

April 17, 2011

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Subject: Implementation of Pilot Project in Applegate area

As a follow-up to our recent session (March 13-19 & 24), we wanted to emphasize several important points related to design and implementation of the Medford Pilot Project as it moves forward. We have interacted with several BLM staff and stakeholders on these issues and considered their perspectives in this final draft.

(1) Landscape context is of critical importance in both designing and implementing the initial phases of our Dry Forest restoration strategy. The basic landscape design involves: (a) identifying the landscape areas for retention as an initial set of denser, complex forest patches (what we are currently calling "late successional emphasis areas" or LSEAs), which will be embedded within a restored matrix; and (b) prioritizing the matrix areas for treatment based on several criteria, including risks from fire, insects, and drought. On the Applegate treating the matrix areas that reduce the risk of loss of the LSEAs to wildfire have the highest priority. In the Applegate pilot these stands generally lay along the northern boundary of the lands managed by BLM.

(2) Our Dry Forest restoration strategy emphasizes the need to deal simultaneously with all restoration needs, including both activities that generate revenue and those that do not. Hence, we expect BLM to include both commercial and non-commercial activities in the Pilot Project, so as to demonstrate that principle. These activities should be scheduled at about the same time to be useful as a demonstration.

(3) The logging techniques (including road design) and equipment utilized in the Pilot Project should be consistent with the ecological and social goals of the restoration. While the large equipment typically utilized for logging on industrial forest lands can be highly efficient, it could require adjustments in the design of restoration treatments that are inconsistent with the objectives. Safety and demonstration of ecologically-sensitive treatments should have the highest priority, while recognizing that logging design and equipment are also important considerations in the design of the restoration work. Ultimately, the pilots should demonstrate the best that engineers and loggers can achieve from ecological, social, and economic perspectives. Innovative contracting mechanisms should be considered as one way of implementing portions of the pilot and contracts, which should, in any case, be designed to insure the greatest possibility of achieving the restoration goals of the pilot.

(4) Monitoring is an essential element of the pilots. Monitoring activities should begin with "implementation monitoring" to assess whether the projects carry out the Franklin-Johnson restoration principles. This can be done in two phases: (1) review of the mark as soon as completed by BLM and (2) review of conditions following completion of the logging. The implementation review should include managers, scientists, and community members (multi-party monitoring). Ultimately a credible, independent third-party assessment needs to be jointly planned by BLM and stakeholders to evaluate the collective accomplishments of all of the Pilot Projects.

Some additional conclusions after our Medford visit are:

(5) A credible initial landscape plan for the location of the patches of late-successional habitat and for prioritizing locations for active management has been achieved, largely as a result of extra-ordinary efforts by some of the BLM staff.

(6) Previous collaborative efforts and community engagement have already greatly facilitated the development of the pilot project and are expected to continue to do so.

(7) BLM personnel have demonstrated their ability to mark dry forest stands for restoration following our principles. In fact, the silviculturalists and timber staff involved in marking demonstrated a high level of knowledge and skill. Very little "training" was actually required. Rather, the key was for them to understand a different set of management objectives and to adjust their prescriptions and marking accordingly. Regular reinforcement of the specific goals of Dry Forest restoration and periodic review of marking activities by supervising silviculturalists should help keep activities "on track".

(8) Although of considerable interest to the BLM staff, the initial Pilot Project will not include treatments in existing mistletoe-infected shelterwood stands within the drainage. Further consideration is needed of how such treatments would relate to a restoration strategy.

(9) While our current pilot project is focused on upland forests, restoration of stream and aquatic ecosystems within the watershed is a critical part of ecosystem restoration, as has been expressed to us by members of the public. The impact of roads on streams is of special concern and should be an important consideration in any changes to the transportation system needed to complete the pilot project.

