



The Ritter Land Management Team:

A Private Forestland Collaborative

Guest Presentation

by

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**On behalf of the Oregon Committee for Family Forestlands
and RLMT**

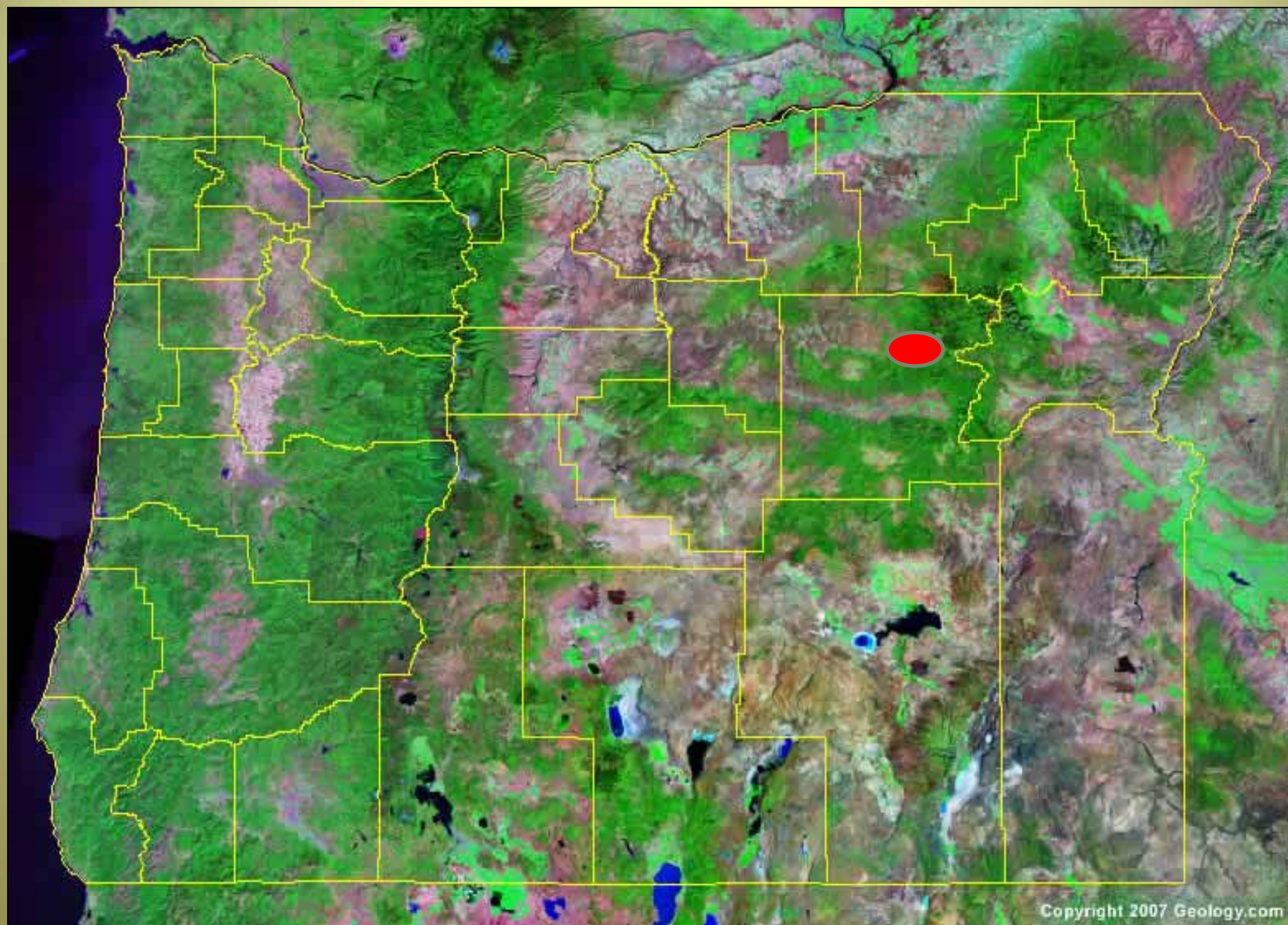
May 1, 2017



Beginning



- **CFF toured Grant County in 2012.**
- **Professionals and private forest owners discussed wildfire risk, juniper encroachment, riparian issues, declining forest and rangeland health, lack of local forest contractors and infrastructure, and unprofitable thinning and harvest.**
- **Research and experience show that some of these may be alleviated through improved communication and collaboration among forest owners.**
- **The Grant County Healthy Private Timberlands Study had also recently recommended collaboration as a solution.**
- **Multi-party collaboration was already underway on the upper Middle Fork and Ritter could complement this work.**



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Grant County, OR:



- 4,529 square miles (2,898,560 acres).
- Population 7,445 (2 per square mile).
- One traffic light. 🙌
- Situated in Oregon's Blue Mountains, an ecologically diverse ecosystem similar in scale to the Yellowstone ecosystem.
- Steep, rugged, remote, scenic, minimally fragmented, and little known.
- Temperatures range from high of 112 to low of -48 below 0.
 - Can fluctuate 30-50 degrees within a 24-hour period during the summer. Tough place to be a tree!
- Precipitation ranges from 12 – 24 inches, depending upon elevation and latitude.
 - Historically predominantly snow but now shifting to rain. This affects forest health, forest pest viability, forest diseases, streamflow, and seasonal soil moisture.
- 63% federal ownership.



Panoramic view of grassland and timber.

- **Primarily a ranching, logging, and hunting-based economy.**
- **Median household income of full-time residents is \$32,560.**
- **13.7% live below the poverty line; 11.2% of families.**
- **Absentee owners and newcomers are steadily increasing in number (50%), often more affluent, from diverse backgrounds, and with varied forest management goals.**
- **Typical FF parcels are 160 to 15,000 acres (nat'l. avg. <20).**
- **Commercial and non-commercial forest outputs are economically, ecologically, and socially valuable but**
- **Forest stands are low-volume due to prior logging history, fire history, slow regrowth, and juniper encroachment.**

The John Day River:

- Drains most of the Blues' western slope.
- 4 major forks; 284 miles long.
- 2nd longest undammed, free-flowing river system in the "lower 48" United States.
- Includes more designated Wild and Scenic miles than any other US river.
- Historically among the most productive of inland anadromous fish habitats, but
- Water flows and temps now fluctuate greatly due to climate, historical mining and rechanneling, riparian vegetative changes, and irrigation.
- Water flows in some areas are sometimes reduced to 0 flow.
- Steelhead are now ESA listed; Chinook salmon are proposed for listing.
- The upper Middle Fork is now a focus of major, collaborative restoration efforts (Tribes, TNC, BPA, USFS, NRCS, State, local NGO's and landowners).





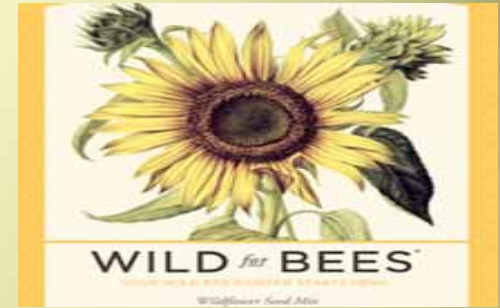
Ritter:



- Is a remote unincorporated area locally known for a rustic hot springs.
 - Approximately 105,000 acres of private land; about 80 families.
 - Situated along the Middle Fork of the John Day River, and the ridge that divides the Middle and North Forks.
 - Nearest town is Long Creek, pop. 186, about 16 miles away.
 - Nearest 'city' is John Day, pop. 1,744, the largest town in the county, about 65 miles away. Nearest sawmills are in John Day, Pilot Rock (70 miles) and a juniper mill in Fossil (100 miles).
- Highly biodiverse; 6 distinct forest types (Ppine; pine/Dfir; DMC; MMC, aspen, juniper.) Family forest parcels often include several, which means complicated management and minimal income.
- Wildlife abounds; some species stressed but many thriving.
- Most local family forest owners integrate or prioritize grazing.
- Juniper encroachment is rampant but treatment is complicated and related reduction in forest and range productivity is not being measured.
- Many properties need restoration due to land and timber speculation.

Seeds of RLMT:

- CFF predicted an unusually high level of “collaborative capacity” (E. Weber) in Ritter because:
 - Locals recognized the need for new solutions.
 - Full-time and absentee landowners were on good terms, trusted one another, and already had some experience working together.
 - Landowners had relevant skills and good relationships with local agencies and NGO’s.
 - Local agencies and NGO’s collaborate more than usual. They need to capitalize upon one another’s capabilities in order to overcome the budget and staffing shortages common in low-population areas.
 - An ecologically unique landscape.
 - Ritter is contiguous to the big restoration effort on the upper Middle Fork, so could complement that important work.
- CFF surveyed a sample of local forest owners to gauge actual interest.
- CFF then approached 11 local agencies and NGO’s to assess willingness.
- This initial assessment revealed sufficient reason to proceed.



From Concept to Action:



- In 2013, on behalf of the landowners a team of CFF members and ODF staff began drafting a USFS Western Regional Competitive Grant application for start-up funding. The American Forest Foundation also offered funding to develop a framework for strategic action planning.
- Landowners, local agencies, and NGO's developed a preliminary governance structure. They chose a local Project Coordinator supervised by a Project Supervisor at OSU Extension (Dr. E.J. Davis).
- Funds from the two grants became available in mid-2014.
- With the AFF funds, Mike Cloughesy (OFRI) designed the SAP framework.
- With input from landowners and agencies a position description was developed and a Project Coordinator (Curt Qual) hired in October 2014.
- In late 2014 the Project Coordinator conducted additional one-on-one field scoping with landowners, and also convened two round-table meetings with agencies and NGO's.
- The first Full Group meeting with landowners, agencies, and NGO's was held in late December 2014. The landowners opted for a holistic, multi-resource approach, and were ready to prioritize projects.



In 2015:



- **Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Operations Manual developed.**
 - Only landowners eligible to be voting members (1 vote per property).
 - Decisions are made on a “consensus-minus-1-or-2” basis.
 - Landowners may opt in or out of proposed projects at their discretion.
 - A 4-member, elected Operations Committee meets at least monthly.
 - 11 agencies and NGO’s are actively involved, but in a non-voting capacity.
 - CFF continues to provide advisory support.
- Professional forestry consultant collected multi-resource data and develop list of landowner-guided priorities for each enrolled property.
- From this data, GSWCD developed a “living document” Strategic Action Plan.
- OSU Extension developed a Forest Health Workshop and periodic newsletter.
- RLMT grew from 12 landowners and 10,000 enrolled acres to 31 landowners 56,000 enrolled acres. More landowners within the 105,000 acre project boundary are interested but demand presently exceeds RLMT’s capacity.
- The Canyon Creek wildfire near John Day claimed the home of the Project Coordinator and also the attention and resources of most of the local agencies and NGO’s.

2016:



- Two sub-watersheds selected for focused 2016 effort. GSWCD drafted Spring 2016 grant applications for one sub-watershed. Applications were planned for the other in Fall 2016.
- \$411,739 in combined funding from OWEB, GSWCD, Grant Weed, ODFW, Title II, grants and landowner contributions began field work on one sub-watershed. Other grant applications were variously successful or unsuccessful.
- The Project Coordinator (Curt Qual) resigned in April to give his full attention to the readjustment of his family and the reconstruction of their home. Patti Hudson, a RLMT landowner with extensive NGO experience was hired.
- A Juniper Management workshop was conducted by OSU Extension.
- RLMT engaged with SNW, the Western Juniper Alliance, and Business Oregon to explore options for juniper management and marketing. Business Oregon provided \$50,000 for a feasibility study.
- RLMT applied for and was awarded official 501(c)3 status.
- RLMT continued reaching out to private foundations and agencies in search of implementation funding for numerous additional projects.
- RLMT's first Community Work Bee was scheduled.
- Under RLMT's guidance, Ritter applied for Firewise status.

2017



- RLMT continues to mature. RLMT and ODF enter into a cooperative agreement passing management and administrative responsibilities to RLMT.
- Ritter has been officially awarded “Firewise Community” status (the second in Oregon).
- Implementation of 2016’s major grant projects continues.
- RLMT continues to build relationships within the John Day Basin Partnership.
- An MOU has been signed with Sustainable Northwest to share goals and roles.
- RLMT and Sustainable Northwest have jointly submitted funding requests for landscape-scale restoration projects.
- Additional funding relationships are being explored with multiple private and governmental organizations, and applications are in process.
- Juniper supply and marketing feasibility study has just been completed; recommends developing a local sawmill operation. An organizational structure is being developed and funding will be sought.
- and it’s only April! The remainder of 2017 promises to be very productive.

Aspen awaiting conifer removal and protection of regeneration



Aspen stand.

Commerical thinning



Ponderosa Pine stand in need of thinning of pole size, non-sawlog trees.

Open Ponderosa pine with mistletoe and encroaching juniper



Scattered Ponderosa Pine with severe mistle-toe. Young juniper encroachment.

Medusahead weed control project



Ridge top grassland with patches of Medusahead Rye.

Proposed Spring Development



Spring high on hillside just below Three Mile Butte. Good candidate for development.

Proposed Riparian Improvement



Culvert replaced with large arch for fish passage on Eight Mile Creek.

Pre-commercial thinning



Young Ponderosa Pine stand needing moderate to heavy thinning.

The Ritter Land Management Team's Mission:

“A community of landowners working together to find innovative solutions for enhancing the health and productivity of private lands.”

- Focused on *active* management and *working* landscapes.
- Seeking solutions for holistic multi-resource management.



Thank you!



View from County Road 19 (Bone Point Rd.) south.