



Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

2013 Highlights

December, 2013

Greetings from Forest Supervisor Rick Brazell

It's been a few years since we had the time and capacity to produce a forest newsletter. I am happy to share some of our accomplishments from this past year with you.

Taking care of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests requires efforts of dedicated employees, partners and volunteers who contribute greatly to the successful management of forest resources. Without great partnerships, some of our work would be difficult to complete.

Our partners include a number of federal agencies, tribes, state agencies, communities, conservation organizations, user groups, environmental organizations, non-profit organizations, universities, local school districts, public entities, and private citizens. Their assistance is provided through a number of avenues including various grants, partnerships, and volunteer efforts.

This year's highlights include: Consolidation of the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forests, Collaboration (CFLRP/CBC), Forest Plan Revision, Clearwater Travel Management, Fire Season 2013, Restoration Partnerships, Heritage Enhancement, and Wilderness Airstrip Reconstruction.

Retirements:

I want to thank the folks who have recently retired for their many years of dedication to the Forest Service and wish them the best in their retirements!

Personnel Changes:

Deputy Forest Supervisor Ralph Rau is currently on a 120-day detail as the Forest Supervisor on the Hoosier National Forest in Region 9. Craig Trulock, Lochsa/Powell District Ranger, is Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor. Several new employees joined us: Joyce Thompson - Planning/Public Affairs Staff Officer, Jeff Shinn - Salmon River District Ranger, Dan Hollenkamp - Vegetation Stewardship Staff Officer, Luke Flock - Forest Plan Revision GIS, Timory Peel - Lead Natural Resource Planner, Rema Sadak - Forest Wildlife Program Manager, Taylor Greenup - Forest Hydro. Technician, Allison Johnson - Fish Biologist, Ann Bonaparte - Information Receptionist (Moose Creek Ranger District), Geoff Kaeberle - Forest Silviculturist, Joel Harrison - Forest GIS, John Haux - Information Receptionist (Salmon River Ranger District), Glen Gill - Central Zone Wildlife Biologist, Clay Hickey - North Zone Wildlife Biologist, Jay Hedrick - Sale Administrator (North Fork Ranger District), Nathan Teats - South Zone GIS, Michael Brumbaugh - Silviculture (Lochsa Ranger District), and Stephanie Berry - North Zone Timber Sale Prep.



Photo by Laura Smith

Consolidation...

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Administratively Combine

Contributed by Laura Smith and Joyce Thompson

In February, 2013, the decision was announced to administratively combine the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests in Idaho. The decision climaxed a five-year process of working toward consolidating leadership and programs between the two National Forests

In 2008, the two forests began to take steps toward the combination with the intent of generating savings of \$2 million per year. That goal has been met and saved funds are being used to maintain on-the-ground-management and service to the public. The consolidation has also better prepared the Forests for reductions in budget as the result of sequestration. The financial savings have been from a reduction in workforce from duplicate positions and reorganization of staff duties. The reduction in the work force has largely been accomplished through attrition as employees have retired, moved on to other jobs, and the workloads have been streamlined. No employees were required to move as a result of this decision.

Due to its central location and government owned facilities, the official headquarters (Supervisor's Office) is in Kamiah. There are three buildings at the old Ranger Station that have been or in the process of being remodeled to accommodate employees. When the remodeling is complete in February, there will be enough space in Forest Service buildings in Kamiah to accommodate 45 employees.

The Supervisor's Office in Kamiah will soon be open to the public with a full-time receptionist available to address forest inquiries and sell forest visitor maps and permits for firewood, mushrooms, and Christmas Trees. The address for the Supervisor's Office is:

Nez Perce- Clearwater National Forests
Supervisor's Office
903 3rd St.
Kamiah, ID 83536

For clarification, the new names for the offices are: Nez Perce-Clearwater NF's - Grangeville Office; North Fork District (Orofino Office), and "Forest Supervisor's Office".

Local communities expressed that they want the Forest Service to maintain offices in their current locations. The combined forests will continue to have a substantial presence in Grangeville and Orofino, the towns that formerly hosted the headquarters offices for the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests. In addition to District and fire employees, other Supervisor's Office personnel will remain in Grangeville and Orofino.

Forest information was combined into one website ("Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests WWW") and it is located at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperceclearwater>.

The Forest Visitor Maps and Travel Management Maps (MVUMs) will not be combined and are titled: "Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests - Nez Perce," and "Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests - Clearwater."

Once the Kamiah Supervisor's Office is fully operational, we will host an Open House for the public to join us in formally opening the new office and we'll have staff available to answer questions about the consolidation.

Collaboration...

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program/Clearwater Basin Collaborative

Contributed by Mike Ward



Thinned stands in Lodge Point Project
Photo by Mike Ward

The Selway-Middle Fork CFLR project continues to be the foundation of our relationship with the Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) from which many other successes have grown. Our program has been identified by many CBC members and others as an exemplary model of public land management - where collaborative engagement has led to increased outputs without resorting to the divisive solutions being pursued in other areas. To-date we have brought in over \$12 million in CFLR funds. This money represents more than just critical work being accomplished across the Forests; it has created opportunities, enhanced relationships and attracted partnerships. Feedback received from the Washington Office during the site visit to our project indicated that we are tracking true to the intent of the legislation. We continue to meet or exceed accomplishments and expectations outlined in our original proposal and expect this trend to continue. Significant achievements for FY 13 include:

• Published a draft EIS for the Clear Creek Integrated Restoration Project which would restore landscape resilience; improve forest health; reduce fuels; provide forest products and improve watershed conditions across almost 10,000 acres

• Nearing competition on the Interface Fuels timber sale (sale sold in FY 11) which will reduce fuels around the communities of Lowell and Syringa

• Started work on the Lodge Point Commercial thin project (sale sold in FY 12) designed to improve forest health and utilize small diameter forest material



Culvert replacement to allow for aquatic organism passage - Photo by Mike Ward

• Signed a Decision Notice which was affirmed on appeal for the Iron Mountain Vegetation restoration project. This project will yield as much as 9 MMBF by utilizing insect and disease affected trees and in-turn promote reduced fuel loadings as well as long term landscape resilience after the harvested areas are replanted with early seral species.

• Ambitiously continued to complete restoration work including road decommissioning, culvert replacement, road maintenance and stabilization; weed treatment and inventory; wildlife habitat improvements and trail maintenance

• Continued support of the IYCC program and initiated the first year of the CBC's youth corps program



Roadless Commission folks at the Lolo Insect & Disease Fieldtrip in August - Photo by Rick Brazell

• Maintained partnerships with the Nez Perce Tribe, Montana Conservation Corps, Selway Bitterroot Foundation, Universities, Back Country Horsemen and others.

Forest Plan Revision...

Forests develop Forest Plan through Collaboration

Contributed by Joyce Thompson



Facilitators led small break-out groups in developing plan components - Photo by Joyce Thompson

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests have been collaborating with the public in development of their Forest Plan. The Forests are early adopters of the 2012 Planning Rule which places an emphasis on collaboration. The Forests were selected as early adopters because of its history of collaboration, recent consolidation of the Forests, and work accomplished from a previous planning effort.

Approximately 50 to 60 people attended the monthly meetings through the winter and spring and participated in group discussions on proposed plan components. Most people participated in person but some participated via video teleconferencing from Missoula and Boise, especially during inclement weather.

Participants divided into “working groups” to have robust discussion on the plan components then came back together to share their ideas. All ideas from participants were captured and considered by the interdisciplinary team for inclusion in the draft Forest Plan. There is follow up at the subsequent meeting to discuss how the public’s input was used and, if it was not possible to include it in the plan, an explanation of why not.

Participants are thankful that they are being heard. They are also gaining a better understanding of the complexity of management of the national forests with the number of the laws and regulations that guide our management. And they are gaining a better understanding of the interests of people who may have different views from their own on how the forests should be managed.

The Forest Supervisor, planning team and others, including some participants, provided crockpot meals and side dishes for the participants at each meeting. Participants appreciate this opportunity to sit and eat with others who have an interest in the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

The Forests are continuing collaboration in January and February, 2014 and are expecting to have a draft Forest Plan out for formal scoping in May of 2014.

For more information on the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan process and timelines, please go to: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5388769>



Other facilitators led working groups via videoconference units - Photo by Joyce Thompson

Restoration...



**McComas Creek and meadow in 2000
before restoration work - Photo by Anne Connor**

were removed from large fish-bearing streams and 15 culverts that were barriers to fish passage were replaced with natural bottom culverts or bridges. A total of approximately 20 miles of upstream habitat were opened up and 30+ miles of downstream habitat were protected.

Also in 2013, several large channel and meadow restoration projects were completed in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, including the Newsome Creek Instream Restoration where dredge piles were removed from 9.5 acres of floodplain, and Jim Brown Culvert Replacement and inlet re-alignment, where ditched flow was restored to a historic channel and meadow system.

Other restoration projects on the Forests included riparian protection through fencing; planting of native vegetation; weed treatment, and riparian protection at recreation sites. In addition, several large restoration projects are in the survey and design phase.

Other partners have included Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Idaho Office of Species Conservation, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, Plum Creek Timber Co, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Forest Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Department of Lands, Latah and Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Wildlands CPR, County Highway Districts, and Montana Conservation Corps.

Accomplishments through Partnerships

Contributed by Anne Connor

The Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests and the Nez Perce Tribe have been working together since 1996 to improve conditions for fish within North Central Idaho. This partnership is the cornerstone of a 7 million dollar per year watershed restoration program on the Forests.

In 2013 the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests decommissioned approximately 67 miles of road and converted another 2 miles to trail using BPA funds through the Nez Perce Tribe, NFRR funds, stewardship (retained receipts), BAER, and RAC funds. In addition, 2 structures



**McComas Meadow Restoration after 10 years of
planting and other restoration work -
Photo by Anne Connor**

2013 Funding for Watershed Restoration: Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests (in thousands of \$)

BPA Funds through Nez Perce Tribe:	\$ 4,500 K
*Matching funds from FS in BPA project areas:	\$ 1,120 K
*FS funds outside of BPA project areas	\$ 300 K
Stewardship:	\$ 300 K
Retained Receipts:	\$ 220 K
CFLRA funds (Clear Cr/ Middle Fork/ Selway):	\$ 350 K
RAC funds:	\$ 20 K
Other partners:	\$ 235 K
Total Program Cost:	\$ 7,045 K

Fire Season 2013...

Accomplishments and Challenges

Contributed by Roger Staats

We began the season with approximately 180 firefighters. The majority of 1039 temporary positions were filled, but multiple seasonal and full-time positions remained vacant due to budget. Unfortunately, due to hiring direction changes in the Forest Service we lost half of the 31 diverse fire employees hired in 2012. Our concerns about hiring have been expressed to the Regional Office and Human Resource Management.

Before fire season began in the Northern Rockies many of our fire personnel travelled to Region 3 in support of their fire season. This helped the forest move closer to our P-code (pre-structured job code tied to fire suppression) reliance target of \$1.66 million.



Retardant Drop on Orofino Fire
- Contributed FS Photo

Fire season began in earnest in July when approximately 10,000 lightning strikes occurred in one day. Both wet and dry thunderstorms were frequent throughout this fire season. To date there has been 465 fires managed through Grangeville Interagency Dispatch Center. Of the 465 fires, 330 occurred on lands under Forest Service protection. This is nearly double our 10-year average annual fire occurrence. Despite the increased fire occurrence we had a 99.7% rate of success.



California Point Fire - Moose Creek
Contributed FS Photo

Several things occurred that contributed to this success: building outstanding relationships with our cooperators (Idaho Department of Lands, Clearwater Potlatch Timber Protection Association and local Fire Departments); establishing the Snake-Salmon Agreement between Regions 1, 4 and 6; the Region 1 & 3 Agreement; and sharing of resources within Region One.

The ability to use fire for resource objectives was also instrumental in our success rate. This year 62 fires were managed for resource objectives and required minimal fire resource commitment, making these resources available for higher priority fires. During the 2013 fire season 21,374 acres experienced wildfire.

In Fiscal Year 2013, our combined fuels target of 16,779 acres was exceeded by 24,079 acres for a total of 40,858 acres of accomplishment. Of these acres there were 571 acres in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and 1,116 acres of non-WUI that were treated with a combination of mechanical and prescribed fire. There was 39,171 acres accomplished by utilizing natural occurring fire for resource objectives (includes fire acres achieved in October 2012). Because of the 2012 fire season continuing through October and an exceptionally busy season this fiscal year, many of our planned prescribed fire fuels treatments were not feasible to accomplish due to unacceptable risk.

Heritage Stewardship Enhancement...

Florence Receives a Facelift!

Contributed by Steve Lucas



The Canfield Cabin received a new roof and several new purlins - Photo by Steve Lucas

as the Region-1 Historic Preservation Team in addition to a contractor and two volunteers. The crew succeeded in replacing several log purlins on the Canfield cabin along with a total replacement of the building's special double layered roof. Additionally the inside of the cabin was cleaned and its logs treated with a preservative. The New Florence jail had its perimeter re-excavated and new boards were added

In July of 2013 the Heritage Program for the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests engaged in building enhancement work at the old town site of New Florence, located 40 miles south of Grangeville, Idaho.

The town sprang to life in about 1895 as a result of a lode-mining boom in the Florence Basin and quickly boasted a population of approximately 1,000. Today, only two structures remain from the actual town site. These buildings, consisting of the Canfield cabin and the jailhouse, received a variety of historic preservation treatments. Work at the buildings was made possible by the Region-1 Heritage Stewardship Enhancement Program. The eight-day project involved Forest Service employees from both the Forest as well

to the base and ceiling.



Volunteer Geof Hochmuht (with Archeologist Steve Lucas assisting) uses a draw knife to peel bark from a log - Photo by Steve Armstrong

The 2013 work is a continuation of other Heritage

Program enhancement work recently conducted in the Florence Basin consisting of recording the New Florence and Old Florence town sites, signing, interpretive kiosk installation and research associated with the Chinese mining sites. Work will continue in 2014 with several new sill logs being replaced on the Canfield cabin and a new floor within, and a new protective structure over the jail building.



The New Florence Jail received a new ceiling and baseboards - Photo by Steve Lucas.

Two forest brochures, "Florence Tells Her Secrets," and "Florence – The Lure of Gold," are downloadable at our forest website under Publications/Brochures at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/maps-pubs/?cid=stelprdb5103759>.

Clearwater Travel Management...

Clearwater National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map Available to the Public

Contributed by Laura Smith

The Clearwater National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) is now available to the public. MVUMs are available free-of-charge at all Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest offices. MVUMs and Frequently Asked Questions can also be downloaded from the Forest's website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/nezperceclearwater/maps-pubs>.



Contributed Photo

In 2005 the Forest Service published a new rule requiring each national forest and grassland to designate those national forest system roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use. It further required designated routes and areas to be identified on an MVUM that is available to the public free-of-charge.

On January 12, 2012, after nearly four years of public involvement and analysis, the Clearwater National Forest issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision that designated roads, trails and areas where motorized uses are allowed.

Forest Supervisor Rick Brazell selected Alternative C-Modified—an alternative that responded to public comments by adding more motorized loops while strengthening wildlife habitat protection in key wildlife areas through seasonal restrictions. The decision moves forest resources toward goals and objectives described in the Forest Plan.

An MVUM displays National forest system roads, trails and areas designated for motorized use. It also displays allowed uses by vehicle class (e.g. highway-legal vehicles, off-highway vehicles, and motorcycles), seasonal allowances and information about other travel rules and regulations. It is the legal document that indicates where you can and cannot ride.

The MVUM becomes enforceable when the map has been posted to the Web and is available to the public in a hard copy format. However, law enforcement officers can issue a notice of violation any time after the MVUM is publically available.



Contributed Photo

If a route is not displayed on the MVUM, it is not designated for motor vehicle use (e.g. non-motorized trails, unauthorized roads and trails, temporary roads and trails) and is not open for motorized vehicle travel.

Motorized vehicle users have a responsibility to reference the MVUM in making travel decisions. They cannot depend upon signs to determine the status of routes.

The MVUM will provide information by ranger district in a black and white map. It is a map for legal designations of where you can travel with various motorized vehicles, but for additional reference it is best used in conjunction with a Forest Visitor map or other detailed map.

Shearer Airstrip Reconstruction...

Minimum Tool Use in the Wilderness = Hard Work!

Contributed by Doug Hunt

Shearer Airstrip, within Idaho's Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, started in 1934. This land (111.01 acres) was originally homesteaded by Phil Shearer in 1917. By 1933, the Forest Service realized the advantage of air travel. A survey of landing field possibilities along the Selway River, between Bear Creek and Running Creek, showed the only suitable location for a landing field was on Phil Shearer's ranch. Phil didn't want to sell his ranch, but finally did sell the Forest Service twenty acres for \$3000.00.



Getting started - Boone Jones with his team of painted horses Mick and Mack using a single bottom plow to break up the sod - Photo by Doug Hunt

On February 13 1934, the Forest Service asked for authorization to expend \$12,500 for the purchase of Shearer's land and improvement for use as an airplane landing field. The letter states that \$3000.00 will go to the purchase of land and \$9,500 for expenses of draining, leveling, fencing and erection of a storage building. Later that year, Shearer conveyed a 19.84 acre parcel of his homestead to the Forest Service for an airstrip. The Forest Service began construction of the airstrip soon after.

By 1943 Phil Shearer decided to sell all of his land to the Forest Service except a small tract to live on. He asked 500.00 per year for 10 years and requested it not be paid in a lump sum, intending to live the rest of his life on that income. The terms were that the Forest Service would lease the 91.17 acres for ten years with the option to purchase it at the end of the lease with no additional payment. Shearer died two years later. The Estate was held until 1954 when the F.S. completed the purchase.

The Forest Service moved into the Shearer homestead. It became the Shearer Guard Station. Regular flights were flown to supply the Bear Creek Ranger Station (later moved to Shearer) and the Shearer Guard Station.

Over the years the Forest Service used the airstrip less and less. Much of the use currently is from private pilots. Regular maintenance was abandoned and much of the strip was overgrown. Potholes were becoming a problem. Most of the airstrip was only 16 feet wide, sloped to the east and ruddy. Numerous comments and safety concerns from the Forest Service Aerial Depot and Idaho Backcountry Pilots Association, prompted the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests personnel to initiate a plan to repair the airstrip.



All sod was removed from the lower strip and dirt from upper strip was moved down to raise the elevation of the lower part of the strip - Photo by Doug Hunt

Willie Acton (Grangeville Aerial Depot), Susan Graves (Facilities Engineer), and Stephan Frazier (Engineer, Central Zone) were in charge of the project. Because the airstrip was located within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, there was a mandate to use minimum tool, with little to no mechanized devices. Stephan was tasked with assessing the condition of the strip, and determining the necessary equipment for the repairs.

Shearer Airstrip Continued...

Since motorized equipment was not allowed by the Wilderness Act, it was decided that the minimum tool would translate into a team of horses or mules, including horse drawn farm equipment suitable for the job. With recommendations from Doug Hunt (Powell Ranger Station Facilities Maintenance) on horse drawn equipment and what would be needed, Stephan put a contract together for a teamster to supply a team and harness, single bottom plow, harrow, forecart, and Fresno or slip (horse drawn scoop to transport dirt) the roller was supplied by Forest Service, along with native grass seed. All equipment would also need to have the ability to be broken down to fit in a Forest Service Otter airplane and re-assembled on site.



Montana Youth Conservation Corp
Outstandingly hard workers with great attitudes!!!
Photo by Doug Hunt

The only mechanized equipment that had to be used was a gas powered water pump that was needed to facilitate the rolling and packing of the airstrip in order to create a safe surface for planes to land on. The use of this equipment required special justification and approval.

Prior to the start of the project onsite inspections and input from pilots were all noted and a design was developed and approved. The final design improved about 600 feet of the total 2,100 feet in length, all of which would need to be plowed. The south-end of the strip would need to be widened from 16 feet to 36 feet. A low wet area that had been a problem for many years would need to be filled-in and drainage installed, a large hump near the top would need to be taken down and the strip would need to be leveled east to west. Other major work included removing sod and rock from the plowed site, grading, leveling, harrowing,

watering and packing of soil and the final seeding with native grasses.

Boone Jones, retired Montana brand Inspector and lifelong teamster, was awarded the contract. Two crews totaling 13 people with the Montana Youth Conservation Corp (MYCC) were enlisted to help along with Stephan Frazier and Doug Hunt acting as the onsite supervisor and inspector. All equipment and tools including six wheelbarrows, shovels, and rakes were flown in the week before.

Boone Jones and Doug Hunt trailered their stock to the Paradise Guard Station on June 16, 2013. The next day they packed 15 miles, with 6 head of stock, to the Shearer Guard Station. Once they got there they began assembling the farm equipment and wheelbarrows. On June 18, Stephan and one of the MYCC crews flew into Shearer and a second MYCC crew hiked into Shearer, from Moose Creek Ranger Station (15 miles downriver). Stephan and Doug, along with Boone, set up the transit and shot elevation points along the strip, with this information Stephan calculated the amount of soil to be moved. Later that day, we started the actual work for the project. The project lasted 12 days with 16 people and 2 draft horses. An estimated 800 wheelbarrow loads of dirt were moved by the MYCC crew and 225 yards with the horse drawn slip. The sod that was removed from the strip was laid out to the side and should establish itself in the future. A 5 foot deep by 4 foot diameter hole was dug for a soil source and then filled in with rock and sod from the airstrip. Final rehab included seeding with native grass seed that was gathered from area before project.

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