

NBFC **DRAFT** notes

Meeting Date: Feb 27 2020
Location: La Grande Ranger District
Approved: Approved March 26, 2020

In Attendance:

NBFC Members and Guests: Paul Anderes (Union County Commissioner), Mike Billman (ODF), Nils Christoffersen (WR), Brian Dill (University of Illinois), Pam Hardy (WELC), Kerry Kemp (TNC), Marisa Meyer (USFWS), Todd Nash (Wallowa County Commissioner), Jon Paustian (ODFW), Susan Roberts (Wallowa County Commissioner), Darlene Rochna, Eric Wunz

Forest Service: Bill Gamble (LaGrande District Ranger, WWF), Brian Goff (Integrated Veg. Mgmt, UMF), Steve Hawkins (Fire, WWF), Amber Mahoney (Natural Resources Partnership Coordinator), Steve Marchi (Forest Engineer), Brett Thomas (Fire, UMF), Eric Watrud (UMF Supervisor)

Staff: none (facilitated by Mike Billman. Jeff Costello was out sick.)

Action Items:

- **Jeff:** Agenda Planning: July Field Trip with AFRC to see implementation on Lower Joseph Creek Project, July 23. June Agenda: schedule time to discuss the Lower Jo NEPA so we're prepared for the July FT.
- **Jeff:** The following items should be on every full group agenda:
 - The Blues Intergovernmental Council Update – usually Paul Anderes
 - The RO revision of the 21" Rule Update

Key Decisions:

- Reached a mutual understanding, in writing, of the key points of Andrew Merschel's December, 2019, presentation. A few key collaborative members were missing.

Open Questions:

- Do elk really avoid roads, or is it predators? There is skepticism about the Starkey results because there are fewer predators and no alfalfa. Are there other researchers? Zumwalt Prairie research was suggested.
- Climate Change: Is it real...and if so, what can we realistically expect in this region? The group would like to investigate this. The PNW Research Station recently did a climate change vulnerability assessment. That would be a good start.
- We should find Andrew's definitions of resilience and resistance.

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 typically those that require follow-up.
(Usually suggestions for future agendas)
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Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Additions to the Agenda: no additions
- Approval of Minutes: No revisions proposed. All in favor.

Announcements

- 5-7pm today: Open house re: Sheep Creek
- SNW workshop in Hood River is coming up in April
<http://sustainablenorthwest.org/blog/posts/2020-pacific-northwest-forest-collaboratives-workshop>
All collaborative members are encouraged to go.
- Mike Rassbach is retiring. His retirement gathering will be in Walla Walla on March 28 from 2-5pm at the Vets Memorial Golf Course.
- Introduction of Brian Dill, Sociologist from University of Illinois
He'll be with us for a few months to better understand our collaborative process
- Lower Jo Field Trip, with AFRC - July 23rd (Thursday).
That's our normally scheduled collaborative meeting date.
Going to look at the Lupine sale – was a no-bid sale, led to a lot of discussion about why.
Bill ____ from one of the mills from Lewiston/Clarkston area had some strong thoughts.
Thought there was too much white fir left behind.
Field trip would be an opportunity to see how the Rx was written & what that looked like in real life.
Group would like to see the NEPA that the Rx was drawn from at the June meeting.
- Our area has been selected for additional state funding as a result of our work on the CFLRP

FS Project Updates

La Grande

- Lower Flag Creek & Lower Limber Jim aquatic restoration projects are happening.
These are both public/private partnerships
- PNW Lab is working on a small tree thinning study...
How hydrology & mammals respond to thinning.
- Five Points – public/private to connect treatments for wildfire transmission risk.
Likely to be some field trips about this, over the 2020 summer field season

Heppner

- Ellis – being analyzed right now
Elk & Fire restoration are a big concerns
FEIS expected next summer
- West End – Farm Bill CE, insects & disease
just finishing NEPA now.

North Zone

- Upper Touche
Being analyzed
- High Buck next big project

Umatilla Landscape prioritization strategy

- They have plans for the next 3 years, but want to be more thoughtful than that.
Looking at landscape level processes/concerns
Will be a collaborative presentation in March

Whitman District

- Patrick Project
DEA out by March
Dry forest types
- Powder –

Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) Update

- Goal: to move the Forest plan forward in a more functional way
They would like to make recommendations within two years.
FS would like to get it complete a year after that.
- The Blues Intergovernmental Council (aka “The BIC” pronounced “bick”, rhymes with tick, like a *BIC* pen)
The BIC is a convening of all the affected governmental players in the tri-forest area.
It started with just the County Commissioners about a year ago.
They brought in the regulatory agencies & tribes in November
- Susan Roberts is a co-convenor
It’s taken a year, but they now have a good process for conversations established
- They recently identified the need for subcommittees.
SCs will be focused on the items in the Plan that had big objections.
(grazing, timber harvest, wildlife, riparian, roads etc.)
- Will be hiring consultants to do a “Weaverville style” economic analysis.
Chico State University Economic Development ...
They are looking at the smaller communities – not just the cities.
This process was used in Region 5 (California)
Get link from Paul Anderes.
- Q: How will you work with people with interests that aren’t on the Council?
A: We’re hoping that the SCs will reach out to other folks.
The meetings are open to the public, and there is a public comment period.
- Mark Owens was an early convenor when he was Harney County Commissioner. He has since been appointed to fill the vacancy left by Lynn Findley, District 60 (Harney, Baker & Malheur Counties, and a little bit of Grant County) in the Oregon House of Representatives. He will still be involved.
- The group agreed that updates on this should be on every agenda.
- A group of Commissioners is going to Washington next week to talk with Chris French & Lisa Northrup.

Sheep Creek proposal

- The collaborative was closely involved in developing the Purpose & Need.
Today, the FS would like feedback
- Please analyze an alternative that would reduce the density of young grand fir around old-growth pine/larch where it appears that those stands were historically persistent early seral with a short fire-return interval.
cmt: there is a history of agreement on this subject.
- There might be lidar to more accurately determine where there are large old trees.
- There is a lot of evidence in this project area that there was historic persistent early seral
Where there are ecosystems along the margins in MMC it would be good to go look carefully at them.
- The public work session in December 2019 built a lot of confidence.
- Q: Will you go to optimal right now, or go lower so that it grows back in?
A: Depends on the stand – some have wildlife concerns that keep us thicker.
Others we'll go to the lower end of the mgmt area.
- Q: Fire modeling: Is that a part of what you explain?
EG: might higher density connectivity for wildlife create fire connectivity as well?
A: Yes, we run these models. Results include flame lengths, severity etc.
Anecdotally, the results have been about 90% accurate.
- Please look at what kind of Tx would create a sustainable cut.
Perhaps one that has a 15-20 year re-entry opportunity.
Please identify what an appropriate re-entry cycle would be.
- Q: Elk: ODFW is concerned about them in this project.
A: There will be some security enhancement.
Cmt: "I don't believe closing roads helps your elk populations"
It might be predators that they're avoiding, not roads.
Just seen such different results in real life.
- Q: Could we bring Mike Wisdom to speak to the collaborative?
Q: What about what's happening on the Zumwalt –
Starkey isn't reality – there's no city or alfalfa fields in there.
Cmt: The Nez Perce Clearwater has found successful models
Cmt: roads have impacts on other wildlife too
- Steering Comm will talk about how/when to bring in appropriate speakers on this.

Lunch

Science SC: Highlights from Andrew Merschel's Presentation

- Andrew's PowerPoint and the key papers he cited are all available in his Box at:
<https://oregonstate.box.com/s/g1yzm88hahc3w6ca35zswg4qmw03ieqd>
- The purpose of this agenda item is to synthesize the important parts of Andrew's work. This is in keeping with our revised goal of coming to a deeper understanding of where we agree, where we have divergences and why we have those differences.
- A small group composed entirely of the Steering Committee wrote a first draft which is presented here. They didn't invite others to this first round because they weren't sure if it would be very hard, or very

straight forward. They wanted to try the experiment on themselves first. Below is the version they produced. The track changes are the changes made in full group meeting.

Key Agreements:

- Higher productivity areas with evidence of historically frequent fire were the most departed from HRV.
- Historically, in mixed conifer forests, fire regime drove ecosystem expression (eg: species composition, structural characteristics) more than any other factors (eg: site environment). Just because the soil, moisture, and nutrient profile of a location could support dense MMC doesn't mean those sites were like that historically. Frequent fire often caused stands to persist with early seral species even though the soil would have supported dense MMC in the absence of fire.
 - Landscape context was probably one of the most significant drivers of ecosystem expression. For example, patches of highly productive soil with a dense MMC PVT¹ may have been persistent early seral forest where they were in proximity to hot-dry landscapes.
 - Ignitions may have been increased by Native American cultural practices in some areas. There are places where we can see that. Regardless of ignitions source, if the landscape is receptive to fire (eg: dry fuels), and the weather conditions are right, fires start and spread across a range of environmental gradients.
 - Isolated locations – aka fire refugia – sometimes burn differently than the surrounding landscape. In Andrews research that was demonstrated by the buttes.
- Historically, large openings, like those shown in the Osborne photos, would have strongly affected the spread of disturbances such as fire and insects, leaving a patchy mosaic of stand types. (This may be an inference from Andrew's presentation, and not his results)
- We need an appropriate way to determine which stands/landscapes historically persisted with shade tolerant species, and which historically persisted with early seral species due to the influence of fire.
 - Some ways we can determine what was historically persistent early seral:
 - soils: evidence of mollisol (grassland) soils
 - existence of large old pine/larch stumps & living old trees
 - evidence of other plant species that established under different stand conditions
 - historic timber harvest records
 - fire history/dendroecological studies
 - GLO data & other timber surveys
 - Osborne & other photos
- On the Deschutes & Ochoco where these data were taken, 60% of the grand fir over 21" are under 125 years old. 20% of the ponderosa pine over 125 years old were less than 21" We're curious about whether this holds in our local ecosystems.

Additional notes

- What is Andrew's definition of resilience?
A: He distinguished between resilience and resistance.
- We should prepare for the possibility of variabilities in climate. The PNW Research station has done a climate change vulnerability assessment. We should take a look at that.

¹ PVT: Potential Vegetation Type

- Andrew Merschel received a TASS grant to look at whether he could use his core data to determine a rule that would better protect old growth, and remove large young grand fir. He is expected to complete that work in June 2020. If that project is successful, the group would like to ask Andrew to do the same analysis on Laura & Kerry's local core samples.

How should we apply this locally?

- How we should apply this may change based on what the goal of the collaborative is.
- This gives us some ideas about how we should look for evidence of changes from persistent early seral to something else.
- Pileated woodpeckers live in large trees.
- Implicit assumptions that may not be true for everyone:
HRV is a state of affairs worth getting to
That active mgmt is an acceptable way of getting there.
- This is helpful for the FS to know that this is science that we've wrestled with, and that they should cite it.

Operating Principles

- When the two collaboratives became one, the Steering Committee attempted to draft a new set of Operating Principles based on both past collaboratives, and on additional nuance captured in more recent project agreements.
- A copy of the current draft was passed out.
The Steering committee requests that people return next month with comments.
- Link to the current version:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TRb8InEoe6zhE7X3FJf1UzeMZ62ZkTUJ/view?usp=sharing>
- There are four sections
 - Mission
 - Forest Stewardship Principles
 - Collaborative Stewardship Principles
 - Operating Protocols (Meeting time, notes, decision making procedures etc.)
- We will only cover the first two sections next month:
 - Mission/Vision
 - Forest Stewardship Principles
- Missing: what is the Steering Committee & what are its functions? Also missing is the revised Signatory Page.

Adjourn: 2:57