

Montana Forest Restoration Principles

Development and use of Statewide principles to accelerate landscape scale restoration



Montana Forest Restoration Committee

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What was the need?

- Differences of opinion about how to manage and restore public lands
- Polarization
- Needed work not getting done
- Current system failing our timber workers and timber-dependent communities, failing the ecological health of our forests, and failing our responsibility to future generations



Zone of Agreement

- Could we find a common ground set of ideas we could build on to generate positive work on the ground?
- 13 Restoration Principles drafted over 6 months
- As trust is built, can we broaden our zone of agreement?



Montana Forest Restoration Principles

- 1) Restore functioning ecosystems by enhancing ecological processes
- 2) Apply adaptive management approach
- 3) Use the appropriate scale of integrated analysis to prioritize and design restoration activities
- 4) Monitor restoration outcomes
- 5) Reestablish fire as a natural process on the landscape
- 6) Consider social constraints and seek public support for reintroducing fire on the landscape
- 7) Engage community and interested parties in the restoration process
- 8) Improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat and connectivity
- 9) Emphasize ecosystem goods & services and sustainable land management
- 10) Integrate restoration with socioeconomic well-being
- 11) Enhance education and recreation activities to build support for restoration
- 12) Protect and improve overall watershed health, including stream health, soil quality and function and riparian function
- 13) Establish and maintain a safe road and trail system that is ecologically sustainable



Working with the Forest Service

- While the Forest Service didn't initiate the effort, they were at the table from the beginning
- Commitment from Regional Forester
- Figuring out roles and responsibilities
 - NEPA process
 - Existing collaborative efforts
- Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests a good place to start



Implementation

- Forest-level restoration committees
- Engage early and often with Forest Service
 - Help Forest Service design projects that will be successful
 - Planning, NEPA process, contracting, implementation and monitoring
- Help raise project funds



Challenges

■ Restoration Committee Governance

■ Forest Service Planning Process



Big (and small) things that bring success

- Excellent facilitation
- Funding from Regional FS Office
- Commitment from the group
- Sense of humor
- Getting to know one another over beers
- Food



Looking to the Future

- More Forest-level committees across the state
- Forests and committees learn how to work with each other in a smooth fashion
- Projects get to implementation quicker
- Collaborative projects occurring across the landscape that benefit our natural assets and our communities.



