

**Blue Mountains Forest Partners
Damon Committee Field Day Notes
June 19th, 2008**

Participants

Mike, Eric, Brooks, Dan, Bryan, Mary Lou, Jack, Tim, Andy, Shannon, Bill, Ed, Charlotte, Celeste, Jeff, Sarah, Diane, George, Curt, and Emily.

Aspen Site

The site we stopped at was in bad shape due to a lack of fire, conifer encroachment, cut down stream bank and grazing – from native ungulates and cows.

We discussed the need to address the root of the problem. We acknowledged that domestic livestock has affected young aspen regenerating, and more active herding and fencing would help. We agreed that abundant local elk populations should be considered when selecting the type of fencing to be used and discussed the huge expense of trying to fence all the aspen in the Blue Mountains or this project area; the fencing also needs to be maintained. We discussed the importance of finding ways to get this work done even though it's expensive. Idea of monitoring unfenced areas to identify places where most pressure is was also raised. We talked about the need to have a long-term, regional strategy for aspen restoration instead of addressing it in a piecemeal way.

Aspen Site Agreements

- We agreed to treat aspen stands in the project area even if we can't afford to fence it all; agreed we will need to fence some portion of the aspen that will be treated.
- We agreed that fencing should be prioritized for aspen stands that are isolates or genetically important or facing heavy grazing pressures.
- We agreed that we want a monitoring and maintenance commitment from the permittees in regards to fencing.
- We agreed that some aspen stands will be heavily thinned but that leaving large pines and doing lighter thins within/ around aspen stands would be ok as well.
- We agreed to consider using post and pole fences in appropriate areas where materials are readily available.
- We agreed to consider the removal of trees over 21" for the purpose of restoring aspen stands on a case by case basis.

Eric's Stand/ Dry Pine Site

This was a stand that has been treated. Current basal area was estimated at 90-100.

Dry Pine Site Agreements

- Everyone really liked the stand and would like to see the prescription (in terms of basal area) repeated in our project with the addition of taking out ladder fuels around larger trees. Basal area is 90-100 with some parts a little lower.
- We want to see the varied age classes of trees supported in the Damon prescriptions.
- We want to see more clumping and variability rather than even spacing. The clumps should not be uniform either.

- Ensure down wood on site after treatment.
- Consider raking around larger trees to protect from fire.
- For a dry pine site, this stand looks great with the adjustments described above.

Mixed Conifer Site

The forest stand we were in had pine, larch, Douglas fir, and grand fir. Basal area was estimated at 220. Beetles were present in pockets. The Forest Service recommended we take down the basal area from below (focus on removing small stuff) to about 60-80 and then send fire through to help restore pine, larch and tamarack. Site is on a north-facing slope and has been impacted by fire exclusion, past logging, and lack of pre-commercial thinning. Site was logged about 70 years ago.

We acknowledged this would be moving a large amount of biomass and would require a 2 acre+ landing. There is 4,000 – 5,000 acres of this type of stand in the project area. If we used biomass in conjunction with a yarder and bundler, it would make a big difference in the landing size. If the biomass is used as hog fuel, the landings would be just as big.

We talked about the need to know the Plant Association Group (PAG) and to look at stumps to try to determine what was historically present and what the historic fire return interval was. Group considered whether there should be more cover patches and more basal area left because of aspect, wildlife use and PAG. Forest Service recommended leaving larger patches instead of more patches – patches would be more than ½ acre in size. These “leave patches” could be thinned down to 180 basal area or so – 140 at the lowest.

We talked about managing area to try to get fires down to 1,000 acres or less for the sake of wildlife, fisheries and other values.

Mixed Conifer Site Agreements

- Strategically place treatment areas with fire in mind.
- Agreed to basal area prescriptions of 60-100 for treated areas.
- Agreed to variable spacing – skips, gaps, clumps.
- Agreed to larger leave patches, and we would leave about ½ of the 5,000 acres.

Stream Site

We visited a severely down-cut stream site (with a lot of mosquitoes). The problems could have been due to a recent flood event. Water is also used for irrigation.

We talked about need to treat the stream to get good aspen regeneration and to get the water table back up. We could do this by adding wood to the stream and planting hardwoods. We talked about decommissioning the road that runs along the creek. We talked about prioritizing aquatic work over a larger area than just the planning area for scarce stewardship dollars and the potential availability of funds from local tribes and OWEB.

We talked about the need in riparian areas to first analyze why the problem exists and then look at solutions. We talked about potential problems in project area with 303d listed streams and lack of shade.

Stream Site Agreements

- Reconnect spring (up road from site we stopped at) with creek.
- Support deciduous trees where appropriate and fence grazing out where appropriate; agreed there was no need to fence this particular stream from cattle.
- Add wood to the creek.
- Consider off-stream watering for cattle.

Designated Old Growth Site

In 2001-2002, trees 8” and under were removed, piled, and burned. No prescribed fire was used.

We talked about how this area would be good to treat if we have the money for it. We talked about the risk of losing it if we didn’t treat it and we talked about trying to determine the historic basal area.

Designated Old Growth Site Agreements

- We agreed to a patchy, clumpy, gappy thinning-from-below prescription.
- We agreed to always leave the largest trees. While we didn’t agree to a diameter limit other than the existing 21” rule, we did agree that not much over 15” would be taken.
- We agreed to do a sample marking with ribbon where we would mark the leave trees.
- We agreed that before we do the sample marking, we will have the Forest Service share the historic basal area figures with us if possible and Tim will bring a prescription from Central Oregon (Glaze project) that was done in a similar area.

Prescribed Fire Site

The site had just been burned for the second time. The first time was cold spring burn in the late 90s, and the second burn was last fall. The burn took out young tree re-growth (but not all of it) and some lower branches of the larger trees. Fescues and not just pine grass were present. No raking of older trees was done, and we won’t know the impact of this for several years. We talked about ability to do things like wet lines to work to protect wildlife patches.

General

- The field tour sites were very representative of the Damon project area in general.
- There is a huge amount of aspen in the project area, and we need a more comprehensive strategy.
- We need to make sure the controversial issues from the Dads project are reviewed here too – like temporary roads and road closures.
- We should check in with Matt Carter because he didn’t make it to the field tour.
- We should carry forward issues and agreements from the 16 road field tour.
- We should identify and review wildlife corridors and information when Andy is ready.