



# 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:

- **Date of Meeting:** November 18, 2021
- **Time:** 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Location:** Virtual: Zoom (Zoom invite sent in a separate email)
- **Facilitator:** Mark Webb
- **Minutes Scribe:** SJ Brown

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- **Call to Order: Introductions, changes to the agenda, agenda approval (all):** agenda moved approved, seconded, approved unanimously. October minutes moved approved, seconded, approved.
  - **2021 CFLRP application status; Title II status (USFS):** CFLRP: the USFS has put together a list of service projects within the CFLRP landscape including heritage surveys, juniper removal, etc. Title II: RAC has been convened and will hopefully be soliciting projects in early 2022.
  - **Forest Service project work updates (USFS):** Cliff Knox: comments are in, on track for an April ROD.
  - **Revised Upland Forest Restoration ZOA presentation, discussion, and possible approval (James & others):** James gave an overview and refresher regarding BMFP’s use of science and adaptive management for the development of zones of agreement, i.e., how we do our work together. The present update to the Upland Forest Restoration ZOA takes an integrated approach that has been informed by a number of research projects (e.g., stand density, fire behavior, etc.) and associated planning efforts (i.e., 21” rule amendment), and seeks to answer the question of whether what we are doing in our restoration treatments is working to restore forest resilience. In order to determine whether our treatments are working, James and his team undertook a number of studies, including examining radial growth, growth vigor, leaf area, and diversity of understory species (plant and insect). Post treatment, the results show that all indicators increase post-treatment, suggesting a more resilient stand.

OSU has funding for future research on several topics including the status and trend of old trees, pollinator diversity in response to restoration treatments, and desired future conditions and above ground carbon fluxes on the Malheur (which would tell us a great deal about our carbon stores, fluxes, and how to maximize long-lived carbon stores on the forest). Also still systematically conducting forest vegetation and fuels monitoring, including monitoring more than 31,000 individual trees!!



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The integrated ZOA will have several chapters including goals, objectives, and methods; vegetation; need for restoration; process-based restoration; effects of restoration; wildlife conservation; fire management; and adaptive management framework. Expect a next draft in the next few months. Lindsay asked to be added to the subcommittee; SJ will add her.

Discussion followed. Can we take away from this that we're sequestering more carbon? Maybe, maybe not: thinning removed some carbon from the live system and placed it into forest products that are not as durable as long-lived carbon. However, to the extent that our treatments result in less severe wildfire, we may be sequestering more carbon in the long term in the trees that remain standing after our treatments. How much of an increase in species richness is there? Roughly 15%, which is fairly significant. What explains the dip after the initial rise in diversity? Several possible explanations, including increase in grazing pressure, a readiness for the next disturbance (i.e., fire), or that there really is no dip at all. Could carbon stores be used as financial revenue for the counties, i.e., carbon markets? Unknown: there is much uncertainty about carbon markets, including whether federal lands would participate in such a market and whether this forest has the ability to store high amounts of carbon (it is unlikely we would store nearly as much carbon as the west side forests, especially in a hotter and drier future).

- **What is the FS considering as a follow up to the 10-year Stewardship Agreement? (USFS):** USFS had hoped to convene folks in person to talk about next steps with restoration contracting on the forest after the current 10-year contract expires in March 2023. We are fairly clear about the ecological need for large landscape restoration, but less clear about the socioeconomic piece in terms of what the local communities need from a socioeconomic perspective. The Blues Intergovernmental Committee is doing some work around socioeconomics that might be useful to inform the contract discussion. Is that information available yet? No, not yet.

The USFS has a number of tools for commercial timber removal and corresponding service work, and the question for the USFS is what percentage of the timber program will use each authority. Timber sale: includes KV and BD plans and allows for long term contracts that can be extended over a long period of time. Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC): excess value from timber can be put back onto the ground for service work. Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC): this is what we have now, which is a true stewardship contract that couples timber removal and service work. The difference between IRTC and IRSC is that the USFS cannot add money to the IRTC in order to complete necessary service work, but can add money to the IRSC to complete service work. Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA): a competitive pool of bidders for a regular/consistent type of work. Can include IRSCs in the pool and maybe IRTCs in the future. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): allows for federal dollars to be used by nonfederal entities for work on federal lands.

Discussion followed. Does the USFS expect the Malheur's target will decrease or increase after the expiration of the current contract? Our target is 75 MMbf, but we are not reaching that target because our volume per acre is so low; 50-55 MMbf is probably more realistic. Concern about the target level: can we raise that number to 100 MMbf? No, we have limitations based on our harvest land base, planning capacity, water availability, and productive ground that preclude a higher harvest rate. Any idea how changes in volume might affect personnel numbers? No, not at



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this time. What is your expectation about funding levels in the future? Other than CFLRP dollars, our budget has been in decline, but with the recently enacted infrastructure bill, we should be relatively stable over the next 5 years. That said, we can't count on money past that, so USFS is reluctant to commit for the longer term (10 years). However, uncertain appropriations year to year has always been the situation.

Others would like to see a consistent flow of work coming from the next contract, which not all contracting mechanisms may result in. The traditional timber sale approach is a step backwards in terms of recognizing the ecological focus of our restoration work. Important to SJ that whatever the mix is that the agency settles on does two things: 1) ensures that service work occurs at the pace and scale and quality that brings conservationists to the table; and 2) results in real local socioeconomic benefit beyond board feet. Interest in promptly completing timber harvest to facilitate service work, especially prescribed fire.

Would like to have a good, open discussion about what worked for the USFS and what didn't, and the same for the partners involved in the current 10-year contract. From the USFS' perspective, fire liability has been an issue because we couldn't change that once the original contract was signed, and market changes/volatility and the appraisal process are also a challenge. There were a lot of growing pains as we learned how to implement the contract. Contractors have the same or similar concerns. Some of these challenges are inherent in the overall system, regardless of contracting mechanism. What is the timing of new contracts? Want to have something put together starting in June. How do you plan to engage with interested parties? USFS has been having one on one meetings and would like to have group meetings in person in the spring. USFS hasn't made plans for a general listening sessions/open houses but will begin thinking about that soon.

What else should the collaborative know about this process? USFS would like to have a frank discussion around the social dynamics around the long-term contract, which some feel creates winners and losers. Some feel that those feelings are not accurate, and that the current contract has created a lot of opportunity and economic security for the region that has been successful. The question is whether you would do the same thing again if the objective is to grow additional business. Certainty is important for businesses to invest.

- **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.*