

# **COMMON GROUND PRINCIPLES OF HARNEY COUNTY RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE**

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Our goal is to restore healthy and resilient forests. Our projects provide social and economic benefits to the local community. We are continually learning and developing best practices that may be applied in other areas.

The Harney County Restoration Collaborative has achieved complete consensus on the following Desired Future Conditions for the northern Harney County forested landscape:

## **Desired Future Conditions**

### **Regarding Fire, Insects/Disease, and Forest Health**

Our goal is:

- A resilient forest that is diverse in age, species, and density; that exhibits appropriate species composition and structure for the ecosystem; and that enables:
  - normal or acceptable levels of fire, insect, and disease outbreaks
  - resumption of natural fire and disturbance cycles
  - Good air quality
  - Good water quality
  - Where historically present, stands have a patchy, mosaic, clumpy appearance.

To achieve this goal we will recommend:

- Low basal area indexes that will create stands that are more fire tolerant initially and for a longer time after treatment except on:
  - North facing slopes
  - Areas needed for wildlife needs
- Target basal areas that are at the low end of the gradient for the site
- More extensive use of prescribed fire where and when possible.

### **Regarding Prescribed Fire**

Our goal is:

- The use of prescribed fire is increased in time and scale so that 20,000 acres are burned annually on the Emigrant Creek Ranger District to maintain the

historic fire regime However, we recognize the difficulty in addressing safety and air quality concerns with the use of prescribed fire.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- As much as possible small diameter, non-commercial timber is treated so that burning can occur at a time of year when safety and air-quality concerns are not a factor.
- Where and when possible use prescribed fire in both treated and un-treated areas.

### **Regarding Riparian Areas and Aspen**

Our goal is:

- Riparian areas that have appropriate vegetation and wildlife for the site,
- The production of high water quality that meets or exceeds standards, to achieve full biological potential given the limitations of the current infrastructure
- To meet optimal “properly functioning conditions”
- To have aspen stands that are:
  - healthy,
  - reproducing, and
  - have trees of multiple ages
- To have an extent of aspen stands that achieves historic distribution over time.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- Removal of conifers less than 150 years of age from riparian areas.
- Enhancement and protection of riparian shrubs
- To restore an aspen stand not properly functioning -
  - Removal of conifer overstory when there is a biological urgency for the health of the aspen
  - Removal of juniper encroachment
  - Fencing out ungulates for a period of time
  - Fire to regenerate existing aspens where appropriate

### **Regarding Old-Growth**

Our goal is:

- Resilient old-growth stands
- An extent of old-growth stands and structure that achieves historic conditions and distribution over time

- An extent of replacement old-growth stands that achieves historic distribution over time.

To achieve this goal we will recommend:

- The harvest of some trees greater than 21” if :
  - Removal will decrease shading of aspen and other riparian hardwoods by encroaching conifers.
  - Removal will improve the retention and survivability of older trees (i.e. old growth ponderosa pine) and to transition toward a more fire resilient landscape. This would typically include the removal of 21+ inch grand fir that have established below the drip line of older pine. The grand fir creates ladder fuels that would threaten the survival of over-story pine during fire events.
  - The removal of dead and dying over-story trees of all species will release and promote younger, healthier cohorts into late structural stages. This would include areas with heavy over-story mortality due to insects and disease outbreaks.

Quotes regarding removal of trees greater than 21”:

- George Wynn, former ECRD silviculturalist on the Ant Project: *“We will continue to cut trees on the ECRD but there will be an ecological reason for every tree we cut.”*
- Jerry Franklin from a presentation in John Day in October of 2013, *“We need to do silviculture that produces spatially heterogenous outcomes. Restoration is never done – we will need to continue to treat periodically with fire or equipment. Retain the old trees regardless of species or health.”*

### **Regarding Wildlife and Fish Habitat**

Our goal is:

- restore and maintain habitat conditions that support viability and biodiversity of native fish and wildlife species

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- Consider the creation of some road closure areas at least four square miles in size to provide quality, non-motorized hunts.
- Provide some overstory removal to create a mix of brush and trees thereby improving wildlife habitat.

### **Regarding Vegetative Invasive Species**

Our goal is:

- containment and/or eradication of non-native invasive species

### **Regarding Grazing**

Our goal is:

- grazing that does not threaten other social, ecological and economic values and grazing management that is compatible with the established goals in this document

### **Regarding Roads and Access**

Our goal is:

- decreased road densities and improved road locations that will result in improvement to aquatic habitat and species, soil and habitat that are within management capabilities
- no net increases in system roads - any new system road would be a substitute for existing roads with the purpose of restoring ecological values
- minimize temporary roads
- a road system that minimizes adverse effects on wildlife
- a designated ATV/snowmobile system that takes the pressure off of other areas.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- The Road Viability Scorecard developed by HCRC in July of 2015 be used to evaluate roads in Restoration projects and only those roads with a positive score remain open for use.

### **Bundling of Project Treatments**

Our goal is:

- All project treatments (non-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, prescribed burning and riparian restoration) will be completed within two years of the initiation of treatments on a restoration project. Restoration is not completed until all parts of a project are completed. It makes no sense for commercial harvest to occur without quick follow-up of non-commercial and prescribed fire treatments.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- One contractor is responsible for completing all phases of a restoration project.
- Stewardship funding be utilized to make sure the bundled treatments are economically feasible for the contractor.

- The contractor responsible for the overall project utilizes local sub-contractors for completing the different treatments on the project including prescribed burning.

### **Regarding Community Health**

Our goal is:

- healthy forests that provide the opportunity for healthy local communities, and healthy communities that provide opportunities to maintain healthy forests.
- the presence of infrastructure capable of utilizing wood products from restoration activities, increase contractor capacity and restore local communities and social health.
- local economies benefit from a diversity of year-round jobs related to restoration, forest management generally, and other ecosystem goods and services
- industries that are appropriately scaled to local, sustainable supply, as determined through collaborative efforts
- sustainable fiber supply is:
- recognized as an important community value associated with forest management
- “levelized” (steady from year to year) and meeting the minimum needs of sustainable community infrastructure.
  - citizens with pride in the forest they are stewarding; citizens recognized by those outside the area as good stewards of public lands

### **Regarding Forest Restoration Economics**

Our goal is:

- restoration projects include sufficient marketable material to help offset costs, when possible, compatible with ecological values.
- restoration projects are funded by a wide diversity of revenue sources –such as fiber revenues, ecosystem service payments, and service contract appropriations.
- forest sector infrastructure is in place to create a value for restoration by-products on a sustainable basis.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- The bundling of projects so all costs are analyzed, considered and completed in a reasonable time period.

### **Regarding Collaboration**

Our goal is:

- a collaborative group that is broadly representative, inclusive and better involves youth
- a collaborative group that has the data needed to make decisions
- a collaborative group that benefits from constant, iterative information exchange
- multiple scales of analysis, management and collaboration linking stands, watersheds, and broader landscapes
- the High Desert Partnership has the funding, capacity and political backing to continue this collaborative process
- the Forest Service looks to the collaborative as a first step in developing plans and priorities for public land

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- A new, revised forest plan be completed and ready to implement by the end of 2016

### **Regarding Monitoring and Adaptive Management**

Our goal is:

- monitoring is an integral, fully-funded component of projects
- social, ecological, and economic monitoring are performed
- monitoring begins before treatments
- third party and collaborative-directed monitoring
- monitoring results are communicated and incorporated into future practice.