

Harney County Restoration Collaborative Summary Notes

August 22, 2017

Harney County Community Center

In attendance: Scott Frost, Karen Wagner, Mark Owens, Travis Swaim, Melissa Ward, Tim Boyce, Kerry Kemp, Pam Hardy, Anthony McCann, Christy Cheyne, Jack Southworth, Patty Dorroh, Jim Campbell, Mel Hall, Tyson Berttoni-Riggs Zach Williams, Dave Hannibal.

Update on 3,000 acre Farm Bill CE on Rattlesnake Project

Dave Hannibal used a drone after the July field trip and provided the flyover video for the group to view.

Comments included:

- Great to help our understanding of the forest.
- I was expecting to see wide spread bug kill, it really wasn't, the forest was very contiguous. I am sure historically there were more of the scab flats.
- I wish I could see the whole forest to keep bringing the landscape scale size.
- Q. when you fly the drone is there a way to track your tracks on the video? A. Yes, I can set up GPS waypoints and have it fly through a timber sale. This would be good to compare to ground truth data and far superior to google earth.
- Lighting is best in early morning, evening might get bleached out.
- Mortality pockets don't look that big but that is what they said about Colorado 10 years ago,
- Inspiring me to buy a drone. Important to see what folks are talking about and to get a better picture.
- Entomologist in La Grande said the beetle/ bug kill in this project is unprecedented in size for the mortality.
- Good teaching opportunity and powerful, especially if narrated in any way.
- James Johnston has asked us to go out to a harvest unit for stem mapping – Hunt timber sale in the Galena project area. Pre and post-harvest will be really helpful.
- Q. Cost of the drone? \$1300 for the drone, and have editing software.
- Big picture context is helpful. Couldn't see the dying trees? Can that be fixed with some spectrum of light.
- Dave said the drone has 30 minutes of flight time per battery. If Scott or Travis wanted to fly something in the project how would they get you information? Just need latitude/ longitude data.
- Does Malheur forest have a drone? if you had a drone would you use it? Yes, USFS would use it. There are a lot of rules to the game. When using it voluntarily it is ok, professionally takes a lot to be licensed for a drone. Rules might relax a little bit, original rules were pretty harsh, small drones are kind of in the middle. FFA licensing. To use it professionally lots and lots of rules, volunteers is not that big deal.
- Better and more useful than a field trip.
- Q. How long to get a pilot's license? A year or two. Christy will ask the forest service leadership team. Anyone can do this so it is fair advantage. It opened a lot of questions. It is interesting territory. Dave has 3 projects lined up in just the next three weeks.
- Q. How much ground can you cover? Q. You can fly pretty fast – up to 40 miles per hour. Looking down and panoramic /Can you take someone else for a flight. – yes, can take one more on a flight with goggles.

Scott Frost presentation:

Timber harvest aimed at categorical exclusion and farm bill funding. 3000 acres is the maximum and this is the worst outbreak we have seen in the forest. There is mortality from large trees to small diameter. There are many stresses to the forest. Managing stocking rate is best way to stop infestations. Infestation is ubiquitous and we are focusing on saving green. We identified 3,800 acres for treatment. We measured site for potential to grow vegetation. We discussed taking stocking rate very low but lowest we went was 30. There are a couple of different treatments. Eagle roost sites and old growth is present.

Comment: A 3000 acre CE will raise a lot of red flags in the environmental community.

We dropped some stands due to isolation. Most units in Cow Creek watershed. Dave flew over Cow Creek drainage, it is a very dry site. Pine beetle is opportunist when trees are stressed. Pine butterfly weakened, drought, overstocking all combine to stress the trees.

Forest health is in bad shape, we take what we can if this 3000 acre goes through.

Thanks for taking us along in the steps of your analysis, enjoyed the quality of conversation and this work will be what moves whole eastern Oregon forward.

Q. Can we do these as stewardship? A. This is the most challenging place in the forest. Logistically a long ways away to make a profit on harvest. Scott has been to all sites and has photos to back up modeling.

What was selection criteria for stands:

1. Stocking rate
2. improve resources, avoided 35% slopes, concern is the challenge with funding.

Leverage external partners

Tim Boyce – Update on fire situation on southern Malheur NF – wild and Rx – now and for this fall – ‘when can the trigger be pulled?’

Tim stated he doesn't think it is unreasonable to burn now but resources aren't available so that is the reality of the situation. Even for a wildfire we still need a prescription. Dana Skelly kept a log from April 15-June 15 – every day recorded if we burned, if we didn't why we didn't, we put a lot of effort in that. Say there were fire modules roaring through the forest, now they are wildland fire modules. I can't guarantee we used to have low-moderate ignition. We still have firefighting capacity issues and in the fall, we don't really don't have resources.

Mechanical and prescribed fire return interval could be longer to get it back into sync. Need to burn about every 10 years. Once return to historic range of variability, burning every 20 years is probable.

Q. How to create a larger burn window without further resources? A. Bigger area network for resources, maybe looking to other forests and regions. Cultivate contract fire crews. ODF has a 5-person crew that operates with agreements on the forest and are in place. Thinning crews wildlife & ranges can be available for prescribed fire. Vegetation management is set up out of John Day and they don't let the crews go to fires.

Tim believes it is possible to ignite a prescribed fire in October for Marshall Devine. Forest Service with the support of collaborative and general public still have capacity. We will never not burn because of lack of funds. It is best to thin first and then use prescribed fire.

Smoke Issue: I understand there are a few repercussions about violating smoke, once violated you are shut down? The main concern is the state doesn't want EPA stepping in to manage smoke.

How to create a fire tolerant forest? Burning is an art form, we need to quadruple burning on Malheur in 10 years. There is a 600,000 acre backlog in prescribed fire at the current level. All firefighters should be good at

burning. Dave Hannibal could pull 5000 -10,000 acres a year just with his people. We had this conversation a couple of years ago, and no one wanted to consider this. Partnership & attitudes will help. Need to move across the forest. We don't know if contracts can do this. Pilot project was insulting I have been on over 500 prescribed burns.

What about public perceptions? This is a concern and need to put out more information out, more of an outreach event. This is a big piece. It is a complex problem and making a plan for public perception about burning up valuable resources and smoke management need to occur.

There are a bunch of people here who have key components of the solution and know that in the context of the collaborative and we can think outside the box. We shouldn't let traditional roadblocks stop us.

After 20 years, still don't have social license to prescribed fire. If we are going for wildfire, then we need to step up the mechanical treatments. It's not limiting future fires, its broadcast burning but beyond a certain point we don't have social license for a 100,000 acre fire. Cost of a prescribed fire is \$50-70 per acre. Why doesn't Malheur have a managed wildfire plan? Malheur does have this. How should do prescription work to create a fire-resistant forest. Tim is willing to try it.

Chetco Fire and Sisters fires set us back.

Fire after mechanical is what makes it best. Run a bunch of stuff burned that has perceived value to public. Dove project will be more interesting for fire. Roaming fire modules. TNC has fire modules in Colorado. There are people in ODF asking me if I have a job for them after fire season. How to burn 30K at once? What are the boundaries for a committee and how to find a way to get around the roadblocks in terms of people capacity, resource policy, perceived at what scale to have a landscape project? Fire is our weak link in this forest we do too much commercial and then no follow up. Appreciate the time and effort Forest Service puts in with data. We know way more about projects, cost of not burning is enormous.

Prescribed fire committee: Pam, Dave, Christy, Tim, Kerry, Mark, Zach, Tyson

- Date of next meeting – the fourth Tuesday is 9 26 2017