



for the greatest good



BLUE MOUNTAINS
FOREST PLAN REVISION - 2015
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman
National Forests

Meeting Notes

Public Meeting on the Pace and Scale of Restoration and Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

Hosted by Harney County, High Desert Partnership, and the Malheur National Forest
Burns, Oregon | Dec. 10, 2015

These notes reflect the best efforts of the notetaker to capture the discussion of meeting participants, but in no way are these notes a word-for-word transcript as the notetaker may have unintentionally missed some statements or dialogue. Also, the notes do not attempt to correct or clarify any statements made by participants.

Participants: Steve Grasty, Michael Buck, Mike Choate, Alex Choate, Jim Campbell, Fred Hellbusch, Derek Taylor, J. Cary, Brenda Smith, Bill Endecott, Colin Endecott, Jack Southworth (facilitator)

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) participants: Steve Beverlin, Christy Cheyne, Melissa Ward, Lori Bailey, Sabrina Stadler, Gunnar Carnwath, Matt Rathbone, Peter Fargo (notetaker)

Organizations represented: Harney County, Harney Co. Snowmobile Club, Oregon State Snowmobile Association, Taylor Bros., JCB Logging, High Desert Partnership, and USFS

Introductory Remarks

Jack Southworth, Facilitator with High Desert Partnership: Good evening. Tonight we are discussing the pace and scale of restoration as addressed in the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision. Everyone will have a chance speak as we go around the circle a few times. Please be respectful of others' views, and please focus on the issues not the person. Share your concerns, but be prepared to offer a solution to those concerns. Also feel free to ask questions, since we have USFS officials here to address them.

Introductions: Who are you, where are you from, and what is your relationship to the Malheur National Forest (NF)?

- Small farmer, president of snowmobile club, also work on construction
- Business owner; recreate in the Malheur NF; President, Oregon State Snowmobile Association
- Vice President, Oregon State Snowmobile Association; enjoy camping in the forest
- Work for the Malheur NF
- Supervisor of the Malheur NF
- Live/work here locally; grew up here; work for Malheur NF

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- District Ranger here in Hines; work for the Malheur NF
- Harney Co. Judge; recreate on the Malheur NF and out in the desert
- Forester with Wallowa-Whitman in Baker City; Forest Plan Revision
- JCB Logging out of Dallas, OR
- Small timber company in Dallas
- JCB Logging
- Small property owner on the forest; recreate up there
- Rancher from Seneca
- Ecologist with the Forest Service
- Local farmer; worked on this Ranger District

Opening Remarks

Steve Beverlin, Malheur National Forest Supervisor

- As you know, mills have been closing over the years; when I got here one announced plans to close.
- We needed the sawmill to process the material that comes off the forest; it is a symbiotic relationship.
- We put a plan together with the community and worked with the USFS Region 6 to hire more people; we are now making three times the number of decisions needed for projects to go forward, and we're doing it in half the time it took before. We worked with our Collaboratives to reduce litigation, and we have not been sued in eight years.
- We have increased the pace & scale of restoration; our past timber target was 25 million board feet (MMBF); now it is 75 MMBF.
- We're here to work together on this Forest Plan and talk about how we can continue the progress we have made.

Steve Grasty, Harney County Judge

- You might say that I'm the oldest member of the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision team, since the County has been a Cooperating Agency from the start.
- 3-5% of the land needs to be treated per year, but currently the Plan is not going to get us there.
- The 10-year stewardship contract did not bring enough jobs to Harney County; we got together with Iron Triangle but couldn't find anyone left here in Harney County who could/would work in the forest; that is a bit of a Catch-22.

Gunnar Carnwath, USFS Ecologist (Summary of the attached briefing paper, beginning on page 8, "Timber Topics: Frequently Asked Questions.")

Questions, Concerns, or Solutions?

- The Regional Office committed to 75 MMBF per year, but the current Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) in the draft Plan is 55 MMBF. How do you meet a commitment made by the Regional Office that doesn't match up with the ASQ?
 - USFS Ecologist: We assumed a non-declining flow of timber. However, the current condition out there is fairly dire: a lot of mid-seral, closed canopy that is not resilient to fire. What if we had the pace and scale of restoration on this forest, including timber production, match the conditions that

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- are out there? We are looking at what it would mean for industry to ramp up production for the first few years, including potentially a non-declining flow.
- What is the average volume per acre that we would be treating?
 - USFS Ecologist: We are recalculating our yield tables using more sophisticated models. We will compare the results with timber sale records. Initial assumption in the plan was no harvest of 21" and over. Now we are looking at adding more trees over 21", which would bring our volume per acre up.
 - My solution for the Plan is to move the ASQ up to 75 MMBF and not 55. If you're going to talk about sustainability, we need to talk about the sustainability of the community; otherwise we are going to fade away.
 - USFS Ecologist: I hear you. Just remember, ASQ is a calculation. To change the output, we need to change the inputs -- e.g., over 21" trees, non-declining flow.
 - FS Planner: The Preferred Alternative has a good balance, but it needs to be tweaked. For example, I'm not sure we need a standard/guideline regarding old trees if the Desired Condition is the goal.
 - Budget does matter. If the Forest Service only has so much money for logging, then it won't be able to reach the ASQ.
 - What is a sustainable yield of timber? I have heard 250 MMBF a year for the Malheur. Is that off? [USFS Ecologist: Based on our models, that is more than the Malheur can sustain.]
 - I don't feel like the Forest Service is doing its job.
 - USFS: It has been eight years since we have had litigation; we have been working closely with our Collaboratives to get projects done. We went from 25 MMBF to 75.
 - Will adding larger trees give you the board footage you need to keep the mills open?
 - USFS: Yes, I think there would be enough. If we move in this new direction, there would be no strict standard against cutting larger trees, but there would be Desired Conditions that we need to meet.
 - Private timber contributions to the mills would be over/above the USFS volume.
 - It's no wonder I don't have a job, since we have not had the timber we used to have to feed the big mill here in Harney Co.
 - The mill you have is old school and expensive. We're not going to have 200 MMBF coming off of this forest. We have a mill for 25 MMBF a year, and we're in the black. I think you could have a small, more modern mill here in Harney County and create jobs. In the mill: 15 jobs. In the woods: 5-10 jobs.
 - Could narrower riparian areas add more volume? [USFS: Yes, the width of the Riparian Management Areas makes a difference, but not for the ASQ. The additional volume would be in the yellow part of the chart (see briefing paper, page 9): "Available" but Unsuitable.]
 - Commercial thinning, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed fire: Is there any way to bundle these services in one area, so all of these activities could happen in the same area to get the job done? [USFS: Sometimes the contractors aren't equipped to do everything. But we are trying to bundle more; it is more efficient and often cheaper.]
 - Is it possible to get a higher percentage of areas treated? [USFS: Yes, it is possible. There is a significant initiative dedicated to doing more restoration across the Blue Mountains. Success will require a great deal of collaboration with community partners.]
 - How is the commercial volume tied to ASQ? [USFS: Allowable Sale Quantity is the "maximum amount of volume, per decade, potentially available as part of regularly scheduled timber harvest from lands suitable

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for timber production.” The Total Sale Program Quantity is the “total amount of volume estimated to be harvested.”]

- Prescribed Fire and Air Quality: Wildfires don’t have to get a permit; prescribed fires do.
 - Solution: If the prescribed burn season was longer, we could treat more of the landscape.
 - However, I also understand that the Forest Service wants to play nice with user groups, including hunters in the fall, and doesn’t want to smoke them out. I’d like to see more creativity around this challenge.
- Would like to see more hardwoods in riparian areas that are being encroached upon by pines.
- Biomass: Projects are in progress that could process 80-100K green tons per year, including juniper and other kinds of woody biomass.

Summary of what was heard: Team Leader, Forest Plan Revision

- I heard that some industry representatives are interested in building a new, smaller mill, and that is encouraging.
- There are some concerns about wilderness and riparian areas.
- Cutting larger trees, when justified by Desired Conditions, could be a way to reach a higher ASQ.
- I heard some say that 55 MMBF is not going to get us where we need to be.
- There is a critical role for economics. As you heard, it is not necessarily used for all calculations in the plan, but it is still an important consideration in how we do our work.

Final round of questions, concerns, and solutions

- What makes you any more confident in the modeling now compared to 1990? [USFS: I think we have much better data today -- data on soil quality, for example. We are using a different framework for modeling compared to the 1990 linear optimization models used to maximize timber production. Now we are looking at the dynamics of the ecosystem. Geographic information systems (GIS) give us better data now; we have better understanding of what’s out there on the land base, overlaid with soils, etc.]
- I haven’t thought about many of the topics that came up today; it stirred my curiosity about what needs to be done. It sounds like we may change; instead of burning everything up in wildfires, we may be able to cut more.
- What has happened in Harney County is what’s happening all over the rural west. We are going out of business. People don’t want to work here, and they often can’t qualify for the jobs that become available (e.g., at Les Schwab); they don’t want to take the drug test; if they do, they don’t want to work hard. The timber industry isn’t going to help us; I don’t see how they could possibly help us here.
- What is Old Growth? [USFS: It depends on the trees and the climate, but old growth trees are often considered older than 150 years.]
- I don’t like seeing forest fires; I would rather have somebody come in and make some money.
- USFS: We haven’t had litigation in 8 years. I have only been here for 2 years, but I can already see that the Malheur is doing a lot. I’m optimistic that we are going to continue to do this.
- My worry with pace and scale is we will defend the numbers we already have in the draft Plan, rather than looking for new ideas. I’ve been part of this from day one and don’t feel the communities have been heard. I think the solution is with the Collaboratives. We have processes that are so finite to the tree that

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local managers won't be able to make decisions. Communities and the Forest Service need to have more flexibility.

- Want to support the sustainability of our communities. I agree that Collaboratives are a big part of the solution.
- I'd like to think the Collaboratives are a big part of the solution.
- I like the optimism. We need to start somewhere.
- I think we have a lot of resources here. I think we can build a small mill and run it for a long time; support the health of the forest and the community; bring jobs.
- We know that something needs to be done; if there are no loggers here, we need to give them a reason to move in. They came in the 1900s; they will come again given the right opportunities.

Closing remarks by Steve Beverlin, Malheur National Forest Supervisor

- I see ASQ as more of an aspiration, rather than a cap.
- I'm always impressed when I come to Harney County; I know we will make progress working together.
- We would love for new industry to come to Harney County; we can work with you; we have the product you need.

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Timber Topics: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)?

- ASQ is the maximum amount of volume **potentially available** as part of regularly scheduled timber harvest from **lands suitable** for timber production **per decade**.
- Although it is expressed as an annual figure, it is actually a 10-year cap, within which annual variation is allowed.
- ASQ is primarily influenced by:
 - *Desired Conditions*
 - *Existing Conditions*
 - The number of acres considered suitable for timber production
 - An assumption of “non-declining flow” (not required)
- ASQ is not the same as the total harvested volume. It is not a promise or a goal.
- It is not based on budget; larger budget assumptions do not result in higher ASQ.

What is the Total Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ)?

- Total amount of volume estimated to be harvested under each Alternative. TSPQ is not a promise of, or a limit to, what may be done in the future.
- TSPQ volumes come from:
 - lands *Suitable* for timber production (ASQ)
 - lands *Unsuitable* for timber production but available for timber harvest to meet the Desired Conditions for a particular area (e.g., Riparian Management Areas, Old Forest)
 - Salvage, firewood, post and poles
- TSPQ is influenced by estimated budget.

What is the Historic Range of Variation (HRV) and why has it been used to develop Desired Conditions for the Forest Plan Revision?

- Range of Variation is defined as the variation of ecological characteristics and processes over scales of space and time that are appropriate for a given management application. The fundamental assumption underlying the use of HRV is if historical ranges in stand structures by forest type are maintained on current and future landscapes, then much of the habitat for native flora and fauna should be recreated and maintained. Thus, most species and ecosystem elements should remain viable. (Wiens et al, 2012; Agee, 2003).
- Use of HRV as reference point for Desired Conditions is not an attempt to turn managed landscapes in to wilderness or return to a specific time in the past. Rather, HRV is a lens that helps managers achieve multiple-use objectives.
- There is broad agreement among managers and scientists that HRV provides essential insights for decision-making. Managing toward HRV has the following benefits:
 - protecting biodiversity and ensuring species viability,
 - recognizing the roles of disturbance,
 - widening the options for management, and
 - maintaining resilience and ecological integrity.

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How many acres are considered suitable for timber harvest in the Alternatives of the draft Environmental Impact Statement?

(See the chart in the Addendum for acreage: “Timber Suitability Classification for Alternatives C, D, and E”)

- **Alternative C** has the fewest suitable acreage for timber production because of a greater number of acres of Preliminary Administratively Recommended Wilderness Area (PARWA), Old Forest, and wider Riparian Management Areas. Alt. C contains additional areas in wildlife corridor management areas that were identified as unsuitable.
- **Alternative D** has the most suitable acreage for timber production, because Riparian Management Areas are narrower and Old Forest is classified as suitable. The effect of this classification would be to increase the ASQ, which is based on the suitable acres.
- **Alternatives B, E, and F** have the same suitable acreage, because they all have the same *Standards, Guidelines*, and similar *Management Areas* that influence Suitability for timber production. Old Forest and Riparian Management Areas are classified as Unsuitable for timber production.

What is the approach to Old Forest management in the 1990 (current) Forest Plans for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests?

Eastside Screens:

- In 1994, the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region regional forester issued “Interim Direction Establishing Riparian, Ecosystem, and Wildlife Standards for Timber Sales on Eastside Forests” (USDA Forest Service 1995c), commonly referred to as the Eastside Screens. It amended the 1990 Forest Plans by establishing riparian, ecosystem, and wildlife standards for timber sales.
- The Eastside Screens amendment emphasizes:
 - retaining and developing late old forest structures and patch sizes within the Historic Range of Variability;
 - maintaining or developing linkages between old forests;
 - meeting requirements for snags, downed logs, and green tree replacements; and
 - retaining most trees greater than 21 inches in diameter.

Old Growth Management Areas:

- All three 1990 Forest Plans designate Management Areas for old growth.
- Old Growth Management Areas are Unsuitable for timber production, but some Old Growth areas may be harvested for other purposes.
- In the 1990 Forest Plans, many Old Growth Management Areas were designated in areas that did not actually contain old forest characteristics. In addition, some areas have been affected by fire, insects, and disease, resulting in changes to species composition and forest structure. As a result, only between 20-40% of designated Old Growth Management Areas actually contain old forest structural characteristics.

Proposed Management of Old Forest and Large/Old Trees

In general, unlike the 1990 plans, the Revised Forest Plan recognizes that Old Forest characteristics are dynamic in space and time and should be managed accordingly.

	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E	Alt. F
Desired Conditions Direct Old Forest	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

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Management?					
Designated Old Forest Mgmt. Area?	No	YES	No	No	No
Standard or Guidelines on Harvesting > 21" DBH?	YES; Guideline: Retain >21" DBH (with exceptions)	YES; Standard: Retain >21" DBH (no exceptions)	NO	NO	NO
Standard or Guidelines on Harvesting Old Trees?	NO	NO	NO	YES: Guideline: Retain trees with old characteristics	YES: Guideline to retain trees >150 years old

How are Snags (standing dead trees) and Down Wood addressed in the draft Plans? What are some Standards and Guidelines that could affect post-fire salvage of snags?

- Section 1.14 (Snags and Down Wood, starting on p. 47) in the Proposed Revised Land Management Plan includes the Background, Existing Condition, and Desired Condition regarding Snags and down wood.
- The Desired Condition for snags and down wood is to maintain ecological characteristics within the historic range of variability.
- Examples of Standards and Guidelines that could affect post-fire salvage of snags:

Standard or Guideline	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D	Alt E, F
Harvest no more than 50% of post-fire source habitat (*)	X	Salvage not permitted	No Standards or Guidelines	X
No snag harvesting in areas with fire perimeters less than 100 acres	X	Salvage not permitted	No Standards or Guidelines	X
Harvest no snags greater than 21" and 50% of 12-21" (**)	X	Salvage not permitted	No Standards or Guidelines	X

* Except in the Wildland-Urban Interface

** Except for Danger/Hazard Trees

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Addendum: Timber Suitability Classification for Alternatives C, D, and E

The chart below illustrates acres of land that are either Suitable, Unsuitable, or “Available” for timber harvest within the National Forest under different Alternatives in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. The definitions below are helpful for the purposes of this chart:

- Lands *Suitable* for timber production allow for regularly scheduled harvest of trees for industrial or consumer use.
- *Unsuitable* lands are deemed unsuitable for timber production based on criteria established by the National Forest Management Act (Sec. 6k) and the 1982 Planning Rule (Sec. 219.14). In general, this includes land with less than 10% canopy cover, significant regeneration issues/concerns, and lands withdrawn by law or policy (e.g., Wilderness Areas).
- “Available” lands are lands that are Unsuitable for regularly scheduled timber harvest but allow for the harvest of trees to meet Desired Conditions for a particular area (e.g., Riparian Management Areas)

