Leveraging Resources to Achieve Collaborative Management Objectives

Location: Sprague River Valley, Beatty and Bly, Oregon

Project Summary: Developed partnerships with tribes, federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local landowners, leveraging resources and increasing access and flexibility to more effectively build the community's ability to solve complex and contentious issues.

Resource Challenge: The Sprague River is a major tributary in the Upper Klamath Basin, an ecological jewel that recently has become a hotbed of controversy due to a variety of factors, including the listing of the shortnose sucker fish and the salmon under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The situation has been tenuous as to how to keep water in the streams and lakes to protect the fish while also allowing farmers and ranchers access to their irrigation water. At the request of several partners (Klamath Tribes, Sustainable Northwest, and Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation), the NRST engaged in various, and often overlapping, efforts to build community capacity for addressing the range of issues in the Sprague River Valley. Each request led to an additional set of multiple activities.

Key Partners: Sustainable Northwest, Klamath Tribes, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, FWS, NRCS, NRST and network members, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation, Oregon Wetlands Conservancy, WaterWatch, Farm Credit Services, Oregon Water Resources Dept., Water for Life, Bancroft Appraisal, Trust for Public Land, Deschutes Basin Land Trust, landowners, The Nature Conservancy, conservation investors, private foundations, Bureau of Reclamation, FS, BLM, Lake County Watershed Council, Timber Resource Services, Klamath Watershed Council, Oregon State University Extension Service, and E&S Environmental Chemistry.

Requests and Activities:

Klamath Tribes:
Water Resources Task Force Meeting and Water Workshop – NRST members provided an introduction to stream processes, function, and restoration options with a focus on using natural processes and removing or managing human-induced stressors. They also introduced the Creeks and Communities (C&C) approach for bringing people together and how it might work in this area.

Sustainable Northwest:
Yainix Ranch – NRST members aided in the technical design of an "affirmative obligations" easement

for the Yainix Ranch and helped provide the collaborative and scientific framework in which the ranch owners and their partners could come together in mutual understanding and purpose.

C&C Workshop and Living Room to Living Room Approach – Yainix efforts were followed by a situation assessment and C&C workshop with the larger Sprague River Valley community to further discuss restoration obstacles and opportunities. From the workshop, a recommendation emerged for team members to participate in a series of meetings with various stakeholders in landowner living rooms to discuss their needs, issues, and concerns. These meetings became the basis for further visits to individual properties due to improved relationships, trust, and credibility.

Multiparty Monitoring – NRST members conducted a riparian vegetation monitoring course in the Sprague area to raise awareness about the monitoring methods used on the Yainix Ranch and explore their use as a common monitoring system to gauge the health of the watershed by groups that have traditionally mistrusted each others' science and management prescriptions. This course led to a grant for establishing Winward greenline composition transects as part of a long-term riparian vegetation monitoring program for restoration efforts in the Sprague (Winward 2000). To date, 12 landowners are involved in these efforts.

Working Landscape Alliance – NRST, Sustainable Northwest, and various private consultants partnered to form the Working Landscapes Alliance (WLA), which increased access and the flexibility to work more effectively with various communities. With multiyear investments in specific locations, including and beyond the Klamath Basin, the WLA provides community assistance and capacity building in the areas of resource management, conflict resolution, and development of new incentives and financial tools.

Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation:
C&C Workshops, Watershed Assessment Field Days, and Landowner Visits – NRST and other WLA members assisted with the community outreach portion of the Upper Sprague and Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson watershed assessments. Each season began with a C&C workshop designed to provide landowners with a basic understanding of riparian function and an introduction to the watershed assessment process and the WLA. These were followed by 1 public field day/month that focused on different watershed topics. After each public field day, a series of landowner visits were completed, whereby NRST-WLA members walked stream segments on private property at the invitation of the landowner (and often joined by neighboring landowners) to discuss the condition of their riparian or upland areas and options for management, restoration, and monitoring.

Outcomes: Numerous restoration projects have been undertaken on private lands within the valley. These projects required significant dialogue and coordination among federal agencies, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and the Klamath Tribes, as well as landowner commitment to innovation and collaboration—both of which were unheard of in previous years. Additionally, an agreement was reached among agency, tribal, and NGO partners that the number one priority for restoration in the Sprague was the proper management of cattle grazing. Finally, the watershed assessment contents and format were aligned with the PFC approach, which is widely accepted by local NGOs, the tribes, landowners, and some agencies.

There are potential outcomes yet to be realized within the Klamath Basin, as settlement of water adjudication issues among the Klamath Tribes and off-project irrigators remains an issue. Seminal work accomplished by the NRST and WLA in building interest in restoration, guiding local agencies and tribes towards methodologies that focus on function (PFC) as a "foundation" for restoration, and helping to create agreements among landowners and the tribes over riparian management may play an important role in the resolution of these critical issues.

"PFC stands out because it places science in the hands of the average person, getting over the enormous hurdles of power and distrust that often come with restoration intentions and projects."

James Honey (2005)
Sustainable Northwest