

# **Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis Steering Committee Meeting**

## **September 28, 2016**

### **Webex/Virtual Meeting**

#### **Steering Committee Members**

Randy Wiest, Rangeland Manager, CSF Real Property, Oregon Department of State Lands  
E. Lynn Burkett, District Manager (DM), Lakeview, BLM  
John Taylor, Rancher, Plush, OR.  
Dan Craver, Acting Deputy Malheur NWR Refuge Manager, USFWS (sat in for Chad Karges)  
Elias Flores, Natural Resource Supervisor, Northern California BLM  
Marci Shreder, Lake County Watershed Council (present for first hour)  
John Kasbohm, Project Leader, Sheldon Hart NWR Complex, USFWS

#### **Spoke with in Separate Phone Conversations to Provide an Update/Get Input**

Mark Freese, Western Region Supervising Habitat Biologist, Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Jeremy Austin, Hart-Sheldon Coordinator, Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Sidney Bowman, Wildlife Passage Coordinator, Oregon Department of Transportation

#### **Unable to Attend**

Todd Forbes, Field Manager, Lakeview BLM  
Chip Dale, Watershed Coordinator, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

#### **Guests**

Kai Foster, Conservation Biology Institute  
Tosha Comendant, Conservation Biology Institute

#### **Facilitators/Backbone Team**

Rick Kearney, Science Coordinator, Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GBLCC)  
Tom Miewald, Landscape Ecologist, USFWS  
Aaron Collins, Park Ranger/Recreation Planner, USFWS  
Levi Old, NWBR Project Coordinator, Great Basin Institute/USFWS/GBLCC

#### **Meeting Purpose**

To gather input on our project's direction based on previous meetings, outreach efforts, and options presented by the Backbone Team. The input the steering committee members provide will be used to guide the creation of a project action plan in fall 2016.

#### **Meeting Goals**

- Bring everyone up to speed on the project
- Discuss options moving forward given key issues from first two meetings and recent happenings
- Solicit input that will lead to a project action plan, fall 2016

## Important Decisions Made and Topics Covered

- The Steering Committee provided feedback on potential presenters and the format of the winter symposium
- Tom Miewald reported on the Open Standards Science Synthesis work the project team conducted over the summer. The next step is to pilot the process of making this into a geospatial format. Tom received approval from the Steering Committee to move forward on this work. The work will exclude Harney County for Version 1, or until further notice
- Several opportunities were shared regarding the human dimensions component of our project
- Fall 2016, the Backbone Team will work on an action plan for the project that will include goals and objectives. The Steering Committee will review this document
- The Steering Committee will try to meet in person in January 2017 to discuss the action plan and prepare for the February 15-16, 2017 NWBR Ecosystem Symposium

## Presentations and Discussions at the Meeting

### I. NW Basin and Range Ecosystem Symposium, Levi and All

\*Note that the SC Members are commenting on a slideshow presentation – virtual meeting

- Feedback on NW Basin and Range Ecosystem Symposium Panels
  - Interested in seeing a presentation that will scrutinize project products of the NW Basin and Range Synthesis
  - Wildlife Connectivity should be included (Levi included)
  - Water use and availability - so much is a private lands permit, stock water is a permit as well, that is going to be a big part, definitely needs to be covered from the land owner perspective, and water resources would be important from the legal side of things (Levi working on all needs)
  - Include private individuals on as many panels as possible – much of region includes working landscapes, follow up with the watershed council (Levi followed up)
  - We need to talk about how the conservation, rangeland, forestry etc. weave together
- Feedback on Keynote Speaker Ideas
  - What's the theme of the Keynote? (Levi still working on this)
  - Consider having a round robin and having a give and take – have a discussion
  - Levi thought about having multiple speakers, but not a panel-like discussion
  - Find someone with a similar landscape project elsewhere in the country – successes and failures in a different landscape, especially as we get into private lands conservation
    - Blackfoot Challenge – Jim Stone, very good speaker - gets folks fired up (Levi in contact)
    - John Buckhouse (retired OSU) would be excellent – lot of experience in all of these areas (Levi considering contact)
- Poster Session and Ignite Activity (10 min presentations)

- There is an arms race to create tools/data useful for making decisions. There are many portals representing this information (E.g., BLM Landscape Approach). Where should we go to make the decisions for conservation? This could be a panel or a discussion
- Tribes – understand some of the unique aspects/needs the Native American partners have
- Consider a call for poster presentations (this is now available on NWBR website) – do both invitations and call for presentations, could be on anything going on
- Scott Miller, USU out of the bug lab, he has done things in this area
- Lakeview BLM will touch base with staff
- So many efforts going on around vegetation mapping, there is a plethora of different maps, find out what's going on (may incorporate)
- Outreach and Funding
  - Two funding proposals are out (both were successful!)
  - Save-the Date - Flyer going out in October (complete)
  - Registration going out in October (filling up quickly)
  - 60+ attendees, potential to make it a bigger conference
  - Several venue options – Interagency, Fairgrounds, Elks Lodge (in the works)

## II. Project Geography, Tom Miewald, Dan Craver and All

- Boundary was always intended to be an eco-regional approach
- Tweaks made based off the feedback from the May 27<sup>th</sup> SC meeting, map was updated
- Issues around Harney County
  - Request from Chad and Regional Refuge System, strategic pause on the region
  - Limit outreach in that area
  - Keep Harney out for geospatial work, gov't overreach is a concern
  - Geospatial priorities/hotspot maps or landscape condition maps in Harney are not a good idea at the moment
  - Occupation and other issues in Harney
  - Anything that looks prescriptive about management of land in Harney could tip the scales for individuals or processes that are in place
  - There is a concern that something could backfire out there
- Chad would say there is a need for getting partners working from a sound foundation, we should move forward and loop in Harney when it's appropriate
- Discussion:
  - Comment: Could we make geospatial products in Harney, but then cut them out? Comment: This could be a mistake because we haven't done any outreach in that region - people might think we're doing something behind their backs
  - There are challenges and also opportunities in this situation
  - Comment: Be sensitive to Harney County issues. Realistically they could occur in other counties as well. Be careful about governmental initiatives. Be very sensitive all around the region, not just Harney County

## III. Refresher on Landscape Conservation Design (LCD), Tom Miewald

- One of the original end goals was a series of spatial decision-support products and implementation of projects based off this information
- 4 Steps of LCD: Convene Stakeholders, Assess Conditions, Spatial Design, Strategy Design
- Collaborative approach around the LCD concept
- Structured approach to assess current and future conditions
- Where things are in a landscape context matters in conservation
- How can we be strategic with limited dollars
- Collective Impact, not a regulatory tool, meant to be a set of data, where are the important areas and what can we do, and that make sense given the economy and social dynamics in the landscape
- Over the last year our team brought together information, Synthesis concept, demonstrated examples of Open Standards

#### IV. Creating spatial products from synthesis work, Tom Miewald

- Aspen woodland ecosystems example
  - Comment: Great that it is a user friendly rating system ([comment made referring to SE Atlantic Blueprint example](#))
- Comment: Are there negative ramifications of these rating systems? Litigation?
  - No knowledge that this has happened, but folks acknowledge that it could
- Once maps and condition assessments are complete, then we move onto the strategies phase
- Important to note: the condition assessments maps are different than a prioritization of biodiversity hotspots. This could occur in the future, but for now we will stick to condition assessments
- Comment: How does this differ from BLM's REA? REA was broad brush. Tom: This could be a refinement/step-down of that work and our goal is to not recreate any wheels if possible. Levi: fits into the Ecological Direction part of the REA, which is the step down
- The actual geographic footprint. There will be drafts as we go
- Comment: It would be a lot easier to get our foot in the door in Harney if this type of thing has been going on around them for a while
- Important to note: this is coming from USFWS leadership (DOJ, too), not just Chad
- We'll move forward on the pilot of some spatial condition assessments

#### V. Human Dimensions, Kai Foster and Levi Old

Participatory Mapping and Eco-regional Collaboration, Presenter Kai Foster

- Community Mapping/Participatory Mapping: asking the community members to highlight the areas that are most important to them – this can lead to a rich understanding of landscape connections
- This is about connection to place over space and time
- Kai highlights two community based mapping exercises
  - 1: Included writing right on maps, post-its, stories, etc. this was a Traditional Ecological Knowledge exercise
  - 2: Field Data collection using GIS with tribal members going to field locations

- These days smart phone or other digital solutions could be important as well
- Methods used depends on scale and many other factors
- Three main points:
  - Capture important areas
  - Provide local perspectives
  - Inform decision-making

Levi showed Video on Community Values Mapping:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta4P6sXWVbc&app=desktop>

Community Values Questions and Comments:

- Question: How do you deal with jurisdictions, scope etc.?
  - Levi: Could pilot in forums, could go to meetings that already occur, could do online surveys, and could meet with individuals. It might be good to do this in two formats as a pilot effort
- Has Levi spoken directly to Commissioners about such an effort?
  - Levi – on a general level, yes. Also, Commissioner Kestner heard me talk about this at the Resilient Landscape Collaborative Meeting
  - Levi will engage them more if we move forward on such an effort

## **VI. Examples of other Eco-regional Projects, Kai Foster and Levi Old**

- Eco-regional Collaboration General Goals:
  - Increase participation, transparency and collaboration
  - Gather broad coalition of landscape stakeholders
  - Design and develop resilient, sustainable landscapes
  - Bottom-up participatory design, long-term outcomes
- Example [Santa Barbara Blueprint](#) Website, Conservation Biology Inst. developed this tool
  - Free access to data from folks
  - Group collaborations and commenting tools
  - Community feedback is available
- [Great Basin Landscape Conservation Atlas](#)
  - Used for larger Basin, but could include the Synthesis project specifically as well
  - Initial data sets for Synthesis project can be placed here
- If we wanted an atlas – CBI could create one
  - A place to share stories
  - Critical topic areas can be highlighted

- Landscape Climate Dashboard (recently went live)
  - Includes Precipitation, Soils, Temperature, Vegetation Change
  - Only covers federal lands and protected areas, not private
  - You can compare the protected areas as well
  - You can look at soils sensitivity
  - Climate Dashboard: <http://climatedashboard.org/>
  
- Three important take away from Kai's presentation
  - 1) Gather stakeholders across the geography
  - 2) Increase transparency of information
  - 3) Shared resource and co-produce management

## VI. Other News

Rick Kearney, GBLCC Director

- Recently touched base with the Wilburforce Foundation
- They fund conservation in American and Canadian West
- One of their programs includes conservation focal areas and a science program
- One of the focus areas is the Great Basin
- This was just an initial meeting to see where GBLCC/Wilburforce might be able to work together
- Invite proposals year around – sit down to evaluate 3-4 times a year
- They seemed interested in this project – they had heard about it in the past
- They work with ONDA and CBI already
- Seems like they're interested in considering supporting this project
- Potentially could be a communications director or whatever the group feels is needed
- CBI said they have worked with Wilburforce and they're a great organization
- Like to invite them to attend the Science Symposium and see what we can do (Levi followed up)

Aaron Collins, USFWS

- Started a revision of the Hart Mountain Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- They're considering the priorities from the Synthesis project's Steering Committee

Levi Old

- Rewarded a small grant from Greater Hart Sheldon Conservation Fund for science Symposium (and OWEB, too)
- Article in NW Climate Science Magazine article coming out soon (released October 24)
- Todd Hopkins from the GBLCC has moved on
- Rick Kearney filling in his place at the moment
- Todd received funding for a Scenario Planning Workshop
  - 2-day facilitated Scenario Planning Workshop
  - Will occur spring 2017 - Integra Consulting received the contract
  - We hope our Steering Committee can attend
  - Q: How does that effect Community Mapping exercise

- A: We haven't figured out exactly how these two will dovetail at the moment, but we're considering how they will come together
- Jason Dunham, USGS – Interested in doing a bio-blitz. This is something for us to consider. 24-h day of surveying, identifying spp. If we could weave this into our work in some way it is something to consider. Q: What would the data plug into?
  - Aaron: Potentially could fill some data gaps that Tom's identified

#### **VIII. Other Updates on Science from the Landscape**

- Don Sada Springs Study – [Data on the Spring Stewardship Databasin Website](#)
- USGS embarking on a landscape scale look at springs and groundwater across the Eastern Oregon –the study includes Lakeview, Burns and Vale BLM Districts (will be at Symposium)
- We've been talking a bit with Great Basin Bird Observatory about collaborating on mapping Aspen in the region

## IX. Levi Shared a Visual on the Project: StrawDog at this point

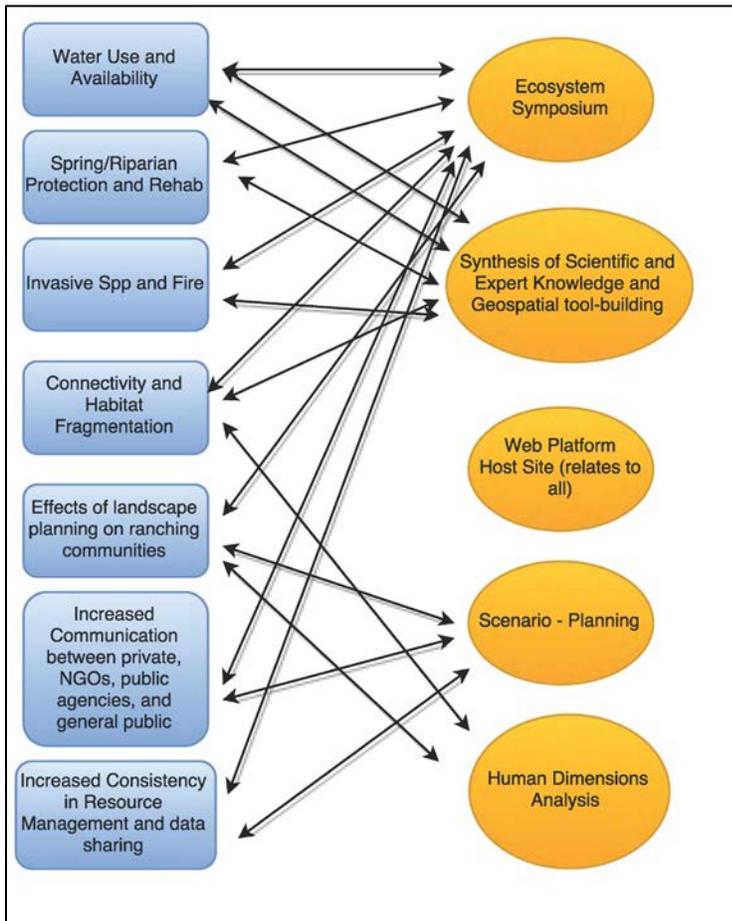


Figure 1: The blue boxes on the left represent the refined key issues developed by the Steering Committee May 27, 2016. The yellow ellipses represent project deliverables/action items we are moving towards, or discussing.

## X. Wrap-Up

- Thinking about scheduling a January in-person meeting, Levi will send out a Doodle Poll
- Working on the Project Action Plan – October and November 2016
- Working on turning Synthesis work into a Spatial form – condition assessments across the landscape
- Working on design and coordination of the NW Basin and Range Ecosystem
- Working on Scenario-Planning Workshop Planning
- Continuing outreach across the landscape
- Thank you!