

Eastside Restoration Strategy Update # 15 December 15, 2016

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Aldo Leopold

This is #15 in a series of periodic updates about the PNW Region's Eastside Restoration Strategy. This effort started in 2013 as a way of putting resources and a focus on some different ways of planning and implementing forest restoration projects on the eastside National Forests of Oregon and Washington. Our region-wide assessment of forest condition showed us that the risks to our forests were increasing faster than we were addressing these risks – so we needed to do something different if we truly wanted to preserve the "integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community".

We have made some progress since 2013. The region's 5 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects have proceeded apace, combining to restore more than 300,000 acres of forest so far, resulting in more resilient, safer fire-adapted forests and communities. We now have 5 Joint Chief's projects, combining the forces of the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service to restore forests and reduce fuel loadings across adjoining federal/non-federal lands in priority areas.

We are also discovering different ways of planning and implementing work more effectively, exploring, learning, and sharing across the region different approaches - like forest-wide aquatic restoration NEPA planning, greater use of stewardship contracting, improving contract preparation efficiency, and developing valuable working partnerships with the states and tribes.

Wildfires are being managed differently – under the right conditions, and in the right times and places, fire managers and line officers are making choices that result in safer, cheaper, and larger wildfires. Among several examples this year was the 059 Wolf Fire on the Malheur NF, burning in June in an area that needed low to moderate intensity fire to reach land management plan objectives. By making the decision to bring the fire to the roads instead of minimizing fire size, the district ranger's course of action resulted in a 241 acre fire with little direct attack, natural resource damage, or risk to firefighters or the public.

The right fire, in the right place and time, accomplishing the right objectives.

These are all great developments to be proud of, and evidence that we are indeed able to eat away at our region's backlog of dry forest restoration needs. I am truly excited to see what the future holds for our Pacific Northwest public forest lands, and how we are going to be able to set up these lands to be resilient in the face of climate change, the effects of fire/insects/disease, and continued use by the owners of these forests, the American public.



for the greatest good

But, after 4 years as the region's Eastside Restoration Strategy Coordinator, and after 34 years of Federal Service as a Forest Service employee, I am retiring at the end of December. While it feels somewhat dissatisfying that I will not be in place to see these efforts all reach fruition, I also realize

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that this is a process, or a journey, and not a destination. Our approaches, thinking, and science about large scale restoration are evolving, and will continue to evolve; the key is to be sure the handoff of the baton is smooth and swift (you knew I couldn't avoid another track and field analogy, didn't you?)

So the Blues work is in good hands, with a strong core IDT and a new leader in David Hatfield. While many of you may know David from his previous position as a natural resources, planning, and administrative staff officer on the Umatilla NF, you should also know that he has a very strong NEPA background; he once led a state-wide Forest Plan Amendment process in Utah for the use of wildfire to restore National Forest landscapes, and was a developer and instructor for the Forest Planning and NEPA course, 1900-1. He is a geologist by training, so he has an appreciation for the long-term and the large scale perspective!

Many other elements of the Eastside Strategy will go back to regional office staff, at least in the short term. M.L. Smith and Carol Boyd will coordinate CFLRP, and Craig Glazier (Regional Fire Integration Lead) has the Joint Chief's program. David will continue my involvement in shared learning, but the next effort will be a west side restoration workshop being spear-headed by Cheryl Friesen, Science Liaison on the Willamette NF.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you – for paying attention to the condition of this treasure we call our National Forests. This is a right and noble effort, paying attention.

Finally, I will end with a quote from a man I admire, one I am proud to have been able to call my friend and mentor. Jack Ward Thomas passed away in May in western Montana, but not before leaving an indelible mark on wildlife and wildland management in North America. Jack told many stories; some of them may have been true, but they all had lessons to impart. He concluded his last book with the following:

"During my life, I had many adventures, good and bad; achieved beyond my wildest dreams; and, to my lasting chagrin, too often fell short. In the process I learned much; lost often but won some too; suffered the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'; helped foment some troublesome quandaries; and helped in the resolution of others."

"Forks in the Trail: A Conservationist's Trek to the Pinnacles of Natural Resource Leadership"

Dare any of us hope for anything more than that?

Be well, be happy, be bold.

Bill Aney, Eastside Restoration Strategy Coordinator, waney@fs.fed.us

Status of Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy

The Blues Restoration Team spent a great deal of time this summer helping the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest work through the draft decision and objections process for the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project – a 100,000 acre forest restoration project in northern Wallowa County. They are also hard at work putting more meat on the bones of the proposed action for the Forest Resiliency Project, which covers 1.2 million acres on three National Forests.

COMMUNICATIONS!

One of our discoveries is that there is never enough communication. A large project like the Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy touches a lot of places and people, and it is important to have information readily available, in a variety of formats, and easily accessible, in order to reach everyone.

Towards that end, the Blues Restoration Strategy Team partnered with Sustainable Northwest to produce a series of web logs (“blogs”) in 2016. The series of articles covers a broad range of restoration-related topics, from planning efficiencies to huckleberries and white-headed woodpeckers. The blog partnership has proven valuable for both organizations, providing a platform to reach a broader audience on forest-related issues. The blog has received positive feedback both internally and externally, which has led to an extension of this partnership into 2017. The listing below includes web links to each article that has been published thus far:

Article series

Issue 1 - January: [Taking action to restore the Blue Mountains](#): A dedicated team aims to rapidly restore forest health on the Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

Issue 2 - February: [Landscape-scale problems require landscape-scale solutions](#): How the Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team is approaching large scale, faster pace restoration planning.

Issue 3 - March: [A focus on the forest restoration need](#): Forest conditions play a critical role in restoring forest resiliency.

Issue 4 - April: [The importance of fire](#): Fire plays a vital role in restoring and maintaining healthy forests.

Issue 5 - May: [Restoring our forests in the face of climate change](#): Designing restoration projects to make forests resilient against drought conditions.

Issue 6 - June: [A tale of two birds](#): Landscape restoration can benefit sensitive wildlife species habitats including the Northern Goshawk and White-headed Woodpecker.

Issue 7 - July: [For the love of huckleberries](#): Planning team uses modeling to inform benefits of restoration activities for huckleberry habitat.

Issue 8 - August: [Reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires](#): Wildfire risk assessment informs placement and design of treatments.

Issue 9 - September: [Working together for effective wildfire management strategies](#): National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy plays an important role in guiding restoration work.

Issue 10 - October: Why restoration matters....to aquatic habitat: Planning Team takes integrated look at effects of vegetation management on important aquatic species, like bull trout.

Issue 11 - November: Large-scale project planning: attempting to create NEPA efficiencies: A look at the NEPA process and how the planning team is approaching landscape-scale project planning

Issue 12 – December: Approaches to accelerating restoration: there is no one size fits all: The Forest Resiliency Project is just one approach for accelerating the pace and scale of restoration