

Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative

Monthly Meeting Notes

September 26, 2016 | 10 am – 2 pm

Attendees: George Mead, Vince Naughton, Bruce Dunn, Paul Boehne, Brian Kelley, Steve Edwards, Lindsay Warness, Susan Jane Brown, Mike Billman, Nils Christoffersen, Rex Storm (phone), Rob Klavins (phone), Carl Kiss, Andrew Spaeth (phone), Ray Osopovich

Action Items:

- **Mike Billman and Bill Gamble will plan a field tour to the Sheep Project Area for October 26**

- **Regular November and December meetings cancelled. Instead we will have one meeting on either November 30 or December 7, to coincide with the Umatilla Forest Collaborative schedule.**

General Updates:

East Face: The first sale has been laid out and marked and is awaiting a roads package before the final appraisal is completed. Layout and marking work on the second sale is ongoing. The FS is planning to offer both sales as stewardship sales. The FS is continuing pre-commercial along the private land border. The WWNF is planning to compete for additional fuels reduction funding in 2017. The monitoring work is ongoing with three recorded plots. The monitoring committee will continue to identify plots for monitoring purposes.

Lower Joseph: The objection process is ongoing, the FS is meeting individually with objectors to identify opportunities for resolution. The resolution meeting is scheduled for October 18th for all objectors. The FS is open to having collaborative members who did not object attend the meeting. The collaborative made it clear that members are welcome to attend and speak about their experience as a collaborator but not speak on behalf of the Collaborative. Carl Kiss, Andrew Spaeth, and Nils Christoffersen would like to attend the meeting. The collaborative reviewed the major objections of the current collaborative members and reminded attendees that full objections can be found in the USFS reading room of the Lower Joseph Project page (found [here](#)).

Current Objectors to the Lower Joseph Project are: 1. Nez Perce Tribe, 2. Wallowa County, 3. Oregon Wild, 4. Wildearth Guardians, 5. Hells Canyon Preservation Council, 6. Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, 7. American Forest Resources Council, 8. Union County, 9. Boise Cascade, and 10. Dick Artley.

The Collaborative reflected on lessons learned from the Lower Joseph Project; including what effective collaboration is and how to model it to create a better project. A few key lessons emerged:

- Adopting a well-developed project from a sub-group of the Collaborative diminished important process and relationship building steps that are important to collective engagement and ownership in a project, and development of a shared vision.

- The role of the Blue Mountain ID Team escalated the challenges by merging the anticipated three project phrases into a single large project (100,000 acres), and accelerating NEPA (initially planned for one year) – these factors combined to create further complexity for the Collaborative.
- There was collective lack of experience with collaboration during the NEPA process within the Collaborative membership and the Blue Mountain ID Team. Most involved had only collaborated in Pre-NEPA processes and in implementation.
- The change in lead personnel from a significant stakeholder late in the process resulted in additional challenges to building consensus.

The Collaborative worked on a Purpose and Need (P&N) for the project, however, the P&N which emerged from the Blue Mountain ID Team did not fully reflect the collaborative input. This changed the dynamic of the collaborative to be more of reactionary group vs. a proactive collaborator.

The larger scale of the project also resulted in a higher number of controversial or difficult topics being tackled within NEPA – and undermined the ability to reach consensus. This contributed to the fact that the Collaborative chose not to work on several important issues, some of which became core points of objections.

Discussion then focused on the broader issue of collaborative agreements and the importance of processes that allow a Collaborative to be pro-active and work through key areas of agreement prior to the initiation of NEPA – rather than reacting to project actions and alternatives generated by the USFS. The group affirmed the importance of documenting all agreements so that it is clear when the collaborative has agreements, and to develop and document a shared history of the project (vs. history from multiple perspectives). A shared history and documented agreements as well as proactive collaboration may work better on the next project. Along with agreements, the collaborative discussed working with the FS to develop guidelines for representation of collaborative input for projects.

Lower Joseph Implementation Update: Wallowa Resources is working with the Wallowa District Ranger's Team to develop final designs, unit designations, layout, flagging and marking. Wallowa County has made funding available (through Title II funds) to assist in implementation. There is also potential for some state funding to assist with the additional planning needs (stand exams to run models, logging systems analysts, etc.). The Title II funding also includes money for multi-party monitoring efforts in the Lower Joseph area. There is a desire to expand monitoring beyond forest vegetation treatments and monitor other things such as range, aquatics, etc. There was some concern that implementation would begin before a final decision has been rendered. The group discussed the objections timelines and the ability of the FS to begin implementation before the end of the resolution meeting. The group concluded that very little if any implementation would be able to take place before the end of the year which is when the objections resolution process is anticipated to end. This may need further discussion when FS representation is available to discuss.

Due to an illness the discussion of the Blues Coalition was postponed.

Facilitation Update: The pool has been narrowed down to 4 candidates and the interviews will take place on October 4th. The goal is to have a facilitator in place for the October meeting if possible, but latest by the rescheduled November / December meeting. The group discussed accountability and agreed that while Wallowa Resources is the fiscal sponsor, the facilitator will be accountable to the collaboratives (except for fiscally and administrative needs for Wallowa Resources). This will be spelled out clearly to the facilitator and in writing for both collaboratives to ensure neutrality.

Next project area selection: The group discussed the next project selection. The discussion centered around the Sheep and Sage project. The group agreed that there should be a field tour in October to visit Sheep and discuss opportunities for work from the collaborative level. The group agreed that the goal of the field tour was to prompt a decision from the collaborative regarding next project location.

The group then discussed further how to collaborate on the new project. There was a strong push to work within some broad guidelines (such as dry forest) and learn more about the needs/desired future conditions for the project area. These needs should incorporate meaningful veg and non-veg work (broader watershed restoration work) and no issue would be arbitrarily removed from discussion. Each issue would be considered in a site-specific context and reference on the ground conditions. The group agreed that learning within the project to understand its role in a larger landscape analysis that considers fire, wildlife connectivity, and economics was an important goal for the collaborative. The group agreed that these discussions should take place pre-NEPA (prior to scoping) and allow enough time for the group to fully discuss options for consensus. The group agreed that the next project priority was to build trust and learning capacity for the collaborative. This is more important than the geographical areas. The most likely successful collaboration will be around dry forest restoration and building zones of agreement. The group agreed that a collaborative approach vs. a consultation (reactive) approach would be the best and this would mean collaborating on the “left side of the triangle” (pre-NEPA). The group discussed what non-veg activities (aside from wilderness recommendations) would be appropriate, some examples were: aquatic restoration, road work, and invasive species.

The group agreed that the process for collaborating on the next project would be to view the potential area with objective to find areas where there could be potential zones of agreement and develop these agreements prior to the NEPA process. The group did not attempt to find consensus regarding what geographical location the group should be working at.

Some additional topics that the group discussed that may be ripe for collaboration were the 21” screen as well as work in class IV riparian habitat conservation areas. The group acknowledged that some of these discussions would make people uncomfortable but agreed that this was part of collaboration. A member reminded the group that we do have a great deal of collaborative experience to draw from that our previous efforts were somewhat successful. It is important to reflect on that as well. The group agreed that there should be time set aside at the end of the Sheep field trip to discuss how the group wants to move forward and make a decision regarding project locations and options for collaboration.

November/December Meeting: The group agreed to try to combine the November and December meetings into one meeting and to hold that meeting after Thanksgiving. There is some discussion whether the meetings should be held 1 week after Thanksgiving (Nov. 28-Dec. 2) or two weeks after Thanksgiving (Dec. 5-9). The group agreed that these dates should be discussed with the Umatilla