

## **The Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot: A Briefing**

The Secretary of Interior designated a Pilot to be located in the Bureau of Land Management's Medford District (BLM) to demonstrate landscape restoration of dry Douglas-fir forests featuring the approach developed by Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson. The Middle Applegate Watershed was chosen by the BLM as the site for this Pilot due to its relatively contiguous acreage of dry Douglas-fir forests, its substantial amount of data associated with past projects and collaborative efforts, the opportunity to capitalize on the planning of current forest management projects, and the landscape-scale size necessary for successful demonstration of the Franklin and Johnson restoration principles.

The Secretary also expects that the Pilot will provide collaborative opportunities for interested stakeholders. The Medford District has participated in long-term efforts with the Applegate Partnership (under a Memorandum of Understanding) and the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative to find as much consent (social license) as possible to implement forest projects that are socially acceptable, ecologically appropriate and economically viable. In addition to BLM's agency partners (Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA Fisheries), non-government entities will be key partners in successfully moving the Pilot effort forward.

The goal of the Pilot is to fulfill the Secretary of the Interior's direction to demonstrate principles of ecological restoration, as developed by Drs. Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin, on BLM lands within the Medford District.

In addition, the Medford District has developed additional, but complimentary objectives for the Pilot:

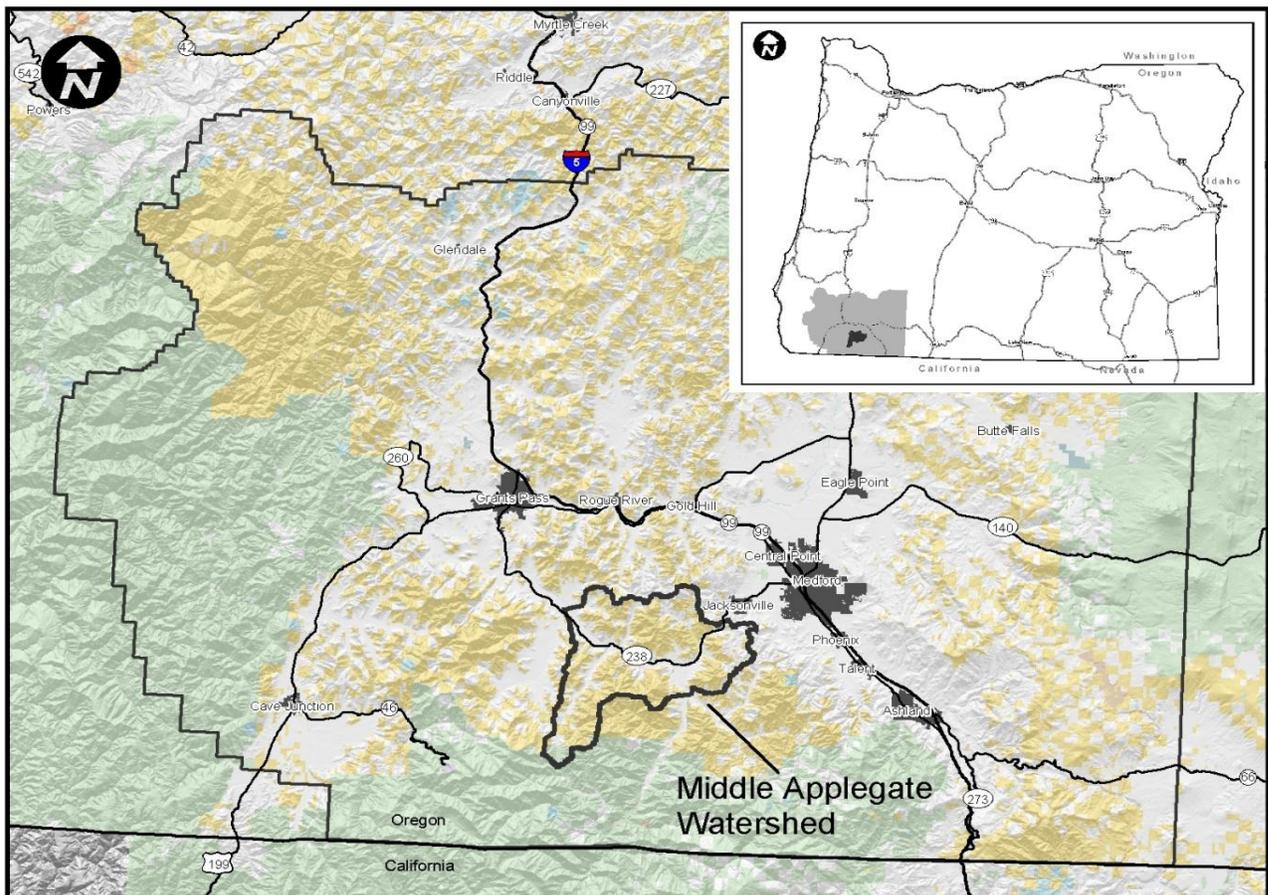
- Integrate northern spotted owl recovery and habitat restoration principles into the Franklin/Johnson ecological forest restoration strategy, and apply new methods of effects analysis in consultation and cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Provide for a collaborative, transparent, and integrated vegetation management approach to maximize efficiency in funding, planning and implementation.

Key concepts that make this pilot different from the District's general timber sale program.

- The Pilot focuses on ecological forestry in a landscape sense. Timber is a byproduct of restoring critical forest processes and habitat for the northern spotted owl. The Secretary believes the restoration effort will yield substantial raw material for the area's timber dependent infrastructure.
- Because there are collaborative partners strongly interested in helping make the Pilot a success, collaboration will be extensive and will require coordination and communication with everyone who has an interest in the Pilot.

- The Pilot is a demonstration of the Franklin and Johnson approach, not a debate about its merits nor an exploration of the range of restoration approaches. Therefore, the Purpose and Need of the project will reflect this objective.
- An additional NSO habitat analysis method will be used to improve the identification and analysis of effects of the project on habitat. Successful incorporation of such work will occur in close cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Pilot focuses its efforts within the 80,000-acre Middle Applegate Watershed, primarily on approximately 50,000 acres of public lands administered by the BLM.



*The Middle Applegate is an 80,000 acre watershed comprised of BLM managed land, intermixed with substantial private industrial and non-industrial land, as well as a small amount of land managed by the US Forest Service.*

Planning processes normally require a minimum two years to complete due to survey protocols for certain species. However, the Pilot will take advantage of ongoing proposed projects in the area to substantially reduce both the time and effort to implement the first in a series of projects in the Middle Applegate watershed. Implementation will begin in fiscal year 2011

through a series of timber sales, stewardship projects and service contracts, with substantial numbers of projects in subsequent years.

**Why Now.** Dry forests managed by the BLM in southwest Oregon - the resources they host and the values they reflect - are at significant risk. Past land use decisions, current conditions and expected future climatic and stand development trajectories create a scenario in need of concerted attention and action.

**Why the Middle Applegate.** The Middle Applegate pilot project is within the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA). As outlined by the Northwest Forest Plan, AMAs are significant for their created intent to demonstrate, test and monitor innovative approaches to forest management, similar to that of the Middle Applegate Pilot. The Middle Applegate watershed includes significant contiguous BLM managed forest and substantial dry forest stand acreage. The opportunity also exists to capitalize on projects already in the planning process for modification and inclusion in the pilot, promoting rapid implementation of the initial projects. Significant data exists within the watershed due to previous collaborative efforts.

**BLM Role.** The BLM is responsible for project consistency with laws, regulations and policies, implementing the regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and making decisions to authorize and fund implementation of Pilot projects. BLM has complete oversight for the development, analysis and decisions related to the Pilot.

**Collaborative Partners.** The Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative and the Applegate Partnership are long standing community entities that have organizational and administrative structures in place to support development and implementation of the Pilot. They are a valuable conduit to and from local neighborhoods and other stakeholders for outreach, education, and information exchange on forest management issues.

**Consultants.** BLM will rely on Dr. Jerry Franklin and Dr. Norm Johnson to provide the forums necessary to inform communities, stakeholders, and agencies on the scientific foundation of their approach, and to build on the rationale that informs their strategy.

**Public Participation.** Collaboration, public involvement and transparency are key objectives in this Pilot. The levels of public involvement runs the spectrum from inform to collaboration, from simply being provided information to consensus building. This Pilot does not replace the mandatory public involvement opportunities prescribed by laws, regulations and policies. Interested stakeholders may participate in the collaborative process through the Applegate Partnership and the Small Diameter Collaborative; take advantage of various public involvement events such as field trips, forums, open houses public meetings, participation in sample marking, identifying priority stands for restoration, and monitoring; and/or provide public input in the formal NEPA processes of scoping and environmental assessment comment periods.

**Products.** These projects will result in timber, biomass and stewardship projects will contribute to the Medford District timber sale program.

**Key Benchmarks.**

January	Organize agency teams and communication pathways.
February	Functional website on BLM internet for schedules, maps, Information and project files  Scoping Letter (Invitation to Participate/Collaborate) Community introduction to Pilot (Open Houses in Ruch, Applegate, etc.)
March	Rapid Assessment completed identifying pool of units appropriate for restoration as an initial project(s).  Intensive public involvement (field school, classroom events with Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin on dry forest restoration.
April	Proposed Action (developed in consultation with interested stakeholders)
May	Evaluation of marking, economics; develop alternatives to Proposed Action, if needed
June	Section 7 Consultation
July	Publish EA to authorize first set of Pilot projects
August	Advertise contracts/timber sales
September	Award contracts and/or process administrative remedy requests; begin multi-party monitoring of process and/or implementation (adaptive management)