



Blue Mountains Forest Partners

Our Mission

“Blue Mountains Forest Partners is a diverse group of stakeholders who work together to create and implement a shared vision to improve the resilience and well-being of forests and communities in the Blue Mountains.”

Full Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting Overview:

- **Meeting Date:** March 17, 2022
- **Time:** 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Location:** Virtual: Zoom (Zoom invite sent in a separate email)
- **Facilitator:** Mark Webb
- **Minutes Scribe:** SJ Brown

- **Call to Order: introductions, changes to the agenda, agenda approval (all):** agenda moved approval, seconded, passes unanimously.
- **Approval of November 2021 Full Group minutes (all):** minutes moved approval, seconded, passes unanimously.
- **Ops’ update (Pam):** Ops talked about the budget and finances for 2023 and discussed Mark’s run for county commissioner – short meeting today.
- **General Forest Service Updates: 2021 CFLRP status; Title II status; staffing updates (Roy/Colleen):** now that Congress has passed the FY22 funding bill, funds will be sent to fund our CFLRP extension: \$28M is available nationally, so we’re not sure whether our project will be funded – good chance of it, but there’s some uncertainty still.

USFS is reaching out to Title II RAC members now and will be very shortly reaching out for project proposals. Should see a press release from the agency soon too. About \$4M is available this round.

Ann Nielsen is our new Deputy Forest Supervisor – welcome! USFS is ramping up hiring across the agency, and we have a lot of open positions; having a hard time filling positions – not enough applications, which is the case nationally as well. Ranger Bob Foxworthy has accepted a position on the Lincoln National Forest and will be leaving the Malheur. The USFS has already advertised this position and is working it now.

- **Forest Service project work updates (BMRD & PCRD staff):** Austin: getting close to having the draft EIS. Bark: scoping package is in preparation and will be released soon. BMFP and the USFS have been contacted about the content of the project: some have complained that aquatic restoration is being taken out of the project. The USFS explained that the aquatic work is covered under the aquatic restoration EA and BiOp, and will be included in the cumulative



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impacts analysis for Bark. Cliff Knox: just finishing the FEIS and draft ROD – will go to the printer this week and should be published in the Federal Register in the next 2-3 weeks. Completed under the new 21” rule amendment.

- **Cliff Knox and virtual boundaries: some innovation (Amanda)**: on this 3,000-acre project, the USFS is using “virtual boundaries” as a trial for one of the task orders. The USFS sees about a 30% fall-off between the NEPA and what is harvested: those acres drop out for one reason or another, which means we don’t treat as many acres as we could. With this approach, rather than lay out each unit, the USFS will use the NEPA maps for “hard boundaries” – private property boundaries, project boundary, RHCAs, etc. – but then use virtual boundaries for the treatment areas themselves. See the hyperlink for more information. The USFS is still trying to figure out the particulars and monitoring will be required to make sure this works for the agency and operators, but this is an exciting new potential tool. Discussion followed. Can operators do this work reliably? Yes, on other forests where this has been tried, operators are able to comply with basal area specifications and other requirements. Will there be timber sale units on the map? For this trial, yes, but in future NEPA there won’t be units and the operator will have the discretion – outside of the hard boundaries – to treat acres according to NEPA and contract specifications. Concern about not treating areas that need to be treated, and vice versa, given the discretion of the operator – monitoring will be important. It will be important for the NEPA to change to reflect this implementation approach, if the trial works out.
- **The Austin ODOT fuels reduction/Austin Junction project (Roy/Colleen)**: project is in the Austin project area: the Austin House and ODOT compound are actually on USFS land and administered under a special use permit, and there are homes associated with both there as well. There is an interest in doing treatments around these areas to protect them from future wildfires: the Easy Fire is south of this area, and the urgency is growing. USFS could wait for the Austin project to be finished, but that will take too long, so the USFS applied for a PACE (Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion) grant from ODF. The grant will allow for ODF to contract the NEPA to prepare a categorical exclusion (CE 9, wildfire resiliency) to treat this area. Discussion followed.

Did you consider including the town of Austin in this project? Thought about it, but the CE is limited to 3,000 acres, so we would have to use a second CE for that work. Might consider it in the future. Can we explore a collaborative process to review the project? In addition to sharing our zones of agreement with the contractor, BMFP would like to take a field trip to the area as well as Austin itself. We could also discuss the new CE authorities while in the field. Has the USFS talked to the adjacent landowners to see if they are interested in participating in this project? No, but public lands in the larger area will be treated with the larger project. Could the USFS engage NRCS on this project? USFS is working with them on a Joint Chiefs project further south, but haven’t engaged on this one.

- **Presentation and discussion: Wildlife Habitat ZOA and Decision Support Tool (Trent)**: Trent gave us an overview of where we’ve been with the development of the Wildlife ZOA. Recall that most of our work has been vegetation restoration-focused because that has been our primary priority, but as we have developed those ZOAs, BMFP wanted to start addressing



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wildlife issues as well. See [Trent's presentation here](#) describing the process we followed to develop the Wildlife ZOA, and the ZOA themselves. Discussion followed.

How does the Forest Service view these ZOA? They're different from the status quo.... The Forest Service is looking forward to using them in our NEPA analysis and streamlining our work. Trent suggested some future conversations with the Forest Service where we can crosswalk the current way the agency does its work into this new approach; Forest Service appreciates that offer and will take Trent up on it. The ZOA embrace the same approach required by the 2012 planning rule, so when we do get a new forest plan, we will have an advantage in implementing it quickly.

Next steps: Trent will share the ZOA soon for review, and BMFP will vote on whether to approve them at the April or May meeting.

- **[Presentation](#) and discussion: Integrated Upland Forest Restoration ZOA (James):** James refreshed our memory about the Integrated Upland Forest Restoration ZOA, which are iterative in that we are regularly revisiting them and updating them. This new version is the third iteration of our upland zones, and James has integrated past zones into it. James walked us through the revised ZOAs in [this presentation](#). Discussion followed.

Appreciate the work that went into these ZOA and the desire to help the USFS increase its efficiency in implementing restoration treatments. Congressional investment in restoration makes this work happen! How will this work continue forward if BMFP moves more towards focusing on implementation? BMFP will continue to work on refining our ZOAs even as we become more engaged in implementation (i.e., like piloting the virtual boundary concept Amanda discussed). How will the USFS use the ZOA in their work? USFS will work closely with BMFP to ensure that our projects reflect this information. Monitoring and adapting is an important part of this process to ensure we use the best available science in our treatments: the USFS has been receptive in the past to making changes. How will the USFS incorporate the views of the public who are not BMFP participants? Through the traditional NEPA process. What will the carbon section incorporate? It will focus on the carbon stores on the Malheur and whether the status quo is sustainable: tree growth is outpacing carbon losses from fire and management. James would be happy to prepare a presentation on this issue for the future.

Next steps: James will share the ZOA soon for review, and BMFP will vote on whether to approve them at the April or May meeting.

- **Adjourn**



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Blue Mountains Forest Partners Vision, Guiding Principles, and Grounds Rules for Collaboration

Our Vision

The Blue Mountains Forest Partners represents a broad constituency of stakeholders interested in healthy forest ecosystems, economic vitality and quality of life in Grant County, Oregon. We provide the US Forest Service with proposals for management of National Forest lands, and we support the utilization of forest resources and related opportunities to strengthen local economies.

Guiding Principles

- *To promote forest restoration in Grant County, integrating ecological, economic and community needs that have been developed and/or prioritized through collaboration.*
- *To improve our ability to work collaboratively and participate actively in these issues, finding common ground for our work. Our process will be open, inclusive and encourage participation of diverse stakeholders; our meetings will provide a 'safe' space for discussion and sharing of ideas.*
- *To overcome gridlock in forest planning and implementation. The success of our work is tied to long-term sustainability of forests and communities.*

Ground Rules for Collaboration and Meeting Participation

Members and nonmembers alike are expected to abide by these ground rules

- *Respect each other in and outside of meetings.*
- *No backroom deals.*
- *Personal attacks will not be tolerated.*
- *The personal integrity and values of participants will be respected.*
- *Stereotyping will be avoided.*
- *Commitments will not be made lightly and will be kept—agreements will be honored.*
- *Disagreements will be regarded as “problems to be solved” rather than as “battles to be won.”*
- *Participants are representative of a broad range of interests, each having concerns about the outcome of the issues at hand. All parties recognize the legitimacy of the interests and concerns of others and expect that their interests will be represented as well.*
- *Participants commit to keeping their colleagues/constituents informed about the progress of these discussions*
- *Participants commit to stating interests, problems, and opportunities. Not positions.*
- *Participants will air problems, disagreements and critical information during meetings to avoid surprises.*
- *Participants commit to search for opportunities and alternatives. The creativity of the group can often find the best solution.*
- *Participants agree to verify rumors at the meeting before accepting them as fact.*



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- *Respect the facilitator and meeting agenda.*