

N. Blues Forest Collaborative Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: August 26, 2020

Location: online

Approved: Sept 23, 2020 full group mtg

In Attendance:

NBFC Members and Guests: Paul Anderes (Union County Commissioner), Mike Billman (ODF), Nils Christoffersen (WR), Alyssa Cudmore (WR), Brian Dill (Univ. of Illinois), Michael Eng, Pam Hardy (WELC), Jean Jancaitis (WR), Kerry Kemp (TNC), Lisa Mahon (Firewise Coordinator), John Marshall, Katy Nesbitt (Wallowa County NRAC), Jon Paustian, Susan Roberts (Wallowa County Commissioner), Darlene Rochna

Forest Service: James Brammer, Peter Fargo, Bill Gamble, Richie Gardner, Lucas Glick, Nathan Goodrich, Paula Guenther, Bob Hassmiller, Brandon Houck, Noel Livingston, Tom Montoya, Cecil Rich,

Staff: Jeff Costello (Facilitator)

Highlights:

- John Marshall presentation of the Osborne Panoramas Photo project
 - Paul Hessburg & John Marshall virtual field trip to the Granite Gulch managed wildfire of 2019 & 2020 revisit
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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 typically those that require follow-up. (Usually suggestions for future agendas)
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Meeting Notes

Preliminaries:

- Agenda Review – no additions
- Upcoming Meetings: 09/23-24, 10/21-22, 12/2-3
 - Hoping for a field trip to the Ellis Project in Sept. or October
- Last month's minutes: Approved with no changes

Debrief July 23rd Lower Joseph Field Tour

- It would be great to get industry into the conversation earlier
Wallowa County is very interested in forest health, and restoration is going to cost more than we have.
Timber receipts can help pay for it, but we need to be efficient.
- FS: We have a pretty good relationship with industry
we have field trips with them to figure out how to make them workable.
- There is a need for consistency/foreseeability in annual offerings so that contractors can invest appropriately.
- Would be great to have more industry involved in the collaborative.
- There are probably other ways to do contracts that would be more workable.
- Related links:
 - [Ellen Bishop's Chieftain Article](#) about the field trip
 - [Katy Nesbitt's Photos](#) from the day

BIC Update

- Socioeconomic SC has a draft ready for comment & input
EOU students did a preliminary presentation.
Next question: Which counties should be in the study?
- Livestock, Fisheries & Hydrology
Looked at desired conditions
Stand density may overlap with forest health
- Looking for feedback from the full BIC re: desired conditions
- Moving toward a recommendation for a wide set of parameters, not specific recommendations.
- Access, Habitat, Wilderness & Set-asides
Carl Shieler from the Umatilla CTUIR presented on land use
Next Steps:
 - Travel Mgmt Questions
 - Desired Conditions
- Forest Health
 - Working on Desired Conditions
 - Next Steps: post-wildfire
- There's been a recognition that there needs to be more cross-subcommittee conversation.
Going to be some reorganization

Mt Emily

- There was a public meeting this morning.
There was a strong interest among those present for a more open stand.
It's probably going to cost money to get the restoration done, even with the timber harvest.

PNW Forest Collaboratives Workshop Webinar Series (September Webinar):

- Good Neighbor Authority in the Pacific Northwest
Date: September 15
Time: 10-11:30am

REGISTRATION REQUIRED (Use the following link):

<https://mailchi.mp/e2360300b1e2/register-today-for-july-webinars-2753030?e=b27a5a0470>

Forest Service Updates

Umatilla – SO – Richie Gardner

- Staff changes
 - Env. Coordinator is moving to the Siuslaw
- SO- Katie Richardson (Environmental Coordinator) accepted veg management staff officer position on Siuslaw NF
- Pomeroy - Upper Pataha (insect and disease CE) out for bid
- WW – Glass IRTC and Grizzly Biomass contracts awarded

Umatilla – Pomeroy & Walla Walla

- Upper Petaha – out for bid
- Glass – IRTC & biomass projects have been awarded
- Wildfires
 - last Tuesday there was a lot of lightning ~ 50 fires
 - Mecham Complex there are 11 still being worked

Umatilla - Heppner RD – District Ranger Brandon Houck

- Staffing:
Filling South Zone sale administrator, silviculture tech, South Zone wildlife biologist positions
- Fire update: Heppner had 7 fires last week, largest were Putnam Fire at 130 acres and Rocky Fire at 12 acres
Both encountered previously treated acres.
- Q4 Sales: South Wall and Upper Wilson timber sales being advertised soon
- Kahler Project:
 - West Bologna Juniper, a stewardship project with Sustainable Northwest is currently being implemented. The project will enhance big game winter range and includes commercial and noncommercial juniper thinning and piling across 240 acres.
 - Additional support provided by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.
- HK Fire Salvage CE 250 acres - complete
- West End HFRA (Farm Bill) CE- decision signed, project implementation will begin Q2 FY21.
Insect and disease/fuels project ~ 2,800 acres
- Mountain Top Defensible Space Project- Includes commercial and noncommercial thinning and Rx burning to reduce fuels at Black Mountain and Madison Butte communications sites. Implementation to begin Q12 FY21.
- Mallory Blowdown Salvage- emerging potential project to salvage 250 acres of timber blown down during a summer wind event. Scoping planned for September 2020.
- Ellis Project – planning for fall field trip and public engagement opportunities to preview draft alternatives. Draft EIs anticipated spring 2021.

Umatilla - N. Fork John Day (aka Ukiah RD) – District Ranger Paula Gunther

- Staff
 - new timber sale administrator coming in
 - will soon be advertising a GS 9/11 archeologist position will be open to the general public
- Umatilla NF South Zone Archeologist will be advertised as "demo" -- open to all US citizens -- for 5-7 days most likely in early September. Please let me know if you would like additional information.
- Contracts are going out on the Ten Cent sale

WW – La Grande District – Bill Gamble

- Five Points Project
 - Held a productive field trip on August 6th with IDT and members of Union County and ODFW
 - Working on additional info & field trips ahead of formal scoping
- Sheep Creek
 - IDT meeting tomorrow at 9am – ask Bill if interested in participating
- Aquatic restoration work in the Upper Grande Ronde basin is continuing – adding woody debris to several miles of tributary streams using rubber tracked excavators.
- Longley Meadows Large river/floodplain restoration project just downstream of the Bird Track Springs being planned and implemented in partnership with the CUTIR
Multi-million-dollar contract awarded to local contractor from Union, Oregon
- **Great American Outdoors Act was just passed**
Legislation authorizes about \$290 million per year for deferred maintenance needs on recreational and transportation facilities
Forest submitted initial 2021 list of \$23+ million in shovel ready and assessment projects
- East Face Project
 - Top Face Sale – One of several commercial timber sales from the East Face project currently being implemented.
 - Monitoring Progress: Big thanks to Kerry Kemp, Lucas Glick and Steve Edwards for their efforts in coordinating installation of 30 vegetation and fuels monitoring plots by interns from Baker Technical Institute on the Butte Timber Sale of the East Face Project. Discussing the opportunity for one of the students to present preliminary data to the collaborative at some point in the future
- Sand Box Project – Harvest activities continue along the 77 road/Catherine Creek area
- Small Tree Thinning inside the fence at Starkey
In partnership with PNW scientists at Starkey we are initiating a small tree thinning study to evaluate a variety of stand and landscape responses to small tree thinning and fuels treatments. Variety of scientists engaged looking at pre-Tx measurements including pollinators, cavity nesters, ground vegetation, big game, fuel levels etc.
- Staff:
 - Losing Laura Navarrete – she took another position with the US Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Lucas Glick will be going on a detail to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest beginning last week of September.
 - These key members of our IDT will be missed, but we wish them the best in their opportunities.

WW - Whitman District – reported by Bob Hassmiller, District Hydrologist

- Patrick Vegetation Project: Draft EA out soon
- Powder Valley Mining Draft EIS out soon.
- Baker City Watershed. First ID team meeting in the woods just happened. We had an extended ID team that talked through the preliminary phases of proposed management to that area and plan to continue to engage in riparian discussions in September (opportunities to improve aspen and cottonwood, as well as bull trout in the watershed). North aspects are cool/moist and south aspects are commonly warm/dry. Excited to make our municipal watershed for baker city more defensible.
- Greenhorn: Fuels reduction projects are moving smoothly Timber sales are planned to start back up in September. We have a contractor out in Little Dean doing road maintenance. Actively have a contractor working on Trail Creek getting a bridge built, the culvert had been removed and the stream simulation work had occurred (1 million dollar contract for a local contractor).
- Ten cent Project in North Fork John Day: We have fire folks out marking and laying out sales
- Fire: Had some wildfire starts over the past few weeks with those passing storms, however, resources were right on top of the situations and the fires were suppressed aggressively and quickly. Thanks for their hard work.
- Staffing:
 - Staff shortages have slowed progress on planning.
 - Still in a process of backfilling the silviculture, wildlife biology and fish biology. We have a panel put together to hire the Wildlife Bio first. We have backfilled our Range position.

WW Supervisor Update

- Construction
 - Trail Creek Bridge on the 51 Road
 - Hells Canyon Boat Ramp
 - Pittsburg Parking Lot
- Morgan Nesbitt Field Trip is happening today would have been on that
- Staff:
 - Dustin Hollowell – acting DR for Hells Canyon
 - Katy Young – asst Forest Engineer
 - Steve Hawkins is in a detail – Mark Muller is acting – will be key contact on CFLRP
- John Day Snake RAC
Will be talking to them about updating recreation fees

Presentation by John Marshall

- This section of the meeting was recorded
Link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dJuZPi6k3OD79brk3SLetUidunJSGWUF>
Notes are limited for this section.
Viewing the original presentation is highly recommended.
- Wallowa Resources funded an exhibit of the full body of this work locally
Will be at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture, in April 2021

- The Osborne Panorama Project in the 1930's was a project to get photos from all the lookouts. Intent: so they could describe where they were seeing fires to the folks at the office 3000 prints were made.
- The prints are now at the National Archives in Seattle.
- John Marshall re-took a lot of those photos in the last ten years. Funding for that field work has been from a lot of different sources Usually a grant for a specific area.
- Results:
 - a lot more trees now in most (not all) places
 - especially marked in the high altitude
 - glaciers on Mt Rainier are no longer as large
- Locally important photos
 - Mill Creek Watershed from Table Rock was a big change. Walla Walla Watershed
 - Griffen Peak
 - High Ridge
 - Hat Point – the high severity patch is much larger than we saw historically.
 - Hells Canyon
change from deciduous trees to conifer
implication: change in avian species
 - McCully Basin
Trees filled in. Water lost
Perhaps more white bark pine!

Questions

- Q: Yellowstone Reburns – were they intentional or wild?
A: it was a wildfire. Don't know to what extent it was managed.
- Q: Did you look closely at any of the foregrounds? Shrubs, grasses etc.
A: Seems like the foregrounds have improved.
There had been heavy grazing up to 1930.
- Q: did you look at any areas that are now located within a WUI that includes residential development?
A: Very few. That's just not where they took pictures.
- Q: How should we utilize this information to restore landscape processes?
A: Paul Hessburg should be here to answer that question.
I used to look at everything at a much smaller scale. He taught me to look at the landscape.
We need more managed wildfire.
- Q: John, your focus has been on fire history over time and its effects on ecological diversity. Are there ways to also document and evaluate the effects of alpine and sub-alpine grazing, especially by sheep?
A: Probably. The La Grande RD (Charlie Johnson & John Skovlin) did some good historic comparison photographs.
- Q: Good evidence of change in tree species composition – especially loss of hardwoods.
Are there any charismatic fauna that we could focus on to champion bringing those back?
A: Don't know – should have a wildlife biologist present.

Lunch 12:30 – 1:30

Granite Gulch Fire – Virtual field trip

- Granite Gulch was a managed Wildfire that burned in 2019 in the Eagle Cap Wilderness Paul Hessburg & John Marshall went to photograph it while it was burning in 2019 and again in 2020.
Nathan Goodrich, who was the Incident Commander on the fire, was also present at our meeting. This presentation is their virtual field trip for the collaborative.
- This presentation was recorded.
The photos are spectacular, and watching the recording is recommended.
Link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dJuZPi6k3OD79brk3SLetUidunJSGWUF>
- Fire Location: along the Minam River, and up towards the ridgeline between that and the Lostine.
- In the Lostine there appears to be a lot of young trees.
And a fair amount of annosum root disease.
- Subalpine fir has done well in the period of fire exclusion.
White bark pine is also regenerating up there.
However, during the native fire regime, this ground was probably more bare ground & rock.
- There was an Osborne photo of the area.
- Most of the time, the fire was a very gentle. It burned under good conditions.
There's been good support from Leadership to manage wildfire.
This is one of the few places in the nation that has Rx fire NEPA in the Wilderness.
- Q: (Paul) historically, this area was more non-forested, than forested.
Could we do a soil analysis, to see where this would be appropriately managed for that today?
A: We could.
- Paul: Tree islands ... They tend to be thick, and flammable.
But some didn't burn.
Paul went to look at what was inside them.
It appears that they just didn't get an ember landing in there.
Implication: As the tree islands expand, and combine,
they lose their chances of being missed by the fire.
- This fire was carefully managed for success. Managed Wildfire is not yet socially accepted.
It worked in this case.
- Hydrology & hill slope processes
This would be a fascinating place to monitor:
 - How does this change water runoff?
 - Will it contribute more CWD to the tributaries – more pools?
 - Will the sediment get all the way to the Minam? for how many years?Acute pulses v. chronic small contributions
- Q: What are the implications of larger high-severity burn patches?
Are there thresholds of sizes where things really change that we should be aware of?
A: This is a BIG question, and a lot of research is currently trying to answer that questions.
Generally, smaller is better in terms of regeneration.
- Q: Are there places where treatment has tried to create conditions that provide natural levels of sediment etc. to a channel like would have happened after fire.

A: It's just beginning.

Beaver dam analogs are doing a great job in certain situations.

Key questions:

- do you have access to the whole flood plain?
- can you move the roads that go through there?

- Q: how common or unusual do you think it is that location and conditions are all lined up and appropriate to passively manage and let burn wildfires in the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area?

A: Have to pay very close attention to weather, topography, resources etc.

The ecological conditions line up more often than the social/political conditions.

There is growing interest in increasing the use of managed wildfire.

- Q: How can we better manage for landscape scale patterns?

A: We can't go back to HRV, but we can learn from it.

Given climate change, we can slow the transition.

Adjourn: 3:05