



Strategic Plan: 2017-2020

DRAFT: December 2016

FINAL: February 2017

Mission

Blue Mountain Forest Partners (BMFP) is a diverse group of stakeholders who work together to create and implement a shared vision to improve forest resilience and economic vitality of communities in the Blue Mountains.

Vision

Our vision is that the Malheur National Forest remains resilient to climate change and natural and anthropogenic disturbances by containing an appropriate heterogeneity of species (conifer and deciduous) and patterns across the landscape. We desire waterways that provide clean, cool water that supports native wildlife, rangeland health, and upland forests. Wildlife populations are thriving, which contributes to important social values inherent in public lands enjoyed by many. Because the landscape is healthy, so are the surrounding communities.

To achieve this vision, BMFP works toward restoring landscape resilience by maintaining or restoring high priority watersheds to healthy conditions. BMFP works to increase economic and organizational capacity by creating a sustainable program of work, and supporting appropriately scaled infrastructure, new and emerging markets, and local economic benefits.

BMFP Operating Principles

BMFP is a member-driven organization representing a broad constituency of stakeholders interested in healthy forest ecosystems, economic vitality, and quality of life in Grant and Harney counties. BMFP has clear codes of governance that structure its operations and its working relationship with the National Forest.

BMFP engagement with the Malheur National Forest supports efficient and timely progress of projects through selection, planning, execution, and monitoring phases of project planning. At all times the focus of projects is to support steady progress towards the long-term goal of the Forest as a healthy, diverse ecosystem that is resilient to natural and anthropogenic

disturbance, and that helps ensure communities are safe from wildfires. Project selection and scale of execution is such that major restoration¹ at the overall Forest level will be evident in a 30-year timeframe.

Activity in the forest and use of forest resources are foundational to the economic vitality and the quality of life of our local communities, fostering a diversity of business and employment opportunities and supporting the infrastructure necessary to create sustainable and science-based utilization of the natural resources available from the Forest. BMFP supports the utilization of forest resources and related opportunities to strengthen local communities.

BMFP Strengths and Accomplishments

Since its founding in 2006, BMFP has achieved the following benchmarks:

- A better understanding of stakeholders' interests has resulted in better communication and understanding, which has led to an increase in trust among stakeholders; in turn, trust building has led to an increased willingness to take risks as part of the adaptive management process.
- As trust among participants has increased, larger, more complex restoration projects have been implemented without an increase in administrative objections or litigation, particularly when compared to other similarly-situated national forests.
- Forest Service staff support for collaboration has improved dramatically, from merely 3% in 2006 to 97% in 2013, resulting in accelerated restoration on the National Forest.
- Increased confidence levels on the part of the Forest Service that encourage it to be less risk-averse and more willing to pursue challenging restoration efforts.
- Landscape-scale restoration projects are underway, log trucks are delivering timber to the local mill, and contractors are implementing more complex, collaboratively-developed treatments.
- BMFP members share the conviction we can accomplish more together than individually.
- BMFP's credibility has grown and is viewed as a model for other collaborative efforts, which allows it increased access to high level professionals and decision makers.
- Helped to secure a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program project designation in 2012, and significantly expanded the project boundary in 2015 – the only CFLRP project in the nation to do so.

¹ BMFP's restoration vision includes improving the resiliency of the Malheur National Forest to future disturbances by restoring forest ecosystems to appropriate ecological structure, composition, and density, which includes reducing fuel loading (surface, ladder, and crown fuels) where appropriate, and thereby reducing the potential for undesirable fire behavior across the landscape. Our restoration activities improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat and water quality, and contribute to the social and economic vitality of local communities by providing forest products from the Malheur National Forest.

- Expanded Zones of Agreement based on the best available science that inform restoration of dry pine forests, riparian areas, aspen, moist mixed conifer forests, and goshawk protection.
- Increased trust and quality of communication that has enabled diverse stakeholder groups to productively engage highly contentious issues such as post-fire management and salvage logging.
- Collaboratively developed projects that have increased timber harvest and service work that helped keep Malheur Lumber and area contractors in business and expand their business opportunities.

Opportunities and Challenges

Although BMFP has made significant progress towards implementing its mission and vision, challenges remain. Grouped into five categories, we view these as opportunities to grow the organization: 1) Project Development and Implementation; 2) Adaptive Management; 3) Policy Development; 4) Broad Community Awareness; 5) Long-Term Restoration Agenda; and 6) Organizational Resiliency and Vitality.

Project Development and Implementation. To increase the pace, scale, and quality of restoration on the Malheur National Forest, the Forest Service must develop science-based, legally-sufficient projects that accurately reflect BMFP’s restoration vision. This requires a robust adaptive management program that focuses on maximizing transparency in the restoration process, and includes outreach to affected stakeholders to share the results of our restoration efforts. Adequate Forest Service funding, coupled with broad stakeholder agreement regarding restoration prescriptions, will contribute to a faster turn-around time for environmental analysis within the confines of existing law and will foster institutionalize trust among partners.

Adaptive Management. BMFP will play a leading role in developing an adaptive approach to forest management. BMFP will be a leading partner in multi-party monitoring efforts that will develop information about the effects of restoration activities on resources that will inform future planning efforts. BMFP will also participate in scientific research that develops new information that informs planning and decision-making.

Policy Advocacy. To date, BMFP has focused on increasing the pace of restoration on the Malheur National Forest rather than policy advocacy or education. This has enabled us to reach significant agreement on most aspects of forest restoration locally, but it is time for us to broaden our focus to include regional and national level policy formulation if we are to continue to be successful. To this end BMFP should educate agency staff and elected policymakers at all appropriate levels (local, state, regional, national) about the realities of doing collaboration right, the need to fund forest restoration, and the need to develop creative partnerships.

Broad Community Awareness. While many in Grant and Harney counties, as well as regionally and nationally, have begun to familiarize themselves with BMFP’s work, broader support for our work is necessary if we wish to continue to increase our ecological and socioeconomic impact locally. In particular, BMFP needs to better explain its work to local constituencies and stakeholders to achieve additional support for the “local solution” the collaborative group has developed. BMFP also needs to conduct additional outreach to distant constituencies in urban areas, and to defend its science-based restoration approach to those stakeholders who may be skeptical of collaborative conservation.

An important aspect of BMFP’s work has always been a consideration of the socioeconomic effects of forest restoration. While BMFP has focused on the supply side of the equation, particularly the need for a consistent supply of raw material, the demand side is integrally tied to the availability of forest products. To that end, strong markets for forest products are required if forest restoration is to be successful. While BMFP does not have the capacity to focus on creating new or enhancing existing markets for the byproducts of restoration, BMFP is often well-positioned to address market-based challenges by developing innovative approaches to restoration (i.e., ten-year stewardship contract).

Long-Term Restoration Agenda. While this strategic plan is designed to guide BMFP’s activities over the next 3 – 5 years, there are longer-term considerations that can shape our work during this time. In particular, the Forest Service adopted the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (forest plan) in 1990, long before many scientific advancements in forest management had been made. Indeed, the 1990 forest plan is largely outdated, which can constrain contemporary restoration activities. Although the Forest Service has been revising the forest plan for almost a decade, even this revision process predates the establishment of BMFP and may not reflect the social and ecological progress that has been made over the past decade on the Malheur National Forest. It may be in the best interest of BMFP to consider involvement in the revision process as it moves forward.

Organizational Resiliency and Vitality. As BMFP has grown since its inception in 2006, the organization has developed an engaged board of directors and dedicated staff. There is often more work to do for board and staff than can be completed in any reasonable time frame, and the risk of burnout is real for staff, board, and volunteers of the organization. Ensuring that the expectations and workload of staff, board, and volunteers is reasonable will be important to the long-term viability of the BMFP.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal #1: By 2020, BMFP will maximize the restoration footprint to achieve desired conditions within the Southern Blues Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program project area. These treatments will be ecologically appropriate and efficiently implemented.

Objective #1: Annually, BMFP collaborates with the Forest Service on at least two CFLRP restoration project areas; and

Objective #2: Annually, The Forest Service implements at least two BMFP collaboratively-developed CFLRP projects that achieve ecologically appropriate desired conditions within the project area by treatment's end; acres treated should range between 25,000-50,000 annually.

Activities:

- Maintain social license for implementing large, ecologically appropriate landscape restoration projects.
- Identify and address barriers to improve efficiencies for planning and implementing large landscape restoration projects.
- Host project field tours, monitoring field trips, project meetings, science forums and/or other tools to build agreement on priority projects on the Malheur National Forest.
- Use ecologically appropriate principles to develop BMFP Zones of Agreement and inform proposed projects on the Malheur National Forest.
- Work with community members, the Forest Service and other agencies to increase prescribed fire on the landscape.

Objective #3: Annually, BMFP and the Forest Service implement the monitoring plan to analyze impacts of forest treatments and complete the adaptive management cycle.

Activities:

- Host monitoring field trips to develop understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our restoration projects.
- Develop and track indicators that reflect socioeconomic benefits for area communities generated by restoration projects.
- Work with scientists to develop new scientific research priorities and actively participate in a variety of scientific research projects.
- Work with the Forest Service and university partners to implement the Forest Vegetation and Fuels Monitoring Program.
- Host regular presentations that share information about scientific research and monitoring results at BMFP meetings.
- Host science forums featuring researchers doing cutting edge research relevant to BMFP goals and objectives.
- Host a regular (at least yearly) science and monitoring forum that shares scientific and monitoring program information and results with Forest Service partners.

- Share information with other collaborative groups, the media, scientists, and managers at conferences and other events.

Objective #4: Engage in policy advocacy on topics relevant to BMFP that advance our restoration vision.

Activities:

- Conduct briefings on relevant existing and emerging legal issues for agency and nonfederal partners.
- Engage in and support emerging policy changes designed to increase the use of prescribed fire on the landscape.
- Engage with local, state, and federal elected officials to educate them about BMFP and our restoration work, and to seek their support for relevant portions of our work.
- Engage local, regional, and national media outlets around BMFP work.
- Advocate for a land and resource management plan (forest plan) that embodies our restoration vision.
- Engage a broader array of state and federal agencies to better align their natural resource approaches/responsibilities with restoration efforts on the Malheur National Forest.
- Build constituency to support co-located, multi-agency staff to engage with BMFP in project development, implementation, and monitoring.
- Present at least one panel on BMFP efforts at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon.

Objective #5: By 2020, ensure Forest Service contracts and agreements prioritize local benefit and reasonable implementation costs when awarding restoration work, and reasonable expectations when inspecting such work.

Activities:

- Meet with contractors to identify challenges, concerns, and desires or suggestions they have in the current contracting context.
- Meet with Malheur National Forest staff to identify challenges, concerns, and desires or suggestions they have in the current contracting context.
- Work with both to develop a list of criteria that will serve to identify local benefits that are legal, robust, relevant, and implementable.
- Work with both to develop and implement an approach to contract inspection and acceptance that is outcome based, reasonably applied, and meets the needs of contractors and the Malheur National Forest practically speaking.
- Engage the RO, and possibly the WO, to ensure Forest Service contracts and agreements prioritize local benefit and reasonable implementation costs when awarding restoration work, and reasonable expectations when inspecting such work.

Goal #2: By 2020, funding for planning, implementation and monitoring of forest restoration projects on the Malheur National Forest is appropriately allocated to meet restoration treatment needs and available at a level required to treat the agreed upon acreage.

Objective #1: Annually, the Malheur National Forest base budget is maintained and the accelerated restoration budget is increased by the amount needed to meet restoration goals.

Activities:²

- Develop an ask to congressional representatives that reflects broad stakeholder agreement and documents past impacts on the Forest and the community.
- Develop talking points and a call to action for US Forest Service Senior Staff in DC.
- Travel to DC to meet with congressional representatives and agency staff annually.
- Meet with Forest Service Regional Office to share learning and requests.
- Advocate for continued State investment in forest restoration and collaboration.
- Prepare briefing papers and other materials for elected officials and other decision makers.
- Build relationships with congressional delegation and their staff.

Objective #2: By 2020, the Malheur National Forest has the authority to use the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRRI) budgetary line item.

Activities:

- Develop an ask to congressional representatives that reflects broad stakeholder agreement and documents past impacts on the Forest and the community.
- Develop talking points and a call to action for US Forest Service Senior Staff in DC.
- Travel to DC to meet with congressional representatives and agency staff annually.
- Meet with Forest Service Regional Office to share learning and requests.

Objective #3: Continue to develop and secure non-federal sources of funding and implementation tools (e.g. Good Neighbor Authority) to fund planning, implementation, and monitoring on the Malheur National Forest.

Activities:

- Engage with decision makers (particularly at the state and federal level) to convey the successes of BMFP, and opportunities to advance funding for and implementation of large landscape restoration through written and/or oral materials.
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- Build constituency to support co-located, multi-agency staff to engage with BMFP in project development, implementation, and monitoring.

² Note that some of these activities may overlap with policy advocacy.

Goal #3: By 2020, ecologically appropriate, landscape scale projects are legally defensible, planning costs are reasonable, and planning time averages 12 months.

Objective #1: Identify and implement at least four planning reforms that increase efficiency, without reducing the quality of analysis; and

Objective #2: Ensure environmental analysis is sufficient to survive judicial review such that BMFP can support the Forest Service in litigation.

Activities:

- Revisit and revise BMFP planning efficiencies report.
- Advocate for USFS action on its existing review of internal barriers to efficient planning and implementation.
- Make a request to congressional delegation to request the GAO to assist the Forest Service in this review.
- Refine BMFP restoration principals and Zones of Agreement.
- Continue to develop relationships with Forest Service personnel as appropriate to achieve objectives.
- Develop a work plan to advocate for planning reforms at appropriate levels (local, RO, DC).
- Annually brief Forest Service on NEPA efficiencies (RO, SO, OGC).
- Present at least one panel on BMFP efforts at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon.
- Conduct briefings on relevant existing and emerging legal issues for agency and nonfederal partners.
- Develop templates demonstrating compelling and legally adequate environmental analysis on selected topics.
- Create products that inform Forest Service analysis (e.g., Zones of Agreement, science synthesis papers).
- Complete or update Zones of Agreement on moist mixed conifer forest restoration, goshawk, aspen restoration, mountain mahogany, road management, dry forest restoration, and land use allocations.

Goal #4: By 2016, BMFP has the capacity and resources needed to effectively carry out its program of work.

Objective #1: By 2020, BMFP obtains and manages the staff and board resources required to achieve its goals.

Activities:

- Develop and implement annual or quarterly work plans for staff and contractors.
- Identify potential new staff/personnel needs to meet goals identified in strategic plan

- Hire administrative assistant to assist Executive Director with fundraising, event scheduling, fiscal management, and board support tasks

Objective #2: Annually, BMFP has the support and resources it requires to implement its objectives (an annual increase of 20%) and secures at least two new major sources of funding per year (for example, corporate, foundation, and major donor)

Activities:

- Increase community outreach and dissemination of information on BMFP efforts to increase awareness, understanding, and support
- Develop and implement a diversified fundraising plan
- Draft proposals and maintain relationships with actual and potential donors, whether foundations, individuals, or corporations

Objective #3: Develop and practice organizational learning to ensure BMFP operates effectively.

Activities:

- Develop and implement an annual review of BMFP progress and outcomes and use results to inform strategy and plan updates
- Draft and disseminate for various audiences one document per year on BMFP best practices and lessons learned

Goal #5: Create and sustain BMFP organizational leadership.
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Objective #1: Create and implement leadership pipeline to recruit new board members who understand and support BMFP’s mission and approach, and enhance its efforts.

Activities:

- Annually, identify 5 new potential board members³
- Identify missing roles or expertise on the Board of Directors and fill those roles or expertise with new Board Members who support the mission of the BMFP.
- Strengthen the Board of Directors to carry out their roles through training, recruitment of additional members, orientation, etc.

Objective #2: By 2020, develop science advisory board with job descriptions.

Activities:

- Identify potential science advisory board members.
- Develop job description for science advisory board members.

³ In 2016 we identified the following potential board members: Ben Holliday, Scott McDonald, Eric Wunz, Amy Charette, Larry Amell, Norm Johnson, Jerry Franklin, Mike Cosgrove, Susan Church, Tyson Bertone-Riggs, Dwayne Meadows, Colby Marshall, Steph Charette, Clay Penhollow, Tim Untelwagner

- Recruit science advisory board members, including experts with socioeconomic expertise.⁴
- Invite selected advisory board members on regular field trip, as appropriate to their expertise.
- Conduct periodic science review with advisory board of BMFP work (e.g., zones of agreement, innovative prescriptions, etc.).
- Develop partnerships with research scientists that facilitate on-the-ground research on topics of interest to researchers and BMFP.

Annual Review and Update

BMFP believes that the best strategic plan is one that is used! While monthly updates from the Executive Director to the Board of Directors are essential to tracking the implementation of activities, looking back annually will create an opportunity for BMFP to look at the larger impact of implementing those activities. Annual review of the results of the activities makes it possible to assess whether the chosen strategies are still the most effective approach, where BMFP needs to continue or increase these strategies, and where - and how – they may need to be changed. It is important to keep goals constant throughout the three-year strategic plan, but to be most effective and efficient, objectives and strategies need to adjust as more is learned and opportunities and challenges shift.

In addition to monthly reports from the Executive Director and reflecting on and capturing qualitative stories on progress, BMFP has identified the following quantitative indicators we will track. Taken together with the other monitoring tools, they will provide a “snap shot” of impact and progress towards reaching the goals. BMFP’s Full Group will review this summary of results annually and discuss updates to the strategic plan, as needed. We will also review whether the quantitative indicators identified below are the appropriate metrics against which to measure our effectiveness.

Quantitative indicators include:

1. Number of acres treated, by type of treatment.
2. Dollar amount of the Malheur National Forest base budget and of the accelerated restoration budget.
3. Time spent in planning per project.
4. Amount (on a scale of 1-5) of flexibility in budget allocations.
5. Length of time required by the Forest Service to move from Project Implementation Letter to decision document.

⁴ In 2016 we identified the following potential science advisory board members: Norm Johnson, Jerry Franklin, Debbie Johnson, Vicki Saab, John Bailey, Paul Hessburg, Jennifer Allen, Troy Hall, Claire Montgomery, Bruce Shindler, Chelsea Batavia, Cass Moseley, and Rob Schiller

6. Length of time from decision document to project completion, including all restoration projects.
7. Number of objections, lawsuits, and changes to BMFP project proposals that result.
8. Amount (on a scale of 1-5) of inverse relationship between number of planning dollars expended and number of acres treated.
9. Total number of funding sources and revenue for BMFP.
10. Membership numbers and participation.
11. Development of new or revised Zones of Agreement.