



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:** July 20, 2023
- **Time:** 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Location:** Grant County Airport Conference Room
- **Facilitator:** Mark
- **Minutes Scribe:** SJ Brown

- **Call to Order: Introductions, changes to the agenda, agenda approval (all):** Agenda moved approval, seconded, passes unanimously. May minutes moved approval, seconded, passes unanimously.
- **Ops & Wednesday field trip update (Mark):** discussed financial update and a lengthy conversation about CFLRP monitoring. Discussed adding questions to the 13 required questions; Ops moved forward with incorporating those questions in our revised monitoring plan. James will be working with BMFP to improve our monitoring plan.

Visited two sites on Wednesday’s field trip, including one Joint Chiefs site at Magone and the Butte Creek instream riparian restoration work. Discussed increasing efficiencies around riparian restoration, legal authorities and processes that the Forest Service must adhere to for riparian work.

- **Joint Chiefs update (Mark):** Mark discussed the USFS/NRCS Joint Chiefs program, which the Malheur and BMFP recently entered with a project on the forest and adjacent private lands. State is also involved in implementation (ODF implements the forestry work for NRCS), and agreements should be finalized soon. Significant federal investment in this work in Grant and Harney Counties that will continue through 2030.
- **Forest Service project work updates (Forest Service):** Blue Mountain RD is focused on instream work on restoration projects; implementing parts of Magone and Laycock Creek; implementing white Bark pine restoration treatments. Agency is consulting on white bark pine, a newly listed species, with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: the regional office is engaging in programmatic consultation on white bark pine that should reduce the consultation burden on the Malheur. Austin EIS is undergoing internal review, with the comment period this fall and a decision late spring 2024. Austin does have some alternatives that rely on the Eastside Screens amendment, so may need to make some changes in response to the litigation. Prairie City RD: Upper Bear Lake EA desired conditions is complete, moving towards alternatives; putting Cliff



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Knox contracts out to bid; Stage 0 aquatic restoration above Malheur Ford; implementing a lot of aquatic passage work on the District. Sold Laycock Creek project that allows tethered logging – will take a field trip to see implementation.

- **Forest planning and litigation updates (Camp Lick and 21” rule) (Ann):** Forest plan revision: Forest is working with the WO to get the Federal Register notice of intent notification published, likely next week. That will kick off the Assessment phase, and new information will be shared at open houses: the public is invited to share their ideas at this phase. This fall will include formal meetings. Planning will cover the 3 Blues forests, and the Malheur will make a decision on its forest-specific plan. USFS is using 2012 planning rule, and a regional planning team (with assistance from the local forests) is undertaking the NEPA. USFS will also present to the collaboratives on the forest.

Camp Lick litigation: district court Magistrate Judge ruled in favor of the Forest Service on the litigation in Findings and Recommendation (F&R), plaintiffs filed objections to the F&R, and the case is now in the hands of the Article III judge assigned to the case; awaiting decision. In the meantime, the project is being implemented and should be finished by the end of the year.

Eastside Screens litigation: district court at oral argument told the parties that the USFS was not going to prevail on the claim that the USFS violated NFMA when the Under Secretary signed the decision exempting the decision from administrative objection. Court has asked for briefing on relief, and has not issued a decision on the other merits claims (NEPA and ESA). Court will decide whether the USFS can rely on the decision or whether the agency will need to revise the decision altogether (i.e., “vacate” the decision).

- **ODF partnership work with the Malheur and in Grant County (Cameron Scott):** introduction to new Unit Forester and overview of SB762 implementation in Grant County. Will the legislature continue to support the landscape resilience work? Support is decent, but there is some waning interest in the cost of treatments in perpetuity. ODF has been implementing the Federal Forest Restoration Program on the Malheur and in Grant County since about 2013, which allows the state to do work on both sides of the property line including using Good Neighbor Authority to conduct surveys, NEPA analysis, and project implementation. Seed money provided for GNA agreements provided through appropriated or CFLR dollars or through the state FFR Program. On the eastside, there isn’t a lot of revenue from these projects, but if/when there is, the state can retain those dollars but must be spent on federal lands.
- **Integrated Forest ZOA update: fire, carbon, and climate change (James):** BMFP develops zones of agreement that outline our areas of agreement on various restoration issues. James has been updating our upland vegetation zones of agreement to reflect a more integrated approach that addresses riparian and forest restoration holistically and includes fire, carbon, and climate change issues. Complements the recently adopted Wildlife ZOAs. The Integrated Forest ZOAs now include information on fire and carbon management, including Potential Operational Delineations (PODs) that outline where on the ground wildfire can be managed. Fire management recommendations are difficult to develop on the Malheur because fire is often managed by off-forest crews and on an ad hoc basis.



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The Integrated Forest ZOAs also address carbon stocks and dynamics. In the Blue Mountains, temperatures have increase slightly, and there has been no perceived change in precipitation. Wildfire occurrence is variable, but the trend is towards an increase in the extent of wildfire in the Blues. Wildfires are consuming old growth trees and contributing to the spread of invasive species. On the Malheur, we are very very slowly increasing carbon storage: carbon storage is relatively stable (as opposed to CA where those forests are now a source of carbon rather than a sink due to wildfire). Even so, and even in high severity fires, only between 10-15% of the carbon in a tree is combusted and emitted as CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Restoration treatments on the Malheur reduce carbon stocks to a degree, but the resulting forest is a more durable carbon store over time due to wildfire risk; and it has additional co-benefits such as biodiversity, old growth conservation, and sustainable rural development. Retention of large (but young) trees for carbon benefits isn't as straightforward as it may seem: while a larger cylinder has more area/carbon than a smaller diameter cylinder, the species of cylinder (i.e., tree) matters. Grand fir die faster than pine and larch (and thus decay and release emissions) and are not as fire resistance and therefore more of them and their carbon are lost to fire (and not retained in the forest). We now have new tools that can model the carbon implications of our restoration treatments. Discussion followed.

- **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.*