Life on the Dry Side

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On the Cover:
Peter Sharp is an active member in the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative.
Photo Credit: N. Strong
Navigating Log Markets with the Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative

Ask any family forestland owner in northeast Oregon what their top forest management concerns are and the first thing that pops out is usually Markets. Small wonder – logs markets in the region are poor and that’s not likely to change much for a long time. Eastern Oregon has lost most of its sawmilling capacity and folks not only struggle with low log prices but the long hauling distances eat a big chunk of whatever profitability there might be. And, with so few purchasers, mill to mill competition is pretty much non-existent so shopping around for higher prices just isn’t an option.

So what to do? When profitability goes to zero (or below) it can be hard to justify hanging on to a large capital investment like a woodland property. But like most family forestland owners, folks have a deep love and passion for their woodlands and work hard to find the means to keep and manage their woodlands.

As an example, in 2002, the Baker County Private Woodlands Association (BCPWA) concluded that the best option for going forward was to take matters into our own hands and find a way to develop our own products and markets, providing extra profitability that would flow back to the landowners. Several enterprise options were analyzed such as small-scale sawmilling facility, biomass combined heat and power production, and shavings for animal bedding. But none of those options ultimately penciled out.

Then in 2011, the BCPWA decided that the simplest, low-cost, low-risk marketing option would be for woodland owners to join together and bundle our annual sawlog harvests together as a single log sale offering to the sawmills. By offering a substantial volume of logs that would be delivered consistently throughout the year, and by guaranteeing consistently high log quality, the hope was that the cooperative would be able to negotiate a significant premium for our logs, boosting overall profitability. The BCPWA created the Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative (BMFC), a for-profit subsidiary, and was able to do that and for a time its members realized a nearly 15% gain over open yard prices. However, the lumber market dropped suddenly and mills had sufficient volume from the 2015 wildfire season salvaging operations so interest in paying a premium for the Cooperative’s logs disappeared, ending log sales.

A few valuable lessons were learned from the log sales venture however. For one, economic benefits are mostly realized by larger landowners who have substantial timber volumes. Folks with smaller acreages realize very little extra income so have a reduced incentive to join the Cooperative and to be successful in the long term, a cooperative venture needs to have broad appeal. The BMFC may benefit from expanding beyond purely log marketing and use the cooperative model to focus on watershed-scale land management activities similar to what the Ritter Land Management Team (RLMT) in Grant County is doing. The RLMT has successfully obtained significant grant funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and other entities and its members are using those funds for juniper removal, invasive weed management, aspen restoration, and other projects. The RLMT also received grant funding to purchase a small-scale sawmill to utilize their extensive juniper timber resources and manufacture value-added products for the expanding juniper lumber markets. The Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative has also studied the feasibility of diversifying into other forest product related enterprises and the Ritter model may provide some ideas on how to do that.

Although the BMFC is currently inactive, interest in the cooperative/collaborative model remains strong and the organization is continuing to evaluate opportunities to bring additional value to woodland ownership. Stay tuned!
Wildfire flowers
This burn around Waldo Lake is abundant in early successional, fire-adapted wildflowers.
LIVING WITH FIRE
How trees, plants, and critters have adapted to live with wildfire
By Nicole Strong, Extension Forester in Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson Counties and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs

We often talk about fire-adapted forests, but what exactly do we mean? Many people wonder what happens to the trees, plants, and wildlife during and after fires, both wildfire and prescribed burns. This article presents just a few examples of ways that species in our dry forests have evolved to defend themselves, avoid fire, or work with frequent, low intensity fire to thrive.

**Ponderosa Pine Trees**
One of ponderosa’s best defenses is it’s iconic (and fragrant) thick, exfoliating bark. This bark forms thick layers of puzzle-like pieces that slough off when the bark is on fire, expelling fire to the ground and off the tree. The older the tree gets, the thicker and more orange/salmon the bark color becomes. With good growing conditions, “yellow bellies” can live more than 500 years. The tree’s deep rooting habit is both strategic to optimize water and providing insulation. This tactic increases survival of the root system after fire, which allows tree to continue to take up water and nutrients, even if surface roots have been killed.

The open crown structure of ponderosa pine allows for better air flow and heat dissipation during a fire. The long needles of ponderosa pine contain a lot of moisture. Even if the needles are scorched, buds are protected by the needles, as well as thick outer scales. These buds will grow new needles after fire. A ponderosa pine can lose 90% or more of its needles in a wildfire or prescribed burn but grow new needles and rebound the following year. If by chance the fire was so hot that the tree does not make it, not to worry. That tree will become a very important snag (standing dead tree) or downed log, which are deficient in many of our forest stands. These structural components will be quickly utilized by fire and snag-adapted critters!

**Quaking Aspen**
Quaking aspen (Populus tremuloides) needs regular fire to be able to out-compete conifers like ponderosa pine and western juniper. Aspen stands will vigorously sprout immediately after a wildfire, giving it a leg up on other, more slowly growing species. More than 50,000 suckers can sprout on a single acre of land after fire from the same underground. Eventually, if fire does not return, conifer trees will grow to over-top and out-compete.

**Flowering Plants, Fungi and Native Bunch Grasses**
Beneath the canopy of dense and suppressed conifer stands lay a rich seed bank just waiting to be released. Regular, low intensity

Cont. on page 6.
fire will open areas up to sun, and create the heat and nutrient-rich soil conditions that will stimulate seeds to sprout. Indian paintbrush (Castilleja spp.), scarlet gilia (Ipomopsis aggregata), Oregon sunshine (Eriophyllum lanatum) and Washington Lily (Lilium washingtonianum) are just some of the wildflowers you will see after thinning, but more so after burning. And those of you who relish spring morels and boletes know that recently burned areas are the best place to find these fungi! (p.s. This Extension Forester does not recommend harvesting or eating any wild plants, roots, fungi or berries without 100% confirmation of species.)

Wildlife

Wildlife species have different strategies for dealing with wildfire.

Many species can outrun or fly away from a blaze. Wildlife species know their home ranges pretty well and know the best ways in and out of harm’s way. Those who are not so quick on their feet, such as ground squirrels, frogs, or ants, will burrow deep underground or find refuge in a down log or under rocks. You will often find wildlife species waiting out a fire within bodies of water, such as streams, lakes, or ponds.

Sadly, the reality is that some individuals might not survive a fire, but these animals are quickly re-entered into the food web via scavengers and predators such as coyotes, hawks, racoons, or bears. Overall, please know that wildlife populations benefit from fire, even if a few individuals perish.

Fairly soon (within minutes to days) after a fire, wildlife will begin to return. Some species of wildlife depend on the structure and food made available from a wildfire. Black-backed woodpeckers (Picoides arcticus) for example, rely on snags (dead standing trees) created from wildfire, both for nesting and to forage insects that are attracted to these recently killed trees.

This is just a small sampling of all the fascinating ways species interconnect and interact with historic fire regimes. I invite you to continue to learn more, through personal discovery, or continued reading.

LEARN MORE


Down on the Tree Farm
Bob Parker, Extension Forester, Baker/Grant Counties

July
Forest inventory
• If you don’t have them established, consider putting in permanent inventory plots to give yourself the satisfaction of “seeing” your trees grow.
• Another way to appreciate your progress is to take periodic photos at established photo points.
• Include large woody debris, snags and understory plants in your inventory. This information can help you evaluate the wildlife habitat on your property. After young birds have fledged, create nesting cavities, roosts, platforms, snags or nesting boxes for future use.

August
Wildfires: ‘Tis the Season!
• Monitor weather reports and be ready to respond if lightning is in the forecast.
• Patrol your forestland and report any smokes that you encounter to the local responders. The phone number should be programmed into your cell, just in case!
• Find fires early and keep them small until firefighters arrive.
• Every vehicle or piece of equipment in your woods should have a proper fire extinguisher and firefighting tools. A backpack fire pump (a.k.a. piss can) is a smart addition.

Culverts and bridges
• Put culverts in streams or build or place bridges when stream flow is low. Check with state forestry department before starting any work!

Been logging? Treat your slash and prepare the site!
• You need good planting spots. Deep slash and brush are barriers to good planting.
• Too much slash is a fire hazard, both now and as your forest grows.
• Piling: Do it when soils are dry, make them dirt-free to protect soils for a clean burn, and use a dozer with a toothed blade or an excavator with a brush grapple.
• Not a burn-bug? Instead of piles, grind, chip, lop or otherwise cut up slash and scatter over the unit.
All-Lands Partnerships in Southern-Central Oregon

Reporting Out From a Peer Learning Exchange

By Emily Jane Davis, Associate Professor, Extension Specialist, Collaborative Natural Resource Management and Daniel Leavell, Extension Forester in Klamath & Lake Counties.

All-lands projects, which involve planning and implementation across landownership boundaries with multiple partners and landowners, are increasingly common. On May 1st, 2018, a peer learning exchange was held at the Klamath Community College in Klamath Falls to bring together all-lands partners in Lake, Klamath, Jackson, and Josephine Counties. Over 60 participants representing a range of landowner, nonprofit organization, state and federal agency, private sector, and other perspectives attended. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Share specific activities, experiences, and lessons learned
- Explore tools and ideas that improve the practice of all-lands management
- Connect to a community of area practitioners and form new peer relationships

Meeting presentations and breakout sessions were provided on the following topics:

- An overview of all-lands management: who, what, and why?
- North Warners & Chiloquin Community Forest & Fire projects
- Ashland Forest Resiliency project
- Inventory & mapping methods
- Neighborhood & smaller-scale efforts
- Private landowner outreach including My Southern Oregon Woodland
- Tools, funding, and mechanisms

The meeting capped with a share-all session on how best to accomplish all-lands work, key lessons all were learning throughout the process, and steps still to take. These included:

1. Working with partners is a necessity to increase natural resource management and impact social, economic, and ecological approaches.
2. Figure out ways to involve students and create pathways from K-12 to university to get jobs.
3. Need a program that focuses on ‘probable future climate conditions and forest management for health, resiliency, and carbon storage’.
4. Need more information on making the grant application process seamless and easier to obtain landowner funding.
5. Look for more opportunities to encourage agencies and land managers to work in a more coordinated, integrated manner.
6. Amazing to hear about progression from Smokey the Bear culture to having a portion of the State Water Bill go toward forest resilience. We have come a long way!
7. Recommendations to amend or change current agency policies should be presented to those agencies.
8. Follow the Nine-Step Process for All Lands Project Development in press (see below).

To see the presentations and the questions, and ideas shared, please visit: https://www.klfhp.org/workshop-resources/

This meeting was planned and implemented by: Oregon State
**Process steps:**
1. Organize an effective partnership that provides a foundation around which barriers can be overcome;
2. Identify a landscape based on a risk assessment and planning readiness at various scales;
3. Conduct an organized private landowner outreach and education program;
4. Complete an efficient private land mapping and inventory designed to address landscape objectives;
5. Provide support to private landowners that leads to land management planning and project implementation;
6. Obtain funding for capacity and project implementation through National, State, and private grants;
7. Design and enter into Agreements and/or MOU’s and develop Authorities to work across public and private lands;
8. Facilitate and coordinate land management plan project implementation across land ownerships; 9. Reap the ecological, social, and economic benefits.

This publication provides two case studies – one in Lake County, north of Lakeview and one in Klamath County, east and west of Chiloquin. Both have over 32,000 acres of private, non-industrial land, adjacent to over 100,000 acres of Forest Service, Fremont-Winema National Forest. The Lake County example has 22 landowners on larger tracts of land and the Chiloquin example has almost 2,850 landownerships with eight subdivisions scattered over the landscape. The KLFHP hopes use of this template will provide feedback to refine and improve the process.

Dan Shoun, Lake County Oregon County Commissioner for the publication:

“Having been involved with our local collaboratives for many years, as well as being a member of the National Wildland Fire Leadership Council that developed the National Cohesive Strategy, I believe that I’m in a great position to comment about the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership’s collaborative work!

It is my opinion that the work being accomplished here in Lake and Klamath Counties through the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy principles is second to none in the Nation! When you look at the goals and objectives of the National Strategy from working across jurisdictional boundaries, to achieving improved forest health conditions on large landscapes scales, every box for the Cohesive Strategy can be checked! At the core of the success has been building relationships with many land owners who have different needs and wants, and these relationships could not be better! I would not hesitate for a minute to endorse our Partnership group as a model to hold up as a National model for the way forest management should be approached and accomplished in the 21st Century!”
Collaboration & Partnerships on National Forests: What Should You Know?

By Emily Jane Davis, Associate Professor, Extension Specialist, Collaborative Natural Resource Management

Many of us live near or spend time on the national forestlands of Oregon’s dry side. If you do not already participate, you may be interested in learning more about some of the conversations taking place. Increasingly, people have been working together and with the Forest Service through collaboration and partnerships.

What are Forest Collaboratives?
Central and Eastern Oregon is home to several “forest collaborative” groups. These voluntary stakeholder bodies provide input about federal forest management activities occurring near their communities. Collaboratives vary by location, but usually involve participants from different perspectives such as local government, the forest industry, environmental organizations, or watershed councils. They typically meet and review information from the Forest Service, take field tours, or review relevant science. They then discuss their interests and values, and may develop written recommendations for what they would like to see happen on the ground.

What are All Lands Partnerships?
All-lands partnerships are forest management projects that involve multiple partners and landowners implementing actions across boundaries. The Forest Service and adjacent landowners may plan together to decide where, when, and how to treat the forest. Partners like Oregon Department of Forestry, OSU Extension, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, nonprofits, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service may be involved to provide mapping, inventory, landowner cost share, outreach, and other technical assistance.

What Does This Mean for Private Landowners?
As a private landowner, you may be interested in participating in a forest collaborative or all lands partnership for several reasons. The projects under discussion may involve or be near to your property. There may be opportunities for you to accomplish some of your land management goals. Also, this could be a way for you to provide input on activities in your larger landscape that may affect your community. You may learn more about what different agencies and organizations are doing, and be able to share your thoughts and experiences. It can also be a chance to meet other landowners and partners, and hear what matters to them.

Know Before You Go
Many meetings are led by a facilitator, who is there to manage the process. There are often ground rules, policies, and other procedures that guide the conversation. You may want to ask the facilitator for these in advance. You may also find it helpful to talk to the facilitator or others about what the group has been doing, and to ask them for clarification, more information, or explanation of what you are hearing. In addition, if you cannot make it to meetings held at certain times, you might have a neighbor or family member attend, or you may ask if there are other ways to participate.

To Learn More about Forest Collaboratives
http://oregonexplorer.info/topics/forest-collaboratives?ptopic=140

Photos by Emily Jane Davis.
FOREST COLLABORATIVE GROUPS & PARTNERSHIPS: CENTRAL & EASTERN OREGON

NE OR: BAKER, GRANT, HARNEY, UNION, MORROW, UMATILLA, WALLOWA, & WHEELER COUNTIES

Blue Mountains Forest Partners
http://www.bluemountainsforestpartners.org/

Blue Mountain Forest Private Landowner Cooperative
Contact Steve Edwards for more information: prxs@me.com

Harney County Restoration Collaborative
http://highdesertpartnership.org/

Ritter Land Management Team
http://www.ritterlmt.com

Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group
http://orsolutions.org/osproject/ufcg

Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative
http://www.wallowaresources.org/

HOOD RIVER & WASCO COUNTIES

Hood River Forest Collaborative
www.hrstewcrew.org

Wasco County Forest Collaborative
http://wascoswcd.org/wcswcd_035.htm

KLAMATH & LAKE COUNTIES

Black Hills Collaborative Project
http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=2075

Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership
https://www.klfhp.org/

Lakeview Stewardship Group
http://www.lcri.org/forest-collaboration/

North Warner Multi-Ownership Forest Health Project

Chiloquin Community Forest and Fire Project
https://www.klfhp.org/

CROOK, DESCHUTES, JEFFERSON COUNTIES, & CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE WARM SPRINGS

Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project
http://deschutescollaborativeforest.org/

Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative
http://ochocoforest.org/

Greater La Pine Basin Joint Chiefs Project
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/or/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd909450
**PRESCRIBE BURN PROGRAM**

Progress is ongoing with developing a prescribe burn program for Klamath and Lake Counties. Agreements between agencies are in process, ways to integrate private landowners in process, and our local Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership has voted to become a Chapter for the Oregon Prescribed Fire Council. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) held a National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)-certified Firing Operations course at their research facilities in the Sycan Marsh area the first week of June. Located to the northeast of Bly, the facilities are excellent to host this training. A training burn followed the course on Forest Service-managed land a short distance away. Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) forester/firefighters, Forest Service (FS) firefighters, and OSU Extension attended the class. The training cadre was from ODF, FS, and TNC. FS firefighter holding crews attended the burn (conducted on FS-managed land) and the class had plenty of lighting time to put class knowledge to practice. A real side benefit to the effort was the various agencies and entities working together, achieving sound management.

*Photo above: S-219 burning class: Amanda Stamper, Fire Manager – The Nature Conservancy, Oregon (left) and Daniel Leavell, OSU Extension forester (right). Photo credits: Amanda Stamper*

**PUBLICATION IN PRESS**

"Planning and Implementing Landscape Scale Restoration and Wildfire Risk Reduction Projects: Achieving the Goals of the National Cohesive Strategy"

Due out this September from the OSU Extension and Experiment Station Communications (EESC). The KLFHP has developed a process to address the issues and challenges of forest health, fire risk reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, and safe and efficient fire response across public and private land ownership. This publication documents the process which has proven to work in South-Central Oregon and provides a “how to” guide for landscape coordination and implementation. Others may use it as a template to learn from – and to apply elsewhere. Public land managers and private landowners are encouraged to modify the process to meet the needs of local conditions or circumstances, where applicable and appropriate.

*Photo below: Prescribe burning is a very appropriate management tool for the fire-dependent/adapted ecosystems in south-central Oregon*
FOREST STEWARDSHIP SERIES

We just wrapped up our last workshop of the Spring Forest Stewardship Series. I am grateful to our excellent instructors, agency partners, and 18 participants who made this workshop series educational and a lot of fun. Stay tuned for upcoming Fall Stewardship Series topics. If you have something you really want to learn, please send me your ideas and questions.

CENTRAL OR FOREST COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

All this talk of collaboration got you curious? Feel free to call or email me to find out more information about meetings, field trips, and engagement opportunities.

Nicole Strong: nicole.strong@oregonstate.edu, (541) 548-6088

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY COST SHARE OPPORTUNITIES

ODF wants to let you know that there are currently 4 areas where you still might qualify for cost share funding to accomplish forest health and fuels reduction objectives:

- Southern Deschutes County
- Wychus - Sisters area
- Greater La Pine Basin
- Greater Sisters Fuels Reduction Project

All of these are opportunities for fuels reduction projects within the Wildland Urban Interface and surrounding areas. ODF Stewardship Forester Boone Zimmerlee is the primary contact to apply for these programs. Boone.Zimmerlee@oregon.gov. You can also request more information online: http://odfcentraloregonresources.blogspot.com/p/grant-request-form.html

There is also a bit more time for a 50/50 cost share opportunity in the La Pine basin through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Please contact Tom Bennett at tom.bennett@or.usda.gov or (541) 699-3186 for more information.
Welcome John Punches

John Punches is our new Extension Forester for NE Oregon, covering Union, Umatilla and Wallowa Counties. John worked for 11 years as the Extension Forester in Douglas County, then spent another 13 years as an Extension administrator. He’s happy to be back in the forest! John’s background includes silviculture, tree physiology, forest disease identification and management, wood science, timber tax management, and forest inventory. He’s working diligently to become proficient in NE Oregon forest types, and looking forward to meeting and serving the area’s many woodland owners. We are happy to have him join us in Eastern Oregon! In his free time, John is a backpacker, mountain climber, caver, and rescue instructor. John can be reached at the Union County OSU Extension Office in La Grande.
Phone 541-963-1010, or email john.punches@oregonstate.edu.

Thank you Bob Parker

And, if you’ve heard rumors that I will be following Paul Oester’s excellent example and also retire from OSU – well, the rumors are true. My last day with Extension is June 30 but then I will continue to work on a half-time basis for the rest of the year, finally departing for good the end of December.

My plans are to stay in the area and remain active with the American Tree Farm System, our local chapters of the Oregon Small Woodland Association and the Ritter Land Management Team in Grant County. Working for OSU Extension Forestry has truly been the capstone of my 40-plus years in forestry and I’m deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from all the amazing family forestland owners, agency folks, NGO’s and all the others who are so passionate about caring for the land. Thank you!

Photo at left: John Punches (left) is our new Extension Forester for NE Oregon, covering Union, Umatilla and Wallowa Counties.

Photo above: Extension Forester, Bob Parker.
The Boise Cascade Company recently announced that they will curtail operations at its lumber operation in Elgin beginning around mid-July. It will be a phased shutdown starting initially with the sawmill, followed by the planer and finally the shipping department. However, the powerhouse and log utilization center will remain operational.

The Elgin lumber mill has been in operation since 1960 but it is no longer cost competitive due to its age, size and technology. The Company will continue to operate the Elgin Plywood Mill and its other operations in La Grande, Island City and Pilot Rock which employ in excess of 500 people.

While the decision to curtail the mill operations is completely understandable, the further erosion of our lumber manufacturing infrastructure in the region is deeply concerning for family forestland owners who already have few log marketing options, resulting in little mill to mill competition and long, expensive hauls to the remaining mills. Declining merchantable timber availability and weak markets may possibly threaten the continued existence of the remaining mills in the region.
FIRE NEWS
Daniel Leavell, Extension Forester

July 7, 2018 – a Saturday. Red Flag warnings have been a California staple for some time now with the warnings moving north into Oregon. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection says about a dozen wildfires crews are trying to contain throughout the State. Thousands of residents have evacuation orders issued.

Advice from the National Weather Service:
Record-breaking heat contributed to the danger this past week. The National Weather Service is warning of temperatures as high as 110 degrees for Saturday in certain counties. The high temperatures and low humidity, as well as gusty winds, create conditions in which fires can "grow rapidly in size and intensity," a National Weather Service alert cautions.

Advice from the Oregon Department of Forestry:
Be vigilant in order to prevent any new wildfires that could take resources away from the Klamathon Fire. Don't use fireworks, especially around easily-combustible materials like dry grass. Using power equipment after 10:00 a.m. is prohibited. It's a good idea to watch for any possible fires after work is complete.
ODF said to keep vehicles out of tall grass, where a hot exhaust system could ignite dry vegetation. Campfires are restricted to fire rings within designated campgrounds, and always keep water and a shovel close.

"To protect yourself against smoke, take the following precautions," ODF wrote. “Ensure your air conditioning system is in good working order and has clean air filters. Check for weather stripping gaps around doors and windows, and make repairs as necessary.”

IMAGE ABOVE. At least one person has died near the California/Oregon border in the Klamathon Fire. This fire has grown to more than 21,000 acres, driven by "extreme fire behavior with movement in multiple directions" (CalFire report). Credit: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection