

Harney County Restoration Collaborative

Summary of February 28, 2017 Meeting, High Desert Partnership Office

Update on Knox Project – Amy Mathis, Prairie City District Office

This project is in both Grant and Harney County, Wolf Project is directly to the west. Early summer scoping is planned. Open up a lot to redevelop the old savannah. Working with range with this and planning native grass seeding in the savannah area.

Questions/ Statements from Collaborative members:

Q. Cutting big trees? A. Not at this point. 80% is hot/dry and warm/dry pine so not a lot of big trees.

South of this project both private and BLM has mostly been treated with a prescribed burn last fall. Good to see this project being developed to continue the work in this year.

Q. How many commercial acres? A. Around 12K acres of the 30K acres. 9 million board feet.

Q. What are blue areas – commercial harvest essential? A. Some are 9 inches and bigger and some are 7 in and bigger. Want to get a lot of the smaller stuff. There is a lot of cleanup to do.

Q. When was it last harvested? A. Anywhere from the 1940s to the last big sale in the 1980s and planted on 8-10-inch spacing. Going to be an interesting project with so much small stuff and hard to get the funding for that. We have to work hard to find funding for the restoration. It is a challenge.

Q. What is happening in the Malheur river corridor? A. Some of the drainages are really thick. It would have to be skylined. Up to 300 acres can be in the river plan for nonscheduled harvest.

Q. Treatment in aspen units? A. Take out conifer competition – 150 foot buffer around all aspens. No diameter limit right now. Leave legacy.

Q. Does this area have less bigger trees than others areas we have been in? There is over historic – losing big trees due to pine butterfly.

Statement: 12,000 acres and 9 million feet – not enough for a commercial harvest. Need to get the value because it is an expensive project.

Q. What is the tree species makeup? A. Main species is ponderosa pine. Doug fir is out there but not a lot. Some larch in the mix.

Q. Are you Treating cat 4s? Cat 4s are intermittent streams – they want to treat but 1200 acres is non-commercial and 300 acres that could be commercial. Probably not treating in the 50-foot zone.

Q. Isn't James Johnston looking to do a meadow research project? Mollisols and plant communities and also contours. Wildlife wants openings to be bigger.

Q. Treating with fire in the small stem areas? A. Yes, but fuels folks know this better. Some hand piling because too steep?

Q. What stage NEPA? A. proposed action out. Statement: I feel FS is being disingenuous by being middle of the road. Take a strident stand – this is what the area needs and this is why it needs to happen. Mechanical treatment done on precommercial – can put in for CFLRP funding.

Q. What about roads? - A. A few closed naturally and won't open them up.

Q. Any recreation trail system? A. 6-8 miles – only foot traffic.

Why are we leaving this out again for mechanized traffic? On Southern Malheur zero miles are designated. There is funding out there for trails with state parks and still no ideas for mechanized trails. I keep bringing it up and nothing happens. Dan could advance this in scoping comments. Logging roads could be used for mechanized and even seasonally is fine.

Brenda Smith – HDP website

High Desert Partnership is supporting HCRC with a page on the HDP website. www.highdesertpartnership.org
On the HCRC page there are resources that include research and papers of interest brought up by the collaborative. Also where meeting notes from HCRC meetings are posted. Melissa Speeg, HDP communications coordinator sends out monthly newsletters. This is a comprehensive site for HCRC and encourage collaborative to use this resource.

Rich Fulton, Plant Manager; and Jeff Maben, Forester - Malheur Lumber Co. – Powerpoint presentation on website. Rich and Jeff provided information about how Malheur Lumber Co. is staying in business with the small diameter timber coming into the mill.

NEPA updates on Dove and Flat:

Dove is out for 45-day objection day period. Comment period has passed, and also during scoping then they have standing to object. No objections as of yet. Around March 26 is when objection period is over. Then go through an objection resolution period within 45 days and that would end around May 10. Can make a decision on Dove toward the end of May.

Q. How can HCRC help? A. you have been involved through the process and now just waiting on objections. If you don't object you can't be part of the objection resolution. Deal with them individually but meet as a group. You only have say what you object about. Can't object about the process. For Flat project – 27 comments on that project closed in Jan. We are done sorting through comments and have an alternative to meet cover issues and looking at road specific issues. Waiting on us now and next public comment period will be in May. In comments – we got a lot of comments for Flat – most were the same comments. Most comments were from Grant County on the road issues. Usual comments are to log up to a non-commercial alternative. Part of purpose and need is to capture the economic value of the resource, and non-commercial doesn't meet this.

Zach Williams: Description of small log processing plant being built near Seneca Powerpoint presentation on website.

What kinds of material will be processed at the mill? What products made?

How did this come about – Parma post and pole did not have enough supply. Consumption in a year – 4-5 million feet – 28-35 thousand tons per year. Iron Triangle purchased, working with Parma post and pole and Zach is in charge of getting it going. Mike thinks we can run the yard with 6-7 people – 10 new employees with the fire wood. We need a longer-term solution with initially being designed. Plans for juniper? No not right now.

Can forest service buy for fence stays?

Not going to solve problem

Doweling machine cuts to diameter, different

We are working with Wisewood to do a biomass to heat system? We don't know what the consumption is yet – around 3200 cords.

34,000 tons – let's do the hard math – 17 tons/ acre on the Malheur, can take only 2,000 acres a year

We could produce up to 100k acres / per year but with the market it is only a step in the right direction.

Travis Swaim: Where is our next project located?

Rattlesnake project

Treated south and north and west. Critics would say too late here with insect and pathogen tree less.

Prevention at the scale is not an option.

Do you change the way you move the trees out of the forest? Vector control? Moving material out of the forest depends on market. Currently not a market – if we had to take that fiber out of the forest it would bankrupt us



all. A lot of these new markets requires multiple people to take the risk on. Removing the piles with fire? When we say recently harvested – pieces were harvested. Rattlesnake is all in Harney county – so timelines can be a little shorter. Only required to have one action alternative. Is there a way to do commercial harvest for more fire and less precommercial thinning? More areas being thinned by fire – that is being considered. What about the steep canyons? We are not ruling out line logging and we have the roads. Anything we can do to accelerate the process? Already pretty declined.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday, March 28 Main Topic will be Areas of agreement to review