**Field trip to Sage project area Wednesday, June 22**

**Purpose and Questions for the Field Trip**

* At the May meeting, the collaborative agreed that the Sage watershed would be a good place to work together on a new project. The purpose of the field trip was to take an initial look at some of the representative conditions and begin thinking about what might be appropriate objectives. The purpose was not to make decisions about what the group is going to do or work on.
* Questions to consider:
	+ What will make this a positive project?
	+ How does the group want to work together?
	+ What is the scope and scale of the project the group wants to take on?
	+ What are the goals for the collaborative as a group? What are the ecological goals? What role does the FS play and what role do collaborative members play?
	+ What more do we need to know?

**Stop #1 - Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (Deer Creek)**

* The stream function is impaired, requires further study to understand why. Would be useful to ID upstream factors that management could affect.
* Adjacent road could make treatments challenging
* Bull trout, steelhead and Chinook are all present in the stream and are listed species
* What do we need to know?
	+ How does the downstream hatchery play into restoration treatments?
	+ What might we be improving and what are the riparian objectives? Only focusing on vegetation treatments could prove problematic
	+ What and where we can address causes of impairment, what needs to happen and where?
	+ What decision space are we in with USFS and what topics do we want to tackle?
	+ Additional stream surveys necessary

**Stop #2 - Lunch viewpoint**

* This area has not been actively managed by the FS for several decades - lacks recent data
* What might be the FS priority in this area? Fuels and fire management, stand resiliency, restore dry-side forests back to historic levels. Still unclear on cool-moist
* FS sees opportunity for treatments on the ridgetops, south and west slopes, and for thinning
* What sort of uses happen up here? Neighboring land uses?
	+ 4 major wilderness trailheads supporting recreation and hunting
	+ Vacant grazing allotment
	+ Adjacent private lands (Hancock and RY timber)
* It’s a very fire-prone ecosystem, much of it cycles in short fire-return intervals
* Prescribed fire CAN happen in wilderness and roadless areas. Igniting must be analyzed under NEPA, letting natural fire go is covered in the management plan
* Regenerating clearcut plantation has opportunity for thinning to improve its value as habitat
* Questions
	+ Are IRAs and wilderness part of group’s scope?
	+ What next steps can help us balance the scope and diversity of what we can do here?

**Stop #3 – Green McCoy Unit - cool-Moist Forest**

* Past timber sale here, fuels thinning project, and still under contract for grapple-piling. It was a Cat 10 project that got rolled over to an EA after litigation. Small units here, no road building. General feeling from FS staff that this project didn’t meet its objective.
* NEPA done 6 years ago
* Growth still considered fairly thick. Opportunity to remove more pole-sized material, protect larch, burn (once thinned)
* Tough topics –
	+ How is the group going to address them?
	+ What is the expectation if you talk about it – that it means agreement on treating, or an opportunity to discuss and learn?
* Debate and discussion about how group should begin to discuss, learn about, consider projects that involve moist-mixed forest types. And discussion about presuming some topics are “off the table.” Alternative proposed was that the group develop objectives for the project area overall, which would then determine whether some potentially controversial topics or areas even need to be included in the scope. The group could then balance any alternative against those objectives.
* There was also a suggestion for a structured discussion and process for learning

**Wrap-Up**

* Reflections/ Take-aways
	+ We all seem to agree that we want to incorporate riparian restoration
* Field Trips
	+ July 27 and August 24 - Next trip will be East Face or a post-burn trip. Bill will lead.
	+ Could potentially create a field trip with smaller, topic focused groups (riparian, fire, vegetation) to the Sage watershed.
* ROD for Lower Joe
	+ Forest received biological opinion, working intro draft ROD, released by July 1, 45 day objection period, est. of RNA’s 60-day, then objection resolution