Little River AMA

June, 2000

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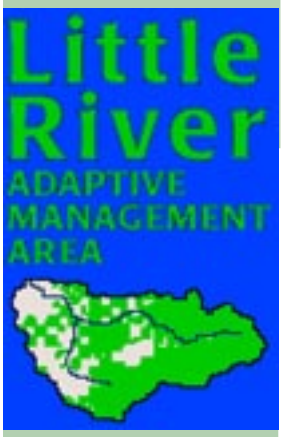
managing to learn and learning to manage



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Watson Mountain Ecosystem Management Strategy

An ecosystem strategy project is underway for Watson Mountain, a 21,830 acre sub-watershed of the 131,800 acre Little River watershed, east of Roseburg, Oregon. Watson Mountain is the lower part of the Little River drainage, below the confluence of the largest drainage, Cavitt Creek, and immediately adjacent to the North Umpqua River at Glide, Oregon. The majority of the land ownership is private; 11,401 acres consist of ranches and home developments and 5,476 acres are owned by private timber companies. The Swiftwater Field Office of the Roseburg District Bureau of Land Management manages 4,953 acres (23%) of the sub-watershed.

One objective of this project is to comply with the BLM Roseburg District Resource Management Plan (RMP) which stipulates that lands will be managed to maintain or restore healthy, functioning ecosystems while providing sustainable production of natural resources on a regional scale.

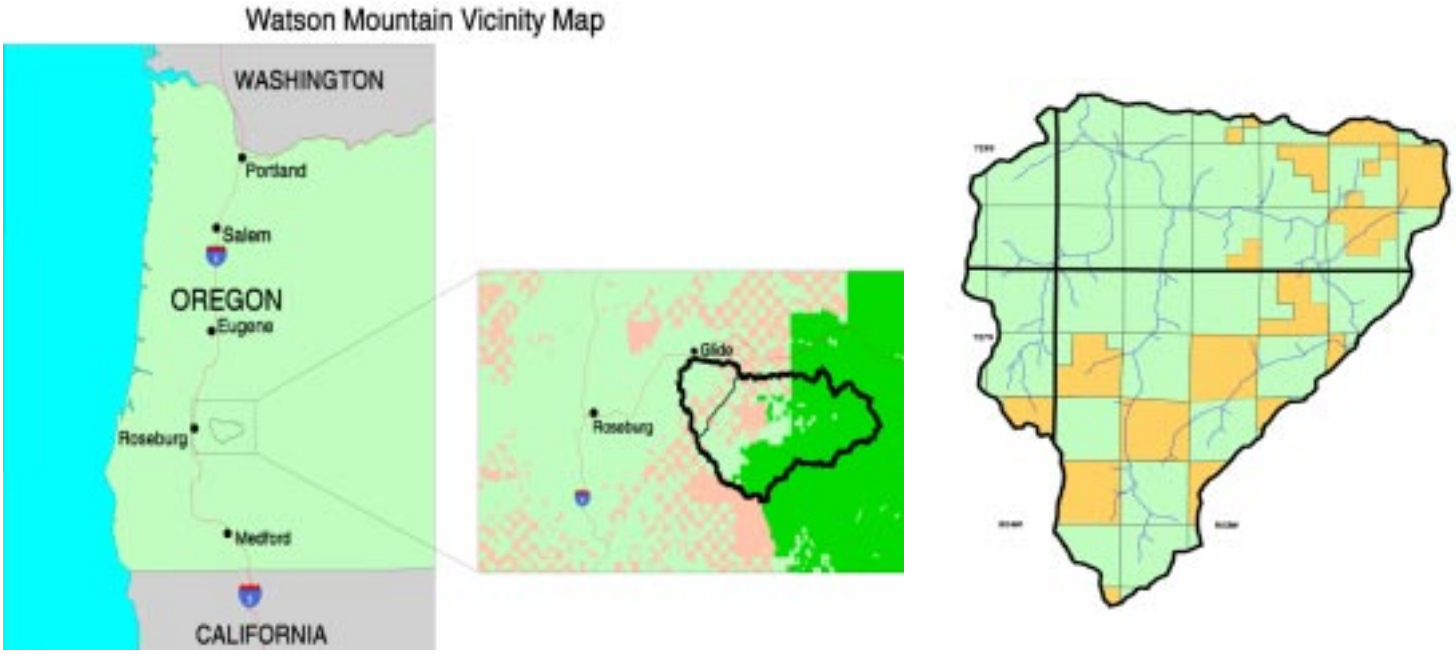
Another objective is to comply with the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) direction regarding AMA's. The overall ojective for the AMA's as described in the NFP is to learn how to manage on an ecosystem basis. Each AMA has a specific and unique emphasis. The objective for the Little River AMA is to develop and test intensive timber production with restoration and maintenance of high quality riparian habitat.

The ecosystem management strategy in Watson Mountain represents the first attempt by the BLM Roseburg's Swiftwater Field Office to create a comprehensive strategy over a ten-year period for BLM managed lands in a sub-watershed. Ecosystem management emphasizes the complete ecosystem instead of individual components and looks at sustainable systems and products. It seeks a balance between maintenance and restoration of natural systems and sustainable yield of resources.

The strategy will include a description of the historic and current environmental conditions, current and proposed projects, and resource monitoring activities. It will also include models of the future landscape resulting from proposed management actions. An Environmental Assessment for the new planned projects, completed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will be attached. The Environmental Assessment (EA) will explore all significant issues and identify a preferred course of action. NEPA requires scoping with the public and with agency personnel to identify all substantive issues associated with proposed projects. Interdisciplinary teams then analyze potential environmental consequences using a range of alternatives.

Current and proposed projects include noxious weed control, Umpqua Mariposa Lily habitat improvement, timber harvest, road restoration and decommission, and fertilization of timber stands.

Questions regarding this project may be directed to Anne Boeder, Roseburg BLM at (541) 440-4931, ext. 360 or aboeder@or.blm.gov.



Sugar Pine Restoration Project

The purpose of this project is to study ways to restore populations of sugar pine (Pinus lambertiana) and Western white pine (Pinus monticola) that are declining throughout southwest Oregon. Mountain pine beetle is responsible for much mortality in older trees but it is white pine blister rust that kills seedling, sapling, and pole-size individuals. Blister rust is caused by a fungus which lives on gooseberry and currant bushes in the summer. In the winter, spores are transmitted on water droplets in low-lying clouds and settle on the ground near the pines. The blister rust moves into the lower limbs and swells the joints where the branches meet the trunk. Eventually the disease girdles or circles the trunk and kills the tree. Young trees with small diameters are particularly susceptible to the disease.

There is strong evidence that selectively-bred, rust-resistant five-needle pines have significant survival advantages in areas of blister rust hazard but additional monitoring of planted blister-resistant sugar pine performance is needed. There is also an interest in testing the disease-controlling benefits of pruning young five-needle pine.

More than 3,800 seedlings were planted in January and February, 2000. As part of the study design, a portion of the young trees will be pruned after the first year. It is hoped that by trimming lower branches, the moisture bridge allowing the disease up into the tree will be broken. Results of the study will be used to adapt management strategies to improve sugar pine restoration efforts. For more information contact Alan Baumann, Umpqua National Forest or Craig Kintop, BLM.

Alan Baumann of the Umpqua National Forest holds a Sugar pine seedling ready for planting.

Cavitt Creek Transportation System Assessment

Cavitt Creek is a 37,700 acre sub-basin of the Little River watershed basin. Approximately 57% is under federal management and 43% is privately owned. The majority of the private land is managed by Seneca Jones Timber Company.

The draft plan for the Little River Adaptive Management Area designates Cavitt Creek as a priority for restoration. Historically, the sub-basin was a cutthroat and coho stronghold for the Little River basin. The watershed analysis identified related concerns including high sediment inputs, high temperatures, and high peak flows. These water quality and hydrologic conditions are linked to poor quality riparian habitat and road-related sediment inputs and influence on stream flow.

Recently, a collaborative inventory of the public and private road network which includes a basic road condition analysis was completed. Partners include the Umpqua National Forest, BLM's Roseburg District, Seneca Jones Timber Company, and the Umpqua Basin Watershed Council. Data collection included approximately 200 miles of road. The information will be used for road analysis and prioritization activities. The partners will next explore opportunities for joint road-related restoration activities. This project illustrates how various partners can work together effectively to pool resources and create a product that satisfies multiple individual and cooperative goals.

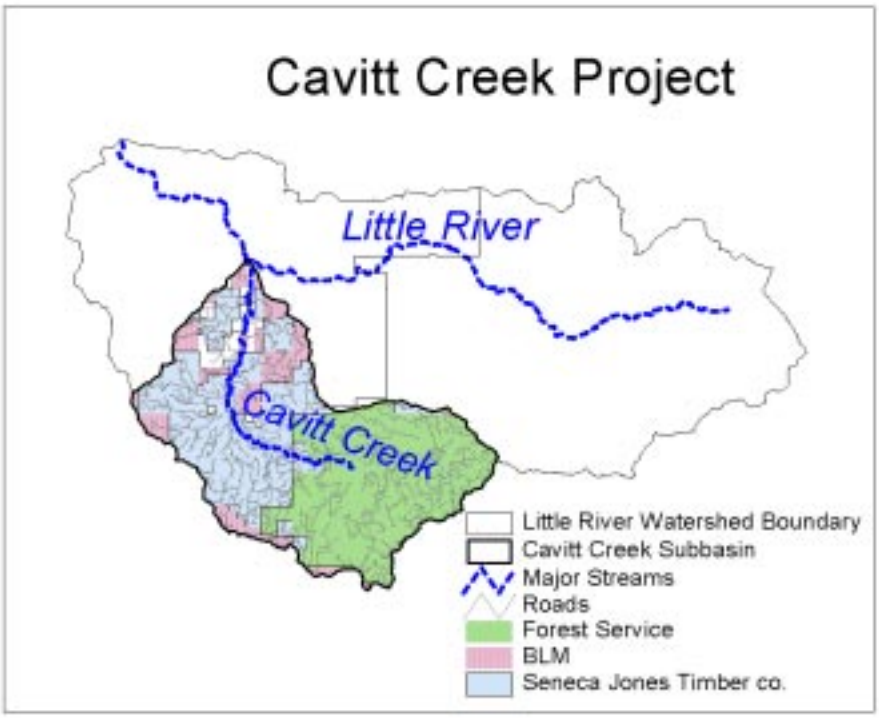
The BLM and USFS Welcome New Managers

The Little River AMA falls within the Swiftwater Field Office of the Roseburg BLM and the North Umpqua Ranger District of the Umpqua National Forest. The two agencies have recently appointed new managers to head up these two offices.

Carol Cushing has been at the helm of the North Umpqua Ranger District since she was appointed District Ranger in 1998. In her 20 years with the Forest Service, Carol has served on five different Western Forests and has experienced great variety in her career.

Carol is pleased to be working on a Ranger District that has an Adaptive Management Area, and she is committed to making the Little River Adaptive Management Area successful. "We have an excellent opportunity for learning because of the cooperative relationship with research. Building partnerships with research and others is a great idea," said Cushing. Cushing believes that "In challenging times like these for Natural Resource Management, we have choices—this is a time for learning and being adaptive."

Jay Carlson has been Field Manager for the Swiftwater Field Office of the Roseburg BLM since January, 2000. He has worked for the BLM for the past 22 years. He has previously served as staff for the Idaho State Director, Area Manager, Planning Team Leader, and Regional Economist. He has had assignments in Burns, OR; Idaho, and Utah.



BLM and USFS managers, Jay Carlson and Carol Cushing

Jay and his family are busy settling into a new town and a new job. He is looking forward to learning about the Little River AMA and how we can work cooperatively to define ways to make the Northwest Forest Plan adaptable over time...to learn from our successes and our failures.

Soil Restoration: The Whitecap Decompaction Study

Public lands are managed under guidelines that limit harvest activities that result in “detrimental soil condition” (from compaction, top soil displacement, severe burning etc). If this condition is encountered, soil restoration is often prescribed. The Little River Watershed Analysis reported that an estimated 35,000 acres of land (27% of the watershed) had been tractor logged during earlier periods when tractor skidding of logs was unregulated. Large areas of soil compaction can potentially increase storm run-off rates because rainwater does not readily infiltrate into compacted soil causing a faster rate of runoff. Also, once soil has been compacted, it isn’t as productive for tree growth and timber production.

The Little River AMA Plan called for a study of the effectiveness of restoring lost site productivity using a process called soil decompaction. Typically, decompaction is applied to portions of harvest units such as skid road and landings. The approach in the Whitecap decompaction study is area-wide, at a harvest unit scale.

The study is testing the effectiveness of two decompaction methods, and both methods are new innovations. The Umpqua National Forest fabricated a “winged-ripper” attachment for an excavator that will decompact contiguous areas working around stumps.

The other method is the V-H mulcher, which decompacts individual planting sites. The study is also investigating the affect of additional compaction (i.e. the cumulative effect) associated with the second harvest entry (i.e. new compaction created with the Whitecap sale).

The study was designed in collaboration with Dr. Bob Powers, research soil scientist (USFS, Redding Forest Science Lab). Each treatment is replicated six times in small clear cuts that were created specifically for the study within the Whitecap sale. The growth of planted Douglas-fir and incense-cedar will be monitored in the various treatments and controls to assess the effectiveness of the methods. Also, soil characteristics will be charactarized after the treatments and compared to soil conditions prior to the Whitecap harvest.

The project is developing and testing new approaches that will ultimately help determine if this type of restoration is a wise use of public funds. The findings have the potential to be applied on private and public lands throughout the region. The decompaction is scheduled to begin in June, and site visits to the project area can be arranged by contacting Barbara Fontaine at the North Umpqua Ranger District (541) 496-3532.

Excavator rigged with the decompaction device developed on the Diamond Lake RD.