

## Pilot Joe Unit 26-1A

Approximately 6 large, older trees were cut in this unit. Two of the trees were over 180 years old. None of the remaining trees were over 150 years old and were between 20 and 30 inches diameter. All of the trees were Douglas-fir. Harvesting trees over 150 years old was not the intent for Pilot Joe. The marking prescription calls for retaining trees over 150 years old.

When alerted to this situation, some members in the community raised concerns:

- that the mark was not consistent with the Johnson/Franklin restoration principles prescription
- that the BLM did nothing to stop these large trees from being harvested
- that this was uncovered *only* because community members took initiative to review some of the Pilot Joe units

The following narrative relates the facts about this incident, and describes recommendations to greatly reduce the incident from repeating itself.

In August of 2012 the Multi-party Monitoring crew, establishing base line plots, came upon a number of larger, older trees in Unit 26-1A that were designated (by virtue of not being marked with yellow paint as a reserve tree) to be harvested. One of the public members of the crew (Aaron Krikava, representing the Applegate Partnership) compiled a set of photos into a report titled "*Pilot Joe Timber Sale, Unit 26-1A, Initiation of Discussion Regarding Removal Tree Choices*" (also posted on this website). The report was sent to BLM on Tuesday, August 28. I determined that the direct concerns were over about 6 large trees as documented by the photos, but other subsequent (mostly emails) discussion also raised concerns about the selection of larger trees (greater than 20 inches diameter) or thinning in established groups. Essentially, there was a difference of opinion over what constituted the appropriate implementation of the Franklin and Johnson principles.

The primary issue, however, was why two trees over 150 years old and several other large trees were cut on the Pilot Joe Timber Sale.

Upon further field review of the unit on August 31, BLM believes there is an indecisive "skip" boundary within the unit that is the cause of the confusion, and concludes that the large trees are really within the skip and safe from being harvested. BLM adds yellow (reserve) paint to several of the large trees on the edge of the skip.

Additional concerns are raised by Aaron about the location of all skips in the sale and how or if logging corridors can compromise the skips, causing large trees--such as the ones in Unit 26-1A--to be harvested, anyway. Aaron remained uncertain that the trees in question are really part of a skip, which prompted me to invite Aaron to the field with the sale administrator to view the corridor approval process for Unit 26-1A. It is BLM's desire to retain the designated skips intact. During that field visit, it is determined that the area in question is NOT a skip, and the large trees not marked with yellow paint (reserve) will be cut as part of the contract. It was determined that the purchaser's one-time use of orange flagging (which is BLM's unit and skip boundary flagging color) created the false conclusion that the area was a skip.

Because the Pilot Joe was under a timber sale contract at this time, there is no authority for BLM to unilaterally withdraw trees from those sold under a contract. However, discussions with the purchaser resulted in the retention of the two largest trees (42 and 32 inches diameter) documented in the photos. The rest of the trees identified in the photos for harvest were cut during the logging operations, some

because they were within the cable corridor. Post-harvest age determination found that two of the trees cut were over 150 years old, contrary to the prescription to retain trees over 150 years of age.

BLM visited the site numerous times with either the community on public field trips or internally with the interdisciplinary team or selected staff members to help understand what occurred.

## **FINDINGS**

Pilot Joe was an effort to see the pilot principles implemented as rapidly as possible to be able to demonstrate outcomes on the ground, rather than debate the approach endlessly. BLM staffs worked many days with Drs. Johnson and Franklin to implement the pilot to their expectations. Pilot Joe harvested approximately 22,000 trees. Of these, about 6 trees were found to be inconsistent with the prescription. To date, no one has identified similar situations on Pilot Joe; thus, this incident is an isolated example of non-compliance with the prescription. We acknowledge, as do Drs. Franklin and Johnson that the process for identifying tree age is not a simple task. As part of this adaptive process, we are reviewing our strategy for identifying older trees, as well as trees that have legacy characteristics, but may not meet the age criteria. Our goal is to accurately as possible implement the ecological forestry principles, be transparent in the process, and to build stronger collaborative relationships along the way.

- The mark to harvest the large trees was *not* consistent with the prescription which noted to retain all trees over 150 years of age, and especially if the older, large trees occur in a clump, which was the case for some of the trees in Unit 26-1A. The two largest trees, which were retained after negotiation with the Purchaser, had physical characteristics typical of old trees.
- The BLM negotiated with the Purchaser to retain the two largest trees. The Purchaser did not agree to retain any of the other large trees in question. The sale was under contract at the time the Multi-Party Monitoring crew discovered the situation in Unit 26-1A. The BLM has no authority under the contract to unilaterally alter the number or kind of trees designated for harvest.
- The Multi-Party Monitoring team discovered the situation at Unit 26-1A while they were installing monitoring plots prior to the timber harvest. The multi-party monitoring effort is funded by BLM and includes both BLM and community members on the team. One of the community members made the extra effort to document and immediately share the situation about the large trees. This was *not* an independent community effort to monitor the pilot project, but a result of the exact reason for funding and establishing multi-party monitoring.

## **WHAT WILL BLM DO DIFFERENT ON FUTURE PROJECTS?**

In Pilot Joe, most skips were designated only by a boundary and an outer ring of reserve trees. We will more distinctly designate and document the skips, and especially reserve mark the larger trees within skips.

BLM will be more detailed in the prescriptions to give the implementation crew better understanding of the desired outcome. The prescription will also include more discussion of stand and group conditions that warrant extra attention.

BLM will provide additional time for the community to review the mark on future projects *prior* to the sale being contracted. BLM will review areas of concerns with the public in the field *prior* to finalizing the decision for a project. In addition, BLM will offer Drs. Johnson and Franklin the opportunity to review future pilot projects and/or discuss issues raised by the public to validate that project are designed according to their restoration principles.

BLM will sample a portion of the trees designated for harvest in future projects to determine if BLM is being efficient at retaining trees over 150 years of age.

BLM will incorporate findings from the multi-party monitoring effort to improve the outcome of future pilot projects.

BLM's silviculturist will work more closely with the marking crew. One person will be in charge of tracking where the "skips" are placed and to document what the resource values are within each "skip" (i.e. hardwood patch, rock outcrop, botany buffer, etc.).

BLM will reiterate with marking personnel the need to be very vigilant about recognizing and protecting trees over 150 years of age.

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