

# Eastside Restoration Strategy Update # 11

## April 17, 2015

*“Collaboration is working,” Ayn Shlisky*

This is the 11th edition of the ERS Update. The intent of these updates is to keep agency employees, our partners, and collaborators up to date with our current thinking and progress at the important work of restoring resilience to eastside forests in the PNW. In the last update, I talked about as ERS Coordinator, I have frequent opportunities to give presentations and have good dialogue with both internal and external audiences, from individuals to large conferences, and how this causes me to constantly “re-center” on the *why* of this work we are trying to accomplish – namely, leaving our forest landscapes in a resilient condition, ready to provide for future generations of forest users.

These conversations and presentations also cause me to reassess how we communicate to the variety of audiences we hope are reading these updates. It seems some people prefer to scan headlines and read a short description, while others prefer to dive into the details. So in the spirit of trying something different, this edition will attempt to provide a headline description and a more detailed account of an activity where it makes sense. Please let us know what you think.

Bill Aney, Eastside Restoration Strategy Coordinator, [waney@fs.fed.us](mailto:waney@fs.fed.us)

### **What we’re accomplishing with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:**

*Blue Mountains Restoration Team is completing the Lower Joseph Creek Restoration Project (Project #1) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and formulating the second project, a large-scale national forest resiliency project encompassing parts of four national forests in the Blue Mountains of Oregon:*

- **Lower Joseph (LoJo) Creek Restoration Project (Project #1):**
  - The Team is editing the FEIS to address substantive comments received during the comment period. They have enlisted the help of a professional writer, not particularly familiar with the way the FS does NEPA, to make the FEIS more accessible and readable to a variety of audiences.
  - The Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative (WAWFC) draft consensus statement was not completed during the official comment period, but the collaborative is continuing to work toward a consensus position on the project.
  - The latest in a series of staff-to-staff consultation meetings with the Nez Perce Tribe occurred on March 26, and formal consultation with the Tribal Council is being scheduled.
  - The Team is developing the implementation plan with Wallowa Mountains Office and Forest staff.
- **The Blues Mountains Forest Resiliency Project (BMFRP):** In February, 2015, the Blue Mountains Restoration Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) tested the use of a rapid wildfire assessment model to jump start a large-scale national forest resiliency project. The Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project encompasses parts of four national forests in the Blue



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Mountains of Oregon. The power point (attached) was the focus of discussion for the Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project Webinar on March 30, and was presented on March 31 to Environmental Coordinators from across the region at their annual meeting.

- **Next Steps:** The ID team is intending to be transparent about the use and interpretation of science, policy, and social trade-offs within the NEPA process to foster effective internal and external collaboration.
  - **Ongoing and Upcoming efforts and scoping:**
    - Formal and informal tribal consultation
    - Introduction for the regulatory agencies (NOAA Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service) Introduction for internal USFS staff
    - The team will continue participation in monthly collaborative meetings to understand where there is general social agreement and disagreement about NFS land management, and how they might be addressed in the proposed action, alternative approaches (planning alternatives), tests of novel approaches, and/or monitoring.
    - The team has and will continue outreaching internally with Blue Mtns Forest staffs welcoming any questions, comments, concerns and opportunities.

**Would you like to learn more about restoring resiliency in the forests of the Blue Mountains? Let us know how we can work together.**

### **How we're learning with the Eastside Restoration Strategy:**

#### ***Webinars, Workshops and Research, Oh my...***

- **Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project Webinar on March 30:** The Blue Mountains Coalition of Collaboratives hosted an online webinar and conference call with the Forest Service's Blue Mountains Interdisciplinary Team to learn about the Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project. The Forest Service is in the very early stages of this project and is searching for feedback from the collaboratives about the approach being considered for development of the proposed action, and the most effective and preferred approaches to engage the Blues Coalition and the five Blue Mountains collaboratives as the project moves forward.
- **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Workshop:** The third annual CFLR workshop was held April 1-2 in Hood River, OR. Approximately 80 participants comprised of about 40% FS, 40% collaborators, and 20% others (Universities, NGOs). This was the third annual workshop, and many participants felt this was the best...the collaborative members in particular seem to have a better handle on what they need from this kind of workshop. The staff at Sustainable Northwest did a tremendous job with this workshop, making it a worthwhile investment of time for the participants.
  - Leslie Weldon, Deputy Chief, National Forest System gave the kickoff, reviewing the 5-year report and what CFLR means. Forest Service employees have had to turn their eyes towards a new way of working with the public – by working with collaboratives.
  - Meryl Harrell, Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment highlighted the importance of communicating what the collaboratives and FS are learning.

- John Allen, Deschutes Forest Supervisor also gave a real good presentation about why collaboration is important to him, and how he conveys his expectations to his staff.
  - Tom DeMeo, Pacific Northwest Regional Ecologist gave an overview of the progress of monitoring, focusing on the national set of ecological indicators. Bill Aney provided a summary of the first five years of CFLR in the region, looking at accomplishments that are emphasized in the region compared to the national program. He also led a discussion about how what we have learned thus far will affect the rest of the 10-year program, and life post-CFLR.
- **Research Proposal:** Melissa Lucash, a scientist at PSU, has submitted a research proposal to use the Blue Mountain Forest Resiliency Project (BMFRP) as a study area to model species responses to the interactions of climate change and forest management. This work is similar to the climate informed State-and-Transition Model (STSM) that were developed for the Blue Mountains by Becky Kerns et al, but this model will focus on individual species, and will use the LANDIS model instead of St-Sim.

### How we're engaging in the Eastside Restoration Strategy:

*The Colville National Forest is making headlines, literally. Whether it's their innovative approach to Stewardship Contracting to partnering across boundaries and agencies they have attracted a lot attention, and it's kind of hard to keep track of. The following details should help tell the whole story...*

- **Colville National Forest Geographic Highlight:** The Colville NF has been the center of attention lately for a number of landscape restoration initiatives. Thanks to Colville Public Affairs Officer Franklin Pemberton for a clear summary of these efforts:
  - **Northeast Washington Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership:** The Colville N.F. in partnership with Washington Department of Natural Resources; Bureau of Land Management; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; NE Washington Forestry Coalition; Conservation Northwest; Avista; Boise Cascade; Vaagen Bros Lumber Inc. were successful in securing \$2.0 million dollars for restoration work that will reduce and mitigate wildfire threats to Colville National Forest land and adjacent private property in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties to help improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet. How this works fiscally is the Colville N.F. will receive \$1 million dollars in 2015, \$850,000 in 2016 and \$676,800 in 2017 to work on hazardous fuels reduction projects in and around designated wildland urban interface (WUI). The Natural Resource Conservation Service will receive \$500,000 to do work on adjacent private lands and the Washington Department of Natural Resources will also receive \$500,000 in 2015 and 2016 to do work on adjacent state lands.
  - **Washington State Healthy Forest Act Designation:** Responding to Governor Inslee's request, Chief Tidwell designated 711,254 acres in Washington State as landscape-scale insect and disease treatment areas. The designated treatment areas are within the boundary of the Okanogan-Wenatchee, Colville, Umatilla, and Gifford Pinchot National Forests be designated under Section 602 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 and Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act

of 2014, i.e. Farm Bill. Within the designated areas, the Farm Bill provides the authority to use the expedited National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures provided for in Section 104 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) for an Environmental Assessment that allows for shortened objection periods from 45 to 30 days and allows the project to study a single alternative or the use of the new Categorical Exclusion allows for the designation of up to 3000 acre treatment (not project are) area and must be developed using a collaborative process.

- **Farm Bill authorization of Good Neighbor Authority:** The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) authorizes the FS to enter into cooperative agreements with the state for watershed and forest restoration activities. The goal of the GNA is to leverage state resources to increase capacity on FS lands and to strengthen the federal/State partnership. The Farm Bill permanently authorized the GNA and also allows the National Forests to take advantage of the FY14 Appropriations Act that authorizes the GNA until 2018. The Forest Service envisions using tiered agreements (master Stewardship Agreement and Supplemental Project Agreements) with the state agencies to document agreed arrangements with the states. . Typical work can include sale prep, marking, cruising, BEs, silvicultural prescriptions, fuels reduction, commercial timber removal, and reforestation. The farm bill authorizes appropriations of \$200,000,000 per year for each of fiscal years 2014-2024, dependent of course on actual annual appropriations. .
- **Northeast Washington Initiative (Colville NF):** Eastern Washington has areas of worsening forest health conditions due to overcrowded, damaged trees that are susceptible to increased harm from insects, disease and wildfire. In 2014, over 380,000 acres burned in wildfires in Washington State, more than six times greater than the five-year average. Between 2000 and 2010, insects and diseases damaged 1.3 million acres per year in Washington, more than 1.5 times the annual average of the 1990s. Homes, developments and communities are increasingly interspersed within fire-prone landscapes, compounding fire impacts and presenting a danger to public safety. This project will reduce and mitigate wildfire threats to Colville National Forest land and adjacent private property in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Accomplishing this work will also protect water quality and supply for communities and industry and protect habitat quality.
  - FY 2015 funding: USFS - \$1,000,000; NRCS - \$500,000.
  - Partners: Washington Department of Natural Resources; Bureau of Land Management; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; NE Washington Forestry Coalition; Conservation Northwest; Avista; Boise Cascade; Vaagen Bros Lumber, Inc.
- **Mill Creek A to Z Stewardship Project:** A highlight for the Colville National Forest was the development of an entirely new way of accomplishing work through stewardship contracting. The effort will increase the scale and pace of restoring forest health and sustainability and provide economic opportunities for local communities. The Mill Creek A to Z Stewardship Project was designed so that each step, from pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) data collection to project implementation will be performed and financed by the contractor, Vaagen Brother's Lumber Inc. The Environmental Assessment for the first of the two planning areas was released for public comment recently. The

contractor is planning to start presale activities this spring and vegetation treatments are expected to begin after the decision is signed this fall.

- **Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA):** Another exceptional initiative was undertaken by the Forest with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The partnership will be achieved through use of the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA). The Forest is one of the first in the Pacific Northwest Region to have an established TFPA project. The Act provides a tool for tribes to propose work and enter into contracts and agreements with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management to reduce threats from Federal lands adjacent to Indian trust land and Indian communities. The goals of the project are to increase forest resiliency and reduce the risk of catastrophic loss to wildfire. Data collection is underway in the 44,500 acre planning area and the proposed action is expected this fall.
- **Bark Beetle Assessment:** The Colville Forest responded to the unprecedented bark beetle outbreak in eastern Washington State by accelerating restoration plans for affected lands. Approximately 450,000 trees were killed Forest-wide in 2013, primarily from damage from the mountain pine beetle. In response, the Forest developed a bark beetle assessment ([http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3820388.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3820388.pdf)), and an accelerated restoration strategy resulting in an annual timber volume target that increased from 44 MMBF in 2014 to 52 MMBF in 2015. Thinning of stands will provide the greatest benefit in terms of forest vigor and will also create diverse stand structures that are more resilient to damage from insects and diseases. Prescribed burning for maintenance and timber stand improvement treatments will also provide tremendous value.

*The Oregon Federal Forest Working Group (FFWG) met March 20 to focus on monitoring of the State of Oregon's investments in collaboratives and the partnership efforts with the USFS. The Ecosystem Workforce Program just completed four (4) new Fact Sheets related to Accelerated Restoration Monitoring in eastern Oregon.*

- Cass Moseley and Eric White presented additional information and discussed the fact sheets below:

[http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS\\_4.pdf](http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS_4.pdf)

ECONOMIC IMPACTS FROM BLUE MOUNTAINS  
NATIONAL FORESTS RESTORATION  
TRACKING INVESTMENTS IN EASTERN OREGON

[http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS\\_5.pdf](http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS_5.pdf)

ECONOMIC IMPACTS FROM THE MALHEUR  
10-YEAR STEWARDSHIP CONTRACT  
EVALUATING YEAR ONE

[http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS\\_6.pdf](http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS_6.pdf)

EASTERN OREGON RESTORATION BENEFITS  
BUSINESSES STATEWIDE  
DISTRIBUTION OF TIMBER BUYERS & SERVICE CONTRACTORS

[http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS\\_7.pdf](http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/FS_7.pdf)

COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY FOR

## ACCELERATED RESTORATION

In addition these papers are posted on Ecosystem Workforce Program website at <http://ewp.uoregon.edu/publications/factsheets>

“The purposes of the FFWG are to:

- Advance collaboratively driven landscape-scale, active restoration of federal forest lands;
- Identify and remove policy and financial barriers; and
- Promote innovative solutions to restoration of forest and watershed health.

### **Restoration News:**

<http://www.yakimaherald.com/news/yhr/tuesday/3060477-8/forest-service-seeks-comment-on-proposed-restoration-project#print>

#### **Forest Service seeks comment on proposed restoration project for Little Crow**

By Scott Sandsberry / Yakima Herald-Republic

[ssandsberry@yakimaherald.com](mailto:ssandsberry@yakimaherald.com), Posted on April 7, 2015

A proposed U.S. Forest Service project in a year-round outdoor recreation destination northwest of Yakima calls for commercial timber harvest, prescribed burning and the decommissioning of 35 miles of the area’s most rugged and minimally maintained roads.

The Naches Ranger District unveiled plans last week for its proposed Little Crow Restoration project, which spans east and west of the Little Naches 1900 Road, a corridor popular with campers, horseback riders, motorized trail riders, berry and mushroom pickers, hunters and anglers.

[http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/Local\\_News/20150407/community-voices-forest-panel-reports-on-activities](http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/Local_News/20150407/community-voices-forest-panel-reports-on-activities)

#### **Community Voices Forest panel reports on activities**

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The Grant County Public Forest Commission, in its regular session March 18, reviewed recent projects and discussed future projects.

The Commission actively works with state and federal agencies to insure that there will be long-term supplies of raw materials that will supply local industry and insure socio-economic wellbeing for the citizens of Grant County.

The Commission did an intensive review of the Draft Blue Mountains Forest Management Plan. Our comments were widely used by other responders in Eastern Oregon.

<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2015/apr/08/grant-will-fund-work-to-reduce-wildfire-risk-in/>

#### **Grant will fund work to reduce wildfire risk in northeast Washington**

Becky Kramer, The Spokesman-Review, April 8, 2015

Steve Parker had two reactions to last summer’s wildfires in Central Washington: a deep empathy for the people who lost homes and businesses, followed by the thought, “What if that happened here?”

It wasn’t hard for the Stevens County commissioner to imagine a catastrophic wildfire sweeping through northeast Washington.

In northern Stevens County, where he lives, Parker has walked through forests so crowded and unhealthy that “it looked like a dead zone,” he said. “If a fire started, it would burn all the way to the Canadian border.”

Over the next three years, a federal grant will help reduce the risk of explosive fires on 30,000 acres near rural communities in Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties. The work also will protect critical infrastructure, such as transmission lines.

<http://boisestatepublicradio.org/post/nasa-images-show-how-wildfire-water-have-changed-western-landscapes>

### **NASA Images Show How Wildfire, Water Have Changed Western Landscapes**

By Emilie Ritter Saunders

More than 7-million acres have burned in Idaho wildfires since 2004, and NASA satellites have captured how some of those fires have changed the regional landscape.

In 2013, U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell told congressional lawmakers that wildfires are burning, on average, twice as many acres each year compared to fires that burned 40 years ago. “The last two decades have seen fires that are extraordinary in their size, intensity and impacts,” he said.

In NASA's "Images of Change" gallery, you can see how fires, dams, mining activity, and a changing climate have impacted parts of the West.

[http://www.ktvb.com/shared/news/top-stories/stories/ktvb\\_vid\\_15808.shtml](http://www.ktvb.com/shared/news/top-stories/stories/ktvb_vid_15808.shtml)

### **Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Arrives in Southern Oregon**

By Aaron Nilsson/KTVL.comCENTRAL POINT, Ore. -- New tactics could help fight the flames this summer.

Jackson and Josephine County commissioners, police officers, city firefighters and foresters teamed up to brainstorm new ideas for the upcoming fire season.

Jim Pena has been with the U.S. Forest Service for 37 years.

He said a new cohesive wildfire strategy is all about cooperation and sharing lands...”all hands, all lands.”

"What will satisfy me is if people leave the meeting today with a belief and confidence that we're willing to from a federal agency listen to state and local partners and local partners willing to listen to all viewpoints so we can find a common ground," Pena said.

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