Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative Meeting

March 23, 2016

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

La Grande, OR

*Participants: Nils Christoffersen, Bill Gamble, Gary Miller, Ray Ospovich, Andrew Spaeth, Steve Hawkins, Rex Storm, Mark Davidson, Rob Klavins, Wally Sykes, Kendal Martel, Jake Lubera, Ron Rochna, Darlene Rochna, Carl Kiss, Mike Billman, Lindsay Warness, Chuck Oliver, Rachel Plawecki, Karen Hardigg, Barbara Wales, Arielle Stay, Paul Boehne*

**Agenda:**

1. **Updates**
   1. **Communications Projects**
2. **Selecting the next project area**
   1. **Review top watersheds**
3. **Working with the Forest Service** 
   1. **Clarifying expectations**
4. **Collaborative business**
   1. **Field trips, East Face, May meeting**

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**Updates**

* New signatories to operating principles: Wally Sykes and Carl Kiss
* Communications
  + New website www.wallowawhitmancollaborative.org is now purchased
  + Coming soon page is live with link to current site
  + Aim to launch at May meeting
  + Working on content over the next few weeks and Rachel repeated a call for testimonials and photos
* Operations committee
  + Drafted a set of roles and responsibilities that they propose to insert in operating principles
  + Will send out electronically for everyone to review in advance of next meeting
  + Will seek approval for including these in operating principles at next meeting
  + Member were asked to submit proposed changes to operations committee if there are any glaring edits needed
    - Potentially adding electronic process for decision making will fall under a larger conversation regarding operating principles.
* OWEB grant proposal submitted, secured more funding for facilitation from NFF
* Projects
  + East Face
    - Decision is out; we’re in objection period which closes April 4
    - Will have draft Biological Assessment in within next few weeks
    - Consultation in late spring, early summer
  + Lower Joseph
    - FS continues to struggle with the consultation process – no change from the last meeting. The April 1st date will be pushed back.
    - Lack of progress on decision is point of frustration for many members of the collaborative, but not all. Some want to see project done well not fast.
    - No plan for implementation yet (resolving objections, offering contract for work)
    - ODF is tentatively earmarking some state funding to provide resources to help with implementation
    - Colorado State University and University of New Hampshire might also help with implementation
    - ODF will provide help with stand exams and a safety project before decision is out
    - Not much for collaborative to do except analyze lessons learned about consultation, what was the concern, etc.

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**Selecting the next project area**

* In February, small breakout groups reviewed maps provided by the Forest Service and agreed that several watersheds (Beaver, Sage, Clark, Patrick, Sheep) could be a good opportunity for the group.
* For this meeting, purpose is to gain clarity around the “where”
* Small group reasons for narrowing down their top watersheds:
  + Proximity
  + Forest type/ composition
  + Watershed condition
  + Economic opportunity/volume
  + Multiple resource benefits
  + Ripe🡪 not sticky issues
  + Road concerns/other benefits
  + Available data
  + FS plans
  + Other landowners
* Beaver Creek
  + Adjacent to East Face
  + Part of the area is in larger focus area for overall East Face Project--part of the Cohesive Strategy with NRCS, ODF
* Sheep Creek
* Sage
  + Between La Grande and Enterprise, in Wallowa canyon
* Patrick
  + One project is already happening on half of the area
* Clark
  + NE corner of Bill’s district
* One of the top criteria when USFS chooses a project is what the collaborative supports and wants to do next; this group can’t autonomously choose what project the USFS works on, but the opinion of the group weighs heavily

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|  | **Pros** | **Cons/Questions** |
| **Sage** | Close; will incorporate some WUI, get additional dollars from that; could work on entire Wallowa front WUI all the way from Sage to Morgan-Nesbitt, could connect to existing work; more warm-dry than cool-moist; could work on small chunk of cool-moist; could work with Bonneville Power Administration on aquatic restoration; aquatic challenges to work on; this area is of high interest to Wallowa County; rises to the top in terms of having the most need; has been part of agency discussions; will be in insect and disease map of Wallowa | Missing recent stand exam data, but possible to have it done soon since the scale is on the smaller side; recommended wilderness addition; analysis area acres (what’s the true operational footprint of the work); listed bull-trout and steelhead |
| **Beaver** |  | Little return on investment in terms of learning and outcomes, some timber stand improvement (pre-commercial thinning) already happening there; IRA, municipal watershed |
| **Clark** | Possibility with plantations could do work outside wilderness | Might be worth waiting a few years to get more merchantable timber; includes IRA |
| **Patrick** |  | Far away |
| **Sheep** | Baseline data on aquatic; could work on elk forage | Not as familiar with the area; not much data available on forest vegetation; historic mining in the area |

Questions about potential projects for the next meeting

* Age of data
* Analysis acres
* Potential wilderness areas
* Previous work done
* Other unroaded lands
* Where are departed acres
* Work on adjacent lands
* WUI layers

Next steps

* Collaborative members will work with FS (Bill, Jake, Steve) on collecting more info on Sage, Clark, and Sheep
* Aim is for the group to come to agreement on a new project area at the next meeting or one following

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**Working with the Forest Service**

* Based on last two projects, a key question is at what stages before and after the official NEPA process does the group want to work with the Forest Service?
* Karen reviewed that she heard that the group wants to work pre-NEPA and maybe get engaged in developing alternatives rather than only commenting on alternatives that the Forest Service proposes
* May be room for engagement in going from existing conditions to desired conditions (which is informed by the forest plan)
* Bill sees room for the collaborative to design proposed actions; he wants to know what kind of information the group needs to be able to develop them
* There was recognition that for the group to be involved in the process of going through NEPA, there needs to be significant commitment
* Lindsay shared an example from the Payette Forest Coalition—CFLRP project about how they worked closely with the FS
  + Group innovated in how they gave information to the Forest Service
  + Before they got to purpose and need, the coalition created 27 pages of specific recommendations with regards to thinning treatments, coalition goals, vegetation, recreation, types of treatments they were fine with, roads, road and recreation infrastructure, did watershed specific things, and provided objectives for the USFS to meet economically. They broke into subcommittees according to issue area (veg, recreation, etc)
  + Work was done before FS came out with draft EIS—was done between scoping and draft. USFS developed alternatives based on the document and scoping information.
  + After alternatives were drafted, the group provided comments to USFS during comment period and rated each alternative based on how well they met the group’s objectives. Chose a preferred alternative to recommend to the agency.
* Question about level of flexibility in USFS timelines—can the agency wait for the collaborative to be in drivers seat for longer?
  + Not so much flexibility in NEPA side (comment periods, for example), but a ton of flexibility earlier in process
  + Between purpose and need and proposed action, no set timeline
    - Longer it takes to do it, the more the project costs though
    - USFS is interested in streamlining process between those two triggers
  + Some discussion about whether the FS would want to include collaborative project in 5-year strategy because it would put undue pressure on the group to decide
* It would be helpful if the USFS provided the questions they need more information on/ views on from the collaborative group
* Comment that there may be tension between addressing the hard questions and doing easy things and building trust
* Group agreed they’re not at the level of doing 30 pages of recommendations, but could apply subcommittee approach for the next project
* Conclusion: earlier involvement would be good, getting involved pre-NEPA and be part of discussion around proposed action and be able to contribute more to the formation of action

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**Collaborative Business**

1. East Face
2. May Meeting
3. Vision statement
4. Summer field trips

East Face:

* Karen pointed to the collaborative operating principles, specifically the agreement to: “Air problems, disagreements and critical information during meetings to avoid surprises.”
* Lindsay stated that Boise Cascade is not planning on objecting
* Wallowa County NRAC and Wallowa Resources did not submit comments; Bruce Dunn and John Williams submitted comments and will not object
* Oregon Wild will look at the decision probably last minute and will let the group know if they will object
* Rex supports effort and all the labor of the collaborators and agency and there were some opportunities missed that we can improve next time
* Rob would like the USFS to send out a notification through Karen when objection meeting is and if other groups outside the collaborative object
* Participation at the objection meeting is determined by deciding officer

May Meeting:

* Proposal to do team building 3-5ish and dinner on Tuesday May 24 next day May 25 meeting
* Location suggestions included Asian Fusion, Earth & Vine, Mt Emily Recreation Area
* Part of the purpose will be a eam building exercise about our why

Vision statement:

* Vision statement adds why, not just how and what you do
* Update from Darlene: she wrote a draft vision statement
* Update from Nils: the team building exercise in May could be good foundation for us to come to agreement about the why we come here

Summer field trip ideas:

* Proposal to have all three summer meetings in the field and carve out time during field trips to do team building
* Field trip with regulatory partners around riparian areas
* Post-fire areas, including riparian areas and WUIs
* Sage
* Lower Joe or East Face depending on where implementation is at
* Could have field visits with each subcommittee to sites relevant to the subcommittee issues
* Combine science engagement with field trips
  + Warm dry vs cool moist (not just treatment but the ecology)
  + Scientists suggested: John Bailey, Paul Hesberg, Matt Rathbone? from USFS
  + Economic issues
    - If we’re close to Sage we could look at the biomass campus (Integrated Biomass Resources) that employs 20 people and utilizes small diameter logs
* Mike Jennings from PNW station has put together paper on insect and disease, explains risk over the next 15 years. Will inform Farm Bill authority to address risk of insect and disease. It extends HFRA approach to EA’s EIS’s. Should have him come in and speak.
* Larry Sandoval also has presentation that the collaborative saw on insect and disease (how much is natural vs unnatural)
* Suggestion to bring in Headwaters Economics Ben Alexander or others to talk about various economic perspectives (extractive, service, etc.)
* The group should look at community/regional economics or timber/project level economics
* Nancy Langston could be interesting as well

Meeting adjourned at 3pm.