

Private Forestland Partnerships in Eastern Oregon
MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017
Union County Extension Conference Room
La Grande, Oregon

Notes and summary by Gabe Kohler and Emily Jane Davis
Oregon State University

Meeting Context and Objectives

Private forestland owners and partners in eastern Oregon have been increasingly working together to overcome common challenges and achieve shared goals. These partnerships have taken several forms, such as a landowner cooperative to sell timber, and all-lands fuels reduction and restoration projects across ownerships. These efforts differ in how they are organized, but share a focus on bringing together multiple properties and partners in the pursuit of markets, contractors, restoration funding, or other means to manage local forests. The objectives of this meeting were to:

- *Share specific activities, experiences, and lessons learned from these partnerships so that others with similar goals may learn what to do (and what to avoid);*
- *Give eastern Oregon landowners and their partners a chance to visit and discuss common interests;*
- *Provide a one-stop shop where landowners can learn about resources and organizations available to assist with private forestland management;*
- *Provide updates on regional log markets, value-added processing opportunities, and restoration grants; and*
- *If desired, to kick off future communication and connection to keep the learning and sharing going.*

This meeting was designed based on feedback from a survey of forestland owners and partners. It sought to blend information-sharing and presentations with time for conversation. It was organized by Oregon State University's Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Service, with assistance from Oregon Forest Resources Institute, Oregon Department of Forestry, American Forest Foundation, and Wallowa Resources. 42 attendees were present representing a range of landowners and organizations.



Summary of common themes and lessons learned

- Private forestland owners should work together to aggregate harvest and project opportunities, making it easier to access consulting foresters, operators, and mills.
- Collective purchasing of equipment is complex and challenging; managing a processing facility takes a unique set of skills and resources.
- The challenges facing private landowners are part of a larger picture of limited mill capacity, inconsistent harvest/activity on federal lands and large industrial private lands, limited local workforce capacity, and market access. We have to work on all these issues to see change.
- More regular dialogue and information sharing is needed. Meetings such as this one could occur annually. Attendance at priority-setting meetings like NRCS local work groups helps get our voices heard.
- Landowner outreach is most effective through local connections—loggers, neighbors—and the use of specifics, rather than general mailings or higher-level information.
- Collaboration takes time, and can be process-heavy—but can result in improved outcomes for private landowners working together.

Brief notes by session

Session One: Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative

Speakers: Steve Edwards (landowner and Coop member) and Bob Parker (Oregon State University Extension)

Discussion Leader: Paul Oester (Oregon State University)

- Wallowa Resources helped the Coop conduct a feasibility analysis of a non-commodity market, specialty wood products operation.
 - Many things have to come together simultaneously. Production, capital, working equipment all together, not just plug and play and it takes work to get it all put together. Mechanic work. Log costs. Market value of products. Handling financing.
 - “Heroic assumptions” needed for profitability, and cautions from a coop in MA lead them to back away from buying equipment.
- Instead chose to create an exclusive premium price agreement with Boise Cascade
 - 1,000,000 board feet at a premium for cooperative if they could deliver in four months.
 - Took them 1 year to deliver the timber to Boise Cascade—long hard winter.
 - Wildfires also changed Boise’s demand for their timber.
 - General agreement that Boise Cascade is important to the survival of private forest owners’ livelihoods.
- Lessons learned:

- Largest factor is distance.
- It was helpful to follow the model of bylaws and articles of incorporation from the Oregon Woodland coop in Washington County (<http://www.oregonwoodlandcooperative.com/>)
- The term “coop” has certain implications for people; appeals to some and not others.
- “Don’t buy equipment”
- There are trade-offs between profitability and collective bargaining.
- Geographically, the exclusive agreement works better for some than others, and no one is going to give up their profitability.
- Opportunities exist if flexible and quick to respond to market.
- Not just about merchandizing, but also about reducing costs.
- Managing the supply line is challenging. Have to bundle shipments and schedule them so we can deliver a supply line that is consistent and predictable.
- The value of the coop model is greater for the 1000-acre plus properties, but smaller properties were more engaged and can aggregate more easily.
- Accounting and tracking logs very important—need someone dedicated to doing this.
- You need someone with the time to deal with log buyers, talk to them, find out what they are paying, how they scale differently in different locations. What is the trucking.
- Opportunities are too narrow with just the merchandizing end of it. Real value in looking at something like landscape-scale change, how to manage. Combine marketing and value added work with the land management part of that. We have new relationship opportunities with agencies and their tools. We need to think more broadly.

Session Two: East Face of the Elkhorn Project

Speakers: Jana Peterson (Oregon Department of Forestry), Gary Wright (Contractor), Bill Gamble (Wallowa-Whitman National Forest)

Discussion Leader: Emily Jane Davis (Oregon State University Extension)

- Project Attributes
 - Spans multiple landowners and jurisdictions
 - 61 landowners participating out of 220 total
 - 5,556 acres
 - \$2.1 million contracted
 - Spans 2 counties and 2 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) offices
 - Difficult to coordinate between counties and NRCS offices.
- Project implementation and development.
 - Project goal was to achieve complementary work across boundaries.
 - Holistic, cross-boundary treatments
 - Emergent project design required the ability to capitalize on serendipitous occurrences.
 - Relied on Good Neighbor Authority

- Create pre-treatment plots for multi-party monitoring.
- Economic benefits
 - 8 million in wages
 - 200 full time jobs
- Contractor perspective
 - Things private owners should consider
 - The longer we wait, the harder it is to do.
 - Keep in contact with neighbors to leverage “win-wins”
 - Set rate on per/acre
 - Larger acreage will help pay for moving costs and “get more bang for your buck.”
 - Working with your neighbors builds social license.
- Lessons learned:
 - Having one ODF point of contact was helpful.
 - Keep in contact with neighbors and look for opportunities to aggregate your projects.
 - Attending NRCS work group meetings in your county is a way to get your priorities on the radar.
 - Be willing to try new tools like Good Neighbor Authority.

Session Three: The Ritter Land Management Team

Speakers: Roje Gootee (advisor to RLMT), Jim Kennedy (Ritter area landowner)

Discussion leader: Ryan Gordon (Oregon Department of Forestry)

- Project locale
 - High-cost to get to market
 - Rural
- Project scoping process
 - Grant County published a study that recommended multi-party monitoring
 - RLMT conducted a baseline inventory of participating properties to serve as the foundation for a larger Strategic Action Plan that covers 60,000 acres.
 - Guided by the priorities in the action plan, RLMT did a feasibility and market study for the utilization of Western Juniper.
 - View of Juniper as a challenge and an opportunity leads to plans for a sawmill.
- Federal grant
 - The Committee for Family Forestlands and the Oregon Department of Forestry wrote a US Forest Service State and Federal grant and received 300,000 for startup, early planning + development
 - Extensive scoping to find a governance structure that would be suitable
- Unpredictable interruption
 - The Canyon Creek fire took the home and the momentum of the project coordinator, and finding a local replacement was difficult.
 - Project coordinator position should have emphasis on grant writing.
- Lessons learned:

- The community has a history of working together and interrelationships (e.g. grazing on each others' properties) that they could draw on.
- Too much process in the startup phase can alienate participants.
- Original grant should have included on-the-ground projects
- Project coordinator with grant writing ability is important.
- Strong leadership from top/ project coordinator is necessary
- Community building and engaging landowners' local knowledge is important
- Finding partner and mentor organizations provided benefits.

Session Four: Improving Market Opportunities for Woodland Owners

Speakers: Chuck Sarrett (Consultant), Butch Tanzey (Contractor), Lindsay Warness (Boise Cascade Company)

Discussion leader: Steve Edwards (landowner and Coop member)

- Current state of the market
 - Log prices decrease while other costs increase
 - No market for pulp logs
 - Reduced logging contractors available
 - No small jobs
 - Mills are opportunistic
 - No timber under contract
 - Fire can flood the market with cheaper timber
 - Possible price increase due to reduction of Canadian imports
- Potential opportunity
 - Standing timber under contract (stumpage) has advantages
 - Insulates against price fluctuations
 - Reduces logging costs
 - Reduces scheduling costs
 - Reduces risk to landowner
- Treatment considerations and process
 - Reduce density to 60-80 square feet per acre (basal area)
 - Remove defects from the stand
 - Mulch all limbs
 - Leave stand “looking like a park”
 - Little trees are strangling larger trees
 - Hiring a crew is becoming very difficult
- Boise Cascade
 - One mill is at 100% capacity
 - Struggling with the small amount of available logs
- Call for greater “predictability” in the market
 - Creating surplus of logs to send to market at once
 - Potential for local log yards
- Lessons learned:
 - Consider stumpage agreement or coop with neighbors to access contractors
 - No one alone can overcome the challenges of marketing in our area—we need to work together, share information.

Session Five: Value-Added Business Opportunities

Speakers: Dylan Kruse (Sustainable Northwest), David Schmidt (Integrated Biomass Resources)

Discussion leader: Nils Christoffersen (Wallowa Resources)

- The Western Juniper Alliance works to create partnerships of non-profits, state, and local government to develop markets for juniper.
 - Creating markets for juniper could alleviate the financial constraints to restoration
 - Uses a network of small mills
 - Training and investment for market development
- Attributes of juniper wood products
 - Naturally rot resistant for green market
 - Cheaper than cedar
 - Reduces the cost of disposing of juniper waste wood from restoration projects
 - Primary market is for fencing, decking, post and pole, and landscaping, but some have attempted to use it for finishing.
- Integrated Biomass Resources started its business asking: how can we increase the value-added to non-saw timber?
 - Started with firewood
 - They use extra-low value wood by-products for heating a kiln to dry firewood
 - Some focus on decreasing costs rather than making profit in the market
 - Raised the question: Where do you get the funding to keep innovating?
- Lessons learned:
 - Landowners can get together, aggregate potential harvest, engage a consulting forester, and present a package to a business like IBR, which makes it easier and more worthwhile for them to come and assess it.
 - We need to keep working with federal partners so they undertake active restoration projects and produce supply of material.
 - Competition for viable local workforce is a challenge.

Session 6: My Blue Mountain Woodlands

Speakers: Nils Christoffersen and Jennifer Hobbs (Wallowa Resources)

Discussion leader: Mike Cloughesy (Oregon Forest Resources Institute)

- Changes leading to decreased harvesting
 - Listing of anadromous fish in ESA
 - Changes in management practices
- Rebuilding private landownership requires keeping private lands as “working lands”
- Committed to helping private forest owners in northeast Oregon
 - Guiding question: How can we as a partnership provide better services to the private owners of northeast Oregon?
 - Working to change paradigm surrounding forest land management to something similar to how people maintain their homes
- Public outreach
 - Received strong response (250 landowners) from a series of outreach mailings

- 120 subscribed to informal newsletter with tips
- Lessons learned
 - Requires multiple “nudges” to engage landowners.
 - Using networks, loggers, neighbors, etc is better than just the direct mailing to get unengaged landowners. Very few people would actually call or come in, but if the loggers did it or he goes out and talks, it gets response.
 - Small “block parties” to engage landowners might be one approach to increasing awareness.
 - A lot of absentee landowners can make outreach hard.
 - Many want assistance with developing a management plan.
 - Building a list of consulting foresters who can do management plans would be a good resource for landowners.
 - NRCS forest management plan requirements vary by county—check in locally.

Wrap Up and Next Steps: Response to the Meeting and Take-Aways

Discussion leader: Mike Cloughesy (Oregon Forest Resources Institute) and Ryan Gordon (Oregon Department of Forestry)

1. What did you learn that you will tell your friends/neighbors/coworkers at home?

- Together we have a chance to address our issues/ opportunities. Divide and we will assure failure.
- Next Farm Bill is being formed and we should get to our congressional delegation about today’s issues in new ways.
- Partnering can be tailored to be place-specific, so it’s likely to be possible to find a combo that works in your area.
- The markets for low-value products, such as western juniper, are continuing to develop with community support.
- Collaboration is a lot of work. Don’t let the process overwhelm!
- Inform yourself and make contact with others.
- There are multiple benefits of successfully working together.
- Collaboration and partnerships may improve the future prospects of small woodland owners.
- Create a register or multiple registers for log availability, loggers, transport, and mills to help make the system more predictable.
- Participate in NRCS local working group to identify the project interests of NRCS and landowners.
- I will look at creating logging co-ops for landowners in Umatilla/Morrow counties
- We need to create/promote more opportunity for individuals and communities to take small, positive actions. Give people specific actions and create momentum toward pooling resources and collaboration.
- Invite adjacent landowners to cooperate with harvest/marketing of forest products.
- Human resources is a huge challenge, predictability is critical, and market development is crucial for value added efforts.

2. What will you do differently or try as a result of this meeting?

- Go to NRCS annual work group meetings and try to get help for private lands.
- Keep our eyes and ears open for alignment of opportunities- implementation and initiatives.
- Encourage elected representatives to support the Forest Service budget for timber support staffing.
- Attend NRCS planning meetings in my county to be sure forest projects are adequately part of the budget for conservation benefits to all US citizens.
- Think about how to use collaborative process on the West side.
- Get involved in collaborative efforts.
- Encourage partners to work more diligently on lessons learned.
- I have a wider perspective.
- Explore the concept of integrated restoration projects.
- Only go to landowners with very specific offers/ invitations/ calls to action. Always come through with something tangible to offer (money or a meeting or specific projects).
- Work or look for inclusion opportunities.
- Think creatively about what the coop can do to help members address challenges.

3. What questions did you have that weren't addressed?

- Prognosis for state and federal policies that foster partnering?
- Why didn't we have someone from representative Walden's office here- or the press?
- Who is inventing a steam truck able to burn wood waste as it hauls a large fraction of its wood while burning a small fraction- all at zero fossil fuel costs?
- Funding sources?
- How can a project, like the East Face project, be established in another area?
- What makes independent people unite? How can we effect (and affect) policy? Where should leadership for the next wave of forest activity come from? How can we better empower private forest owners?
- What's with the biochar? Is it a wonder fertilizer or are there other uses? Where is it being produced?
- Boise paid a premium for guaranteed wood, but how does this work to meet their third-party certification?
- There are a large number of collaborative projects, and not all were at this meeting.

4. How can partners (organizations, agencies, Extension) continue to support private forestland owner partnerships? What do you need from us?

- Greater collaboration with Boise Cascade as an "integrated natural resource management" team.
- Partners need to do a better job of working together and communicating ahead of time so that landowners feel supported, not overwhelmed. Need to play to our strengths, organize for more effective/ targeted outreach. Private landowners also need more guidance, templates, examples, and leadership training/ mentoring.
- I need an effective and practical means or method to insulate my property from the extreme fire hazard on adjoining US forest service lands.

- You are doing it... thank you.
- Introduce us to partners that we can use, continuing education and meetings like this.
- Continue educating landowners about value of local support of business and cooperative values.
- Offer how a small landowner can accomplish forest maintenance without losing money.
- What do you provide to the individual or collaboration. Educate public.
- Recognition of landowner knowledge about their land, and mentoring of partnership development (most landowners aren't sure how to start).
- More workshops/ field visits to educate landowners on new/ emerging markets or products. Leverage funding to help-out these private landowners.
- Small grant for innovation in on-site, value-added wood use and disposal.
- Need to find ways to facilitate partnership formation. Get people together who have common cause.

5. What follow-up actions and activities would you like from this meeting?

- Additional classes for landowners and manager for developing the right species composition to enable fire management as a tool.
- Share the stories from this gathering.
- More work with lessons learned, pooling info, and updating our outreach practices accordingly. Call to action for average landowner/ partner. What would that look like?
- Meeting like this annually? -every two years?
- Continue to provide forums for civil and informed dialogue around forests and their management.
- Simply a participant list with contact info, so we can do follow-up on our own.
- Address these same issues in future forums that will achieve a wider audience of timber landowners and operators.
- Institutionalize annual "conference of Oregon forest partners."
- Focus on more of what other groups are doing around the state and look at what some of the landowner groups are doing.
- Encourage everyone to write Congress to support the farm bill.
- More financial resources for innovations/ business at state or federal.
- For future meeting invite economic development representatives, federal legislative staffs, etc.
- We could have one of these workshops annually to compare.
- Mentor contractors to help them meet the context of woodland owners. Policy advocacy for prescribed burning (liability issues, lack of contractors, site prep costs).
- Convene landowners in focus groups and ask them what will entice them to join, to do, etc.
- Establish an East Face type plan for Union County.

List of participants

Last name	First name	Organization/affiliation
Aschenbrenner	Larry	
Billman	Mike	Oregon Department of Forestry
Christoffersen	Nils	Wallowa Resources
Cloughesy	Mike	Oregon Forest Resources Institute
Connolly	Curt	Landowner
Connolly	Lou	Landowner
Crary	Jim	Political
Davis	Emily Jane	Oregon State University Extension
Edwards	Steve	Blue Mountain Forest Coop and landowner
Engle	Chad	Landowner
Engle	Gary	Landowner
Gamble	Bill	US Forest Service
Gootee	Roje	Advisor to Ritter Land Management Team
Gordon	Ryan	Oregon Department of Forestry
Guyer	Randy	Landowner
Hayes	Scott	Committee for Family Forestlands
Heffernan	Chris	Landowner
Herold	Robin	Landowner, Ritter Land Management Team
Herold	Dan	Landowner, Ritter Land Management Team
Hobbs	Jennifer	Wallowa Resources
James	Jim	Oregon Small Woodlands Association
Johnson	Jim	Oregon State University Extension
Kennedy	Jim	Landowner, Ritter Land Management Team
Kennedy	Hanley	Landowner
Kohler	Gabe	Oregon State University
Kruse	Dylan	Sustainable Northwest
Maille	Robin	Oregon State University Extension
McCullough	Wendy	
Oester	Paul	Oregon State University Extension
Parker	Bob	Oregon State University Extension
Peterson	Jana	Oregon Department of Forestry
Pettigrew	Jason	Oregon Department of Forestry
Rudolf	Hans	Oregon Department of Forestry
Sarrett	Chuck	Consulting forester
Schmidt	David	Integrated Biomass Resources
Shibley	Gilbert	Committee for Family Forestlands
Siemens	Brad	US Forest Service
Smith	Evan	Committee for Family Forestlands, The Conservation Fund
Tanzey	Butch	Operator
Warness	Lindsay	Boise Cascade
Weber	Ed	Committee for Family Forestlands, Oregon State University
Wright	Gary	Operator

