



## Eastside Restoration Strategy Update 2

2 April 2013

*Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.* Society for Ecological Restoration, and FSH 1909.12 draft planning rule

**Background:** This is the second briefing paper regarding the accelerated eastside restoration effort. The focus is to try doing some things differently, aimed at substantially increasing the amount of forest restoration that we are able to do with active management (thinning, prescribed burning, in-stream restoration, etc.). We want to build on, not replace, the good work that is already underway on these four National Forests in cooperation with their respective public collaborative groups.

What will be different? We envision 1) a dedicated project planning team of very experienced natural resource specialists, 2) engaged in early and frequent engagement with collaboratives, 3) working at a large geographic scale, and 4) with direct, deliberate connections to, and counsel from, the forest science community. We also envision using innovative tools to implement projects, with the entire range of contracting authorities at our disposal.

### **Current Status:**

- 1) Planning team: The outreach for the planning team members has been distributed, and we are collecting responses. The current outreach period ends on 17 April.
- 2.) Collaboration and communications:
  - a) I have met with the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla collaboratives, and with several members of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners (BMFP). I am scheduled to meet with the Ochoco Collaborative in April, and hope to do the same with BMFP and Harney County collaboratives. I have met with the FLTs on three forests, and am scheduled for the Ochoco this month. There will also be good opportunities to interact with the collaboratives at two workshops being held in Hood River this month.
  - b) I also participated in a conference call with members of all the collaboratives in the Blue Mountains, exploring opportunities to create a collaborative coalition. I have enlisted the help of Maia Enzer, FS Partnership and Collaboration Specialist to reach out to these collaboratives and explore larger-scale collaborative models.
  - c) Worked with Regional Office public affairs and partnerships group to develop a communications strategy with FAQs.
- 3.) Identify a project of appropriate scale and value
  - a. Exploring different models of larger-scale planning. The joint TNC/FS product to prioritize ecological restoration needs across the 4 National Forests is scheduled for completion in June.
  - b. Developing maps of ongoing planning efforts in the Blues, and another of plant association groups across all four forests. This should help inform the choices that the collaboratives and the team will need to make regarding restoration needs.



**Summary:** The eastside restoration strategy maintains an obvious high level of support and interest. A larger-scale collaborative can help identify the best ways to increase the pace and scale of restoration, but this will take time to develop. In the meantime, staffing the interdisciplinary team, developing a budget and communication strategy, collecting current condition information about the Blue Mountains landscape, and continuing discussion with Forest staffs and collaboratives is time well spent.

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