

**Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative**  
**Rigdon Collaboration Committee: Youngs Rock Rigdon ZOAs**

Tuesday, Sept. 3, 9:00 – 1:00  
Roundtable Discussion

Attending: Susan, Chandra, Mike, Fergus, Lon, James, Chris, Melanie, Loren, Molly  
Staff: Sarah, Katie

**Updates:**

**Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project application**

Rigdon not selected in phase I. The Region wants to see NEPA done and show success w/FS and collaborative; said it was a strong proposal and will revisit in a year or so; will be stronger with signed NEPA; not concerned about small acreage; prefer the focus on restoration and fire-dependent landscape; highlight work with OWEB and state grants; lots of good feedback, hopefully will be able to apply again when YRR NEPA is signed; thought the \$\$ amount was high per acre – it's more complicated on this side than the east side – stream restorations, etc. – the application didn't ask for a breakdown, just total cost. Asked for monitoring funds - can include up to 10%.

- Collaborative - the membership diversity looked good, just want to see success first (signed NEPA doc)
- Last call for proposals was 10 years ago; hoping another call in 1-2 years
- Allows for funding for an additional \$4 million per year for up to 10 years (in addition to project revenue)

**Eugene Weekly article**

Sarah was interviewed by author at open house, offered to do a field trip, but got quoted on the first thing she said and nothing else. The reporter appeared to have a preconceived angle by her questions, which was displayed by how the article was written.

- Unfortunately, no comment option online with the article
- Email from Duane recognizing that there is starting to be media attention on project – the Forest will probably do a press release
- Sarah - wants collaborative members to feel free to go out and provide comments and talk about projects. Just be sure to speak for your individual perspective and experience. It is also important that comments reflect the same thing you say during collaborative meetings in order to not break trust and honor the collaborative process.
- Trish working on outreach strategy, get a bit more organized around communications. Discussion of creating a series of articles about “what Rigdon means to me” from collaborative member perspectives; can help share the many different voices
- Discussion about creating talking points. Rigdon background doc is a good resource; work on talking point sheet; use ZOAs as much as possible to frame conversations
  - Sarah – the RCC can create a talking point document, probably start with what the FS PIOs develop, but for now our ZOAs are really our talking points
- the article had some good info but a lot of bias – relied on old enviros v. loggers trope
- Nothing reported was outside of Oregon Wild's official comments; did not say that Jim's Creek was a disaster; frustrating to have someone who hasn't been as involved with the collaborative having so much airtime; emphasizes why it's important to do as much

outreach as possible for interests who don't have as much time or ability to come to meetings

- The author is a freelancer and new to EW; The editor would likely be open to hearing feedback/give reporter more guidance in the future and/or an opportunity to write another article
- illustrates just how complex forest management is for the general public
- Side discussion about soil-health loss. Comment came from Oregon Wild comments about evidence of mycorrhizal and other soil health impacts
  - The hypothesis has been tested extensively; is there any evidence of detrimental impact, because if so we really need to talk about it, even if it's anecdotal
    - Chandra will send Oregon Wild comments
- Sarah – maybe it would be worthwhile to have a grad student compile a Jim's Creek literature review or a clearinghouse of executive summaries/abstracts

### **YRR Proposed Actions Discussion**

Project design criteria (PDC:)

- PDCs will be included in NEPA as a list that specialists come up with, e.g. rare plants get a 100 ft buffer
- IDT checks contracts to make sure PDC are included – sometimes called best practices
- Will be discussed at the next IDT meeting

Alternatives: Proposed actions that cause the impact/outcome to be different, this prompts an alternative – difference has to be significant and measurable

- Have done alternatives for road closures/building
- Alternatives still need to meet the purpose and need

### **Design Criteria**

- **Baseline trees per acre in natural stands.** The three trees per .1 acre plot (*this is a correction, during discussion it was incorrectly identified as .25 acre*) prescription isn't appropriate everywhere – some areas are/were open prairie and that may be more ecologically appropriate – one sample plot should have had only one tree on it
  - some areas would exceed # of trees per plot also – is there a way to balance the different areas for a net similar outcome
  - Base level is stand-by-stand, each stand will have a certain number of trees left; to have a different prescription the FS would either have to hand-mark those or make them separate stands
- Discussion:
  - age/size gets applied across different stands rather than trying to apply specific baseline to all stands
  - diameter standard doesn't capture all legacy trees, so offering alternative definition would be good
  - In addition to 30" diameter, broaden definition to include trees that predate active fire suppression; and all trees that exhibit old-growth characteristics

- the 30" standard was developed by coring, not arbitrary
- some old growth trees will still get missed under that standard
- if you have a 30" tree that's killing a 400 year old pine, would you want to take that out?
  - Example: east side 21" standard, exception for those in drip line, in direct conflict with "desirable" tree types
- 30" DBH exception near preferred species
- **Snags and downed wood important to consider**
  - Discussion:
    - Current language is for leaving existing snags
    - Wildlife bio currently working on proposal for creating snags
    - Not doing any implementation in RA32s
    - natural snags are much higher quality
    - FS will probably end up with some guidance about a certain number of snags per acre
    - what about recruitment? – leave wolf trees, defect trees for snag recruitment (retain)
      - timber operators typically fell these trees, so it's worth including these as a design criteria
- **Modify early seral prescription units** to leave more trees, different configuration– more trees in more units and prioritize where openings are – meadows, oaks, etc.
  - Oregon Wild comments want to consider variable density thinning rather than early seral in those areas
    - more of the matrix of the stand be scattered trees with smaller openings as opposed to larger openings and more clumps
  - Discussion:
    - can we get early seral without removing as many trees
    - "traditional variable density thinning with gaps" i.e. Leaving more trees
    - What's the intent of the early seral/what species are you trying to benefit? Different forest types = different species
    - What is early seral? Is Jim's Creek early seral now? 30 trees per acre? depends on forest and forest type; yes to Jim's Creek
    - Early succession – just the first successional stage following disturbance; removing overstory sufficient to support those early seral species; shrub/forb component with more light availability
    - Two types of early seral being created – dry and moist
    - A lot of studies on sizes of gaps to be considered "big enough" for wildlife species you're trying to promote
      - Too small of gaps where you're going to get understory growth won't be conducive to many species
      - The bigger the gap, the longer it takes to fill in and the longer the early seral species will stay in that area

- All species are going to have different responses; when's the next entry of the stand, what's the ultimate goal? Lateral spreading; have to go by species for appropriate densities
- RA32 borders early seral and further south there's more; that should be considered in prescription for units like this – higher densities near current RA32s? Habitat buffer?
- Possible PDC: don't put gaps within a certain buffer adjacent RA32s
- Are there owls in these stands? one nesting site confirmed through surveys, not in RA32; RA32 designation is from owl recovery plan recommendations for high-quality habitat

### **Alternative proposed actions:**

Forest resiliency is the purpose and need; what FS is proposing is not really large-scale or huge impact in terms of future forest resiliency. If it's 2-3 degrees warmer in the next 30 years with dramatically increased fire activity, we need to think bigger. Treat more acreage and more aggressively. The FS has to balance resiliency with legal mandates and it may not be worth time/money to evaluate a more aggressive option.

- Propose to treat mixed conifer sufficient to regenerate ponderosa pine; early seral is mostly in moister areas; where there is PP and oak, thin sufficiently to regenerate those
- Discussion:
  - Current prescription is insufficient for regen; there's too much shade to recruit in pine
  - Not sure it's worth time to consider something that will not be possible given policy constraints, but might be worthwhile from an analytical perspective for knowing how to create resilient forests on a landscape scale so that 30-50 years from now as we're dealing with impacts, we have that structure over a large area
  - We know how to create resilient stands over the breadth of the landscape
  - If the current proposed action is implemented, there will be a lot of old growth pine that will die, and a lot of oaks won't be there in 20 years; analyze an alternative to restore all/most pine and oak habitat
  - How do we do that outside of the yellow stands? There have to be ways to modify prescription to look for where oaks are and do more aggressive openings to prioritize oaks and pines. How does that look different?
    - Greater intensity and spatial range; 1/3-2x as much acreage
    - Ponderosa pine is far more drought-adapted
    - In dry mixed conifer, do a heavier thinning prescription – would have to be in already-analyzed stands; would not go into areas that have not been surveyed; there are plans for those areas to be surveyed in the future – taking it to X number of trees per acre
  - There are three ways to do project
    - 1. Emphasize species dependent on closed-canopy forest; little bit of thinning and oak/pine habitat
    - 2. Emphasize resilient forest that would treat a large landscape largely without consideration of canopy-dependent species
    - 3. Balance those interests at landscape and stand levels

- NEPA tells FS to compare alternatives for healthy forests to see what impacts of prescriptions are; if you wanted to prioritize oak and pine, you'd do it differently
  - Would also treat areas where pine and oak could be but aren't currently
- EIS requires more than an action; have to consider alternatives anyway; also have alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis
- The forest service only has so many opportunities to go in and treat. What's the next time this project area is going to be on the board to do something? We need to be doing everything we can while we have the opportunity to do it.
  - Clarifying question: save the oaks and pines where that's appropriate. We've talked about all the different forest types out here – so adding pine and oak into the areas (moister forest) that don't currently support them but might in the future? No; in the future those pine and oak areas will move higher up (50-100 years), but it's hard to project the impacts of directional climate change – impossible to model the impacts of topography and microclimate
- consider alternative that treats all areas of pine/oak without regard to land allocation such as riparian areas and RTV corridors? wouldn't request ignoring law, but pursue all opportunities for pine/oak regeneration; pine and oak release where possible
- Managed stand alternative – fold early seral into similar prescription for late seral connectivity/mixed conifer (move blue stands to green with their respective forest type, but maybe with more gaps – maybe bigger than one acre)

### **General discussion and voting - *see final recommendations below***

Can vote if needed but should try to make decisions on consensus; allow for minority report if 70% vote for it.

#### **Proposed Action Alternatives – evaluating options**

- If we support considering alternatives, don't want that to be construed as support of implementation
  - The FS can implement parts of different alternatives based on rationale
  - People might have different comfort levels with endorsement for analysis versus implementation
  - We can submit to IDT as a request for analysis
- Second alternative discussion: Addressing concerns with regen harvest in early seral – both dry and moist stands proposed for early seral creation – get at early seral in different ways
  - Maybe not early seral creation units; better label probably would be pine/oak regeneration
  - does that rise to the level of an alternative or just a prescription change?
  - Oregon wild position is that it bigger than PDC because it's fundamentally changing purpose of those stands; would have more late seral connectivity
  - Do folks agree with moving that one forward?
    - Yes for moist sites, no for dry sites

- makes more sense ecologically. In the dry sites, higher density doesn't seem ecologically appropriate
- Consensus – move forward as request for analysis for moist sites

### **Project Design Criteria – evaluating options**

- PDCs are based on the current proposed action because that's what we have to work with right now
- Alternative definition of legacy trees (Van Pelton desc of old growth)
  - Exception for 30" DBH near legacy trees
  - Dripline exception – what's feasible/desirable, and what makes an impact?
  - How many trees (Doug fir) are in that situation close to legacy pines?
  - Not exceptionally rare – exceptions to diameter cap for instances where there are smaller trees that are old that should be retained or 30" or greater near trees you want to cultivate, they can be removed
  - Will you definitely save the target tree if you remove the 30" tree?
    - No way to know that
    - opening that area up if the pine dropped enough cones to regenerate on that spot
    - oak regen at Jim's Creek is awesome
    - protecting legacy trees is priority; keep all trees that have been there over 150 years
    - have language from Jim's Creek
  - Are there rules for culturally modified trees?
    - PDCs to make sure CMTs do not get cut down, but that's the extent
    - legacy trees, oak, pine
- Marking trees vs. marking boundaries
  - Can't use retained receipts for marking because it's not a restoration activity
  - can use GNA, but have to contract out
  - maybe get student help from OSU
  - Have complicated units in this project that will have to be marked, but not feasible for every stand/acre
  - contractor will be more capable of marking once shown how to do a few stands
- Removing baseline trees per acre
  - Supposed to be an average over the whole project
  - Contractor will fall back on the average
  - Issue of scale, spatial heterogeneity; want some acres with 10 trees and some with 70 or 80; less experienced operators try to hit 30/acre measure for every acre – anticipate getting inspected and getting dinged; in practice it's really hard to get a 30/acre and also maintain heterogeneity at scale; you're going to get more uniform acres because of the way it gets operationalized
    - want the more varied landscape
    - we have buffers and RA32s
    - more specific narratives help operators do a better job
    - contract has to have language that can be held up to a standard, has to be a way to inspect it
- Snag retention/natural recruitment
  - want to retain and recruit natural snags as much as possible

- only caveat would be if they're a danger/OSHEA rules
- Snags sometimes have to be cut for prescribed burning

### **Topics from July meeting**

Trail reroutes: concerns that trail re-routes for floodplain restoration (not yet planned/designated) would take trail away from the river

- Maintain scenic character and sustainability of the river while keeping trail as close as possible to river – not quite PDC, but part of conversation; will probably be a separate NEPA
- the public likes to be near the river
- 600 acre floodplain restoration downriver
- Trail will have to be high enough not to be impacted by high water events
- Lots of unknowns – floodplain restoration has to be designed first, there will be a NEPA document for the trail reroutes
  - Will request for collaborative involvement in early discussions about trail reroutes
    - possibly something to take to rec committee
    - Years out at this point – earliest would be 3-5 years

John Omlund with Valley Power Sports has been concerned about road plan – proposed spurs that will be closed. Wants no net loss of roads.

- goes against minimum roads strategy
- Included areas outside of Rigdon area – out of collaborative purview
- some of those roads don't go anywhere
- This proposal doesn't align with the work collaborative has been doing to date

### **Next Steps**

Propose monthly meeting for the next few months, Sarah will send out doodle poll – maybe about 6 weeks out.

- Next meeting – see if FS picked up recs for alternatives, outreach efforts, PDC discussion
  - Talk about fire/how maintenance is going to happen, whether collaborative has a consensus statement about fire on the landscape
- Monitoring subcommittee will be ongoing – Sarah will share science synthesis notes once they have been sent

**Rigdon Collaboration Committee Recommendations to Youngs Rock Rigdon  
Proposed Actions  
September 3, 2019**

Alternative proposed actions for consideration:

1. Conduct dry mixed conifer thinning heavy enough to regenerate ponderosa pine and Oregon white oak.
  - a. Oak and pine release: capture all or most opportunities to restore pine and oak
2. Treat early seral creation moist forest (dark blue) similar to late seral connectivity mixed conifer (light green)

Additional design criteria for consideration:

1. Eliminate 30 tree/ acre baseline for mixed conifer stands
2. Consider a definition that captures legacy trees:
  - a. Keep trees that predate fire suppression
  - b. Keep trees with old growth characteristics (based on Van Pelt definition)
  - c. Keep trees that are greater than 30" dbh
  - d. Exception to 30" dbh for large trees that are within the dripline of preferred species (pine and oak)
3. Recruit and retain natural snags: keep wolf trees, cull, and defect trees where possible