REPORT ON POST-FIRE RECOVERY PUBLIC MEETINGS

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INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on a second set of 2013-14 post-fire recovery public processes conducted by the BLM, assisted by Oregon Consensus facilitators Theresa Jensen and Jon Lange. It follows earlier work, summarized in a previous Oregon Consensus document by the same authors (September, 2013), and alluded to here. Further, this report is most thoroughly understood by reading its companion piece entitled "Report on the Post-Fire Recovery Workshop, 1/30/14, Canyonville."

In the 2013 report, we began by writing about some of the contextual features, our charge, and the desired outcomes and objectives. All remain essentially the same, even as the BLM has refined their goals, continuing its own internal planning, processes, preparation and work on the land.

CONTEXT

BLM Roseburg and Medford districts continue to face fire-related and other challenges:

- Post-fire season losses and activities
- Mandates of the Swanson v. Salazar case
- Political pressure from counties, neighbors and others, representing often competing and sometimes mutually exclusive goals
- Looming legislative activity
- Possible associated litigation as the BLM encounters a variety of legal and interest-based dilemmas or quandaries

OUR CHARGE: 2014 Post-Fire Recovery

In their continuing effort to respond to the interests and values of their multiple constituencies, the BLM sought facilitation assistance from Oregon Consensus to do a constituent "pulse check" about the post-fire recovery work done to date and the

current plans—to the extent they were known--for the immediate future. We were asked to reach out to stakeholders and listen to their perspectives on these efforts.

Our **scope of work** was to:

- Help plan, prepare and facilitate two public input sessions on post-fire recovery efforts, one closer to Medford and one further north.
- Help plan, prepare and facilitate a longer, full-day workshop with interest groups and interested parties, as a follow-up to the one held in September. This was held in February, 2014.

These sessions had the multiple purposes of:

- continuing to inform the public and stakeholders about the BLM's competing tasks in post-fire recovery,
- soliciting stakeholder input about those dilemmas,
- enabling stakeholders to learn from each other, and
- perhaps finding common ground in some areas.

In addition, the BLM wished generally to:

- Continue to obtain information that would inform the agency as they identified and prioritized their future steps;
- Continue to clarify areas of highest likelihood of success in meeting their own requirements and goals while satisfying as many as possible constituent interests;
- Have conversations with all constituencies, and ensure that they all have equal access;
- Characterize these conversations as pertaining to more than just "salvage logging" possibilities, as there is so much more: safety, good neighbors, ecological, habitat, economic considerations, etc.;
- Respond as a "good neighbor", with the highlighted checkerboard pattern of ownership.

To further explicate the BLM's goals, and in the interest of thoroughness, the following are relevant excerpts from the "Leaders Intent":

State Director Leader's Intent: Engaging the Public and Transparency
Understand the public's areas of common understanding and support for post-fire activities, as well as their concerns and dissent. Engage in dialog with stakeholders in a manner that allows us to learn from each other and ensure that we are transparent from the beginning.

Roseburg and Medford District Managers Leader's Intent:
Goal: Plan and implement southwest Oregon fire-recovery actions with public and constituent group conversations seeking common ground.

METHODS

Planning Meetings

There were several planning meetings and conference calls between the facilitators and varying BLM personnel, including the Project Lead, Medford & Roseburg District leaders, Field Managers from Medford and Roseburg Districts and public outreach staff from both districts.

Public Meetings

Glendale on 1/21/14 and Grants Pass on 1/23/14. Times: 5:30-7:30 PM

Goals of the meetings:

- Share post-fire project information on Big Windy and Douglas Complex fires, and hear feedback on various topic areas;
- Show and tell accomplishments to date;
- Share and discuss key issue topic areas : what information the BLM has, and potential project ideas

Agenda for Public Meetings
Facilitator opening, agenda review, discuss opportunities for participation
Field Managers introduce the context
Project lead discusses fire-recovery efforts to date and current plans. Provides overview
Facilitated Questions & Answers from audience
Information Stations were staffed by BLM personnel, who were available with more specific information, including visuals and maps. Members of the public could roam and interact informally. Stations included:

ESR/Reforestation
Fire Planning
Roads/Road Safety
Riparian/Watersheds
Habitat
Economic Recovery
NEPA

Day Long Workshop, 1/30, Canyonville

(For a summary of this workshop, including the participants who attended and a list of participant notes, please see the document entitled "Report on the Post-Fire Recovery Workshop, 1/30/14, Canyonville.")

Goals:

- Build understanding of the dilemmas the BLM faces as they attempt to balance issues such as long-term habitat restoration, protection from future fire, minimizing sort-term impacts, safety considerations, private land concerns and economic recovery.
- Seek stakeholder input about those dilemmas;
- Enable stakeholders to learn from each other;
- Learn about possible common ground.

Agenda:

Facilitator-led opening: introductions, goals, ground rules, agenda review

BLM Presentations/Participant Questions. Topics included:

- Roads & Road Safety
- Fire Planning
- Potential Unit for Salvage
- Riparian/Watershed Issues
- Habitat

Layered Issues in Douglas Complex: Matrix and LSR

The BLM Field Managers presented information about a GIS-layered specific piece of ground that included both LSR and Matrix areas, in order to show the dilemmas the BLM faces, including all the different constituent interests as well as some of the legal requirements/constraints, discussed layer by layer.

Small Group Work

Groups of *mixed interests* discussed:

How would you approach the various dilemmas presented by this multi-layered scenario? What would you prioritize?

OUTCOMES

Informing the Public and Stakeholders About the BLM's Progress and Competing Tasks in Post-Fire Recovery

As noted, the two public meetings in January involved Information Stations staffed by BLM personnel who had visuals and handouts available for the public. Likewise, the morning segment of the January workshop involved BLM staffers presenting specific updates and draft ideas in a number of substantive areas. Though the Grants Pass public meeting drew some pointed questions—as well as a number of strongly stated preferences—in general, the reactions to the information and level of detail appeared to be greatly appreciated by the vast majority of audience members at all venues. We believe that the presentations for both the public meeting and the workshop were very helpful.

The all-day workshop on January 30 had a specific goal of building understanding among constituents with varying interests regarding the dilemmas the BLM faces as they attempt to balance competing interests of constituents with legal constraints and imperatives. In particular, the layered GIS model of a representative piece of land that encompassed both matrix and LSR, was an outstanding tool to highlight the complexity of decisions the BLM faces in post-fire recovery.

Soliciting Stakeholder Input: Encouraging Stakeholders to Learn From Each Other

Even though the January 30 workshop turnout was disappointing, there was general agreement among the Medford and Roseburg BLM leadership that, when taken together, with the public meetings in January and the September field trips and workshop, a clear picture of constituents' goals, interests, and reactions to the current tentative plans emerged. There was a more than reasonable assessment of the public's "pulse," varied as it may be.

In addition, the goal of having participants learn about the BLM dilemmas seems well-met. This was demonstrated in one of the January small groups, where there were many voices agreeing that the BLM must obviously follow the laws as they approach the LSR, and even beyond that, they should use treatments that are "stand specific," blending all that they must with regard to safety, erosion, wildlife concerns, etc. In that group, there was a general understanding of the various quandaries the agency faces. Additionally, this group asked that the BLM "be creative," applying what they must do and what they know about constituent interests as they approach their task.
The above and other instances suggest success in having participants "learn from each other," as in both of the workshops, they exchanged information previously not shared. A particularly compelling example, among many, includes the exchanges about future fire safety, regarding what must be salvaged and where, as well as what kinds of treatments yield what kinds of (fire resistant or fire prone) effects.

Guidance About Where to "Aim" BLM Efforts

Specifically, the BLM was interested in where they should "aim" their efforts. Some of that "aim" has been usefully narrowed, as the agency was able to hear more specific and refined reactions from the various interest groups. We believe this will "show up" as the decisions by field managers are made public.

With regard to possible litigation (discussed in one on one interviews with constituents, as well as during the second workshop), it is our impression that conservation/environmental groups will most likely not litigate on the following:

- Salvage logging in the Matrix lands
- *In the LSR*, logging that might be acceptable would include:
    - Ensuring roadside safety and eliminating hazard trees

- Decked logs
- Providing future access for firefighters
- Selected fire breaks
- Riparian restoration (though what counts as "restoration" may be equivocal)
- Some small diameter trees and thinning from managed plantations
- Selected replanting designed to mimic natural processes and variety in areas that were already plantations

High Quality Dialogue

In the (earlier) September, 2013 workshop, adjacent landowners were noticeably absent, while the key conservation groups were present, including KS Wild and Oregon Wild. In this January workshop, a representative from Roseburg Forest Products attended and actively participated, while KS Wild was noticeably absent (though they did provide a letter explaining why they would not be attending; see below).

One of the common complaints of conservationists--voiced at the September meeting and elsewhere--is that all (post-fire and other) ecological considerations need to be addressed on *federal* lands, since private landowners (and even, largely, the Oregon Department of Forestry) seem to them uninterested in ecological goals as they are solely motivated by profit and managing their lands for timber production. Though this concern was repeated in January, the Roseburg Forest Products representative challenged this assumption by stating that he was open to talking to his owner about taking some affirmative action on their private land to address ecological interests. He discussed, for example, the possibility of a) avoiding salvage logging within certain buffer zones next to BLM land, and b) managing some parts of their lands with goals similar to Matrix and LSR areas. Though skeptical, the few conservationists who heard this welcomed the ideas, particularly as they affected wildlife connectivity.

A timber industry representative engaged in an active discussion with a participant from Umpqua Watersheds regarding a possible agreement which, if joined by all the relevant major conservation agencies that typically bring lawsuits, seemed to represent an opening negotiation stance that would allow for both an ecological focus (while promoting active management for future fire prevention) and strategic salvage logging (toward that end). Some of the discussion included:

- Overall goal: raise the level of ecological function
- Leave plenty of snags
- Variable density re-planting
- "Smart" ridge-top treatments (limit soil damage)
- Conventional harvest on existing roads (no new roads)
- Possible diameter limit (20" was mentioned but no number was agreed upon)
- Active management for future fire prevention, which would include strategic salvage logging that would otherwise not be done

Although these ideas were in the nature of a "brainstorm" between only two individuals, near the end of the session, one representative of adjacent private land did put "on the table" that he would be willing to talk to his owner about setting aside a specific piece of their private land to try out aspects of this approach as a "case study."

This was an interesting ending to the day, though it calls for some wariness. Previous collaborative attempts at establishing a diameter limit have (perhaps justifiably) proved futile; it was only two people brainstorming, without much more input (e.g., from others in the environmental community or from the owner of adjacent private land). Nonetheless, it showed some openness to dialogue.

Common Ground

Most of the following list—areas where it seems all constituents can agree on logging--repeats information from the last report (September, 2013). That is, there seems to be little change over time. It may be instructive to examine the NEPA scoping comments recently submitted by the environmental community to prove this issue further.

- Safety roadside hazard and other safety-related logging
- Fire deck logs
- Small diameter thinning or salvage logging, even in the LSR if in unhealthy stands or managed plantations
- Fire break logging
- Logging required to provide access to critical recreation areas
- Re-planting in areas that were "plantations" or in unhealthy stands
- Focus on matrix
- No salvage in riparian areas except as safety requires
- Where possible, minimize effects of salvage logging on soils; for example using pull suspension cable removal, such as on ridge tops, or helicopter logging where economically viable
- Restoration thinning in areas adjacent to green trees
- Full consideration of how to minimize the likelihood of intense future fires (for example, by avoiding leaving large snag patches)
- Potential for creative packaging in LSR (e.g. stewardship contracting if economically viable; mimicking "Norm & Jerry" forestry in burned areas, where replanting is done with "skips and gaps" etc.; fewer trees than the 10x10 or 8x8 grids mentioned in BAER report; fall hazard trees along roads adjacent to streams and leave the logs in stream)
- Exploration of the possibility of a new kind of salvage logging that would create long term ecological benefits (with a neutral or minor impact in the present).

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Correction/Clarification Needed

Several in the conservation community referred to their impression that "The BLM is going into the LSR [i. e., salvage logging] in a big way." This was heard from representatives of KS Wild and Oregon Wild When asked about the source of this impression, it appeared that the map of "potential salvage units" was erroneously understood as a map of LSR lands and not the matrix lands that they actually depicted. BLM managers are moving to correct this mis-impression. In fact, no salvage logging for economic gain is being planned in the LSR.

Notes from the Workshop

The edited flip chart notes from January 30, which capture input from the participants, are located in the document entitled "Report on the Post-Fire Recovery Workshop, 1/30/14, Canyonville".