



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 Agenda

Meeting Overview:

- **Meeting Date:** May 19, 2022
- **Time:** 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Location:** Grant County Airport Conference Room
- **Facilitator:** Mark Webb
- **Minutes Scribe:** SJ Brown

- **Call to Order: Introductions, changes to the agenda, agenda approval (all):** agenda moved approval, seconded, approved unanimously.
- **Approval of March 2022 Full Group minutes (all):** March minutes moved approval, seconded, approved unanimously.
- **Ops update (SJ):** short meeting for ops today. Received a financial report, discussed reflections on the field trip, and shared a reminder about the June field trip.
- **Field trip update (Mark):** Visited the Austin project, starting on Highway 126. Discussed tethered logging on steep slopes, visual corridors along the highway, and thinning along the highway to remove some of the taller trees to reduce icing on the highway. Visited the ODOT maintenance yard and a project to thin the forest behind the compound using a categorical exclusion. Will use good neighbor authority for the project: the state will complete the analysis and implement the project.
- **Forest Service project work updates (BMRD & PCRD staff):** in the objection process for Cliff Knox, and expect a decision in late July/early August. Austin DEIS should be out in late August. Will the Forest Service have an open house for Austin? Haven't decided yet, but probably in September or October. How is infrastructure money landing on the Malheur? It isn't: the Malheur hasn't sought or received extra money from that investment, but is hoping to be asked for that information in the future.
- **FS wild horse planning update (FS staff):** planning on having an EA out by end of August so the USFS can gather in 2023. ~~USFS has been working with ODFW to has install~~ camera traps on the forest to monitor wildlife populations that are, ~~which is~~ coming up with similar numbers as fly-overs are identifying. The USFS has done some DNA testing to determine whether the horses from the Ochoco are in fact Murders Creek horses and therefore appropriately located on the Malheur, but those results haven't been conclusive. As a result, the Ochoco hasn't moved



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any horses over to the Malheur for a few years. It's likely that the USFS will gather many horses, given that the land is over the horse carrying capacity. Concern about the lack of forage for the horses, which are then predating on private lands and overgrazing public lands. Has the Forest Service considered how the increase in invasives should further limit herd size because the lack of feed. The gathered horses will be sent to BLM's gathering facilities for adoption.

- **Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative presentation regarding its Senate Bill 762 wildfire mitigation responsibilities (Tucker Billman & other OTEC staff):** OTEC is a cooperative, which is different than a for-profit electric company, which allows OTEC to act differently to protect its customers and communities. The PUC is currently going through rulemaking to determine what will be required of utilities with respect to implementing wildfire mitigation required by SB 762. OTEC has already taken actions to mitigate wildfire risk, including meeting with first responders, land managers, and the community to discuss mitigation. OTEC has had a good experience with the Malheur in terms of taking action to reduce risk. Doing a lot of vegetation management around powerlines and other infrastructure, have replaced equipment that was more prone to starting a fire, and increasing inspection and maintenance of the existing lines. OTEC has also done some undergrounding of some high risk areas, and identified areas in the community where they will turn off the power during high wind events. When OTEC deenergizes a line, they will inform the potentially affected homes as far in advance as possible and are working to provide emergency power in those situations (like Granite). Currently replacing wooden poles with steel, as a further risk reduction action, and have installed dispersed weather stations to track fire weather conditions. Working with volunteer fire departments, who are often the first responders on a fire, to provide them with the training, personnel, and resources they need to do that job.

Discussion followed. OTEC works with county emergency services during wildfires – can you share that information about sensitive populations? Yes, OTEC can collaborate with other management and community services: also keep in mind that OTEC has a board of directors who are local, who can also provide information to the community. How are you working with senior citizens to address these issues and information? Would recommend you present at the John Day Senior Citizen Center, Mt. Vernon Senior Center, and Prairie City Senior Center. What do you do with the material removed from the right-of-way? Lop and scatter it usually, but would follow whatever prescriptions the USFS recommends. The board is very willing to speak to members of the public about the work that OTEC is doing to reduce risk.

- **Forest Service fuel break categorical exclusion: what it is, what it permits, and how it might be used to complement OTEC's powerline maintenance and wildfire mitigation efforts (Craig & other FS staff):** can be used to reduce fuels along linear features not more than 3,000 acres, authorized by the Infrastructure bill. USFS has been treating a lot of these features as part of our large landscape restoration. The authority requires the USFS to facilitate collaboration amongst state and local and tribal government, and the participation of interested persons.
- **Bark Project discussion/update (FS staff, Mark, Loren Stout):** visited the Bark planning area back in 2019 but haven't had an update from the USFS in awhile about it. Some community members are concerned that the riparian restoration work has been pulled out of the project and



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would like to understand why, and what the status is of the project. Loren shared his story of going through grazing litigation and how that has affected his operations. Would like to see the use of best available science to inform riparian treatments that will restore fish passage in this area, and to remove some of the instream features (weirs) that are causing fish passage problems.

Discussion followed. USFS explained that the Bark project is just on federal land, and cannot address state-managed land issues such as riparian problems there. Bark hasn't yet been scoped, so the agency hasn't made a decision about what is in or out yet: the public will have a chance to provide comments on it, including the importance of the project. Bark is behind the Austin project in the queue, and because of capacity shortages, the agency isn't able to do both now (looking at 2024 if the USFS uses an EA, 2025 if it is an EIS). Because Bark isn't within the CFLRP footprint, we can't use those funds to implement the project. USFS would like the public to have realistic expectations about the pace with which the USFS can address the riparian concerns, but the agency can use the aquatic restoration EA (ARBO) to address urgent needs now; but the USFS will still struggle to fund that project. NMFS has also recommended that the USFS not use commercial thinning in every project but rather to do a single project that only focuses on riparian restoration as opposed to including upland restoration in projects as well.

- **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.*