

HARNEY COUNTY RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE  
Meeting Notes – November 23, 2015  
Pine Room Restaurant, Burns, OR



Attending: Dana Skelly, Travis Swaim, Josh Giles, Tom Segal, Tim Boyce, Phil Jenkins, Zach Williams, Melissa Ward, Jim Campbell, Nathan Poage, Kerry Kemp, Lisa Van Teegum, Roy Sutcliffe, Dan Bishop, Jason Kesling, Becky Miller, Brenda Smith, Jason McGovern and Jack Southworth.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

Monitoring Report from Becky Miller on Marshall Devine project  
*Collaborative Forested Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP): Monitoring effects of restoration in the Malheur National Forest*

As part of an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Grant for Monitoring in the Wolf Creek Project, Becky developed a poster for outreach purposes for HCRC. The poster will be available on the High Desert Partnership website – [www.highdesertpartnership.org](http://www.highdesertpartnership.org)

- Main questions monitoring is designed to answer: What extent do treatments shift species composition from fire intolerant to fire tolerant species?, How do treatments change fire behavior effects and How do treatments influence understory vegetation composition and function?  
Early data indicates:
- Moderate increase in surface fuels post treatment.
- Not much difference in litter layer.
- Logging methods may have an effect.
- It will be interesting to observe over time especially after prescribed fire has been across some of the treatment areas.

Lessons Learned from the Canyon Complex Fire from Dana Skelly

Dana provided a video produced by John Day FS on the Canyon Creek Fire. It is not available to the public but FS hopes to make it available in the future. Dana's points from the fires this season:

- Have to be able to do more prescribed burning both in terms of time (longer season) and scale (more acres).
- Need to communicate better with other resource folks about the timing and importance of prescribed fire.
- Need to plan ahead and let other agencies and forest users in on the planning.

- DEQ and EPA smoke constraints and the need for more burning makes accomplishing more burning difficult.

**Comments:**

Kerry Kemp – A new publication with a review of nineteen studies showed that those restoration projects that had prescribed fire post treatment showed a real difference in being able to tolerate a wildfire. Without prescribed fire there was no difference between treated and untreated areas. (Kerry sent the pdf of this paper, available on [www.highdesertpartnership.org](http://www.highdesertpartnership.org))

Jason McGovern – Regarding burning more – there needs to be a mix of big and small units. When conditions are right for a long period of time we can tackle the big units. If they're not, like this year, we can still work on small units. We need 100 to 300 acre units as well as the 10,000 acre units because we don't know what our fire window will be.

Dana Skelly – Need to see more open stands and mechanical treatments need to be a part of it. We can't restore the forest with just fire alone however we could treat some areas like Inventoried Roadless Areas with just fire.

Josh Giles – Need to keep skips as far from roads as possible to keep game away from roads.

Tom Segal - We wildlife guys want hotter fires to get more shrub response and overstory removal. Need to work on zones of agreement between wildlife and silviculture regarding burn sizes. Need to treat different areas at different times.

Tim Boyce – It's important to remember the Canyon Complex was a weather event – not a fire event. If Josh wants a 50 Basal Area on his projects then we should cut it back to 30 so it will grow back to 50. If we just cut it back to 50 then in ten or fifteen years it will be back up to 80 basal area.

Phil Jenkins – Dana estimates 70% of the treated areas were heavily burned in the Canyon Complex.

Zach Williams – James Johnston has written a spatial pattern paper that says our dry forests burned regularly in a low severity manner. There were fewer stand replacement fires than people think.

Jim Campbell – We need to burn more acres whether they are in big or small units.

The "One Thing" Exercise.

If the goal of HCRC is something along the lines of 'creating a diverse, fire tolerant forest with a full complement of old growth Ponderosa Pine, healthy aspen stands, healthy riparian areas, good habitat for deer and elk and good jobs and recreational opportunities' -

**What is the one thing that HCRC could do that is currently impossible but if it were possible would greatly and positively enhance our ability to accomplish the above?**

Zach Williams: Thin throughout the diameter range of a stand. We wouldn't be hammering the mid-diameter trees and we would be increasing variability across the landscape. There would be less heavy fuels on the ground.

Phil Jenkins: If we could cut trees greater than 21" dbh we would be managing for the whole forest, not just a part of it.

Tom Segal: Allow for overstory removal to create a mix of brush and trees thereby improving wildlife habitat.

Josh: Being able to remove trees at both ends of the spectrum – greater than 21" dbh as well as the really small stuff.



Travis: Being able to thin throughout the diameter range. Take some trees greater than 21”.

Dana: Get prescribed fire treated for air quality purposes the same as wildfire. Wildfires don’t require burn permits. This would increase the burn opportunities.

Jason McGovern: More fire. It would manage tree density, decrease small diameter timber and allow more water to infiltrate the soil.

Jason Kesling: Treat thinned and unthinned areas with large prescribed fires.

Dan Bishop: Harvest more volume per acre, harvest some of the large diameter trees, treat riparian areas and end up with a forest that is better for younger trees.

Roy Sutcliffe: Create year round closures that are at least four square miles in size after treatments in order to provide secluded areas for hunters and wildlife.

Lisa Van Teegum: Create a larger effective burn window.

Becky Miller: Allow wildfire to play more of a role with a variety of seral stages across the landscape. We have species adapted to fire across the landscape and we should acknowledge that.

Kerry Kemp: Allow wildfires to burn under more moderate conditions. Use wildfires as a tool. Would have to change views of society towards wildfire.

Nathan Poage: Broader burn windows within a stabilization window of fuels reduction.

Jim Campbell: Push projects through the pipeline that don’t follow programmatic NEPA and thereby create a more resilient forest.

Melissa Ward: Have an updated Forest Plan making projects easier.

What would be the first step you could take in making the impossible a reality?

Melissa Ward: An updated Forest Plan and the Social license to amend forest plan.

Nathan Poage: Demo projects with participation from strongest critics.

Kerry Kemp: Support from local community such as commissioners and mayors to talk to legislators to get rules changed.

Becky Miller: Start a narrative in the local community about how forests should function.

Roy Sutcliffe: Make burning a priority from higher levels in the Forest Service. Shouldn’t be able to persecute or fire a ranger for having a fire get out of control. Have to have restoration targets in the Forest Service as well as timber harvest targets.

Dan Bishop: New forest plan would be number one as well as changing laws and legislators back in D. C.

Jason Kesling: Education to policy people and communicate that education back to the local level.

Jason McGovern: Do a better job of educating local folks on the importance of fire on the landscape. Thank K through 12.

Dana Skelly: There’s a lot of risk with fire but there’s also a price for not doing fire. No one in the Forest Service ever loses their job for not doing a burn.

Travis Swaim: Be willing to endure litigation to get the treatments we believe in.

Josh Giles: We need a broader social license to use burning and harvest trees greater than 21”.

Tom Segal: We need to get Karen Coulter back in the room.

Tim Boyce: Get buy in from the local community for longer fire period.

Phil Jenkins: Get the ability to produce smoke with prescribed fires.

Zach Williams: Weigh in with the Blue Mountain ID team and see if there are ways they can help us with these large scale issues.