**Summary Notes**

**Harney County Restoration Collaborative**

Tuesday August 7, 2018 10:00am – 3:00pm

Banquet room of the Pine Room Restaurant, [543 W. Monroe, Burns, OR](https://maps.google.com/?q=543+W.+Monroe,+Burns,+OR&entry=gmail&source=g)

**Attendees**: George Heinz, Tom Segal, Dan Bishop, Rod Klus, Patty Dorroh, Hana Maaiah, Jami Martenson, Kate Wellons, Kayla Gunther, Tatiana Dolgushina, Frances Preston, Mark Owens, Pam Hardy, Glen Johnston, Zach Williams, Matthew Cawfield, Cam Cornell, Frank Heide, Jim Sproul, Dave Traylor, Melissa Ward, Trevor Simmons, Jim Campbell, K.D. Burman, Mel Hall, Chris Rossel, Tim Boyce, Steve Beverlin, Caleb Sturgill

Action Items:

* Send Consensus Statement document to group prior to next meeting – *Pam Hardy / Ben Cate*
* Clarify the verbiage of interested person vs. an objector. Clarity around the 10 day notification period. When / where is this printed/publish. – *Steve Beverlin*
* Find out when the next forest cruise will happen – *Steve Beverlin*

**Welcome and introductions**

Introductions around the room answering the question of what economic and emotional ties you have to the southern Malheur forest.

**Report out from Fuels Monitoring Crew – Marshall Divine, Canyon Creek Fire**

Crew gave an update on the 2018 field season. It should be noted that data has not yet been analyzed for the 2018 season and these are simply personal impressions at this time.

Fuel Treatment Monitoring (both mechanical and prescribed fire) However, there hasn’t been fire in the monitoring plots yet, only mechanical thinning. They have looked at fuel response to a wildfire in Canyon Creek though.

Pollinator abundance and diversity (as an indicator of environmental health)

* Use netting & pan traps to capture then taking specimens home to identify and quantify

 Research objectives:

1. Develop an index of invertebrate life in Marshall divine
2. Determine the effects of thinning & burning on pollinator populations (Theory is that opening up canopy will increase plant diversity & subsequently pollinators)

Control Plot Issues

There were numerous control plots that were supposed to be untreated that were thinned. 9 of the 16 control sites were mechanically treated. – lack of coordination between local USFS staff & crew about where treatments were occurring.

Grazing & data collection:

Ran into issues with cattle in allotments during sampling (trampled wet areas, grazed grasses – makes identification very difficult) – again, lack of coordination with local USFS staff as to timing of grazing operations

Canyon Creek Fire area

Grass Diversity pie chart – notable takeaway from this slide was that there was 3% cheatgrass cover and predominately desirable native species.

Forest Structure & Bird diversity – birds as indicators of forest health

How will single story forest structure affect birds in Marshall Divine?

Questions from around the room:

Q. Is there a high diversity of pollinators?

A. Data is not analyzed yet, but it appears there is a high diversity of pollinators

Comment on grasses: It is time specific, different grasses mature at different times of year. Annuals (invasive) mature early and perennial (native) mature later generally.

Q. Are you monitoring for shrub response?

A: Yes, we are also trying to document more mahogany.

Annual grasses much more dominant on the Canyon Creek fire than Marshall Divine. Could be due to the severity/intensity of the fire. More likely to have undesirable species dominate degraded/scorched sites.

**Update on fire situation from Tim Boyce**

Tim showed a slide of the Energy Release Component (ERC) at Crow Flat. ERC is a measurement of the available energy (in BTU’s) per unit area of fuels within the flaming front of the head of a fire. Currently in the 97th percentile this year and approaching historically high ERC numbers.

We are also approaching historically low fuel moisture (1000 hr fuels)

7 fires have occurred on district so far (4 in June and 3 in July)

Looked into managing some of those fires, but for various reasons they wouldn’t have worked (near private, too much fuel, fire effects in a small 3 acre fire in rattlesnake were extreme so it wouldn’t have worked).

One way to expand our window in the fall is to burn at night (when rh’s start to drop & temps drop)

Showed slide of smoke in spring prescribed burn vs. smoke the first of August. (smoke during the spring burn had an increase in smoke during the night which dispersed early in the morning, whereas the smoke we’re experiencing in August peaks at around noon)

Comment by Jim Sproul – it seems like a priority for management should be reducing fine fuels (in July / August) through cattle grazing, grasses are the most combustible fuel source and are what carries the fire.

Tim’s comment in response to previous comment: The buildup of duff & litter is the bigger issue, whether there is grass or not. Cattle aren’t going to remove the buildup of those types of fuel, which also carry the fire and result in most of the tree mortality (buildup around tree base).

Dave Traylor: ‘Fire can be a useful servant or a fearful master’… Grass is an accelerant that will start fires, we need to realize this. Also, the general public’s knowledge about this is limited.

**Review draft consensus statement regarding fire - Fire Committee.**

Pam Hardy read off the (April) draft consensus statement – we worked through the document as a group changing and highlighting things that needed to be addressed along the way.

Several notable comments were:

* North facing slopes (removing these is taking out a large portion of acreage available and often areas with most & highest dollar timber)
* Quantifying prescribed fire goals (is 20,000 acres a reasonable number to include in the document?)
* In regard to managed wildfires, Harney County won’t sign on unless there has been a silviculture treatment of the area in last 10 years. NEPA approved for fire.
* Let’s not stay inside of the Forest Plan sideboards and ask for what we really want to accomplish and work from there.

Ben will send out draft to the group prior to next meeting, where we will try to wrap up this document.

**Update on revised Malheur National Forest Plan from MNF Supervisor, Steve Beverlin -** Highlights of the plan and how it will help HCRC bring about ‘*healthy and resilient forests while providing social and economic benefits to the local community’*, which is our common ground goal.

* Had over 4000 comments, numerous public meetings.
* Had 5 alternatives, developed 2 new alternatives based on public comments
* Now in the objection process: (USFS used to appeal / litigate, now objection process is built into the management plans)
* August 28th is last day to file an objection, followed by a 90 day objection resolution process
* There is 1 record of decision for the Malheur, Umatilla & Wallowa-Whitman
* The easiest document to navigate is the summary, more concise than full plan and highlights all the important topics (Steve went through this summary in the meeting)
* The 3 forests’ plans were all from 1990’s (purpose is to update these plans)

**Changes between the draft & final:**

* Added 3 modified alternatives for alternative E
* Alternative E (modified) is the preferred alternative (best to look at this alternative and THEN look at some of the others if you have specific issues with this alternative to pick & choose from other alternatives to find a combination you are satisfied with.
* Access: heard lots of concerns around this (not enough access)
* Added a standard for air quality (we will comply with all state & federal laws)
* Increase aquatics (watershed conditions) component of plan
* Updated the economic & social well being component to more closely reflect the tie of economic benefit to timber resources
* Grazing was an issue, working with counties to modify this & come to agreement
* Additional background on the Why… Why we include some things (soil, etc.)
* Wilderness: we changed the wilderness from a guidleline to a standard.
* Added in some wildlife standards (elk security, etc.)
* Management options (new forest plans are less prescriptive - More about desired condition we want to see on the landscape than exact prescriptions)
* There was 1 recommended wilderness area: Mclellan Mtn. (near John Day)
* The total was adding 2,900 acres to strawberry mtn. wilderness
* Proposed wild & Scenic area (lake creek) – will not impact snowmobile access

**Clarification Around Objections:**

Q: What is the difference between and objector and an interested person?

A: A person can only have an objection if they commented previously in the open solicitation timeframe. Interested persons can object (if they hadn’t commented previously) but they can’t have an active dialogue in the discussion.

Mark Owens: It’s not adversarial, it’s part of the process. Objections are an expected part of the process meant to strengthen the final plan.

Q: I’ve heard east side screens were pulled and then backdoored back in. True?

A: They were pulled out, but some of the pieces were put back in in various ways…

Q: If something new was added to plan (even though they didn’t comment during open solicitation) can we still object?

A: Yes, if it is truly new information. BUT NOT if it was in the range of variability analyzed. (for example timber was analyzed in the plan with a range of 0-250 million board feet) The plan changed from 50 million to 84 million, so it was within the range analyzed in the initial plan and therefore it is not considered new, and someone who didn’t comment during the open solicitation timeframe cannot object.

Where is the analysis that gives us sustainable harvest? The ASQ.

**Travel Management Plan Conversation**

Right now we are an open forest, with certain closed roads seasonally.

After the plan is final we will fulfill the plan to analyze the travel management plan and once that is done, it will be a closed forest with permissible roads. Closed to the general public, but not to permitted use (such as timber sales, pre-commercial thinning, restoration projects, etc.)

No specific changes are made in the forest plan revision. That comes after the travel management plan has been analyzed. (we are one of the last forests to have not already done this)

Q: Do they have a cruise on the general forest?

A: No, we don’t. We have cruises for our project specific areas, but not over the entire forest.

**Grazing Conversation**

Q: What is different between preferred alternative and original draft with grazing standards?

A: It was a standard in the original draft, now it’s a guideline. Looked further into the what-if’s as far as stubble heights, stream bank alteration standards, etc.

Mark O: We don’t have trend (grazing) data in the Southern Malheur, and so my fear is that due to the data gap we will have people being moved off allotments in areas that may not warrant it ecologically?

Q : What is your gut feeling, as far as where this plan will be in January of next year?

A: I think that there will be some holdups in Washington (potentially) and I just don’t think it will be done by end of year. But, there are some real good reasons to move forward. We will be operating outside of our current forest plan very soon & will likely get litigated when that occurs so to avoid that, we need to get this approved asap.

**Final comments and wrap up**

* would like to know the difference between treated (in Marshall Divine) versus untreated areas
* Request to hold meeting later in the day in Sept. (Pam Hardy can’t arrive until 2:00)
* Patience is key. If we keep working together with patience we can get somewhere & that is something special in the divided world we live in today.
* Thanks for your leadership on the fire side of things (last week the F.S. was spending 18 million / day on fires) If we could act more preventatively/proactively it could have a very big impact.
* Very similar issues in other collaborative groups, thanks to all the non-gov employees for showing up and participating. That is what makes this group strong.
* Find it strange that the monitoring crew did no coordinating with local resources.
* The fact we are approaching a historically hot & dry is sobering.

September agenda item:  Darren Clarke, ODFW researcher on how deer and elk are affected by roads (Starkey Experimental Forest).

**Next meeting will be held on September 11, 2018**