

COMMON GROUND OF HARNEY COUNTY RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE

Created 9/22/09

Updated

April 25, 2017

The goal of HCRC 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 nearly complete consensus on the following Desired Future Conditions for the Emigrant Creek Ranger District in the forested landscape of northern Harney County.

Desired Future Conditions

Regarding Fire, Insects/Disease, and Forest Health

Our goals are:

- 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 suggest:

- 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 stand density indices (SDIs) that are appropriate for the HRV of the site. Management should drop SDIs to the lower end of the recommended (Powell's reference) management zones to allow more time between treatments.
- 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 (or as many acres as is required to get Emigrant Creek district back to historic return intervals) 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 suggest:

- As much as possible small diameter, non-commercial timber is thinned 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 (i.e. Manmade features such as roads and culverts)
- 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 suggest:

- Removal of conifers less than 150 years of age from riparian areas.
- Don’t remove too much shade all at once.
- Enhancement and protection of riparian shrubs and hardwoods.
- 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.

- Fire to regenerate existing aspens where appropriate

Regarding Late and Old Structure (LOS)

LOS stands in our two most predominant Plant Association Groups (PAGs) are defined as:

- 5 trees per acre ≥ 21 " diameter at breast height (dbh) in the Hot-Dry PAG
- 10 trees per acre ≥ 21 " dbh in the Warm-Dry PAG

Our goal is:

- Resilient and persistent LOS stands within the Historic Range of Variability

To achieve this goal, we suggest:

- Enhancing LOS by:
 - Treating excess Old Forest Multi-Strata (OFMS) stands to remove competition to historically dominant over-story trees,
 - Increase fire resilience by favoring fire tolerant species, and
 - Moving stands towards deficit Old Forest Single-Stratum (OFSS) stands

Regarding Large Trees (≥ 21 inches dbh)

Our goal is:

- To maintain large trees necessary to sustain ecological function, structure, and habitat for important wildlife species that depend on them

To achieve this goal, we suggest:

- Maintain all remnant late and old structural live trees ≥ 21 " dB that currently exist within stands proposed for harvest activities.

Exceptions where a portion of trees greater than 21" may be removed include:

- Tree(s) need to be removed to meet or maintain desired conditions for species composition on the landscape by removing shade tolerant or mixed-tolerance species in favor of shade-intolerant species.
- Tree(s) need to be removed from high density forest to meet or maintain ecologically desired conditions for low density stands on the landscape
- Tree(s) need to be removed to favor aspen and/or riparian hardwoods and other special plant habitats
- Note: Karen Coulter and the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project only agrees to the harvest of trees greater than 21" in diameter when it is done for the removal of hazard trees.

Regarding Wildlife and Fish Habitat

Our goal is:

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

To achieve this goal, we suggest:

- Consider the creation of some road closure areas to provide quality, non-motorized hunts.
- Overstory removal in places that did not historically support trees.

Regarding Vegetative Invasive Species

Our goal is:

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

Regarding Grazing

Our goal is:

- To have livestock 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
- To minimize temporary roads
- A road system that minimizes adverse effects on wildlife
- A designated ATV/snowmobile system in non-sensitive 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. (attached)

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 suggest:

- That 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, resilient forests that provide the opportunities – ecologic, economic and social – for the local community.
- The presence of infrastructure capable of utilizing wood products from restoration activities, increase contractor capacity and restore local communities and social health.
- To have local economies benefit from a diversity of year-round jobs related to restoration, forest management generally, and other ecosystem goods and services
- To have industries that are appropriately scaled to local, sustainable supply, as determined through collaborative efforts

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.
- A forest sector infrastructure is in place to create a value for restoration by-products on a sustainable basis.

To achieve this goal, we suggest:

- The bundling of projects so all costs are analyzed and considered to enable projects to be 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
- To have multiple scales of analysis, management and collaboration linking stands, watersheds, and broader landscapes.
- That the High Desert Partnership has the funding, capacity and political backing to continue aiding this collaborative process.
- That the Forest Service looks to the collaborative as a first step in developing plans and priorities for public land

To achieve this goal, we suggest:

- A new, revised forest plan be completed and ready to implement by the end of 2017

Regarding Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Our goal is:

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