

NBFC Minutes

Meeting Date: January 23, 2020
Location: La Grande Ranger District
Approved: Feb 27, 2020

In Attendance:

Stakeholder Members and Guests: Kathleen Cathey, Roy Garten, Jessica Keys, Todd Nash, Vince Naughton, Katy Nesbitt, John Punches

Steering Committee Members: Paul Anderes, Mike Billman, Nils Christoffersen, Pam Hardy, Kerry Kemp

Forest Service: Brianna Carollo, Bill Gamble, Richie Gardner, Bob Hassmiller, Nathan Poage, Scott Rollins, ID Team Members (see minutes section on Sheep Creek)

Staff: Jeff Costello (Facilitator)

Action Items:

- **Jeff:** Kerry & Laura have offered to take people out to the field to learn how they sample plots. This needs to be scheduled.
- **Jeff:** Emily Heyerdahl will be in the area over the summer. We should try to get her to speak to the collaborative.
- **Ops:** Discuss whether we should begin ZOAs on Rx Fire. (open question from fall field trip)
- **Ops:** Monitoring: There are many open questions. Discuss & come up with plan to answer them. (open question from December meeting)

Key Decisions:

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Open Questions:

- How can we have more effective debriefs where we actually gain a better mutual understanding?
Open Questions remaining from past meetings:
 - How is implementation monitoring accomplished?
EG: how do we know that all the road closures & PCT/NCT that are listed in the NEPA are getting done?
 - Where do we house monitoring data long-term? And how do we ensure that long-term monitoring protocols will be followed 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 20+ years down the line?
 - Through the help of the NBFC, there is/will be monitoring taking place in three areas
- Umatilla NF, East Face, and Lower Joseph
It would be helpful to have common protocols across all three areas, especially if we get CFLRP funding
 - What kinds of timber contracts are there?
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Minutes Key

- Meeting minutes do not represent collaborative agreements, unless they specifically say so. They are meant to record three basic things only: 1) the issue discussed, 2) the major points or questions raised in the conversation, and 3) the resolution, if there was one. Unless specifically stated, resolutions are only the resolutions of the people present at the meeting.
 - Common Abbreviations:
 - Q: Question
 - A: Answer
 - Cmt: Comment
 - Tx: Treatment
 - Rx Fire: Prescribed Fire
 - Highlighted Items are those that probably require follow-up. (Usually suggestions for future agendas)
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Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Approval of minutes from December 5, 2019 meeting:
Approved, no changes (except a few typos)
Brian Kelly abstained – he was only here for the presentation last month
- Approval of Agenda – Approved, no amendments
- Upcoming meeting dates:
02/26-27, 03/25-26, 04/22-23, 05/27-28, 06/24-25
Meetings are scheduled for 2 days.
During winter, when there are no field trips, they are sometimes only one.
If only one, it will likely be Thursday to accommodate the County Commission schedule.

Funding Situation

- ODF TASS Grant Proposals:
Kerry's Research with Laura Platt: was funded in full! Yay!
- Weyerhaeuser – funded in full
- OWEB – funded in full, for collaborative capacity

Upcoming Events:

- Revised Operating Principles – draft expected out next month
- Osborne Panorama Photo display will open in Walla Walla (Sheehan Gallery, on Whitman College Campus) on 01/31/20. Paul Hessburg and John Marshall will be speaking at the opening. The exhibit will be shown in La Grande and Joseph, in 2021. John Marshall will be talking to the Collaborative in April, 04/22 or 04/23.

RVCC Meeting takeaways

- “Familiar territory” these are our people

- Would be good to see more County Leadership at these meetings.
- Several WO people in the room. Strong delegation, including Chris French
- Key Topics of Discussion:
 - GNA
 - Tribal engagement
 - CFLRP
 - Shared Stewardship Agreements
 - Leveraging federal & philanthropic funding opportunities.

News & Announcements

- The main parcel of private property in the East Moraine, above Wallowa Lake, has been purchased for long-term conservation, and as a community-owned working forest.
Deal closed Friday.
This was a BIG deal for the community.

Forest Service Updates

- Link to Wallowa-Whitman Schedule of Proposed Actions for more information:
<https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110616>

Whitman District Current Project Updates (Bob Hassmiller, District Hydrologist):

- Patrick Vegetation EA
This project area is about 49,000 acres of primarily warm/dry forests in the Headwaters of the North Fork Burnt River. Potential management actions include vegetation management and fuels reduction in uplands and riparian areas, as well as road closures for promoting blocks of intact elk habitat. No Forest Plan Amendments are proposed. Specialist reports have been completed and a draft EA is being put together for March 2020 and Decision for the EA is planned in September of 2020.
- Powder Valley Mining EIS
This project is the combination of 22 Plans of Operations with 6 suction dredge (underwater vacuums), 4 lode mines (reopening of historic of historic shaft) and about 20 placer operations. Mining is primarily located around the Sumpter Area, Cracker Creek, Deer, McCully Forks, Elk and California Gulch. EIS is about to go out for draft a few months behind Patrick. Mining is occurring in Bull Trout ESA critical habitats and the BO has been received from USFWS. Draft EIS is planned for May/June. Final anticipated in November.
- Baker City Municipal Watershed
This is a fuels reduction project in the Municipal Watershed for Baker City. We are revamping our Project Initiation Letter and the district will continue field work this summer. Some of the preliminary challenges in the planning area include a very large roadless area with accumulated fuels in the headwaters portions of the area, a major road through the middle of the project area with a brittle pipeline under the road that needs replaced before haul, many of the hillslopes are steep (over 35% slopes) and the number of easements through private lands to access public lands appears challenging. Vegetation improvements and fuel reduction units have been proposed. Considering Non Commercial Thinning treatments in roadless areas along the ridges to assist with wildfire

management in a watershed important for having clean and abundant water for the people of Baker City.

Should acquire Lidar this summer and we are excited about the Phase 2 Fire History, disturbance patterns, stand structure study that Kerry and the collaborative have shared with the district. Looking to have a final decision to implement the project in 2022.

- Pine Valley Range
Most of the specialist reports have been completed for this project. Reauthorization of livestock in the Pine Valley Area, just above Halfway. Challenges in the planning area includes ESA Bull Trout and Brook Trout hybridization issues, wolf packs in the allotment and getting a rotation that will work for the permittees that use these public lands with higher tree cover and less grass availability. Specialists are working on this between other Tier 1 projects. Looking at the draft document going out in June/July and then November/December for the Decision.

La Grande District Updates

- Bill Gamble – Using Farm Bill CE for fuels reduction
Five Points WUI
Will be reaching out to individuals in the group.
Would be open to having the larger collaborative engaged.
There's been work on the private side of the line in this area.
This is an opportunity to be a good federal neighbor.

Umatilla NF

- Link to Umatilla NF Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for more information:
<https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110614>
- Both North Zone Rangers have announced retirement
Monte Fujishin & Mike Rassbach
The Forest Supervisor has already begun seeking new applicants
- RO is going to be doing a "Review of the Eastside Screens"
Focus is on the 21" Rule.
There will be NEPA review
- In the Kahler Project area, there was a single vehicle accident involving a log truck –
Mark Willis, worked for Dodge, died in the accident
Deep condolences expressed

Debrief of Andrew Merschel's 12/05/19 Presentation

- Paul Anderes suggested that we collect stump sections (and record their location via GPS) to support Andrew's work. Kerry noted that processing those samples in the lab, takes significantly more time than collecting them.
- Kerry & Laura have offered to bring people out to the field to help collect data, during Summer, 2020.
July & August are prime months
There will be sampling in the Baker City watershed.
Also in the Imnaha & Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

- Emily Heyerdahl will be out this summer to re-sample some of her plots.
We may be able to get her to speak to the collaborative.
She's currently a researcher out of the Rocky Mtn Research Lab.
She pioneered a systematic approach to fire history reconstruction.
- Historical range of variability – structure & composition - depends a lot on local topography.
Scale & pattern need to be considered when determining treatments.
Productive sites that had historically frequent fire are most departed.
- Unless you have barriers to fire spread, it's going to move across large landscapes.
- Weather in August – fire season – is the biggest driver of fire.
- Q: How do you describe where a frequent fire ecosystem ends & a moist ecosystem begins?
A: Soils can show historic conditions. EG: mollisols meant past frequent fire.
- Personal anecdote by local FS employee re: looking at MMC...
Current conditions in the stand were 80% grand fir & 5% pine, but the pine were all very large & old, even though, according to records, historic timber taken off was mostly pine.
Showed that current conditions are VERY different than past.
- Cmt: In order to be ready for the future, it probably needs to go back to more pine.
- Paul Hessburg has been looking at historic photos for structure.
He may be able to reconstruct the disturbance pathways that stands took to get to current conditions (insects, avalanches, fire, etc.).
- Cmt: Our debriefs are not actually shedding light on areas of agreement/disagreement, or on whether anyone learned anything new, or on whether the information has any implications for management. Does it show us that we're doing a good job, or does it suggest that we should be adjusting our direction?
- Cmt: There should be a process for identifying tension points and the science that addresses them, and the confidence we have that that science is applicable to our forests.
- Q: HRV: What are we trying to go back to?
A: We're not necessarily trying to go back, but that information makes a big difference in how we understand appropriate mgmt.
- Cmt: Several existing tensions are:
 - 1) Harvest levels
 - 2) How fire is used & managed
- Cmt: When you get stuff done, it's because there's a level of trust – you know each other.
Where is the common ground?

CFLRP Update

- Application was put in, early January.
If awarded, up to \$44 million over 10 years.
Process has built and rebuilt many solid partnerships ... just to write the application.
- RO was very impressed with the oral presentation on Thursday.
- Key Players:
John Panches, Extension Forester with OSU

Alyssa Cudmore
Kerry Kemp

- John Panches presented the slide show that we gave to the RO
[Link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BtMwSteqKLku8BSb09LZxCp-ImTGECeTe](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BtMwSteqKLku8BSb09LZxCp-ImTGECeTe)
- CFLRP boundaries will be the same as the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy boundaries

Sheep Creek

- [Link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hsM3YDZhg5MnOK-2mE27VSTxrR8_eyHh) to Powerpoint Slides via Google Docs (full version and condensed version):
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hsM3YDZhg5MnOK-2mE27VSTxrR8_eyHh
- Collaborative Feedback needed by early-mid February.
- The ID Team is almost ready to send the project out to scoping.
This is our final opportunity to give pre-scoping feedback.
- Collaborative was deeply involved in developing the Purpose & Need Statement (although there was not a final decision)
Proposed Action meeting took place in October, and the collaborative was invited.
Several members attended.
- Purpose & Need:
Bridging the gap between Existing & Desired Conditions.
 - structure & density of trees
 - terrestrial habitat conditions
 - Aquatic habitats
 - fuels & fire regimes are able to receive fire naturally
 - contributions to socio-economic conditions
 - trust building with stakeholders
- **Lucas Glick & Michael Johnson** - presented on Forest Plan mgmt areas.
- Old growth areas will not be treated.
- Management history:
70's – 90's: saw big changes: clear cuts, overstory removal etc.
The area was cut by railroad logging prior to the existence of the FS.
- All the land we're proposing to touch has been touched before.
- Plant Veg Groups
 - 48% of the planning area is cold
 - 28% dry
 - 22% Moist
- Fire Regimes:
1/3 FR 1
2/3 FR 3
We've successfully eliminated wildfire from this area for the past 100+ years.
There have been natural ignitions, but they've been put out.
- Insects:
There is a non-native species impacting sub-alpine fir

sub-alpine fir competes with White Bark Pine, which is a threatened species.
So there's not aggressive Tx's.

- Insect activity increases in drought.
There's been a lot of drought recently, so there's been a lot of insects.
- Reducing insect vulnerability is a key goal
- **Mary Young** – Forest Soils Scientist for WW
Area has a lot of ash, which holds water, supports greater density of vegetation.
They will be using soil type to help determine which areas should hold higher/lower densities.
- **Laura Navarrete** – Wildlife Biologist:
Will be looking to increase OFSS & OFMS
Buffers around goshawk & great gray owl nests.
- Connectivity: Corridors are required between all old growth stands
Map in the slide show.
Created, to the extent possible, by placing corridors through marten habitat.
There are a few marten that have been seen in camera traps.
- **Sarah Brandy** - Fisheries Biologist
Dana Nave - Hydrologist
Sheep and Chicken Creeks are both important for bull trout, salmon & steelhead
There has been substantial investment in these areas to help fish.
The "essential projects" for fish have all been completed.
- Q: Are any of these waterways listed as impaired by DEQ?
A: Grande Ronde is listed for temperature.
Sheep & Chicken Creeks are refugia...they're colder, but maybe not quite cold enough.
- Goal is to enhance riparian areas for improved processes & functions.
- There will be consultation with
USFWS for bull trout
NMFS for anadromous species
There is concern with them about short term shade removal
Goal is to work early & often with them.
- Riparian Treatments: 244 acres out of the total 33,000-acre project area.
Not going to touch the first 50 feet on each side.
Feathered approach after that.
- Hardwoods: There is evidence of historic hardwoods.
There's a lot of ungulate pressure, so restoration would require exclosures
- Birds! Focal species: Flammulated Owl, Lewis's woodpecker
- No trees >21" will be removed
- Cold forests (Lodgepole):
patch openings that mimic historical high-severity fire and/or insects.
30-40% of the area within a unit will be openings.
- HTH: Thinning to try to develop OFSS
These have ponderosa pine already in the site.

- HIM: Improvement harvest (to move toward early seral, OFSS)
These don't have enough of the ponderosa on site
There would be openings of 3-6 acres
- HSH: Shelterwood – regeneration
2 units only. One will likely be used for fish logs.
In pockets where there is root disease that is preventing healthy growth and where there are few early seral species.
To be planted in PPine, Larch, & White Bark Pine.
These root diseases are helped by compacted volcanic soils.
- Non-commercial Tx's: only up to 9" dbh.
 - mechanical mastication
 - piling
 - or by hand, with chain saws.
- Fire & Fuels:
A lot of country has very large stumps, and has been overtaken by lodgepole.
Goal is to return stands to a condition in which they can receive fire naturally.
- The following will be used:
PODs: Potential Operational Delineations
PCLs: Potential Control Lines (new acronym)
DFPZ: Defensive Fuels Profile Zone
~8000 acres of treatments like this.
- Q: How far off the road do you go for the above Tx's?
A: Depends on the topography.
Steep slopes it might be a mile.
Shallow slope, possibly just a couple hundred yards
- The Blue Mtn Elk Initiative was formed in 1990 to benefit elk on public, private & tribal lands.
A lot of people care about elk.
2017, the Operations Committee decided to focus on creating elk security areas.
- Sheep Creek does not have a lot of good potential elk security because of so many roads.
- Road Mgmt: closing 3.45 miles of road
- **Ben Walker** – South Zone Recreation Specialist
150 miles of OHV trails.
13.28 miles of roads would be converted to OHV trails
6.3 miles of closed roads would be opened to OHVs
New OHV trail opportunities are very important to the local OHV clubs.
- Dispersed camping: plan to do what they can to keep those opportunities.
- Q: Road Density?
A: If you only consider legally open roads, we're a tad below Forest Plan standards.
But some closed roads are being used, and we don't have numbers on that.
- Q: What reference are you using for appropriate tree density?
A: Powell
- Q: Are you incorporating spatial variability into stands outside burn blocks?
A: Yes: we're working to protect the best trees on the site. That creates a natural variability.

- Q: Contracts: DxP? Or FS marking?
A: Some of both, creative combinations.
- Q: How are you determining which riparian areas to treat?
A: Places with old decadent hardwoods
Some criteria include: Areas with steep north aspects to continue to provide shade & treat south aspects that won't reduce shade. Near roads, so it costs less. Near commercial units, so that it can be done at the same time. Places where there's a roadbed in the RHCA.
- Forest Service employee requested that the collaborative provide a volunteer who would monitor % shade loss in these Tx's over the next several years – same day, same time of day, for the next several years.

Adjourn 3:40pm