

MEETING NOTES

Malheur Field Trip

October 12, 2005–John Day, Oregon



Meeting Facilitator: Martha Bean
Meeting Recorder: Pattie Hammett
Meeting Participants: 35 participants signed in

Meeting Summary/Objectives:

1. How to apply the vision and desired conditions we have developed together.
2. Management to move toward the desired conditions.
3. Suitable uses and the criteria that should be used to determine suitable uses.
4. Discuss measures of social, ecological, and economic sustainability.”

Handouts:

1. Forest Plan Revision Field Trip Agenda
2. Map – Collaborative Field Trip
3. Desired Conditions for Field Trip Stops
4. Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Draft Chapter 1: The Vision
5. Sustainability Framework
6. Components of a Forest Plan
7. What a Plan Does and Does Not Do
8. How to Contact Us
9. Collaborative Field Trip Evaluation

Field Trip Introduction: Supervisor’s Office, John Day

Martha went over the agenda/objectives (above) and all of the participants introduced themselves. Dave Schmitt, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Leader, reviewed the following (see handouts):
Components of a Forest Plan
Sustainability Framework
DRAFT Forest Plan Chapter 1 – Vision (comments on vision due by end of January)

Stop One: John Day River near Crescent Campground

Discussion:

Bob Gecy, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team hydrologist, provided an overview of the hydrologic (stream and streamside area) function at this site.
Trish Callaghan, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Recreation Specialist, discussed the challenges of having a variety of recreation uses in an undeveloped setting.
Bruce Countryman, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Vegetation Specialist explained the biophysical setting for the area as well as past large wildfires. He also discussed the desired conditions for uplands and riparian areas and the desired work within natural processes.
Bob Mason, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team Biologist, explained how the biophysical setting relates to the desired conditions for fish and wildlife.
Elaine, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team social scientist/economist, provided an overview of the sense of place and economic factors related to the site.

Q: What does population sustainability mean?

A Referring to indicator 2.1.4. in the vision, population sustainability is the capacity of a species population to maintain sufficient density to persist, well distributed, over time.

Q: Why is this river on the 303D list? It's excellent habitat for bull trout and steelhead. If the John Day River reached 64°, could it come off the 303D list?

A: The temperature issue will be addressed in the desired conditions and the whole watershed will be looked at.

Q: Federal lands need to maintain highest quality – if this (riparian site) is meeting the desired conditions, how do you deal with invasive species?

A: You weigh what is going on...how invasive is species?

Comment: If this stream is on the 303 D list, how can this site be meeting the desired conditions – it's contradictory – what does FS really have control over? We're not going to go back to what it was naturally (historically) - wants to see in desired conditions what we can really do and what we can really accomplish.

Q: This is a dynamic situation – what do we think we can maintain and for what amount of time? At what point does a species become an invasive species?

A: We recognize it's a dynamic system – our “ranges” hopefully allow for the dynamics – we build it into our site specific desired conditions.

Q: There is “battling” over how many snags to leave in a burned area – how will the desired conditions differ from what we're doing today?

A: Maybe we deal with it on a larger scale.

Stop Two: Huddleston Snowpark

Discussion:

Bruce explained the biophysical setting for the area as well as past large wildfires.

Bob Mason explained how the biophysical setting relates to the desired conditions for fish and wildlife.

He also discussed that this area is within a lynx analysis unit.

Trish Callaghan discussed the variety of recreation uses in the area. She explained that the Snow Park is bounded by proposed wilderness designation and roadless areas.

Elaine provided an overview of the sense of place and economic factors related to the site.

Q: What about existing condition information on non-federal ownership?

A: We will recognize what is going on off the national forest.

Q: How much control does the FS have?

A: Control is a tough question. There are many rules and regulations we have to follow. It's difficult to describe and discuss the desired condition. It's also tough to get to the historic condition. How can we get to where we want to be?

Comment: Lynx rely on arctic hare. We are making a “quantum” leap with regard to lynx.

Comment: Every new line on the map creates new problems; it's a cumulative impact.

Comment: The issue is exemplified with the lynx because of what we're allowed or not allowed to do in that area – there are so many overlaying restrictions that we can't do anything.

Comment: I expect that the Revision Team will explain what science says in relation to different species such as lynx.

Response: The Lynx Conservation Strategy will be looked at in relation to habitat and will bring forward what is felt to be appropriate.

Comment: I believe there is documented evidence of lynx in the Blues – the question remains as to whether or not it is a “population” here or an “explosion”. Lynx habitat is many other things too and should not hinge on just the lynx species.

Comment: I am concerned that the lynx issue strains the credibility of the planning process – why aren't we managing for a whole range of species – the question is procedural – once mapped as a lynx habitat, you give 3rd parties the ability to litigate – go back to science.

Comment: The issue is being responded to because lynx is a listed species and identified as a distinct population segment....there are many questions still to be answered.

Comment: There is a high reliance on government – how do we correlate economic standards with federal land management. agencies? Timber and grazing are economic engines that drive communities. There seems to be an emphasis on the kind of indicators that value is placed on but does not have a socio/economic benefit.

Q: How will the plan address what will be logged and not logged and how will wildlife be addressed?

A: That will be in the “strategies” section of the revised forest plans, which has not been developed yet. Suitable uses will be identified within the strategy section. Desired conditions have been drafted for wildlife as well as other resources.

Comment: The 3 sustainability circles seem lopsided with emphasis on ecological. In the planning process it doesn't appear the circles come together – if you talk about economy –logging is it.

Comment: We need to focus on areas where there is common ground. For instance, by restoring balance and protecting old growth and wilderness, we are focusing on common ground and we can get somewhere.

Comment: I don't know how we can talk about ecology and then violate the primary principle of ecology – anytime we favor a species we put another species at risk.

Comment: FS will do what we can regarding timber harvest, grazing, etc. within the constraints we have. If drawing a line helps implementation, let's put the line on, if not, leave them off.

Stop One: Big Creek Campground

Discussion:

Bruce talked about the desired conditions for this biophysical setting (i.e., to have larger ponderosa pine and remove smaller trees using low intensity fire).

Bob Mason explained that this site has some special habitats (i.e., aspen stands) and that Logan Valley is featured in the Oregon Wildlife Viewing Guide.

Bob Gecy provided an overview of the hydrologic (stream and streamside area) function at this site.

Trish discussed the recreation opportunities at this site and that it is close to wilderness, and is a diverse environment that represents a “cultural crossroad”.

Elaine provided an overview of the sense of place and economic factors related to the site.

Q: Is there any place in the plan that is going to turn the FS loose to help “me” (i.e. ranchers)?

A: Grazing is a legitimate activity and provides an economic output. Desired conditions for grazing will be included in the revised forest plans. The Forest Plan will not be a “one size fits all”. Focusing the desired conditions on sustainability framework should help.

Comment: I urge the Revision Team not to be satisfied with the way the vision is now – the appearance is that ecological factors are the focus and social/economic factors have suffered. The Malheur NF is surrounded by private lands and landowners have different objectives for land management – FS needs to consider the management of land that is adjacent to private lands.

Comment: Regarding the sustainability circles, I believe the social and economic circles rely on the ecological – without ecological system, social and economic won't survive – we (humans) are adaptable.

Comment: I hope motorized recreation (ATV use) is addressed as dispersed recreation.

Comment: We need to think of ecosystems as dynamic. We need to balance the ecological, social and economic.

Comment: In looking at the goods and services criteria in the vision, the FS should try to create a restoration component. Jobs and restoration work needs to be included; the legacy of mismanagement in some areas that could be “tended too”.

Comment: Things are changing – consider biomass, gas prices, etc. The environmental community is “holding out their hand” and saying we want to work with you.

Comment: I am concerned that elk cover is being destroyed by prescribed burns and that access is being limited in roadless areas.

Comment: Commonality – that is what we’re talking about. One thing we cannot tolerate is a great deal of variation. Our communities need some degree of dependency. The resources need us to do what the resources need done. We have to mimic natural processes. As we talk about uses and desires, we need to separate out the desires as consumption of the forest as a tool and the advantages to resources by using these tools – the timber and agricultural industries are tools.