforestry.org/institute/world-forest-institute/international-fellowship/>.

For more information about the Eastside Restoration Strategy, please contact Darcy Weseman (541-278-3755). For information on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, please contact one of the following: Katy Gray (541-523-1246) or Matt Burks (541-523-1208).

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