

## **Harney County Restoration Collaborative Meeting Summary**

### **Tuesday, June 5, 2018 Field Tour of Spring 2018 Prescribed burning on the southern Malheur National Forest**

**Attending:** Mark Owens- Harney Co., Jim Sproul- citizen Grant Co., Caleb Sturgill- ODF, Mark Blaine U of OR, Tom Segal, Rod Klus, ODFW, George Heinz, Jim Campbell-citizen Harney Co., Dave Hannibal- Grayback Forestry, John Reponen-BLM, Pam Hardy-WELC, Guy Sproul- log trucker, Howard Richburg, Travis Swaim, Lisa Foster, Mel Hall, Tim Boyce, KD Burman, Melissa Ward, Christy Cheyne, Sarah Bush-USFS, Ben Cate, Brenda Smith- High Desert Partnership, Jack Southworth-facilitator

Early comments before touring the sites that were burned this spring. Interested in how to lessen costs of restoration?, How to achieve bigger acreage numbers?, How to reach more people for education?

#### **Lisa Foster – Rare plant survey**

Lisa took the group to a patch of Blue Mt. Milk Vetch. Occurs in open / sage meadows in Ponderosa pine forests. Grows in cattle trails, deer trails. Lisa monitors populations and does vegetation treatments that will favor the populations. Conifer encroachment into the meadows negatively impacts the plant success.

**Tim Boyce – Why use fire?** It is a tool to meet resource area objectives including habitat for species and increasing nutrient cycling

Stop #1 – May 7 burn of 3000 acres. Most of the burn was moderate to severe. The acres burned included no previous treatment, commercial and pre-commercial thinning treatment. Area last burned in 2001, some trees were insect kills. We couldn't get the fire to burn in a 6 acre area that burned 3 years ago. This is a mosaic burn pattern. We try to keep the pine needles from building up around the base of the big trees so when the needles burn, the tree cambium layer is not burned. The big trees are not harvested because of 20" rule. Most of the trees are in the 80-100 yr. range with a few big remnants.

Q. What was the allowable mortality? In the burn plan it was conservative. Trying to reduce seedlings by 50%, reduce 5" diameter up to 25%.

Stop #2 - Up on a knob where there was high intensity with slope and wind. There were pockets of mortality. Comments from the group included:

- Looks good
- Looks perfect
- Don't like seeing the pocket of mountain mahogany that got burned (2)
- These trees will fall down, creating a jack-strawed mess
- In our current projects, can we capture commercial values? Designing our treatments with more clumps of trees.
- If we have more of this fire on the landscape it will allow us to do more of this burning.

Jack asked Tim for the final takeaway at this stop: We take all the concerns that I have heard this morning into consideration when prescribing fire. There is an in-exactness to it but it is also the beauty of it in creating a diverse forest in a mosaic pattern.

It would be good to get every project an economic treatment before prescribing fire. But, we have “wildlife cover” requirements, 21” diameter rule requirements. We won’t get relief unless we can change policy and have been ineffective in changing policy.

In the Marshall Devine and Silvies Units we harvested 15 million board feet. There is not enough board feet in this stand we are looking at. We would have to subsidize. We need guarantees for investors for infrastructure. How do we get to ecosystem health and have economics with it?

Industry needs consistency. Need to talk to understand the issues. What can we influence? A lot of the economic value was captured here in the early collaborative agreements.

Q. What is holding up our goal?

A. More of an organizational issue? Is anyone making plans to change this in the future? There is economic risk and weather risk? We are figuring out forest burn plans for a landscape scale. There is a right fire, right piece of ground and right time.

Smoke management and public perception is going better. But there are folks in town who think we are just burning up the forest and not capturing economic value of the resource.

Tim (Boyce) has been a driving force for prescribed fire and has done a lot of good in educating.









