

FY2012 Partnerships Report

SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST

Five Mile Bell Management Project

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) announced a new National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) pilot project in February, 2012 to increase the quality and efficiency of federal environmental reviews and reduce costs. CEQ selected a US Forest Service proposal to develop NEPA best practices for the forest restoration projects using lessons learned from two of the restoration projects currently being analyzed in Arizona and Oregon. These two projects demonstrate that by involving partners early in the NEPA process we can then cut costs and operate efficiently while still maintaining a strong environmental safeguard at the ground level.



Five Mile-Bell Landscape Management Project is the latest and one of the largest Siuslaw National Forest partner-organized and developed projects, and in this case, the Siuslaw National Forest and the Siuslaw Basin Partnership (Eco trust, Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District, Siuslaw Institute, and Siuslaw Watershed Council) expanded the traditions of collaboration by engaging communities and natural resource work forces. The Siuslaw Institute was contracted by Eco trust to directly participate in assisting the Forest Service to gather and synthesize assessments data and information necessary for the planning and environmental analysis process. This effort was accomplished by employing citizens with strong connections to the land and people. Along with this effort partners are directly involved in the NEPA dissemination and outreach to the public with the concepts materials and meetings related to this work and its long-term plan.

Five Mile-Bell is an ecological and habitat restoration project on close to 5,000 acres of National Forest System lands in the Five Mile and Bell Creeks sub-basins on the Oregon coast. The project includes in-stream restoration, stream channel restoration and re-meandering, upland road and stand improvements, and valley bottom native vegetation treatments.

The project will address ecosystem diversity and productivity with its primary focus on habitat enhancement for threatened Coho salmon, northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and associated plants and animals. Through a sustainably managed landscape the project will enhance the economic timber education community and recreational opportunities available. The proposed restoration work is based on adaptive learning from successful watershed restoration projects on acquired lands in the Siuslaw basin.



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Ecosystem restoration on the Siuslaw National Forest is characterized by easy informal collaboration among a wide range of partners on a watershed scale. Fire Mile-Bell takes this to a new level by sharing the environmental analysis workload. The Siuslaw Basin Partnership is carrying out field surveys and preparing specialist reports under contracts and agreements with the Siuslaw National Forest. These partners share strong and broad connections with the local community and Interest groups. The Forest Service retains responsibility for the final environmental document and decision. Sharing the workload in this way builds ownership and trust in the project among the public which can minimize and decrease the risk of litigation and appeals. Sharing the workload also builds capacity in the community and among non-governmental organizations to complete environmental analysis and address environmental impacts. Collaborative preparation of environmental analysis goes well beyond traditional scoping while advancing the national policy of “productive and enjoyable harmony between [humans] and [their] environment.”



Youth Focus: Battling an Alien Invader

In early spring 2012, more than 80 Siuslaw Elementary 4th graders marched to the Oregon Dunes Day Use Area to battle an “alien invader,” a noxious invasive weed commonly called Scotch Broom. Considered one of Oregon’s most problematic weeds, Scotch Broom spreads quickly and forms dense stands that choke out native plant life and destroy wildlife habitat. Armed with gloves and garden tools the students and their parent helpers removed an entire hillside of the weed freeing the space for native plants to re-establish. This restoration project was organized and led by Siuslaw Salmon & Watershed Studies Coordinator Jim Grano and USFS Fisheries Biologist Mike Northrop. Transportation and tools were funded by Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Gray Family Foundation grants. While the weed-removal effort was underway students also participated in guided nature walks led by Forest Service volunteers and field rangers including Secrets of the Oregon Dunes author Dina Pavlis. On their nature trek the students heard the story of the formation of the dunes searched for animal tracks and learned how the future of this unique resource is imperiled by yet another invasive weed European Beach Grass. Field ranger Carol Davis court stated “I was extremely impressed with how much the kids accomplished and how hard they worked we can really make a difference out here when folks get together and help defend the dunes we all love. Many thanks to the 4th graders of Siuslaw Elementary in Florence and all the teachers, parents organizers, volunteers who made this event a success!”



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