

## **COPWRR Project Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report - Summary**

Project Evaluated: La Pine EA - Darlene

Field Visit Date: June 9, 2009

Units Visited: Darlene Units 1, 2 and 3

### **1) Summary Comments on Implementation and Effectiveness**

After visiting 2 of the units on the Darlene Project, field review participants concluded

- that while the treatments had not always been implemented as described in the Programmatic EA, the implemented treatments at least represented a combination of the EA Proposed Treatment Prescriptions by Unit, the band treatment strategy, and Appendix A
- that Best Management Practices specified in the EA had largely been adhered to; and
- that the project addressed the Purpose and Need specified in the EA and advanced the Management Objectives specified for the units visited.

There was a real tension in this project between fuels reduction and maintaining wildlife cover and this was the reason that the treatments that were ultimately implemented varied from those described in the Programmatic EA (seeking to maintain 40% cover led to less total area treated and more cover retention in treated areas). The BLM did a careful balancing act between these two objectives and was very creative in trying to meet both needs. The project succeeded in improving public safety, reducing flame lengths, and reducing crown fire risk potential. It also helped to restore ecosystem health and improve long-term resiliency.

### **2) Considerations for Future Project Planning**

Both field review participants and BLM staff felt that the project helped address the Purpose and Need and provided a thoughtful balance between fuels reduction and wildlife cover. The group explored a number of topics that are worth documenting so that future management efforts can address them:

#### ***Seedling and Sapling Size Lodgepole Remaining in 3<sup>rd</sup> Band / Unit 3***

The BLM had not yet decided whether to implement additional thinning of small lodgepole in the third band at the site we visited. The group did not come to any kind of consensus during the visit about whether it would be better to leave the remaining small lodgepole in this ponderosa site or to try to remove it now. The four considerations were: Fully restoring Ponderosa Pine, Providing cover and a mosaic of conditions, Reducing fuels and re-introducing fire, and Cost.

#### ***Spatial heterogeneity***

The project achieved a heterogeneous spacing of leave trees in some portions but not in others. The group expressed a desire to see more clumpy, patchy, gappy patterns after treatments. It sounds like the BLM is providing this kind of instruction to contractors but it is still taking a while for that practice to become standard.

#### ***Snags***

The group appreciated all the snag creation efforts on the project. Some participants suggested using larger trees and putting the cuts farther up the trees when creating snags. There was no consensus on whether making the cuts on snags angled was preferable to flat cuts, but people did like the aesthetics when the tree ripped apart at the top and left a more natural looking separation.

#### ***Wildlife Habitat***

Cover was a major driver of the treatment design for this project area. This concern generated the zig-zag shaped fuel break in part of Unit 1 that everyone hoped would be evaluated / monitored for effectiveness. The 40% cover criteria pushed the BLM to be creative about how to still achieve the fuels objectives of the project. Ironically, the need to meet the 40% cover criteria meant that the BLM did not implement the Wildlife Habitat Emphasis treatment in part of Unit 1 that they had originally planned to. There were participants in this field review that would definitely like to see the results of that treatment and will try to check it out when the treatment gets implemented in the Babb project.