

## NBFC Minutes

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**Meeting Date:** May 26, 2021

**Location:** online

**Approved:** June 23, 2021

### In Attendance:

#### **NBFC Members and Guests:**

Paul Anderes, Union County Commissioner  
Mike Billman, ODF  
Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Resources  
Brian Dill, University of Illinois  
Marlee Goska, Western Environmental Law Center  
Pam Hardy, Western Environmental Law Center  
Kerry Kemp, The Nature Conservancy  
Laura Navarrete, US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Katy Nesbitt, Wallowa County Natural Resources  
Director  
Kara Parker, Law Student at Lewis & Clark  
Jon Paustian, ODFW  
Susan Roberts, Wallowa County Commissioner  
Lindsay Warness, Safety, Environmental and  
Forest Policy Manager for Woodgrain  
Eric wunz, Retired Silviculturist

**Staff:** Jeff Costello (Facilitator)

#### **Forest Service:**

Brian Anderson, Wallowa Mtns District Ranger  
(new!)  
Anthony Botello, Deputy Forest Supervisor,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Jim Brammer, Natural Resources Staff Officer,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Brianna (Breezy) Carollo, NEPA Planner,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF

Peter Fargo, Public Affairs Officer,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Bill Gamble, your district ranger in La Grande on  
the Wonderful Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Richie Gardner, Silviculturist, Umatilla NF  
Lucas Glick, Silviculturist, Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Brian Goff - Integrated Veg Staff - Umatilla NF  
Bob Hassmiller, Hydrologist, Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Steve Hawkins, Fuels Manager, Wallowa-Whitman  
NF  
Amber Ingoglia, NR Partnership Coordinator for  
the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman NF and the  
Northern Blues CFLRP Coordinator  
Christy Johnson, Forest Ecologist,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Colleen Laird, Soils Tech, Wallowa-Whitman NF  
Tom Montoya, Forest Supervisor,  
Wallowa-Whitman NF...for next 30 days!  
Susan Piper, Pomeroy District Ranger, Umatilla NF  
Mary Young, Soils Scientist, Wallowa-Whitman NF

### Important Topics Discussed:

- Sheep Creek Proposed Actions & Alternatives  
Preparation for tomorrow's field trip

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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**

Approved, no changes.

#### **Review of New Meeting Protocols:**

- Conversations primarily among members, agency, invited guests
- Opportunity at the end of every session for non members to comment
- Members may ask for non-members to participate at any time
- No recording of meetings without consent of all present
- Not wanting to exclude viewpoints, just keep conversation among committed participants
- These protocols are based on similar protocols in other groups
- More details in our Operating Principles
- This is about respect & building trust & a safe place to talk

#### **Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

- Jun. 23-24, 2021 field tour likely - Morgan Nesbitt: meet at 8am in Joseph
- Jul. 28-29, 2021 field tour likely - Kerry Kemp's MMC research
- Aug. 25-26, 2021 field tour likely
- Sep. 22-23, 2021 field tour likely
- Oct. 27-28, 2021 field tour likely
- Dec. 1-2, 2021

When meeting virtually, We'll usually run 8:30 – noon

Field Trips may vary

#### **Tomorrow is a field tour: arrive at 8:45 for a prompt departure at 9:00**

- bring rain gear!
- we will caravan because the field stops can be hard to find

#### **Approval of April Minutes?**

Approved no changes proposed.

#### **Eastern Oregon Business Economic Summit - August 18-19**

18th is a field trip

19th is a conference

Discussion related to us will focus on CFLRP, and the opportunities it will create.

Other things on the agenda as well.

## Updates & Announcements

### **SNW Workshop series**

Link: <https://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/forest-collaboratives-workshop-series>

Lots of good topics this year.

**John Marshall exhibit at the Josephy Center** in Joseph.

Rave reviews - highly recommended.

Up through June 14.

### **Jeff is "retiring" from NBFC:**

We're going to miss you!

He will be with us until the end of June.

### **Union county is advertising for an Emergency Manager**

## Forest Service Updates

### **Umatilla SO – Reported by Brian Goff**

**Personnel:** Heppner District Ranger - Brandon has moved, Gavin Smith is Acting, Doug McKay will arrive toward the end of June, comes to us from the Winter Rim Zone on the Fremont-Winema NF.

Forest Environmental Coordinator position will be advertised very soon, has been vacant for more than a year.

We've done a presentation in the past on the **Umatilla Landscape Restoration Prioritization**. Have been working with Alan Ager (Research Forester with RMRS) and others using a scenario planning tool. We are now using it to identify potential future planning areas that meet the prioritization criteria we've set, based on CFLRP objectives. Will be presenting to employees on the Forest in a couple weeks and scheduling more presentations following. This tool organizes information objectively based on criteria we've set, people make decisions. We believe this tool will be very useful for many purposes including informing decisions, sharing information, and tracking accomplishment.

### **Pomeroy District**

– District Ranger Susan Piper

### **Turkey Tail Veg Management**

- Public meeting was held last night
- 3000 acre CE
- Six phase approach to restoration
- First phase is today

### **N Fork John Day & Heppner**

– District Rangers: Paula Guenther & Doug McKay

Reported by Paula Guenther

**New District Ranger:** Doug McKay

Will be here in June

**Ellis:** no updates at this time.

DEIS expected soon.

**Implementation** this summer:

- Kahler sales
- Mallory Blowdown salvage
- Mountain Top Defensible Space

**Walla Walla RD**

– District Ranger Aaron Gagnon

No May Report

**Wallowa Whitman SO**

**Personnel:**

This is Tom's last week

Anthony Botello will be acting Forest Sup until they fill the position permanently.

Ann Neisen will be deputy Forest Sup

Jake Mason - intercenter management

Jeff bonsac - new FMO in the Wallowa Mtns

**New Tribal Liaison Position:**

The three Blue Mtns Forests have decided to fill a tribal liaison position

**Rx Fire** - Reported by Steve Hawkins

There's a new smoke forecaster in Salem

Working with him to show that we can do this right.

All three districts have implemented some rx fire so far this year.

**La Grande RD - District Ranger Bill Gamble**

- Five Points project – meeting tomorrow morning to continue efforts putting together Joint Chief proposal, heritage report submitted setting path for signing decision in next 4-6 weeks
- CFLRP – 6 contracts underway across LGRD including mastication and hand thinning work in the Trail, Sandbox, Limber Jim and Syrup Creek areas (past NEPA decisions on LGRD). The Syrup Creek work is being integrated with a small tree thinning study with our partners at PNW research/Starkey. One additional contract planned to start in early fall completing CFLRP task orders on LGRD this season
- Seasonal employees coming on board across all resource departments and efforts underway to plan/prepare for the fire season. Our 2 local interagency hotshot crews are already on assignment – one in Minnesota, and one in the southwest US.
- Was fortunate to be asked to present a federal land manager perspective on restoration challenges and opportunities in the Blue Mountains to the Oregon Society of American Foresters annual meeting a couple of weeks ago. Was great to share the work we are engaged with as a

collaborative, use of prioritization tools/models, as well as the role of cross boundary work envisioned in our CFLRP proposal as some primary opportunities for addressing the landscape restoration challenges we face.

- Took the WW forest leadership team on a field trip last week to visit a few of the aquatic restoration projects in the upper Grande Ronde. Great day seeing some restored channels/floodplains, hearing from our restoration partners (CTUIR and TU) and discussing the role this work plays in our local communities/economies
- Forest is also preparing priority program of work guidance for fiscal year 2022 – lots of great projects to consider and need for FLT to refine list to align with forest/employee capacity
- Lots of meetings and trainings happening in preparation for the impending 2021 fire season.
- Looking forward to spending day in the woods tomorrow with everyone

### **Whitman RD - District Ranger Kendall Cikanek presented by Bob Hassmiller**

**Fuels Program** - Steve Hawkins  
very successful spring burning  
lots of good feedback, even in the WUI

“I want to recognize the great work our Fuels Program did through spring prescribed fire. Fuels put prescribed fire on the landscape around Phillips Lake on the north side and in portions of Little Dean that had recent ground based and skyline logging. The public has had nothing but positive things to say about what they are seeing. Also, great prescribed burn in the Burnt River Watershed within the Trout Creek Area along Highway 7.”

**Baker City Watershed** - scoping expected late June

**Patrick** - Scoping is currently open. Closes June 1.

### **Wallowa District – District Ranger: Brian Anderson (new!)**

Prescribed burning has been going well

**Lower Jo** will be underway this summer  
- Lupin & KV sales going on soon.

**Lostine**  
- fuels work will be happening this summer.

**Morgan Nesbit:**  
Field trip next month

### **CFLRP – both forests - Amber Ingolia**

Projects are getting underway.  
Doing annual updates to 5-year plans

All Lands partnership is working on an MOU  
Working to connect with Washington partners

Held the spring All Lands Partnership meeting on May 6  
Fall meeting will be October 5-6

## **Sheep Creek: Proposed Action & Alternatives**

Presented by Breezy Carollo & Lucas Glick

Link to Presentation:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VwAcAiSOeT4TFriP-f8fYrlcH\\_wH\\_9zl/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VwAcAiSOeT4TFriP-f8fYrlcH_wH_9zl/view?usp=sharing)

Three Alternatives.

None are quite the same as the proposed action.

Alternative 2 - Modified from Proposed Action

- Riparian Areas were the key concern in comments

Alternative Three

- Reduces Tx in MMC
- Drops all tx in OFMS
- Drops all temp roads etc
- Drops all tx in RHCA
- Drops all tx in connectivity Corridors

Cmt: It is good to see the steeper slope units proposed for being managed at the LMZ as we have documented that steeper slopes need more open crown spacing to be resilient or resistant to crown fire.

Historically

- RHCAs were high-graded like everywhere else
- Then RHCAs were just not treated
- Now working toward the OFSS structure that was there historically

There were substantial comments on how to improve operational efficiencies, and several changes were made to address those concerns

## **Comparison to Zones of Agreement**

FS is emphasizing ALL phases of and tools for restoration, including intentional non-treatment.

There was a lot of good field work that allowed for careful location of non-tx areas, such as connectivity corridors.

Chat comment: I think the science brought to the NBFC has encouraged a softer differentiation between moist mixed conifer and dry forests - given the legacy of past land use and management and the influence on current plant associations, future range of variability associated with climate projections, and improved understanding of fire frequency and severity patterns. I hope this understanding can be incorporated in a final decision. Further, I hope we can find areas to treat some OFMS stands with the intention of maintaining the large old trees and working to restore representation of OFSS across the landscape. Resp: agreed ... and I think the incredibly broad categories of Dry, Moist, Cold can make it difficult to find those areas of soft differentiation in a proposed action and analysis

We are within HRV for OFMS, and severely deficient for OFSS.

That has a lot to do with

- past timber harvest (removal of large trees)
- fire suppression (allowed dense in growth)

There is strong emphasis on creating more OFSS.

There are a variety of wildlife species that require OFSS.

Alt 2 reduces OFMS by changing it into OFSS.

It does not remove large or old trees.

Alt 3 does not touch any of the OFMS - so it requires working to create OFSS by treating younger stands so they can grow into OFSS.

#### Restoration of channel morphology

- This will not be happening as a part of this project -

But, there have been a lot of past riparian enhancement projects in the area in the past, and the hope is to complement those.

#### Cold & Moist Forests

Kerry's work looked at Beaver Creek, which is very similar, and found that the fire regime was very similar. Looks as if the change in structure & species composition is \*more\* on the moister forests than on the dry.

Q: Is there any research out there showing the relationship between management of cool moist and water table, or water runoff results?

A: There is some work on that ... but there's more evidence about water availability to other trees.

There is a lot of impact from the interception of precipitation (rain & snow) and the shaded snowpack.

There is a lot work happening on reconnecting channels with flood plains

The Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment addresses this.

Q: has there been discussion of the possibility that not treating connectivity corridors will result in an unnatural condition.

A: It's going to take a long time to really get back to natural conditions. Things are going to change over time. Also, we're not going to leave 100% of the connectivity corridors. There are a few places where they co-exist with fuel breaks, in which case there will be some thinning.

Q: What's it going to take to maintain this? How often do we need to re-enter?

A: Depends on site productivity, but generally about 15-20 years.

Mostly PCT, but for some moist stands there are commercial entries possible in that much time.

Generally going to take stands down to a comfortable mid/lower management zone

Reason: to give trees room to grow for the longest time before they start to compete.

That's going to require a new NEPA decision in most cases

P&N#5: Intent is to create PODS, or strategic fuel breaks.

P&N#6: Socio-economic needs

Q: The commercial always gets complete. The PCT is planned, but the public rarely knows whether it's getting done, and often, it lags WAY behind due to funding shortfalls. What are we doing to address that?

A: We need a biomass market. In the meantime we're pursuing CFLRP, Jt Chiefs, RMF and any other funding that we can find that will pay to get this done.

Cmt: It should be in the NEPA that we might not get to it all should discuss prioritization & impacts if tx doesn't happen.

Q: Is there a good tracking system showing what's waiting for treatment so we can monitor progress?

A: No. Not really.

There is a 5-year plan that tracks the primary veg & rx fire stuff, but not PCT

The expected outcomes should realistically consider the likelihood of whether all the parts of the rx will actually be carried out. EG: thinning outcomes are not the same as thinning & rx fire outcomes.

Legacy Tree Retention: plan is to include morphological characteristics in the marking guide so old trees of any diameter are retained. We're not taking any trees over 21". This project was started long before the amendment. There just aren't a lot of trees over 21" that are problematic - not enough to change direction now. It would likely reduce trust.

Cmt: should look at using the new guideline in the future, or industry will feel betrayed.

## Steep Slopes

Sheep Creek has a bunch of ground steeper than 35%

- Economically it's expensive to treat these areas
  - needs 5000 board feet/acre to pencil
  - flat land only needs 3000
- PCT is also about 2x as expensive, especially piling
- fire spreads faster there
- 1100 acres proposed in Alt 2
- 90 acres proposed in Alt 3
- There are few skyline operators in the Blues
  - needs to be a lot of units in the same vicinity to make it worth transporting the equipment

Proposing a forest plan amendment that will allow ground-based equipment on steep slope ie: a "tethered logging system"

- essentially tethering a machine to a tree so it doesn't rip the ground up as it's moving across it.
- anecdotal evidence is that there is ~5% ground disturbance
- skyline would be ~2-3%
- damage occurs above 6-8%
- a "slash mat" will be required to prevent soil disturbance

Q: What is the availability of this sort of equipment in our area?

A: Not sure. Seems to be some interest.

There will be a **monitoring** component that includes:

- pre-site visits & measurements
- sale administrators watching closely



- post-tx measurement after the first rain event  
(protocol in the ppt)