

## **Draft criteria for Forest Service consideration in preparing Dad's Creek Project Final Version, February 21, 2007**

This memo is intended to provide assistance from the Grant County collaboration group to the Forest Service to help them prepare a proposed action for the Dad's Creek Project. *The collaborative group met on February 21, 2007 and agreed with full consensus on all aspects of this memo with the understanding that this represents an iterative approach to project planning and ongoing discussions will further refine activities recommended for this project.*

### **Geographic scope**

The geographic scope of the project should be the Dad's Creek subwatershed. Not all of the subwatershed will be subject to silvicultural or other types of treatments. Some areas may be inappropriate for treatment due to cost, technical feasibility and/or resource concerns or needs. It is our intention that this be a restoration project that integrates community needs and ecological objectives.

### **Goals**

The overall goal of the project is to establish a healthy native forest ecosystem based on an assessment of historical conditions and current understanding of forest ecology in this climate zone and forest type. We anticipate that achieving this goal will require a long-term commitment to the area.

Our recommended specific goals of the project are:

1. Moderate fire behavior in forests that were historically adapted to frequent fire, but are now at risk of uncharacteristic severe fire, and that are in proximity to private lands (particularly those within the Wildland Urban Interface). Forests should be treated to be more resilient in the face of disturbance.
2. Restore, maintain or establish diverse, dynamic, and complex forest structure and composition that supports high levels of historic or desired biodiversity. The Forest Service should enhance old-growth characteristics, and maintain trees of all species that have old growth or fire resistant characteristics.
3. Enhance hardwoods, especially riparian hardwoods.
4. Enhance aquatic conditions for cold-water species.
5. To the extent possible, implement a cost effective project that explores a range of funding options and generates as much revenue as it spends, or better yet, generates net income that can be devoted to other restoration projects.
6. Provide raw materials to local facilities and employment for the local workforce.

## **Issues**

In it's environmental analysis, we would like the Forest Service to:

1. Address opportunities to protect and enhance soil and aquatic resources, minimizing adverse disturbance and protecting and improving water quality and soil productivity. Protecting and enhancing soil and aquatic resources is expected to lead to better conditions for trout, steelhead and other sensitive fish species. Opportunities for pro-active stream restoration should also be considered.
2. Address opportunities to enhance local economics, including labor force retention and development, and the local necessity for a sustainable flow of wood fiber and other resources from the national forest.
3. Consider opportunities to stabilize the existing road system and improve fish passage. Silvicultural treatments should be designed so that no new system road construction is required, unless necessary to improve protection to the forest ecosystem inclusive of soil, water, fish and wildlife. The Forest Service should strive for lower open road densities after forest management treatments are complete.
4. Consider effects to interior forest dependent/associated species and address opportunities to protect and improve habitat for rare, sensitive, threatened or endangered species, as well as other resident native species.
5. Address opportunities to treat invasive exotic plants and enhance native vegetation. Consider the availability and opportunity to use local, native grass and forbs for revegetation.
6. Consider historic vegetative conditions and how silvicultural treatments will impact historic, current and desired vegetation communities. Place all proposed actions in the context of the natural, cultural and socio-economic landscape. Design treatments to enhance broader landscape ecology.
7. Address the spread of mistletoe and other pathogens while maintaining the positive ecological roles of forest pathogens.
8. Consider how proposed treatments conform to forest plan standards and guidelines, land allocations and forest plan direction (as amended by eastside screens).
9. Address needed restoration tasks in the area, and consider how stewardship authority can be used to complete these tasks.
10. Consider collaboration with the BLM on treatments in their inholdings, as well as outreach and cooperation with tribes and other interest groups, including private landowners.
11. Create conditions suitable to implement a broadcast underburning and other prescribed fire program on the landscape.
12. Consider and fully disclose the consequences of failing to treat forests in the area.

## **Information needs**

The collaborative group would like to review Forest Service materials that describe:

1. Historic and existing vegetation communities (overstory and understory species). The FS should determine whether existing plant association descriptions accurately identify seral stage and potential ungulate forage production.
2. Location of unique habitats (e.g. aspen, wetlands, springs, talus, caves and cliffs) and known sensitive species locations.
3. Big game use of the area.
4. Landscape management allocations in the proposed project area, and general status/condition/allocation of adjoining and proximate private lands.
5. Summary description of active grazing allotments, if any, in the area.
6. Existence of steep and/or unstable slopes.
7. Any other information about erosion potential, including soil compaction and effective ground cover.
8. Stream surveys (habitat and species information) and stream flow (yield, duration, timing) if available.
9. Data and maps that describe 303(d) listed streams.
10. Maps of WUI/CWPP boundaries.
11. Locations of invasive exotic plants.
12. Road system maps, including fish passage barriers, and ancillary data such as open road densities related to big game security cover.
13. Information—including a description of the scope and objectives—about any past, present or planned monitoring efforts.
14. Relevant information about potential cumulative effects.
15. Relevant information about cultural or archaeological sites.
16. Applicable scientific research on ecological restoration that addresses
  - a. wildlife, aquatic, and botanical species of concern;
  - b. forest ecological and wildlife habitat, water quality, and soils issues.
17. Applicable restoration methods, mitigation measures, recommendations, and concerns, including the type and range of machinery and equipment available (including that which may not yet be available in the region).
18. The full range of ecologically-sound options/methods for reducing the presence and spread of invasive exotic plants in the project area, including full disclosures of the impacts of methods, toxicity, and potential harms of any formulations considered for use.

Some of this information, may, in part, be available at this time, and the group would like to review it, if it is available in a concise and accessible format. If the information is not currently available, the information should be developed as part of the planning process and made available to the group when completed.

Thank you for considering these comments, we appreciate the Forest Service's willingness to work with the community, and look forward to our collaboration on the Dad's Creek project.