

Eastside Restoration Strategy Update # 9

August 22, 2014

What we're accomplishing with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

❖ Blue Mountains Restoration Team:

✓ Lower Joseph (LoJo) Creek Restoration Project (Project #1):

As September approaches, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) continues their analysis of the alternatives, write specialists reports, and document references and data, with the intent of publishing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in the fall. Here are a few key summary and status points:

- *Proposed Action:* The proposed action, published for public comment in January 2014, included forest thinning, prescribed burning, restoration of riparian areas, wetlands and springs, establishment of two research natural areas, and transportation management over nearly 100,000 acres.
- *Project Scoping and Issues:* Publication of the proposed action for public comment resulted in 57 responses from interested parties, and 959 individual comments. The IDT categorized and synthesized these comments into three significant issues focusing on:
 - The best road network to allow for public and administrative access, while protecting the natural resources,
 - The most appropriate vegetation treatments to restore forest structure and function, and
 - The most appropriate management activities in designated old growth (Management Area 15), riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) and inventoried roadless areas (IRAs).
- *Alternatives:* The IDT developed three alternatives to evaluate the best course of action to rectify the issues:
 1. Alternative 1 (No Action): Continue with current land management, including fire suppression.
 2. Alternative 2 (Proposed Action): Treat vegetation toward the historic range of variation (HRV), including mechanical restoration treatments in MA 15, IRAs, and all RHCAs for category 4 streams that bisect harvest units.
 3. Alternative 3: The road network would meet public access needs as identified by the Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee; no commercial mechanical treatments in MA15/IRA/RHCA; no non-commercial mechanical treatments in MA15/IRA; and removal of trees >21" in diameter anywhere.

The IDT began with analyzing four alternatives in detail, but they and the line officers determined the fourth alternative was not needed, and it could be incorporated into the Proposed Action. The IDT is carrying forward Alternatives 1-3 into detailed effects analysis.



for the greatest good

- *Effects Analysis:* Preliminary analyses show:
 - All of the action alternatives reduce departure from HRV in cover type, tree size, percent cover (density), and stand-level pattern, with the Proposed Action generally having the greatest positive effect.
 - White-headed woodpecker and western bluebird habitats increase in abundance under the action alternatives, and decrease under the No Action alternative.
 - Eight of ten sub-watersheds are currently functioning properly, two are functioning at risk.
- *Timeline:* The Team is on track to produce and publish the Draft EIS this fall for public review and comment.
- *Implementation Plan:* Planning at a larger scale may necessitate different implementation approaches than we typically employ. The IDT therefore has begun discussions with the Wallowa-Whitman NF on developing implementation processes and capacity. This effort focuses on how the selected alternative will be implemented not what will be selected. Questions being addressed are what type of training, follow-up monitoring and surveying, and contract administration are needed? Implementation is another step in the learning process.

✓ **Strategic Fuel Treatments Project (Project #2):**

This team, Forests, and collaboratives continue to define this project. Wildfire and fuel treatment concepts were presented at the Blue Mtns Coalition of Collaboratives meeting, and the idea seemed to be well accepted, laying the groundwork for each Collaborative to engage with their forest in locating and designing the treatments.

How we're engaging in the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

❖ **Blue Mtns Coalition of Collaboratives meeting July 29-31 in John Day:** Thirty-five to 40 people including people from the five forest collaboratives participated in the Blue Mtns Coalition meeting and field trip. Coalition members heard presentations intended to meet the following objectives:

- Collaborative governance: Review and up-date the purpose, structure, and governance of the Blue Mountains Coalition of Collaboratives
- Collaboration with Blues ID Team: Revisit and clarify the collaborative engagement process with Blues ID Team on projects that span more than one National Forest.
- Strategic Fuel treatment project: Increase understanding of the history, purpose of a fuel treatment strategy, and how roadside fuel treatments look on the landscape
- Socio-economic monitoring: Receive an overview of socio-economic monitoring baseline data and information describing local contracting capacity, its implications and utility for local collaborative projects and the broader Blue Mountain Restoration Strategy, and tips for increasing local capture of contracts.
- Peer learning: Share insights around the classification and science of Mixed Moist Conifer forests with an aim to increase understanding, potential zones of agreement, and best management practices.

The coalition made several moves forward with the following proposed purposes:

- Support Blues Strategy and other regional efforts.
- Information sharing among collaboratives.
- Work on overarching policy and management issues.

The group agreed to form a Blue Mountains Coalition of Collaboratives Executive Committee to set goals for the Coalition and better define the coalition's engagement strategy with the Blues IDT.

The participating collaboratives are:

Blue Mountains Forest Partners

<https://sites.google.com/site/bluemountainsforestpartners/>

Umatilla Forest Restoration Collaborative

<http://umatillacollaborative.org/>

Wallowa-Whitman Forest Restoration Collaborative

http://www.wallowaresources.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112&Itemid=67

Harney County Restoration Collaborative

<https://sites.google.com/site/harneycountycollaborative/home/about-the-collaborative>

Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative

<https://sites.google.com/site/ochococollaborative/home>

❖ **East Face Project - Cohesive Wildland Fire Policy Pilot:**

The Northeastern Oregon Cohesive Wildfire Strategy partners (NRCS, ODFW, BLM, ODF and USFS) continue to coordinate on project design, funding and communication strategy. The Forest Service is focused on data collection, silviculture and wildlife field surveys, land-line surveying, and project design. Fuel treatment and forest health improvement activities are being designed to meet landscape needs instead of jurisdictional boundaries. The Wallowa-Whitman NF is working with the Forest collaborative to help develop alternatives and has recently visited the site to discuss treatment needs and alternatives. Landowners are working collaboratively to plan projects that encompass the entire landscape. In addition, the partners are coordinating on biomass strategy development.

The CWS Pilot has included engaging with the public at events such as the Union County Fair and the Miners Jubilee in Baker City.

<http://prdp2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/home/?cid=STELPRD3791060>

❖ **Washington Forest Collaboratives Summit: Forest Collaboratives in Washington State will meet as collective September 8-9 in Wenatchee, WA.**

Goals:

Members of the Washington forest collaboratives will:

- Get to know each other, the landscapes they work in and develop relationships that will be useful in future networking.
- Share the challenges and successes of their collaborative and engage in candid shared learning.

- Develop shared understanding of restoration needs in WA and how to effectively increase the pace and footprint of restoration in the state.
- Identify shared goals and opportunities in which to engage.

Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Have ideas to take back to their forest collaboratives to advance their work.
- Have new connections and know who to follow up with for a certain idea or need.
- Have draft purpose and goals for ongoing WA forest collaboratives networking.

- ❖ **Broadening the Eastside Restoration Strategy:** Forests across the Region are accomplishing accelerated restoration in approaches and methods unique to their capacity, communities and ecosystems. Two basic questions are how can we learn from each other and share those lessons learned?

For example, recently, Bill met with the Fremont-Winema National Forest Leadership Team (FLT), with a follow up field trip, to share and learn about the common issues related to accelerating restoration work. The Fremont-Winema appears to be planning at a larger scale than other eastside forests (100K acres), and is testing efficiencies in the layout and preparation of Integrated Resource Timber Contracts (IRTC). Some of their work could be considered a “pilot” in the region, developing and testing an EA “framework” (template), testing some different approaches to flagging/tagging/painting of treatment units, operator design and selection of skips and gaps within treatment units, etc.

How we’re learning with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

- ❖ **What does “completing the job” look like?** Pre-treatment stand and landscape condition photo points have been established on the Ochoco, Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman Forests. Following initial treatment, the stands will be revisited and photo documented at the same, exact location to create a visual “before and after” comparison, and effective learning and communication tool.
- ❖ **Training:** The team is working with the Regional Office and the national Remote Sensing Applications Center (RSAC) to deliver two LiDAR workshops in eastern Oregon this winter, focusing on IDT members and analysts that are or will be using LiDAR data collected locally. These sessions are tentatively scheduled for February 9-13, 2015 in Bend, and March 2-6, in La Grande. Our intent is to allow participants to use data collected from their own Forests as part of the training.
- ❖ **Blues-Wide Fire Modeling:** Work is ongoing with The Nature Conservancy and Western Wildland Environmental Threat Assessment Center to develop a Blues-wide fire model that identifies high value resource areas, and a cost-benefit analysis with high risk and high benefit by five intensity levels. This tool should help fire managers develop response and risk management strategies to unplanned ignitions, and in prioritizing treatments.

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