

Community-Based Riparian Assessment

Location: North Fork Crooked River, Prineville, Oregon



Project Summary: Information gathered during the community-based riparian assessment process was used for the subsequent design of management and monitoring plans. Valuable written documentation of riparian condition, needs, learning points, and decisions was provided to support consistent management over time.

Resource Challenge: The North Fork Crooked River is located within Crook County, Oregon, a place where agriculture and natural resources are valued in the face of ongoing demographic and economic transition. Designated a National Wild and Scenic River (WSR) in 1988, the North Fork Crooked River has outstanding scenic and botanical values as well as a sensitive species of frog and redband trout. Issues and concerns include: effects

of dewatering (irrigation) and increased water temperature (Clean Water Act, section 303(d) list) on fish; grazing impacts and whether livestock grazing is a suitable use in the WSR corridor; strongly held values tied to the protection of historical grazing use and water rights; concern over upland condition with a heavy concentration of small diameter trees; disparate opinions regarding restoration approaches; and inconsistent implementation of the 1993 interagency management plan. With the proliferation of lawsuits regarding WSR management in Oregon, the Ochoco National Forest requested help from the NRST to initiate a collaborative process to address the management of the North Fork Crooked River.

Key Partners: FS, Crook County Natural Resources Planning

Committee (CCNRPC), BLM, permittees, private landowners and managers, NRST and network members, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, Oregon Dept. of Forestry, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State University Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, interested citizens, county planners, Crooked River Watershed Council, Juniper Chapter of the Sierra Club, Oregon Fly Fishers, Oregon Natural Desert Association, and the Deschutes River Conservancy.

Activities:

Prework: The FS, CCNRPC, and NRST hosted a series of meetings with principal partners and other interested parties to develop an inclusive involvement strategy. A situation assessment included a

series of discussions held with key stakeholders to get a sense of existing concerns and issues. Finally, an electronic communication network and website were created for interested parties who were unable to directly participate in the process.

Creeks and Communities

Workshop: A workshop was conducted on a Friday and Saturday to increase community involvement. The purpose was to build a foundation of understanding based on riparian-wetland function and the PFC assessment method and to create a common vocabulary while fostering relationships among diverse stakeholders.

Community PFC Assessment

(5 days, 19 stream miles): An experienced interdisciplinary team

and diverse stakeholders together assessed the North Fork Crooked River and engaged in facilitated discussions regarding current condition, limiting factors, and opportunities.

Community Briefing: The PFC assessment results, along with management and monitoring recommendations, were presented to the community at an evening meeting providing a forum for questions and discussion.

Outcomes: Given the need for both woody shrubs and large woody material in the system, as identified in the assessment, the FS planted riparian shrubs in 2005-2006 and have closed sections of the riparian corridor to firewood cutting. Additionally, the FS and

grazing permittees agreed to change management on some key areas to meet resource needs as identified by the assessment. Monitoring plans were also developed. Two reaches were revisited in July 2008 with stakeholders. It was evident that resource conditions were improving. Time was also spent brainstorming future management strategies to maintain upward trend and meet permittee needs. The FS and permittees made a commitment to a collaborative short- and long-term monitoring strategy.



*"I would say the outcomes are more than I had hoped for.
The education, collaboration, and joint assessments are a wonderful model."*

Larry Timchak (January 2005)
Ochoco National Forest Supervisor