

October 24, 2017 Meeting Summary Harney County ESD Meeting Room

Attendance: Mark Webb - BMFP, Rod Klus- ODFW, Jim Campbell-farmer, Jon Reponen- BLM, Pam Hardy - WELC, Dan Haak-OHV Interests, Melissa Ward, Lori Bailey, Quillen, Eric Amsted, Mel Hall, Karlene Buerrman, Pete LaDuke, Arnie Cole, Gerald Dixson, Frank Heide, Christy Cheyne –USFS Jack Southworth -facilitator, Kerry Kemp- TNC, Tyson Bertoni-Riggs- ODF, Patty Dorroh, Mark Owens – County Commissioners, Brenda- HDP

Since this meeting has a presentation on recreation, Jack surveyed those in attendance of their favorite form of recreation in the forest. Results tabulated below:

Cutting wood, working up wood – 1

Hunting (bird or big game) – 5

Fishing -2

Driving in the forest – 2

Sight-seeing, fall colors - 2

Walking/ Hiking in the woods – 5

Trail clearing -1

Foraging for medicinals – 1

Rock hounding – 1

X-Country Skiing -1

Standing in circles (ie. Collaborative discussions) -1

Christmas Tree Cutting – 1

Frank Heide: Update on Rattlesnake project:

Frank reviewed the early information coming in on the non-timber aspects of restoration that include aspen, mountain mahogany, wildlife, and riparian areas. Frank is just stepping in from the work Scott Frost outlined when he was detailing in a silviculture position this past summer. He emphasized he is just getting started on learning the details of the project.

In the project for aspen 81 acres is the main goal. Will need to be approved by hydrologists.

441 acres of mountain mahogany. Thin around patches to improve wildlife habitat.

3,088 acres of dry meadow, wet meadow, and sage steppe. Remove conifer to open them up to historical condition.

Cat 1 & 4 streams with excess stand densities to be opened up to let species thrive.

More prescribed fire.

Q. Are mountain mahogany treatments different than other treatments around HRV? What is the difference?

A. Removing conifers from mahogany does help them recover. A. Jon R. - Wolf sales are doing mahogany treatments and they don't go in a stand to pull a tree out.

Lori Bailey: In Rattlesnake there will be some proposed road closures. They will include previously closed roads and most will be done east of the 28 road. We were proposing to HFRA authority to do hazardous fuels reductions. We can do restoration projects under the aquatic EA or we can just do Rattlesnake as a NEPA “big gulp” – haven’t really decided how we want to do that yet. *We need to make sure that folks know that we do propose to do it simultaneously – collect data, write a proposal and get it signed off – if we got it done as an Aquatic EA.*

Soldier CE is the third project. We did this as a rush job and we talked about how the restoration projects will be in the subsequent EA to make good on our promise. Soldier CE will be signed in the next month, Rattlesnake project and Aquatics EA. We need a Rattlesnake project because we need prescribed fire. Pam can’t sign on to just a commercial CE because she can’t explain this to the environmental community, but every one said they would put all the other things in Rattlesnake. All the commercial acres – CE can cover pre-commercial thinning and commercial thinning, but not prescribed fire in a small area because it causes us to put a fire all around. This would be too much disturbance for a small area but Soldier Creek acres could be put in Rattlesnake for prescribed fire. Now that we are taking a bigger look at this we can do it.

Comment: From a wildlife habitat perspective, saving mahogany is good, thumbs up. There is a confusion of timeliness. Rattlesnake is the next thing behind Soldier Creek. It will either be a regular EA or HFRA. Primarily different on how we do the NEPA. HFRA is only treatments around fuels reduction. HFRA would be faster and Aquatics EA would be faster as opposed to having it all in a Rattlesnake Project NEPA because you don’t have a 45-day appeal period with the previous 2 processes.

Gerald – Comment on trip out to the Soldier Creek CE just this morning. Soldier CE and HFRA is committed to bringing in more options for packaging.

Q. Is there a 21” cap on all trees in the aspen stands? A. yes.

Q. If you use HFRA, where does mountain mahogany fall? A. It is thinning and it could fall under HFRA because it is fuels reductions and Aquatic EA will improve watershed. In the mahogany, we thin up to 25’ into the stand.

Q. Does packaging these projects differently change how projects go out on the ground? Not really, as long as outcomes are clear from the projects.

Pam Hardy: Update from Fire subcommittee and possibility of smoke management summit.

Recently talked with someone who did a 4,000 acre burn on the Ochoco and it was \$19/acre. Much less than it costs at \$5,000/acre to manage a wildfire. Practically speaking we are not going to get caught up on the amount of acreage that needs prescribed fire. Strategically place treatments with small amount of prescribed fire to manage a wildfire. We need to get much more strategic about future wildfires to make sure the wildfires help us. It is more complex, but we need an order of magnitude change is going to come in the form of wildfire. Use this as a tool to get social license for prescribed fire. We need to get this in front of congress, saving lives, saving resources.

Kerry: Perception about wildfire management is not about managing catastrophic fires. We historically had a number of smaller fires – just allow some of those events to do good work. We must frame what we mean when we say catastrophic. This is not those kinds of events.

Tyson: There are a lot of implications when we say fire – can we do community outreach and bring together a local workshop?

Christy: we have been getting a few little fires here and there – when are we going to let them go? As we move into the next year, we have done so many good treatments and let it go. FS has let me see what is possible.

Q. Are managed wildfires from a different pot of money? A. There are changes in how we are able to fund. Funding of fire management and more discussion about managed fire. Not cheaper but comes from a different source. Prescribed fire doesn't have social license. We won't have social license for managed fire. Kerry is working on this for implementation strategy to better define and identify where we have treatments on the landscape and prioritize the decision space in order to better set up managing a natural ignition. And a map that has red, yellow, green.

Rod: First time I have heard this discussion of wildfire. Fire folks usually get nervous. There is potential but is not going to save it. Chetco Bar fire started in a wilderness area and it got out of the box we drew for it.

FS did try to put resources on it and could not get personnel on it because of terrain. They did bucket drops but didn't work.

Best way to manage fire is before it starts.

Q. Does FS have strategic forest breaks? A. Yes we have them but you don't have just strategic fuel breaks. BLM says there are strategic places. So many regulations on fuel breaks now it rarely can stop it.

When it is an active crown fire it is firefighter strategy. BLM fires a little different because they rarely get an active crown fire. There are things that can stop it. Basal areas are lower in the south and west aspects that helps with prevailing winds. The project area is not selected to be strategic for fire.

Jon – We are managing fires by default. We had 130 contract employees and no feds and we did fuel treatments out in front. We waited for the weather to change. We were playing defense, not offense because no firefighters were available. Forest Service strategic breaks are every 2 and 4 digit roads. All wildfires are now managed. It is all defense and no offense any more. We try to do strategic fuel breaks away from the fire. They are all prescribed wildfires now. We will wait for the prescribed fire committee to decide about a smoke management summit.

Update from Eric Amsted on ECRD recreation program

- We have met with the Chamber of Commerce and we have branded this program as “Adventure Harney”. A number of groups are participating: Eastern Oregon Trail Alliance, Outdoor Enthusiast, Burns Paiute tribe, Travel Oregon, BLM, Snowmobile club, ODFW, OR state parks. Eastern Oregon Trail Alliance (EOTA) is focused on Grant and Harney county. They are focused on trail recreation in these counties. We are focusing on the Skull 120 & 60 bike race – 120 mile is a gravel grinding race and a way to capitalize on what we have on the forest. Gravel riding is a cross between mountain bike riding and road riding and bike packing. This is a growing trend in bikes and this is now listed as an epic ride on Travel Oregon. We have good partners with the experience of the race last year.
- Working on a county map with all outdoor recreation opportunities; new trailhead kiosks on this district – this is funded; and new grooming shed and warming hut at Idlewild. Found out there is a trail

out of Joaquin Miller campground. If the trail can be developed, the horse corral at the campground would be positive. The trail could be networked into the Myrtle Creek trail system and Silvies Valley ranch trail allotment.

- Working on campground signing improvements, especially for folks out of town and having better signing in the campgrounds to make them look like they are better cared for.
- EOTA – working on John Day trail system, Magone lake and also working on Palamino Buttes mountain bike trail with BLM.
- Talking with entomologists about large trees in the campground and how can we protect the large trees. Will see what trees could be treated and regional funding to get them treated.
- FS is working on facilities recreation management plan. Looking at what we have and how they work within the framework of the budget. If interested I can provide more information.
- Idlewild will improve the interpretive trail outside at the campground. Close to town places.

Any questions or what would you be interested in seeing on the district for recreation?

Q. I could not find trailheads when I first came to town. A. Yes, I am also getting wayfinding signs to campgrounds and trails and evaluating it from a visitor's perspective. The goal is to create more outdoor recreation opportunities for the community and visitors to spend money.

Look to connect those longer runs, which will keep people in the area.

There is a rail bed from Burns to Seneca. Would connect the communities by trail. This would be a way to diversify the economic base and look to connect and maintain existing trails. Just needs to be maintained and connected. Having signs is important out this way. At the chamber, we would like to have the confidence to say, "Go out and find this great place," and they can find the trail.

Been great working with Eric and his ideas. Signs are important and even the roads are poorly marked. This community could bring in more diversity if folks could get on board with recreation. What is the goal of the recreation and is it compatible with county goals?

Q. Any way to make good geolocated maps? A. Great point. One of the things on the Malheur website. Will have different codes on the map, bring them to the website and have downloadable pdfs. Get those up front on the website and get them on a place where we can find them.

I like the gravel grinder concept because we already have the infrastructure.

Private adjacent landowners didn't want folks going through with the railroad bed in the early 80s. Other trails and they fell apart because they were not used or maintained.

Q. Do we have new demand? A. I believe use and maintenance go hand in hand. We are not confident in sending people out to get to the trails. Maybe once there is maintenance, trail signs and a map they will be used and this should bring more relevance to the trail system.

Delintment Creek Trail – trying to get that back after the fire.

We had some open houses. Asked, "Tell us what you would like to see for outdoor recreation."

Mark W.: It will be important to consider the impact of grazing permittees. Make sure to engage.

Stock trails and maybe combine trails – i.e. Oregon trails.

Christy: Eric has been here full time for a year. The vision was to look at our large project areas and he is doing an incredible amount of work. Current, future and when we first came here to look at the project areas for recreation. We thought of this several years ago. How do we grow this collaborative? It is not growing right now because it is about the bike race right now.

If you want input just let us know.

Jack Southworth - Update on Soldier CE – status of letter of support

Last meeting I was authorized to draft a letter to Steve Beverlin and Gerald Dixson. I sent the letter to Christy, Travis, and Pam for review and then to full collaborative by email. Pam was not able to support it but sent a follow up letter about language so she could support it. It is dependent on the decision. What we do is go to the veg. board – botanist, silviculture and we pull out all existing NEPA for that fiscal year. We throw that out on a spreadsheet and the veg board will bump this up so that it is in the FY 18 implementation plan. If we are trying to get ahead of disease, it should be expedited. We will get it in the 2018 work load for crews.

Gerald: Thanks for the letter. It helped us see what is on the priority list. Your letter was helpful also Pam. Timetable on soldier CE – would like to have a decision within a month.

Q. Not a bug guy – how critical is it when you treat? A. You want to do this treatment now -like spring 2018. That is why we are planning now to commit to this. Would hate to lose the investment. Even if we propose to prescribe burn, it is not going to go for a long time.

Q. Since you didn't have to do a cumulative effects analysis would it be possible to say we are not putting these projects together because it is not allowed but we have in the cue these projects down the line? A.Lori – yes we could do that.

Q. to Pam - Your constituents – why can't they support that decision? It is political optics and it is frustrating. It is very hard for me to go back to my community but you are already talking about changing the project up. NEPA is a decisions tool and also a communication tool and a pledge of doing something. At least acknowledge more work is coming in the document.

Kerry: the subcommittee that proposed the CE first was out of concern to save the big trees that were left but part of the agreement then was we would do all the rest of the restoration projects. I think what I am pointing out is being clear about communication. Even when you say that you are doing the same things in the room people don't understand what you were just doing. Collaborative support was predicated on the fact that these other projects will take place.

We are moving forward with the CE and thought we had support.

Collaborative support has not been hashed out in court and it going to be taken to court. This is like nothing to other situations. Finding out what the definition of what counts as collaborative support.

What will be in the suite of treatments in Rattlesnake? We can put all in Rattlesnake in one EA.

We were trying to expedite because we heard loud and clear you wanted this to follow right behind the Soldier CE. Prescribed fire, pre-commercial thin, road closure, aspen, mountain mahogany under HFRA, only thing that can't be added in HFRA is adding woody material to streams and culverts.

We are still advancing to what was agreed previously.

Definition of collaborative – project had to be collaborated but didn't have to be agreed upon.

Folks in the environmental community are triggered by "what is the purpose of the treatment." I (Pam) know they are done for the purpose of restoration on the Malheur, but I fight off detractors because you call it precommercial thinning or commercial thinning and you are removing volume without regard to ecological value. Have to spend time with people who don't get it. Less targets on your back if you describe your treatments to make sure folks know that it is restoration.

Lori: All our treatments are described as Ponderosa pine and LOS enhancement. We haven't used precommercial thin, commercial thinning and biomass removal.

Can you change your nomenclature? It is tough.

If you were to do aspen and mountain mahogany under HFRA as fuels treatments, this seems like it would be disingenuous. It is reducing fuel and removing biomass.

Mel: As far as collaboration, what about more environmental community involvement and it is more of a two way street. It is frustrating to me to see the environmental groups not funding more people for situations like this. This would be a really good idea. Pam A. I feel fortunate to be funded to attend.

Jack: The way this collaborative is set up is to only make suggestions. It is set up as consensus or consensus minus one or two. This district has been exemplary in taking our suggestions.

Soldier CE is done. The letter has been written and we had support minus one. The next part is Rattlesnake but your form of EA is yet to be decided.

Question from Kerry: Does the farm bill CE provide enough support with consensus minus one to keep from being liable? We went on a field trip, had a meeting and we had a letter. The legal hook is not about whether this was collaborated on. When I received that letter, I took it as this was the collaborative decision and we would keep collaborating through implementation.

Mark Webb Report and take-aways from joint BMFP/Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project riparian tour and panel that was held on Oct 16.

One of the issues is we couldn't get a collaborative zone of agreement to remove commercially viable timber from the riparian zone. This is really an example of language that trips people up. Ongoing argument of not considering all the science and we would co-fund the workshop on whether to include removing commercial timber from riparian zones. BMBP had 2 scientists out and 2 stops that they selected. First critical of forest district handling of NEPA. The scientists use Pac fish and In fish as best available science. This says roads and cattle are the main issues for riparian areas.

My take away for the scientists is Historical Range of Variation is irrelevant so why would you want to target 150 years ago since it is a moving science? Stand replacing fire is more typical for the forest and the firs are more natural. Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa forest types are similar and fire return intervals were much longer historically. What dominated pre-European and what role active management can and should take. BMBP are opposed to commercial logging in riparian zones in principle. We are not talking about optimizing riparian form and function and not talking about commercial timber out of a riparian zone. Removing trees after all objectives are met. At the very end, BMFP Zone of Agreement (ZOA) is about optimizing riparian health.

Principles – historical patterns at a landscape scale, they fundamentally disagree what Historical Range of Variation was.

We have really good evidence about what the forest is in departure from. It was black and white.

We had a workshop and took a vote on our riparian ZOA. Involved section 14 and allowed removal of commercial timber when all other objectives are met.

Scientists presented that riparian areas are not a part of a frequent fire interval. Argued that removal of a commercial conifer removes shade and adds sediment to the stream. Silvicultural focus is an underlying

suspicion of taking big trees. By the end of the discussion they were okay with woody placement. We could use it for other collaboratives.

Q. Didn't we propose something similar on the Wolf project? A. Yes, trying to get it funded is expensive. We are clear to see short term impacts for long term gain. FS do that all the time. In terms of ZOA we have engaged with National Marine Fisheries on this. Thanks to BMFP for working on this ZOA. It was entertaining.

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, Dec 5

Agenda items

Type of EA on Rattlesnake, report from fire subcommittee, managed vs prescribed fire, look at the next project and see if it is near strategic for fire. Update on Soldier CE.