

COPWRR Project-Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report – Summary

Project Evaluated: East Tumbull Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

Field Visit Date: June 4, 2008

Units Visited: EA Units 104, 112, and 136 and Cardinal Bridge Project

1) Summary Comments on Implementation and Effectiveness

After visiting 4 of the units on the East Tumbull/Cardinal Bridge Project, field review participants concluded

- that the treatments had been implemented as planned and described in the NEPA documents and Decision Notices;
- that Management Measures specified in the Environmental Assessment had been adhered to; and
- that the projects addressed the Purposes and Needs specified in the NEPA documents and advanced the specific Management Objectives listed for the units visited.

Participants agreed that the Forest Service implemented the project as described and that the results were largely as planned and described. Wildland fire risk to communities and to present and future forest values was reduced and defensible space and escape routes were provided by the treatments. Natural fire regimes, wildlife habitat and mule deer winter range, visual quality, recreational opportunities, wood products, and the Wild and Scenic River corridor have all either benefitted or been enhanced by the project.

2) Considerations for Future Project Planning

Overall, the field review participants and Bend-Ft. Rock District staff were pleased with the implementation and results of the project. The post-implementation visit also provided an opportunity to discuss ideas that might help the Forest Service to continue to innovate on future projects and to do even better at achieving the purposes and needs of project like East Tumbull and Cardinal Bridge. The COPWRR Ecosystem Monitoring Committee respectfully submits the following comments for agency consideration:

- A. While both the agency and the field review participants agreed that prescribed burning is a desirable method for treating understory fuels, the Bend community currently has a low tolerance for burning on its outskirts or in the immediate Bend airshed. The Committee encourages the Bend-Ft. Rock RD to discuss with COPWRR, the Fire Learning Network, and other community partners ways to increase public awareness and acceptance of high priority burn activity with.
- B. Environmental stakeholders continue to be interested in spatial heterogeneity in restored stands after treatments. The Bend-Ft. Rock RD tried several techniques to achieve a “clumpy, patchy, gappy” spacing on this project including a Designation by Description prescription and a species-specific prescription, where all small lodgepole was removed from a mixed stand. The COPWRR Monitoring Committee appreciates these efforts and encourages the Forest Service to keep experimenting and innovating in producing spatially heterogeneous restored stands.
- C. The field review participants encourage the agencies to implement aspen stand restoration as was done at the Cardinal Bridge unit to preserve this rare and valuable component of Central Oregon forests. To enhance the effectiveness of aspen

treatments, the agencies might consider fencing recently released stands to allow some browse-free recovery time and burning or other disturbance to stimulate new sprouting.

- D. Multiple field review participants expressed concern about leaving the band of trees immediately adjacent to rivers and streams untreated when implementing forest restoration activities. These valuable areas can be negatively impacted by high severity wildfire and could also act as “wicks” to convey fire through an area even if the rest of that area has been recently treated. With adequate up-front collaboration, the COPWRR Monitoring Committee believes these sensitive areas could be carefully treated in a publicly acceptable manner.
- E. The smooth implementation at the Cardinal Bridge unit re-affirms that with good up-front collaboration it is possible to treat highly sensitive areas where there are many forest values to balance. In this case, defensible space and escape routes, elk calving habitat, and Wild and Scenic River values were all carefully attended to and a treatment was implemented with minimal controversy and no appeals.
- F. In addition to snag retention, one participant in the field visits asked whether snag creation and other methods to accelerate the development of habitat for cavity nesting birds might be incorporated more regularly into future projects.
- G. The thinning treatments implemented on the East Tumbull project clearly have reduced the number of trees per acre and created the conditions for residual trees to grow faster to larger sizes. But the East Tumbull project documents do not explain the strategy for the Forest Service to move the treated areas to historic old growth conditions during the next few decades. How do we get from 80 to 90 medium sized trees per acre to 40 or 50 large old trees per acre? Some discussion of pathways to future desired states in project documents could be helpful so that the public can understand potential strategies to get to the desired conditions they want.