

COPWRR Project-Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report - Summary

Project Evaluated: Katalo Project

Field Visit Date: October 30, 2006

Units Visited: 3 (SV-3), 9 (D-6), 13 (G-2), 18 (G-7), 23 (E-2)

1) Summary Comments on Implementation and Effectiveness

After visiting 4+ of the 26 units on the Katalo Project, field visit participants concluded

- that the treatments were implemented as planned and described in the Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice;
- that Management Measures from the EA were adhered to; and
- that that project addressed the Purposes and Needs listed in the EA and advanced the specific Management Objectives listed for the units visited.

Attendees agreed that the Forest Service “did what they said they would do” and that the results were as planned and desired. Fuels Management/Public Safety, Wildlife Habitat, Soil Productivity, Forest Health, and Fiber Harvest have all benefited from the project. At the time of implementation, the Governor’s Forest Planning Team recognized the Katalo project as one of a number of model forest restoration projects statewide.

2) Key District Insights from Project Implementation

- A. District representatives, Jim Schlaich and Bill Peterson shared that at the time the project was planned, an innovative designation by geometry cutting prescription was used in a few units where the purchaser selected the cut trees based on a spacing specification, so the pre-marking and cruising costs were reduced. *All present on the field visit agreed that the outcome on the ground was satisfactory for this treatment, but more heterogeneous spacing may be desired in the future. Please see 3A in the next section.*
- B. Bill Peterson, Silviculturist, shared that he and the planning Wildlife Biologist deliberately manipulated canopy cover to favor bitterbrush for deer browse by limiting the opening size to limit the spread of snowbrush ceanothus. *The field visit participants agreed the technique worked well.*
- C. Jim and Bill pointed out that no riparian and/or aspen area impacts were created by avoiding and eliminating these areas from the treatment, but they suggested that in the future, treating riparian areas and aspen stands needs to be considered. *Field visit participants agreed, please see section 3B.*
- D. The Bend Ft. Rock District has had a very positive experience with over-snow/frozen ground harvesting when they thin. Operating in these conditions offers very good soil protection and works well for contractors whose operating schedules are constrained by many seasonal restrictions.

3) Considerations for Future Project Planning

While field visit attendees commended the Bend-Ft. Rock District for the implementation of the Katalo Project, they also used the field visit to put forward considerations 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 projects like Katalo. The COPWRR Ecosystem Monitoring Committee respectfully submits the following thoughts for Forest Service consideration:

- A. Consider methods to achieve a more “clumpy, patchy, gappy” spacing of residual trees across the treated landscape. Also, what are the pros and cons of using variable density thinning techniques? The Bend-Ft. Rock District is already adapting to these kinds of public desires in more recent projects.
- B. The Committee encourages the Forest Service to work to increase public acceptance of entry into riparian areas and aspen stands to implement restoration projects using highly sensitive, thoroughly reviewed treatment practices. Historically, implementing treatments in riparian areas such as the one visited on the field visit was viewed as a big risk because of the sensitivity of such areas and treatments were avoided. But it is becoming clear that the ecological risks of not treating riparian areas may be great as well.
- C. Consider the use of harvesting technologies that reduce the amount of soil compaction (and subsequent need for subsoiling) on sites that are appropriate. Loren Kellogg specifically mentioned the potential to use a cut-to-length forwarding system in sites where there is sufficient moisture to decompose the branches that are laid down for the equipment to operate over. There is a great deal of concern in general in Central Oregon about soil impacts of forest operations. Perhaps more research is needed on the effects on soils of different harvest practices.
- D. How do we figure out what historical landscapes looked like? Specifically, in the days when old-growth dominated, how many trees per acre do we think there were (What is our HRV for density)? This may not be the target that we try to achieve through long-term management, but this factor will certainly inform the target.
- E. Implementing prescribed burn treatments in close proximity to Bend or in Bend’s immediate airshed is apparently a challenge due to a lack of public awareness and acceptance. The Committee encourages the Bend-Ft. Rock RD to discuss with the COPWRR Stakeholder Committee what COPWRR can do to assist with addressing this barrier to effective restoration.
- F. The narrow window of time to implement prescribed burning treatments is a challenge that the Committee has no specific recommendations on but would like to assist with.
- G. If we are working towards managing ecosystems at the landscape scale do we need to do anything differently? Do units need to be larger? Are the patches that were created as part of this project big enough? How do we achieve a mosaic across the landscape?

- H. As biomass utilization increases in coming years, we need to think about how we can ensure that demand for material does not exceed what our restoration objectives indicate we should be taking.
- I. If there is still uncertainty in the field of wildlife science about what the needs of our resident elk populations are and how to meet those needs through restoration, the Committee encourages the Forest Service to seek ways to fill those information gaps. Field visit participants expressed concerns that we don't know all that we should to manage for elk but did not identify specific areas of information needed.
- J. Most of the project area for Katalo was exclusively second growth trees with only a few trees exhibiting late-seral characteristics in one of the four units visited. Environmental stakeholders who participated in the visit were keenly interested in these few large trees and suggested development of protective guidelines for projects in comparable areas. The COPWRR Ecosystem Monitoring Committee recommends retention of those ponderosa pine trees that have yellow bark that is characteristic of older, pre-settlement trees and retention of trees of all species that have old growth or fire resistant characteristics, except under unusual circumstances. This includes trees that are old (over 100 years) but may be smaller than 21" dbh which were a component of the pre-management landscape. Committee members suggest that there are visual characteristics that make it possible to identify such trees which would allow marking crews to mark for retention the old trees that are smaller in size.