

Creeks and Communities Project:
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Ruby Mountains Ranger District



In 2009, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) and University of Nevada Reno (UNR) Cooperative Extension jointly requested the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) to work with the Ruby Mountains Ranger District (RMRD) and the local community. The purposes discussed were to develop enhanced understanding and management of riparian systems within the Forest, and to build improved capacity within the community to solve problems related to complex natural resource issues. Grazing management in riparian areas has been the focus of considerable controversy as the Forest has developed Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for permitted grazing on the Santa Rosa and Jarbidge Ranger Districts.

The 2010 Creeks and Communities (C&C) pilot project in the southwestern end (eco-zone #1) of the RMRD was seen as an opportunity to begin working in a different and more collaborative way for future NEPA planning. This project focused on the collection of important riparian resource information, as well as the engagement of diverse stakeholders who were interested in and affected by the future outcomes. The pilot was proposed with the understanding that it would expand to other eco-zones on the district in support of rangeland NEPA only if deemed successful by the Forest Service and key partners. Success would be determined by whether the parties involved felt that useful information was obtained and, more importantly, if stakeholders (permittees in particular) were, and continued to be, engaged. Feedback during the October 2010 assessment results workshop indicated overwhelming agency and stakeholder support for the expansion of the C&C project to a second eco-zone in 2011, with a kickoff meeting scheduled in May.

Ruby Mountains Ranger District Creeks & Communities 2010 Pilot Project Activities

May 2009: Community Briefing

A one day meeting with Forest Service and stakeholders to provide background on the NRST and the C&C approach, discuss the agency's consideration of using the C&C approach in advance of rangeland NEPA on the RMRD, outline how the NEPA process could benefit from using the information obtained through a broad-based assessment (i.e., Proper Functioning Condition (PFC)) to inform management and monitoring using a collaborative process, and gather input and advice from participants.

September 2009: IDT Training and Community Briefing

Three-day PFC and aerial photography assessment training for local interdisciplinary team members, with both classroom and field component, plus an evening stakeholder briefing reviewing the elements of the 2010 project.

March 2010: Pre-Work Meeting

Three-day working session for NRST specialists to work closely with the corresponding Forest Service specialists to review pertinent information in existing files, stratify reaches, set assessment schedule and discuss logistical considerations.

May 2010: Situation Assessment

Three days of stakeholder discussions designed to identify various stakeholders, understand their perspectives regarding riparian management, gauge their interest in participating in a collaborative effort, and identify possible strategies for creating an effective community engagement effort.

July 2010: Pre-Assessment Community Workshop

Two-day session (indoor and field component) to provide an introduction to riparian function and the PFC assessment method, insights on how to use PFC assessment information to prioritize riparian management and monitoring efforts, examples of grazing management strategies, and facilitated stakeholder discussions. Time also allocated to reviewing how stakeholders can be involved in various aspects of the PFC assessment.

July-August 2010: PFC Assessment Work

NRST affiliated contractors serve as coaches and mentors to the Forest Service interdisciplinary team; stakeholders are invited to participate in the assessment process.

October 2010: Post-Assessment Community Workshop

A one day community workshop to explain the results of the assessments and explore next steps, both in terms of how to best use the information and in stakeholder interest that has been generated, and whether to move the effort to another area within the District. Information garnered during this meeting will inform 2011 activities.

Ruby Mountains Ranger District Creeks & Communities 2011 Activities

In addition to continuing to link riparian assessment findings to management and monitoring, as well as the larger NEPA process, the pilot program will be expanded to include a second eco-zone in 2011.

May 4, 2011: Introduction to Creeks and Communities 2011 Project

A one day meeting with Forest Service and stakeholders to provide background on the NRST and the C&C approach, discuss the agency's consideration of using the C&C approach in advance of rangeland NEPA on the RMRD, outline how the NEPA process could benefit from using the information obtained through a broad-based assessment (i.e., Proper Functioning Condition (PFC)) to inform management and monitoring using a collaborative process, and outline 2011 planned activities.

July 2011: Pre-Work Meeting

Working session for Forest Service and other specialists to review pertinent information in existing files, stratify reaches, set assessment schedule and discuss logistical considerations.

August 1-2, 2011: Matrix/Scorecard Training

Forest Service, NRST and University Extension Specialists met for 2 days to receive instruction on how to apply the Humboldt-Toiyabe Matrix/Scorecard and discuss how it corresponds to the information gathered during the PFC assessment process.

August 3, 2011: Pre-Assessment Community Workshop

One-day session (indoor and field component) to provide an introduction to riparian function and the PFC assessment method and insights on how to use PFC assessment information to prioritize riparian management and monitoring efforts, as well as to provide opportunities for facilitated stakeholder discussions.

August 4-31, 2011: PFC Assessment Work

Permittees and stakeholders participation in the PFC assessment process is encouraged and will provide an opportunity to become more familiar with PFC, learn more about riparian areas in general, engage in discussion about resource conditions with specialists from the NRST, Extension and the Forest Service and interact with the FS interdisciplinary team conducting the assessments.

October 2011 (week of 24th): Post-Assessment Community Workshop

A one day community workshop to explain the results of the assessments and explore next steps, both in terms of how to best use the information and in stakeholder interest that has been generated, and how best to move the effort to another area within the District.

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