

Fivemile-Bell Landscape Restoration Project



**NEPA assessment & data collection performed by local workforce
under the direction of the SIUSLAW INSTITUTE***

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**Funding provided by a Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative grant
(USFS, Region 6), administered by ECOTRUST
Project located in Takhenitch Lake Basin of Oregon's mid-coast region**

Selected as one of five National Pilots for NEPA Innovation by CEQ

FiveMile-Bell Landscape Restoration Project

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Note: Throughout this document various spellings of the name of FiveMile Creek are used. This is not a mistake, but is caused by actual historical differences in usage that still exist today: e.g. FiveMile, Five Mile, Fivemile, 5Mile, etc.

Acknowledgements

The Siuslaw Institute, and this Project's coordinator, Johnny Sundstrom would like to thank those who supported and participated in this effort.

Maia Enser and Alice Williamson suggested that a nomination of our project and its innovative approach to NEPA work be entered into the CEQ Pilot Project process and assisted in that process.

Ecotrust and Kate Carone obtained funding through USFS Region 6 Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative, and she did a superb job of managing that funding and finding ways to use its authorities in adapting them to this unusual format of activity.

Jerry Ingersoll, Supervisor and Jeff Uebel, Natural Resources Staff Officer for Siuslaw National Forest were always helpful in advancing this project and fully supported its success.

Paul Burns, Fisheries Biologist for the Siuslaw's Central Coast Ranger District is the lead Project Manager for the FiveMile-Bell Project and coordinated the Task Force that worked to develop the Environmental Assessment for it. He was instrumental in convincing the agency that this process was worth trying, and was invaluable in assuring its accomplishments.

Bruce Buckley, Siuslaw Forest Planner, was the principle author of the EA and kept all the parts in order and working together.

Primary Contractors utilized in the gathering of data, doing research and joining in the design process included:

Charley Dewberry, Ecologist – NW Science and Photography: Fish Studies, Roads and passage issues, Hydrology, Historical & Photo research, design,
Val Knox, Botanist – Plants and vegetation inventory, tribal liaison & design
Seth Mead, Forestry – Silvicultural analysis, stand exams and inventory
Liz Vollmer-Buhl and staff, Siuslaw Watershed Council coordinator - GIS, design
Rhonda Black, Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District - vegetation surveys, public meeting arrangements, and design,

We thank all of these and those that worked with and for them for an excellent and highly cooperative endeavor, conscientiously performed with excellent results.

We are also grateful to Jay Jensen and Horst Greczmiel of the Council on Environmental Quality for embarking on this Pilot program, and Jim Smalls of the USFS Washington Office for all his efforts in keeping it moving.

We are hopeful that our collaborative work on this Project is useful to the ongoing national review of NEPA work and procedures. We look forward to more streamlining and ease of use, and to a greater sense of how communities can be involved in these efforts.

JS

FiveMile-Bell Landscape Restoration Project – *a summary*

Diverse partners including the Siuslaw National Forest, the Siuslaw Watershed Council, Ecotrust, the Siuslaw Institute, Umpqua and Siuslaw SWCDs, Siletz Tribes, other tribal representatives, local schools, and others are collaborating in both traditional and innovative methods to restore the Fivemile-Bell sub-watershed from ridge top to creek bottom while creating and maintaining economic opportunities. The project area contains the largest tributaries to Takhenitch Lake, a wild coho stronghold basin. A unique public-private collaboration addressed the NEPA environmental assessment process for the project, utilizing local partners and contractors, hired and coordinated by the Siuslaw Institute, working with federal agency staff.

The upland forests are overstocked and lack diversity. In the valley bottom, the main stream channel had been rerouted and straightened during the previous century, resulting in downcutting and disconnection with the floodplain. In-stream wood was also eliminated, decreasing stream complexity. Historically, native riparian and wetland vegetation was removed, allowing invasives and non-native pasture grasses to establish and then dominate the surroundings. Undersized culverts beneath the county road restrict natural hydrology, aquatic species passage, sediment transport, and frequently led to road closures and maintenance issues which were burdensome to both county staff and neighbors. Logging roads continue to erode and require maintenance and/or de-commissioning

Working to address the myriad of issues, the Siuslaw National Forest and Ecotrust led the initial design process, with the Siuslaw Watershed Council and other partners now leading the restoration implementation. On-the-ground restoration activities include upland stand treatments (thinning and underplanting), historic logging road de-compacting and re-contouring, re-meandering the stream, re-grading the valley bottom to restore floodplain connection, establishment of diverse native upland, riparian, and wetland plant species, replacement of problem culverts with aquatic species-friendly passage structures, monitoring, and more. The entire project is expected to take about 10 years, with sustainable agriculture and educational facilities as possible additional goals for this sub-watershed. During 2012, the Siuslaw Watershed Council, the Siuslaw National Forest, and others implemented the first phase of restoration with Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funds secured by the Siuslaw Watershed Council, and other state and federal funding. Local heavy equipment operators were hired to fall trees and decompact and recontour the historic logging roads. An area botanist was contracted to develop the vegetation strategy. In October, a heavy lift helicopter moved the felled trees from the uplands into two miles of creek, increasing stream complexity.

This winter (2013), native trees, shrubs, and graminoids are being purchased from local nurseries, and area natural resource education programs are being contracted to grow-out site sourced seed stock. Project partners have secured and are seeking funding for the future phases of the project with federal, state, and private dollars all contributing to the success of the project and creating local jobs and contracts.

*this document prepared
by Johnny Sundstrom
Siuslaw Institute*

NEPA & THE FIVEMILE-BELL LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT

ASSESSMENT PROCESS and PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) announced the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Pilots Project in February, 2012 to increase the quality and efficiency of federal environmental reviews and reduce costs. CEQ selected a US Forest Service proposal to develop NEPA best practices for forest restoration projects using lessons learned from two restoration projects currently being analyzed in Arizona and Oregon. These two projects demonstrate that by involving partners early in the NEPA process we can cut costs, operate more efficiently, and reduce potential for litigation while still maintaining strong environmental safeguards at the ground level.

FiveMile-Bell Landscape Management Project is the latest and one of the largest Siuslaw National Forest projects organized and developed by the Forest and its partners. It is located in the mid-coast region of Oregon and its sub-basins directly feed the Takhenitch Lake system which flows into the nearby Pacific Ocean. In this case, the Forest and the Siuslaw Basin Partnership (Siuslaw Institute, Siuslaw Watershed Council, Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District, and Ecotrust) worked together to expand on their traditions of collaboration by engaging communities and the local natural resource workforce in new ways. The Siuslaw Institute was contracted by Ecotrust to directly participate in assisting the Forest Service by hiring local citizen/workers to gather and synthesize the assessment data and information necessary for the project's planning and environmental analysis process. A task force of Forest Service specialists and representatives of the significant partners was convened to oversee the process, and met regularly throughout the analysis and planning phases. As a part of this effort, partners were also directly involved in the NEPA dissemination and outreach to the public with concepts, materials and meetings related to this work and its long-term plan.

FiveMile-Bell is an ecological and habitat restoration project on close to 5,000 acres of National Forest System lands in the FiveMile and Bell Creeks sub-basins on the Oregon Coast. The project includes in-stream restoration, stream channel reconstruction and re-meandering, upland road and stand improvements, and valley bottom native vegetation treatments. The project will address ecosystem diversity and productivity with its primary focus on habitat enhancement for threatened Coho salmon, endangered Northern Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets and other associated habitat for plants and animals. Through long-term efforts to maintain a sustainably managed landscape, the project will enhance the economic, timber, education, community and recreational opportunities available to the area. The proposed restoration work is based on adaptive learning from several other successful watershed restoration projects on federally acquired and managed lands in the Siuslaw Basin.

Ecosystem restoration on the Siuslaw National Forest is characterized by consistent, informal collaboration among a wide range of partners on a watershed scale. Fivemile-Bell takes this to a new level by sharing the environmental analysis workload. The Siuslaw Institute and partners have carried out field surveys, data collection and historical research, and prepared specialist reports under contracts and agreements with the Siuslaw National Forest. These partners share strong, broad and diverse connections with the local community and interest groups and these relationships helped in reaching out to the public with information and answers to questions in advance of the normal public comment period. The Forest Service does retain responsibility for the final environmental document, consultation and decisions.

Sharing the workload in this way builds ownership and trust in the project among the interested and affected public, which can minimize and decrease the risk of litigation and appeals. Utilizing and training local workforce participants in this the workload also builds capacity in the community and among non-governmental organizations to participate in and complete environmental analysis and address environmental impacts in the future. Collaborative preparation of environmental analysis goes well beyond traditional scoping, while advancing the national policy of “productive and enjoyable harmony between humans and their environment.”

PROJECT INTENT

The FiveMile Bell Restoration Project is a planned 10 year restoration project that will phase-in restorative actions to balance fish and wildlife needs, provide for adequate re-vegetation activities and schedule them to reduce the potential for erosion, and, because the scale of this project is so large, the time allotted will allow for the use and development of native/local seed and plant sources for the re-vegetation. Phase I of this project sets the stage for rehabilitation of the uplands and valley bottom of this large-scale, Focus Watershed in one of the most productive Coho salmon basins in the Northwest. Activities for Phase I will include the repair of drainage features in the main valley roadway to allow equipment access for future restoration actions and support activities awarded through an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grant and other funding. In addition, wood placement in certain reaches of the creek will also be carried out utilizing both ground and aerial placement. Riparian area improvements will start with blackberry and other invasive plant removal.

Future restorative actions include the additional placement of large wood, reconstruction of previously altered stream channels, valley re-grading, further re-establishment of native valley bottom vegetation, and the decommissioning of old forest access roads and stream crossings throughout the uplands that are hampering ecological healing. This project is unique in the involvement of local groups and entities for all phases of its development and implementation, helping to create and increase future capacity for these organizations. Monitoring and many study and research opportunities over the ten-year time span of the project will be encouraged and supported. Youth and other community volunteer groups and activities will be involved and utilized during all Phases of the project

NEPA Pilot Projects Submission Form to CEQ

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Member of Public or Federal Agency?: Public

What Federal agency or agencies will be involved in pilot project? (1500 characters)

USDA-Forest Service, Siuslaw National Forest

What is the Federal action to which this NEPA pilot project applies? (1500 characters)

It applies to a Federal watershed restoration project on the Siuslaw National Forest, known as the Fivemile-Bell Landscape Management Project. It includes upland treatments, in-stream restoration, stream channel restoration and re-meandering, and valley bottom management. The project will address ecosystem diversity and productivity with its focus on habitat enhancement for endangered or threatened coho salmon, northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets, and for other important wildlife and vegetative species. Additionally, the project will enhance the economic, timber and recreation opportunities offered by a sustainably managed landscape; provide opportunities for small-scale sustainable agricultural use; and provide for the development of watershed education, training and research opportunities. The targeted area for restoration is formed by Fivemile and Bell Creeks, and lies upstream from Takhenitch Lake on Oregon's mid-coast. The Lake's outlet passes through large dunes to the ocean and is a prime access point for returning salmon. The total project area includes approximately 7,000 acres, of which 5,000 are managed by USFS, 300 by BLM, with the remaining 1700 in private or tribal ownership. The project area consists mostly of low-gradient stream and aquatic habitat, flood plain bottomland, and forested uplands. USFS recently acquired a 640-acre portion of the project area primarily for the restoration of habitat for coho.

How will this pilot project reduce the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process? (2500 characters)

It achieves these goals by leveraging local, collaborative capacity for on-the-ground data collection and analysis, fundraising and outreach necessary to meet project goals in a timely manner.

USFS currently lacks capacity to carry out this large project on its own. Therefore, it issued an RFP soliciting assistance with long-term management of the restoration project and subsequent developments regarding the newly acquired property and adjacent upland forested area. Ecotrust responded and was accepted as partner in this effort. The Siuslaw Basin Partnership (Siuslaw Watershed Council, Siuslaw Soil & Water Conservation District and the Siuslaw Institute) joined the USFS in this effort early on.

USFS, Ecotrust and the Partnership worked together throughout the scoping and analysis phase of the Project, increasing the efficiency of the NEPA process. They are cooperating in the preparation of its NEPA document in unprecedented ways, as well as developing designs and outreach documents to be used in securing funding and support for this 10-year effort. An interdisciplinary USFS team guided and shared in the work of the partners at the assessment and data collection stages.

The Siuslaw Institute trained and utilized local expertise to gather data, historical references, and on-the-ground surveys required for the project's NEPA and design processes. The purpose is three-fold: to assist the USFS in getting this Project approved and implemented in a timely manner, to create and sustain local workforce capacity able to assist the USFS in similar future efforts and to reduce costs and time needed for this activity. Local contractors provided significant technical assistance, including the performance of stand exams and botanical, aquatic and hydrologic surveys necessary for the overall assessment. Outreach, communications and publication development, as well as the public comment phase of the NEPA, are being managed by the Institute and Ecotrust.

Another innovation of this project is the use of a \$10,000 contribution from the Partnership. This amount is held in a revolving account that allows for prompt payment of all contractors (within one week of submitting invoices). The fund is replenished by reimbursements to Ecotrust from Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative, a process which can be lengthy as requests are routed through regional and national payment centers. This procedure is beneficial for contractors and the Institute in managing the payments.

How will this pilot project ensure rigorous environmental protection? (2500 characters)

This Project ensures rigorous environmental protection at the local, state and federal level by complying with existing regulations and consulting regulators and environmental experts throughout the decision-making, project implementation and monitoring phases of the project. This Project is governed by the regulatory frameworks of the Northwest Forest Plan, the Endangered Species Act, and Oregon State's water resources statutes. Not only does it fall under these frameworks, the work itself is designed to fulfill these mandates. Consultation is also occurring with NOAA Fisheries, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the NRCS. All of this guidance has been brought together to determine both the conceptual design of the Project, as well as the technical and technological approaches to its implementation. The experience of the Siuslaw National Forest and its partners is such that for over 12 years there has been no litigation aimed at federal forest practices, restoration activities, or construction work performed on the Forest. Environmental groups, wildlife interests, and industry are all included on advisory panels such as the four Stewardship Contracting Groups on the Forest, the Coast Range Province Advisory Council and numerous stakeholder and interest groups convened by the local resources management entities, and by the Forest Service itself. The inclusive and open nature of these initiatives assures that communication concerning practices, projects and actions takes place well in advance of the decisions to proceed, as well as ensuring that oversight and input from citizens and their representatives is considered in a timely and ongoing manner. While this endeavor is not subject to usual County and State permitting procedures, due to its occurrence on Federal lands, the participation of those responsible agencies is being sought out and considered along with the public's interests in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the Project.

How will this pilot project improve the quality and transparency of agency decision-making? (2500 characters)

The Fivemile-Bell Landscape Management Project improves the quality and transparency of agency decision-making by encouraging and providing opportunities for open communication between the agency, local collaborative groups, and the public. For the past 20+ years, collaboration and cooperation between the agencies and entities involved in the Siuslaw Basin Partnership has been a tradition. In 1989, a Coordinated Resource Management Plan was first developed for one of the sub-basins of the watershed. Federal, State, and local governments, private landowners and industry, and advocacy groups facilitated the process of developing projects and inter-group communication about upcoming needs, plans and funding. Over the years the day-to-day work, especially restoration, of all of these parties has been based on expanded consultation and shared expertise and funding. Currently, a technical team of specialists from multiple natural resources oriented parties and agencies meets monthly to propose, assess, contribute to and approve projects that fit under the Basin's Whole Watershed Restoration strategy. The Fivemile-Bell Landscape Management Project utilizes this standard of operations, and takes it to a higher level with the cooperative development of its NEPA utilizing local organizational and workforce capacity, as well as being able to ensure regular and effective exchanges of information and progress among the parties. This extensive and transparent communication continues to significantly improve the relationships between the parties and the Forest Service, and contributes to a much smoother and more efficient process of implementation, funding and monitoring over the life of these Projects. Public and contractor involvement in developing the work-plans and reporting procedures for the NEPA data collection, assessment and dissemination brings everyone's decision-making out into the open and provides much greater opportunity for mutual consideration and evaluation of concerns and contributions.

Will this pilot project develop best practices that can be replicated by other agencies or applied to other Federal actions or programs? Please describe. (2500 characters)

Yes, the Fivemile-Bell Landscape Management Project will result in replicable best practices that can be applied to many Federal actions and programs. This pilot project shows the way forward for Federal agencies in a future characterized by shrinking budgets and workforce, and increasing costs and workloads. Federal overhead budgets are notoriously expensive and we can show how significant reductions in these expenditures have been made using our model. At the same time, local and rural community capacity has been improved for work of this type in the future on both public and private landscapes. The timeframes we have worked within have shown real efficiency in the work done by contractors under agency specialist supervision, and if there have been slow-downs in the process they have been due to factors within the Agency and not on the contractor side. One key element in the slowing of the NEPA process for this Project has been turnover within the agency as Inter-Disciplinary Team members have either retired or been re-assigned. While personnel changes do occur in the private and local government sectors, those vacancies are more likely to be filled quickly and the local entities demonstrate a more resilient and stable character in maintaining their workforce and fulfilling their commitments.

CEQ Pilot Action Plan

FiveMile-Bell Landscape Management Project

Background: The FiveMile-Bell Landscape Management Project is an ecological and habitat restoration project involving the US Forest Service ownership lands in the FiveMile and Bell Creeks sub-basins on the Oregon Coast. The Project includes in-stream restoration, stream channel restoration and re-meandering, upland road and stand improvements, and valley bottom native vegetation treatments. The Project will address ecosystem diversity and productivity with its primary focus on habitat enhancement for endangered or threatened coho salmon, northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets, as well as for other important wildlife and vegetative species. In addition, the Project will enhance the economic, timber and recreation opportunities offered by a sustainably managed landscape; provide opportunities for small-scale sustainable agricultural use; and provide for the development of watershed education, training and research opportunities. The Project's total area includes approximately 7,000 acres, of which 5,000 are managed by USFS, 300 by BLM, with the remaining 1700 are in private or tribal ownership.

The Project's cooperative effort uses an adaptive management strategy utilizing historical and current assessments, the NEPA process and products, and resources-focused implementation and monitoring, all of this in a collaborative exercise seeking to improve NEPA efficiencies and match the NEPA analysis with the landscape scale decisions that need to be made. The CEQ Pilot process can be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the FiveMile-Bell Project in meeting these objectives, identifying lessons learned, and determining if additional policy guidance or direction is needed by either CEQ or USDA Forest Service.

CEQ Pilot Action Plan: FiveMile-Bell Project involves a very intensive collaboration effort that began with its original conceptualization and has been maintained through all stages, including design, data accumulation and NEPA preparation, and which will continue into and through the implementation and monitoring stages. The NEPA document is currently in its final drafting stages and the collaborative process will also be used in all aspects of the required public comment and involvement. This Pilot Action Plan is designed to draw from those efforts and not duplicate them. CEQ will be the sponsor for events and provide legitimacy and assurances for other Agencies and stakeholder groups that this is an important NEPA efficiencies pilot project. The partnership of the Siuslaw National Forest, Ecotrust, and the Siuslaw Institute, along with other associated entities will provide the speakers, materials, documentation, presentations and supplemental products needed for the Pilot events.

Four events are anticipated:

Introductory Webinar – Sponsored by CEQ, hosted by Forest Service, to be held in Corvallis, Oregon. Within three months of selection, the Webinar will explain the objectives for the pilot, the adaptive and collaborative management approach of the partners, and include presentations by stakeholders concerning their involvement. The objective is to provide information about the NEPA process and answer questions about its innovations and procedures.

Post-DEIS Release Webinar - Sponsored by CEQ, hosted by Forest Service, to be held in Corvallis, Oregon. After release of the FiveMile-Bell DEIS, we will hold a Webinar to discuss the content of the DEIS and how it relates to the objectives of the CEQ pilot, the successes of our public engagement processes, and the lessons learned so far.

Post-FEIS Release Webinar. - Sponsored by CEQ, hosted by Forest Service, to be held in Corvallis, Oregon. After release of the FiveMile-Bell FEIS, we will hold a Webinar to discuss the content of the FEIS, including its response to public comments, and how it relates to the purpose of the CEQ pilot process. The objective here is to provide information about the FEIS, answers to questions, and an evaluation of the overall NEPA process as utilized in this Project.

Shortly-After-Implementation Workshop (late 2012 to early 2013) - Facilitated by CEQ, hosted by Forest Service, to be held in Corvallis, Oregon. The Partnership will provide CEQ with documentation of this Project's NEPA process and its products, will identify lessons learned from the process, and determine if there is a need for additional CEQ or Forest Service policy direction or guidance to improve performance. The model and this input will then be documented and prepared for CEQ dissemination and other uses.

It is the intention of the partners in this Project to continue to provide CEQ and other interested parties with updates and evaluation of the Project as it is implemented and as it conforms to the NEPA process itself. Monitoring results will be matched to NEPA expectations, and the local and regional community's involvement in this project will be of special interest in the ongoing assessment of the value and validity of the innovations utilized in this endeavor.

Respectfully submitted by:

The Siuslaw National Forest, Ecotrust, and the Siuslaw Institute

Some of the Participants



A few of the Key Participants in this NEPA process and the Webinars that followed:

from left: Paul Burns, USFS - FiveMile-Bell Project Manager
Kate Carone, Ecotrust – Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative Manager
Johnny Sundstrom, Siuslaw Institute – NEPA project Contrator/Coordinator
Jerry Ingersoll, Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor
Jeff Uebel, Siuslaw National Forest – Natural Resources Staff Officer

Participant Comments

KATE CARONE – ECOTRUST (Funding management)

“Ecotrust was involved in the assessment phase of the Fivemile-Bell project, and has helped secure funding for both the NEPA process and for project implementation. The project’s NEPA Pilot Project recognition by the CEQ demonstrates the distinctiveness of the Siuslaw National Forest’s community-based approach to NEPA compliance. By partnering with local groups and organizations to complete EA documentation, the Forest freed up staff time to build momentum for project implementation, helped increase local capacity to do similar projects, and reduced the potential for litigation through meaningful community engagement.”

CHARLEY DEWBERRY – ECOLOGIST (Data collection and organization)

Fivemile-Bell NEPA

“I participated in the following parts:

- 1) Historical reconstruction of the vegetation of the Fivemile basin.
- 2) Collection and analysis of aerial photos
- 3) Snorkel survey of the abundance and distribution of fish in the Fivemile basin.

Comments:

- 1) The historical reconstruction of the vegetation from the cadastral land survey (GLO). This portion of it went very well. Since not every forest has people with experience working with the GLO notes, I believe that it provided an important addition to the project. Contractors with GLO experience could be utilized to provide this valuable information for a number of federal projects in forests without personnel with experience working with this information.
- 2) As a U of Oregon faculty member I was able to obtain all the aerial photos available for the basin in a quick and most cost effective manner. The map library at the University has a very extensive collection. There are opportunities to partner with faculty members at state universities to gain access to map and aerial photo collections. Such a partnership could be very valuable to the Forest Service, especially with smaller budgets and available personnel. It also could benefit the University by providing \$\$ for them to train students to maintain the collections and also to analyze the photos.
- 3) Evaluating the effects of a project on the stream ecosystem. This is an excellent opportunity for the Forest Service to contract with local individuals to provide this valuable information.”

LIZ VOLLMER-BUHL – Watershed Council Executive Director (Task Force and GIS contract work)

“The Siuslaw Watershed Council was able to be involved in the pre-NEPA stage of the 5Mile-Bell Project with the Task Force for planning and design, and continued participating throughout the NEPA data and information collection and development phases. This gave us the opportunity to ask questions, suggest additional considerations, and assist the USFS staff in becoming aware of how actions involved in the Project might be perceived by community members and interests.

As a future participant in the implementation of the Project, this process gave us the opportunity to interface with USFS specialists (silviculture, wildlife, vegetation, etc.) that would not have been so available without this avenue. We were able to communicate with our Board and members throughout for input. As a subcontractor for the GIS work, we gained further insight into the concepts, were able to contribute to the Project’s design, and provide additional compensation/hours to a staff member.”

JERRY INGERSOLL – Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor

“This approach greatly expanded the capacity of the ranger district to initiate and complete large-scale project planning, plus yielding several other important benefits :

- More and better data, due to increased canvassing and use of local information and knowledge (especially historical background) from community members;
- More intensive data acquisition by external team-members in the initial planning stages that later contributed to improved project design and implementation;
- Expanded understanding and support for the project in the community, due to increased number of community members intimately engaged and supportive of the decision; and
- Expanded opportunities for local employment.

Challenges included: impacts to continuity of the process due to changes in USFS staff over time; frustration from lack of full understanding of NEPA process and USFS policies and management direction by the external participants; miscommunication and loss of efficiency between external and internal team members due to short history of shared backgrounds and work. We anticipate that the process would run smoother, quicker, and better in our next effort together.

Overall the planning project was a great success, contributing to a well-founded and beneficial landscape-scale restoration project. Community understanding, trust and enthusiasm for this and future work is high. This effort has significantly contributed to our shared vision to build a ‘restoration economy’, and we couldn’t be happier with the outcome.”

Excerpts from the Final EA

The Proposed Project

The Fivemile-Bell Landscape Management Project is a package of associated aquatic and terrestrial restoration actions that would serve to address the problems identified in the Project area. Project design criteria (Appendix A) were developed to ensure that proposed actions benefit natural resources in the long term and minimize adverse effects to these resources in the short term. To address the problems and meet the desired conditions and goals for the Project area, the following actions are proposed:

- Reconstruct and re-grade the stream channels of Fivemile Creek and Bell Creek to recapture natural stream function;
- Add large wood to Fivemile Creek and Bell Creek;
- Reestablish native riparian vegetation in valley bottomland and upland areas;
- Decommission some non-key forest roads;
- Commercially thin, diversify stand species and structure, and create dead wood in young (less than 80 years old) stands;
- Inoculate or top mature trees near young stands;
- Create meadows and gaps in young stands;
- Maintain existing meadows;
- Repair, upgrade, and maintain key and some non-key forest roads;
- Build, then close, temporary roads; re-open, then close, existing temporary roads;
- Store (close) non-key forest roads;
- Treat invasive plants; and
- Treat residual logging slash along key forest roads.

Chapter 2 provides a quantified list of actions proposed (Table 1), and provides information concerning alternative proposals. Appendices B-2, silviculture prescription; B-3, harvest plan; B-4, costs of upland post-harvest treatments; and B-5, cost of valley-bottom actions; and C, proposed road closures and decommissioning also provide quantified information.

The Project would maintain existing road access needed by private landowners and other public agencies.

All actions are connected because they help meet the restoration objectives within the same 5th field watershed, or they would be funded by revenue from the sale of timber. For example, upland areas would provide in-stream large wood for Fivemile and Bell Creeks, and repairing and maintaining some key forest roads are connected actions with timber sales because timber purchasers would be required to perform the work as a condition of timber-sale contracts prior to using the roads. Some of these roads extend outside the boundary of the Project area and provide connections to locations, where commercial-thinning products would be transported.

Most activities would be completed within the next 10 years. The stream restoration work, such as channel reconstruction and valley re-grading, would begin as early as the summer or fall of 2012. A commercial timber-sale contract may be awarded as early as the winter of 2012/2013. Other actions, such as creating dead wood and under-planting seedlings, would not begin until after the completion of commercial thinning activities in each unit. Until seedlings become well established, they may need to be protected from competing vegetation and animal damage, requiring treatment 10 or more years after planting.

The Problems (Issues) To Be Addressed

Information from various sources, such as the Plan, landscape-scale assessments, the WA, the Invasive Plants FEIS (USFS 2005a) and Invasive Plants Record of Decision (Invasive Plants ROD; USFS 2005b), best available science, and analysis data collected by the Team were used to identify the problems.

Based on these information sources, the District Ranger identified the following problems and the need to address them:

- The shortage of high quality aquatic habitat in the Oregon Coast Range limits recovery of coho salmon and ability to maintain healthy populations of other aquatic-dependant species, especially other anadromous fish. Thus, there is a need to improve the quality of aquatic habitat.
- The shortage of old-growth forest habitat in the Pacific Northwest limits populations of species associated with old-growth-forest habitat, such as the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. Thus, there is a need to speed the development of old-growth forest habitat in young stands located in late-successional and riparian reserves.
- The shortage of habitat diversity in young stands and the declining amount of early seral habitat (hardwoods, and grasses, forbs, and shrubs) in the Project area limits the ability to support a diversity of plant and animal species. Thus, there is a need to improve habitat diversity in young stands, maintain existing meadows, create transitory early seral habitat in upland areas, and restore native riparian vegetation in valley-bottom areas.

- The shortage of funds to implement actions designed to enhance or restore ecosystem function limits the ability of the Forest to meet all the Project objectives. Selling timber from young stands (less than 80 years of age) proposed for commercial thinning provides revenue to help fund several of these actions. Thus, there is a need to sell timber generated from thinning young stands to help fund actions designed to enhance or restore ecosystem function.
- The shortage of road maintenance funds limits the suitability of key forest roads for commercial and noncommercial use. A stable transportation system provides access for managing the health, diversity, and productivity of the Siuslaw National Forest and for meeting the needs of present and future generations. Thus, there is a need to use revenue from the sale of timber to maintain or repair key forest roads to standards that allow both uses.
- The continuing spread of invasive plants in the Project area degrade habitats for native species and communities, and have the potential to spread to land under other ownerships (Invasive Plants FEIS; USFS 2005a). Adjacent watersheds outside of the Project area contain invasive plants that can easily spread into the Project area primarily by use of roads and by stream flow. Thus, there is a need to use manual, mechanical and herbicide treatment methods, and to implement an early detection-rapid response strategy for managing these species (Invasive Plants ROD; USFS 2005b).

These actions would also provide economic opportunities for local communities.

Evidence Used by the District Ranger in Deciding to Address These Problems

The record of decision (USDA, USDI 1994b) for the Northwest Forest Plan—based on physical, biological, and societal evidence provided in the Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team report (USDA, USDI, et al. 1993) and described in the Plan's environmental impact statement (USDA, USDI 1994a)—is intended to provide for healthy forest ecosystems, including protecting riparian areas and waters; and a suitable supply of timber and other forest products to help maintain local and regional economies predictably over the long term. The following evidence was used by the District Ranger in deciding to address the problems previously identified

The need to enhance the health of aquatic ecosystems

The Plan's Aquatic Conservation Strategy recognizes the need to restore and maintain the health of watersheds and the aquatic ecosystems they contain. The Coastal Lakes Watershed Analysis (WA; USFS 1998) and the Siuslaw National Forest Roads Analysis (USFS 2003) identified the need to improve water quality, fish habitat, and the condition of roads. These analyses identified the following adverse conditions in the watershed:

- Anadromous salmonid populations in Oregon coastal streams, including those in the Project area, are substantially reduced from historic abundance (WA, page 42). The lack of native riparian vegetation and diked channels along reaches of Fivemile and Bell Creeks have resulted in downcut, simplified channels that lack habitat complexity and floodplain connectivity. Pools are moderately abundant, but deep pools are uncommon, and most stream reaches have low amounts of large wood, particularly in areas that have been used for grazing. (WA, pages 42 and 43).
- Bell Creek is listed as water quality limited for temperature because it exceeds the 64-degree temperature standard established by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (Oregon DEQ). This list can be found in Oregon DEQ's 2006 biennial Clean Water Act Section 305(b) report to EPA (<http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/assessment/rpt0406/search.asp>). Actions that could reduce stream temperatures are riparian thinning to increase growth rates, riparian planting to increase numbers of conifers, and placing large wood in streams to increase sediment storage.
- The Assessment Report for Federal Lands in and adjacent to the Oregon Coast Province (USDA, USDI 1995) states that in-stream fish habitat on federal lands throughout the Province is in marginal to poor condition. The report recommends specific actions to improve fish habitat on federal land by stabilizing, decommissioning, or obliterating roads; and restoring long-term habitat by reestablishing natural riparian areas through actions, such as thinning to speed the development of large wood.
- Forest and county roads, especially valley-bottom and mid-slope roads, have degraded aquatic habitat by accelerating delivery of sediments and debris torrents to streams (USFS 1999, page 91). Less than 1 percent (about three miles) of National Forest System roads in the Project area is located on the valley bottom. Valley-bottom roads can inhibit transport of large wood and coarse sediment, disconnect stream channels, restrict natural sinuosity of streams, and act as barriers to aquatic species migration.
- Currently, and over the past several years, funding to maintain forest roads to standard is inadequate. Roads not maintained to standard have a higher potential for degrading aquatic habitat because un-maintained roads deteriorate more rapidly and culverts are more likely to fail (USFS 2003).

Who was Consulted about this Project? (*from the EA*)

I. Introduction

As described in chapter 1, comment on the proposed action was solicited through letters, local newspapers, and the Siuslaw National Forest's quarterly "Project Update" publications. The results of specific government and agency consultations are summarized below.

II. Local Confederated Tribes

The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians; the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians were informed of the Project's proposed actions during the initial public-notification process.

If any plants, such as camas, are found in the Project area, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians have expressed interest in managing these plants for cultural use. No other comments on the Project's proposed actions were received.

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians indicated that they plan to restore about 3,000 feet of historic logging roads directly adjacent to the lower Fivemile valley on land owned by them. These roads cross three tributaries that enter the lower valley from the south (T20S, R11W, sections 8 and 17). Based on a field review by members of the Confederated Tribes and Forest Service personnel, the Tribes plan to concentrate restoration work on the roads, where they cross the valley bottoms of the tributaries and impact aquatic resources. Road crossings would be removed from each of these three tributaries, and the old road beds would be de-compacted. Removal of the roadbeds would allow the tributaries to re-occupy former stream channels that still exist.

III. Federal Agencies

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

Project actions not associated with commercial thinning, such as adding large wood to streams, riparian planting, road decommissioning, culvert replacement, and non-commercial thinning would be covered under the NMFS programmatic biological opinion for fish habitat restoration activities in Oregon and Washington (USDC 2008).

The District is consulting with NMFS about valley-bottom actions, such as stream-channel construction, valley re-grading, and levee removal. These actions have been analyzed in the Fisheries Biological Assessment (Appendix G).

Project actions associated with commercial thinning, such as road repair and maintenance, tree felling, yarding, and hauling, have been designed to have no effect on Oregon coast coho

salmon—a species listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act—and its corresponding designated Critical Habitat. Project actions would not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat for coho and chinook salmon, as designated by the Magnusen-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (appendices A and H).

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Through consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the FWS concluded that the Project would not jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet (Letters of Concurrence: reference #13420-2010-F-0184, habitat modification; and reference #13420-2009-I-0152, disturbance). The terms and conditions associated with the biological opinions are included in Appendix A.

Bureau of Land Management

Land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is in and adjacent to the Project area. The BLM currently has no plans for activities in the Project area in the foreseeable future, (Dan VanSlyke, BLM District Fish Biologist, Coos Bay District, pers. comm.).

IV. Federal Government Representatives

US senators and congressional representatives were notified about the Project. No comments were received.

V. State of Oregon and Local Governments

All proposed actions were evaluated under the 2004 programmatic agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO; USFS 2005a). A letter of concurrence from the SHPO is pending.

State congressional representatives, and several State agencies, such as the Oregon Coastal Zone Management Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Division of State Lands, Department of Land Conservation and Development, and Oregon Department of Forestry were notified about the Project. Local governments and representatives, such as county commissioners, city mayors, other local-government representatives, and county planning departments were also notified. No comments were received.

VI. Watershed Councils and Stewardship Group

Members of the Siuslaw Watershed Council and Stewardship Group were contacted. Meetings and field trips were held. Project proposals were discussed and recommendations by these groups were considered by the District Ranger. In general, Project support was expressed by these groups, although one person is concerned about the proposed use of the herbicide glyphosate.

FiveMile-Bell NEPA Lessons learned

Collaboration between the USFS and its local partners works!

Our local workforce has the people and skills needed by the Forest Service for accomplishing many of its data collection tasks. Some specialized training may be required.

Overhead and management costs for a management contractor can be much less than the agency's costs for the same activities and results.

A Task Force of USFS specialists (i.e. silviculture, vegetation, wildlife, etc.) for this effort was necessary, and internal communication is critical. These specialists can serve in supervisory roles for the local management contractor and its workforce of sub-contractors.

Short-term employment and compensation make important contributions to the local economy.

Contractors and workers benefit from being able to add this experience to their resumes.

Having local people doing this kind of work for the agency leads to a greater level of communication between the agency and citizens, and can head off controversy and litigation over the final NEPA documents.

Turnover within the agency, and the time it takes to fill vacancies is a serious obstacle and often creates delays for the timely and rapid fulfillment of the project.

Funding for this work is not yet built into budgeting processes and requires special exercise of some existing authorities, but it can be done.

This process encourages USFS personnel to consider issues that they may never have dealt with, and gives them experience in examining ways of solving problems that they don't typically take into account.

SIUSLAW INSTITUTE: 5M-B NEPA PARTNERSHIP: Tasks and Costs

HYDROLOGY DATA GATHERING – 23 days @ \$600/day = \$13,760

Includes historical research, GLO and aerial historical records, channel and valley floor, and stream crossing analyses
GIS work, Aquatic Restoration Planning, hydrological modeling
Attendance and participation in USFS Task Force meetings and consulting
Providing information for public meetings and outreach

PLANNING AND MAPPING – 9 days @ \$600/day = \$5,400

HISTORICAL MATERIALS COLLECTION – 11.5 days @ \$600/day = \$7,000

VEGETATION AND BOTANICAL SURVEYS – 33 days @ \$200/day = \$6,600
2.5 days @ \$600/day = \$1,500
Total = **\$8,100**

Field surveys of entire planning area and one control sub-basin, including photography and mapping
Reports and recommendations prepared and submitted to FS
Attendance and participation in USFS Task Force meetings and consulting
Providing information for public meetings and outreach

SILVICUTURAL EXAMS – 17.5 days @ \$400/day = \$7,000

Stand exams of entire sub-basin (USFS lands) and reports
Attendance and participation in USFS Task Force meetings and consulting
Providing information for public meetings and outreach

PROJECT MANAGEMENT – 40 days @ \$400/day = \$16,000

Contracting and supervision of training and all activities & tasks
Communications and planning with USFS 5M-B Project Manager and other agency specialists
Fiscal management, re-imbursments & reporting for Ecotrust
Gathering of historical information, documents and interviews
Attendance and participation in USFS Task Force meetings and consulting
Providing information for public meetings and outreach

TOTAL COSTS FOR THESE COMPONENTS OF THIS PROJECT = \$57,260

Fivemile-Bell Project: Engaging Communities in Restoration Planning



Webinars

(no longer available from this source) The following link should get you to the page with the videos. They'll be on the right side in the hot topics box: CEQ Pilot Webinars.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/>

The first of two webinars was shared with the 4FRI project in Northern Arizona and is identified as the "Fifth Pilot project"

The second and final webinar for this project by itself is identified as the "Fivemile-Bell Project"

Now Available only from the Siuslaw Institute (siwash@pioneer.net) w/ no sound