Blue Mountains Forest Partners

“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:** July 16, 2015
- **Time:** 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Location:** Grant County Airport
- **Facilitator:** Mark Webb
- **Minutes Scribe:** Susan Jane Brown

Action items in red!

- **Call to Order:** Approval of June’s minutes; changes to the agenda. Lindsay moves approval of the agenda, seconded, approved unanimously. Zach moved approval of the June minutes, seconded, approved unanimously.

- **Ops update (Susan Jane Brown).** SJ presented an overview of the ops meeting. Ops discussed administrative matters (rent/office, financial contracting with GCSWCD, grant update, finance update) and a preview of the full group meeting.

- **Update on the TNC cost share position (Mark Webb).** This position is a joint position between the USFS and TNC, which will provide a liaison between the USFS and BMFP, and collaboratives on the Umatilla and Ochoco. Carrie Kemp was hired and starts in October.

- **Update on last two workshops: post-fire and goshawk (Pam Hardy, Zach Williams).** The post-fire workshop involved two researchers from OSU and one from the USFS. These experts presented information on snags, fuels post-fire and post-logging, wildlife use of burned areas, and soil effects from post-fire logging. We also had a field trip the following day, and discussed what sort of post-fire management BMFP could support based on some areas that had been salvaged in the past. The group discussed bringing Vikki Saab back to the forest to work with us and the Forest Service on a pilot project examining post-fire treatments and wildlife use, which would help BMFP work through this challenging issue.

BMFP also hosted a goshawk science workshop and field trip. Trent has been contracted by BMFP and TNC to prepare a science synthesis that will be available in the next few weeks. In summary, the literature on goshawk suggests that it is a habitat generalist without viability concerns, and that we may want to reexamine our approach to goshawk management. This sets us up nicely to develop Zones of Agreement around goshawk management.
• **Forest Service updates (Sasha Fertig).** Big Mosquito objection resolution meeting is next week – the meeting is open to the public, but only objectors will be allowed to speak. Meeting is 1-3 p.m. July 22 at Supervisor’s Office. Star Aspen will go out for scoping next week. Magone is undergoing environmental analysis now, and hopefully will be out for comment in August. Camp/Lick alternatives is under development now. Ragged Ruby early planning starting now; field trip with BMFP in August.

• **Summit presentation by PCRD staff (Greg Moon and staff).** Purpose and need is forest health, fire resiliency. Land use allocations include general forest, riparian, motorized and primitive recreational use, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and others. The purpose and need (and project) are similar to Elk 16: ecosystem restoration, open sustainable forested areas, heterogeneous habitat for wildlife, sustainable lodgepole pine forested areas, WUI treatments along escape routes, aspen restoration, healthy watersheds and hydrologically functioning roads, improved water storage capabilities, improving bull trout habitat, protecting heritage resources, meadow restoration. There are some differences: white bark pine restoration on Sheep Mountain (thin around to protect), sagebrush-steppe restoration in Logan Valley (remove juniper, etc.), Bosenburg Creek fish passage (very cold water resource) and retention of recreational opportunities, creating openings for livestock and wild ungulates for forage, meadow creation, and creating new recreational opportunities (new bicycle trails). These openings are larger to facilitate new forage, and will be arranged based on harvest units and soil capacity (i.e., lower productive sites might be better suited for forage than trees).

Discussion and questions followed. Among other issues, members are interested in meadow restoration, having more information about herd size to inform forage creation, and consideration of browsing pressure on aspen that could be addressed by treatments. USFS will consider all available tools for bull trout restoration, and should consider the cost of such treatments (USFS believes there is a lot of relatively inexpensive treatments that could be done). Will the USFS consider treating some of the plantations for future intensive forest management? James would like to see us revisit the concepts of skips and gaps, and do more aggressive thinning.

USFS: Where is BMFP on access issues and discussing them? BMFP would be more interested in recreational issues as opposed to travel management planning/access: bring us a proposal and we will consider it. Need to have ODFW involved, as well as private landowners and deer/elk interest groups. Would like to understand how our restoration treatments are affecting herd size, etc. – need more information about the “problem” and what might be proposed to address it. Should BMFP form a Subcommittee to take on this issue? That group could work with the USFS and other stakeholders (ODFW, hunters, etc.) to identify decision space and suggest a path forward. USFS is interested in exploring how the veg program is affecting forage and elk habitat.
BMFP asks that the USFS come back to us at our next meeting with more information about exactly what they would like our input on with respect to elk and recreational opportunities (trails, roads, veg management).

- **Finalize Riparian Zones of Agreement (Susan Jane).** BMFP has been discussing riparian restoration for about 2-3 years: as accelerated restoration came on line, it became clear that we would need to take an “issue-based” approach to restoration – riparian restoration is our first attempt at this approach. After several Subcommittee and full group meetings, and science workshops, a drafting committee came together to pull together the areas of agreement on this topic.

BMFP expects that monitoring, additional shared learning, and experience may change the content and scope of these ZOA. For example, there are some issues that BMFP did not reach agreement on during the initial development of these ZOA, but may be able to come to agreement on after additional discussion. Similarly, we may find that some ZOA are too prescriptive, and do not warrant integration into project development. BMFP intends these ZOA to be a living document, subject to change based on collaborative discussion and agreement.

Commercial thinning is a major issue that we do not have agreement on and is not part of the ZOA, but it is an important issue that many people are still interested in. Pam has agreed to take up the mantle, and guide the Subcommittee’s future work on this topic – please get in touch with Pam if you are interested in working with her on this issue.

Brooks expressed concern that BMFP and others need baseline information upfront in order to determine whether the zones have merit. Discussion followed, noting that we have already had several opportunities to provide comments on the Zones; however, since the suggested changes are minor, SJ has made changes to the ZOA based on this discussion: see page 2 of the ZOA.

In addition, there is some current agency work around heritage sites and SHPO involving the county. Brooks would like to ensure that the county is involved in heritage issues as appropriate, and suggested a small change to ZOA #2. Brooks clarified that the concern is that the county should be working with SHPO, not that the county should be working with the Forest Service, on this issue. SJ has made changes to the ZOA based on this discussion: see page 3 of the ZOA.

Lindsay noted that the process/function/tools is not consensus position, and that this fact should be made more prominent in ZOA. SJ upgraded two footnotes to emphasized narrative text to reflect this.

BMFP then used our voting process to determine whether BMFP could agree to the ZOA. After a tallied vote, BMFP agreed to the ZOA with the changes indicated above. BMFP will send a copy of the approved ZOA to Steve Beverlin for his records.
• **Research on moist mixed conifer (James Johnston).** See James’ presentation for more information. James reported on the early results of his dissertation research and what it is indicating about mixed conifer management on the Malheur. In summary, his results are showing that traditional mixed conifer species compositions (ponderosa pine, larch) are shifting into a grand fir-dominated system. However, there may not be strong obvious linkages between forest structure/composition and fire disturbance processes. The most departed stands are moist mixed conifer stands, not dry pine stands. This is because these areas experienced regular mixed-severity fire that controlled what species grew where; when fire was suppressed, this shifted the species composition. May want to consider focusing on larch restoration, which is the only species that is less prevalent today than it was in 1860.

• **Revisit BMFP’s Declaration of Commitment for current members; opportunity for interested parties to join (Ops members).** With the new issues we’re taking on (post-fire, goshawk), it is a good idea to revisit the Declaration and new membership Mark set the context for the Declaration of Commitment and the birth of BMFP: we came together to focus on forest restoration, with the intention of creating solutions and dealing fairly and respectfully with all members, even in times of disagreement.

   Many members feel that collaboration is the best way forward to get local involvement in land management. Bruce Daucsavage shared his perspective that the collaborative work on the Malheur is essential to keeping the mill open and employing local folks. He visited with people in Washington, DC recently to promote this work, and noted that we are a bright spot nationally because what we are doing here is working – we are a national model that people want to replicate (the new funding from the Oregon state legislature is one measure of this success). But it is also fragile, and could be destroyed if we don’t take care of our relationships.

• **Status of fire borrowing given early fire season; CFLRP dollars and fire-fighting budget (Forest Service staff).** USFS reports that there’s no chatter about fire borrowing yet that would affect our region. CFLRP is probably subject to fire borrowing; Dana will check and let us know. CFLRP is rolling along: task order 3A is in final negotiations. Objections and possible litigation may affect implementation. USFS has given a presentation about our CFLRP work nationally because of the interest in our success. Agency is looking at how we can move from restoration to maintaining resilient landscapes.

   Regarding post-fire work, Dana Skelly pointed out that there is a wildfire moving through the Shake Table fire and causing concerns about firefighter safety: snags are falling and preventing USFS from putting fire fighters in there. This is an important consideration as we move forward with this discussion. Dana will present some additional information at the next meeting for BMFP to discuss.

• **Adjourn**