

Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis Steering Committee Meeting

May 27, 2016

Lake County Library, Lakeview, OR

Steering Committee Members

Cidney Bowman, Wildlife Passage Coordinator, Oregon Department of Transportation
Mark Freese, Western Region Supervising Habitat Biologist, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Chad Karges, Malheur NWR, Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jeremy Austin, Hart-Sheldon Coordinator, Oregon Natural Desert Association
Randy Wiest, Rangeland Manager, CSF Real Property, Oregon Department of State Lands
E.Lynn Burkett, District Manager (DM), Lakeview, Bureau of Land Management
John Kasbohm, Project Leader, Sheldon-Hart NWR Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Todd Forbes, Field Manager, Lakeview Resource Area and
Acting DM Northern California, Bureau of Land Management

Facilitators

Levi Old, NWBR Project Coordinator, Great Basin Institute/USFWS/GBLCC
Todd Hopkins, Science Coordinator, Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GBLCC)
Tom Miewald, Landscape Ecologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Aaron Collins, Park Ranger/Recreation Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Meeting Goals

- Bring everyone up to speed on the project's history and possible future direction
- Show examples of landscape conservation approaches
- Who is missing at the table? Develop targets for next round of outreach
- Develop list of Key Issues and Refine them
- Develop list of Vision Statements
- Discuss "What does success look like in two years?" in regards to Refined Key Issues
- Define Next Steps

Important Decisions Made (See pages 10-11 for more information):

Next Steps:

- Established target people/groups for further outreach and Steering Committee members
- Move forward on Science Symposium Planning
- Move forward on Open Standards Synthesis work

- Next meetings: Conference call - July and next in-person - September
- Update NWBR contact list based on feedback

Note: These meeting notes are comprehensive rather than a summary. The intention is to get everything down in order to create clear project transparency, and to avoid making judgements on attendee's comments and input.

I. Introductions

Initial question: What immediately comes to mind when you think of Landscape Conservation?

- Protecting the whole suite of habitats that covers all the needs and resources for fish and wildlife
- Process of gathering stakeholders/organizations to develop shared priorities to accomplish things bigger than their own mission permits
- Connectivity of habitats in a broad sense
- Public-private partnerships that address ecological and social contexts
- Developing shared ecoregional priorities, and how we can work together to move the needle on conservation
- Creating an action plan and not just a plan to plan
- Collaboration of public and private groups
- Working with your neighbor: BLM has been doing this for a long time
- 50,000 foot elevation look down at the landscape -- who are the players and what they're doing where (public/private lands)

II. Presentation and Discussion: Overview of Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) -

Tom Miewald, USFWS

Four phases of a Landscape Conservation Design:

1. Convening Stakeholders
2. Assessment of current and future conditions
3. Spatial Analyses
4. Strategic Design: Creating Strategies

Tom Miewald went through each of these steps using examples from the many LCD projects around the west that he has been involved with directly or peripherally. At the end of Tom's presentation on Landscape Conservation Design, he asked the Steering Committee meeting members to list potential **challenges and opportunities** in the NWBR landscape in regards to landscape conservation planning and design.

(This comprehensive list includes both meeting minutes compiled by Todd Hopkins and flip chart notes compiled by Levi Old)

Challenges/Issues:

- We need to consolidate information
- Lots of projects stop at political borders
- Often planning is reactive
- The organizational structures of entities across states and land designations can make it difficult to plan appropriately
- Data consistency issues among entities
- Maps can create division within collaborative groups. There needs to be a lot of intention put behind the appropriate use of maps as a tool. If we start the conversation with maps then it focuses the conversations. Start with common goals and visions and then have collaborative conversations about what mapping needs are specific to the vision. When the group says they need a map, then make one. Don't make the mistake with this effort by starting with maps, as it might create a flashpoint for negative reactions
- Products could be used in a regulatory way even if the project itself is a "non-regulatory" process
- Who is doing what, where on the landscape? Lots of projects stop at the boundaries – opportunity to collaborate
- Working across state lines can be a challenge, but also an opportunity

Opportunities:

- This is an opportunity for proactive shared management
- Example: High Desert Partnership (NGO - Collaborative) – 15 yrs of building relationships between National Wildlife Refuge and partners. The partnership weaves a mix of economic, social, and ecological processes into their work. Perhaps a similar model for NWBR Synthesis would work well. Chad Karges mentioned the Blue Mountain Partnership as another possible model. One of the challenges of such partnerships is that there is lots of information out there, but

it's not consolidated and difficult to access. It would be great to have a place where information is housed and we could all easily access it

- We can build on existing structures such as the Wildfire Collaborative, Resilient Landscapes Collaborative, etc.
- Nevada doesn't have as many collaboratives as Oregon. Work can be opportunistic and independent. This is an area NWBR could build on. NWBR needs to bring in Conservation Districts, Rural Fire Protection Associations, and private landowners. The Steering Committee shouldn't be too big or it will get clunky. NDOW has shared positions with NRCS – they might be good to bring into the Steering Committee. NDOW could use some better coordination with California and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife
- Opportunity to share information across boundaries, agencies, stakeholders, to get the broader picture
- Can we look at what all three states are doing for whatever focal species we choose, and see how we can coordinate better across boundaries?
- Create a place to house accessible data, shared data and information on the broader picture
- This project could help land managers realize how land plans fit into the larger landscape
- Oregon BLM – This project could inform land use plan amendments/revision
- USFWS Hart Mountain Refuge – same thing, this could help get a landscape perspective and inform how Refuge lands fit into the bigger landscape. Refuges cannot be successful alone, they need to work with others (States, BLM, Private, etc...)
- Wetland, spring, and aquatic conditions mapping is a need and opportunity
- Assessment of wildfire risk or threats, fuel breaks, water (springs critical for wildlife)
- Human Dimensions: Community Values Mapping, Socio-economic - Opportunity to incorporate the human dimensions of the landscape. Social values mapping hasn't been done in Malheur area. We could use this project to do some social value mapping
- The Process and Relationships are an important part of the NWBR project. It isn't only about the products
- For creating stakeholder driven management plans we need county participation, general public side of things (e.g., NGOs)
- Department of Interior is interested in collaborative partnerships after visiting Harney County post-occupation and realizing that a lot of the social resiliency to the occupation occurred because of previous partnerships in the region. DOI would like to expand this around the country

- Keeping fuzzy boundaries on maps makes them potentially less divisive and gives the project wiggle room in regards to maps and specific issues the project's teams are trying to tackle

Brief Overview of the Resilient Landscapes Collaborative (RLC)

The RLC is multi-agency group, funded by the Department of Interior Office of Wildland Fire, [Resilient Landscapes Program](#) and is focused around on-the-ground conservation/restoration efforts. The primary goal is to improve resiliency of the landscape. Sheldon-Hart Resilient Landscape Partners: Summit Lake Tribe - fuel breaks and invasive annual grass treatments, FWS, BLM, NRCS - conifer removal and invasive annual grass treatments. About 40% of the national pot of money was allocated for the Sheldon-Hart Resilient Landscapes Collaborative, and it funded the initial part of the Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis (in part).

~Break~

III. Presentation and Activity: NWBR Synthesis Project History and Future - Levi Old, GBLCC (Todd H. and Tom M. as well)

Overview of Project - Timeline:

2013	Project idea first proposed
2014	Initial proposal for funding wasn't funded
2015	Second funding proposal funded. Collected plans and science papers from across the landscape (60+) and started to synthesize this work using the Open Standards tool. Reached out to some initial contacts. Hired Project Coordinator position
2016 (Feb.-May)	Project Coordinator started. Communication/Stakeholder Engagement plan written. Reached out to 60+ stakeholders, representing 30+ organizations. Piloted vetting of Open Standards work. Webinar to engage people and give project update. First Steering Committee meeting May 27, 2016

Steering Committee Feedback Activity: Engagement and Outreach: All attendees went through the NWBR Synthesis contact list to see who's been contacted, and to add more names to that list. Then we had a discussion on some of the most important stakeholders NWBR still needs to contact

- Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife: President Larry Johnson
- USFWS: Paul Henson and Ted Koch
- Counties: Ken Kestner (email sent), Judge Grasty/Pete Runalds, Dan Nichols
- Nevada Cattleman: Ron Cherry, French
- Friends of Nevada Wilderness: (Levi connected with in April - aware of project)
- Malheur Watershed Council: Linda Rosa
- Beatty Butte Grazing Association: Fitzgerald, Mary Woodsworth
- Fort Bidwell: Ken Sam, Natural Resource Specialist
- Ducks Unlimited: Taylor Albertson (resigned?), Chris Paulson
- Mule Deer Foundation:
- Cedarville Rancher: Joe Kurcher - BLM might know his contact information
- General Public: (Levi mentioned eventual Press Release)
- Recreation Contingent: (BLM, RAC, OPRD etc.)
- State Parks/OPRD: (in the works)
- Harney Electric
- PacificCorp
- State Wildlife Conservation Districts
- State Historic Preservation Officers or State/Federal Archeologists

Adaptive Management and Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation Overview: – Tom Miewald
Tom gave a snapshot of the synthesis work we've started over the last year. He explained how the Open Standards tool works. We plan to vet this synthesis work through experts over the summer 2016.

Overview of Human Dimensions opportunity, Community Values Mapping: – Levi Old
Levi provided a snapshot of one tool/exercise we could use to engage the community and gather information to support natural resource decision-making. Levi also mentioned that we're working with a human dimensions team (Cornell, USFWS, and BLM), to discuss options.

- Comment: Values mapping is very similar to BLM's Planning 2.0. BLM found that is was difficult for the public to differentiate between issue and values - need good facilitator

Climate Scenario Planning: – Todd Hopkins

Todd presented on how the Climate Scenario Planning process works. He gave some examples from around the country. There was a short discussion on how the values mapping and scenario planning might mesh well as a progression of forum/workshop type activities.

“NWBR State of the Ecosystem” Science Symposium: A ~ 1.5 day workshop concept – Levi Old
Levi presented on the Symposium idea slated to potentially occur next winter.

Project Boundary Discussion: Should we change the boundary?

- Maybe include all the Santa Rosa Mountains or none of them?
- Social dimension work could shift the boundaries – particularly the northeast side of the project area - stay open to this no matter where the boundary is drawn
- Fuzzy boundary can be good
- Fingers at south end of boundary make sense ecologically, but seem off/funny to the viewer
- People took notes on several of the maps - Levi is compiling this information

~Lunch~

IV. Key Issues Brainstorm Activity: The Steering Committee was facilitated through a multi-voting activity. Each member spent 10 minutes brainstorming all the key issues/problems they thought that the NWBR Synthesis could address in this landscape-scale effort relative to their respective organizations. After the first round of brainstorming in which the members were encouraged to “think outside the box,” and write down everything that came to mind, they then went through a process called multi-voting. In this process they each received votes for half the number issues they had listed. They could use the votes to vote for the issues that were the most “key” to them. They could use multiple votes for a single issue if chosen. Below is the refined list of key issues. See [Appendix 1 \(page 11\)](#) for the comprehensive list of key issues.

Question/Assignment: For your respective organization, what are some of the key issues/problems that the NWBR Synthesis process could address in this geography at the landscape scale?

Refined list of Key Issues for the NWBR Synthesis to potentially address. These were shared with the whole group (Placed on PostIts in front of room):

“*” = 1 person beyond the original attendee identified this as a key issue on the refined list

- Water use and availability
- Horse Management
- Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation ****
- Increase consistency in resource management
- Increase communication between agencies, NGOs, and public
- Effects of Landscape Planning on Ranching Communities (could be socio-economic assessment)

- Spring/Riparian Protection & Rehabilitation
- Invasive species and fire*
- Fire Resiliency -- How can we increase fire resiliency across the landscape while accounting for climate change, lack of \$\$, and a changing political climate
- Data Sharing

V. What does success look like for these key issues? Levi facilitated a brief discussion for several of the refined key issues around the proposed question: What does success look like in 2 years regarding _____ key issue? These are the notes (compiled by Todd Hopkins) from those discussions.

Fire & Invasive Species:

- Having a good idea of what the current situation for invasives, fire return intervals, and fire risk
- Tools: BLM has fire risk maps (might add onto or improve with ground-truthing)
- Assessing fire risk: fuel suppression (map of high priority areas), greens trips, what species to use post fire
- Increased consistency across boundaries, communal seed sources, more collaboration. How to quantify? A plan, then shared priorities
- Primary existing tools to build on for fire/invasives?
 - [Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool \(FIAT\) Reports](#)
 - Get it pre-planned out (e.g., Winnemucca Montana Mountains Fuels breaks)
 - Wildfire Collaborative in Burns is doing this sort of thing – burn interval, etc...
 - Building up the Rural Fire protection Districts in Nevada (Oregon might be ahead)

Water Use and Availability:

- Quantify groundwater use: impacts of drawdowns, etc...
- Keep springs and riparian areas intact. Assessment of current conditions, projections without actions, identify what we could do to protect and/or rehabilitate, which are more critical for animal migrations/movements
- Common ground of knowledge – open collective data that is agreed to
- Sharing information and the consistency of data being used

- Existing information that we could build off of for Water Use Availability?
- Harney County has lots of data
- [SONEC](#) effort by the Intermountain West joint Venture
- [National Wetland Inventory](#): then do assessment of those areas (ephemeral springs need assessment)
- The [NORWEST Network](#)

Connectivity/Fragmentation Issues:

- Identify priority areas that everyone agrees should be protected as a corridor for connectivity
Sage grouse are done, but mule deer, pygmy rabbit, etc...
- Scale is important: what is an issue for a pygmy rabbit isn't an issue for sage grouse or mule deer
- Evaluation of health or condition of sage steppe
- Areas that aren't as important as others – can we define those?
- BLM: we are totally focused on Sage grouse, and we might miss something else: beware of unintended consequences

Wild horse Management:

- This conversation revolved more around “who we should contact?” and keep in the loop around Wild Horse management. Levi is in touch with Laura Leigh, WildhorseEducation, and several in the group thought that she is a good person to keep in the loop. A couple other names were added to the contact list as well

VI. Vision/Goal Statements for NWBR Synthesis: Aftering the key issues multi-voting process (see above), each member was given a chance to craft an overall vision/goal statement for the NWBR Synthesis. The Steering Committee members were given 10 minutes to craft their project vision in relation to the key issues that stood out the most on their list. Some participants chose to look at the previously created “overall goal” from the project 2-page outreach document, and some didn't look at it.

- The goal of the wildfire project is to identify risk (R&R) of wildfire in the NWBR area to develop a comprehensive fire suppression, pre-suppression (i.e. fuel treatments) and rehabilitation priority list and action plan so that when events occur, appropriate actions occur in a timely and efficient manner.

- The goal of the spring/riparian protection & rehabilitation project is to synthesize and assess the current state of spring/riparian area within the NWBR project area, to develop a priority list and action plan to conserve and improve these resources.
- Our goal is to generate a common landscape vision amongst numerous landowners and user groups across the NWBR to better facilitate project objectives while understanding concerns of wildlife connectivity and the impacts on local ranching communities.
- To facilitate communication between stakeholder groups within the area to help inform landscape protections and improvement priorities, to synthesize existing knowledge, and research about key species, habitats, and resources, and to assist with a way to communicate the results of the information above to the public, other stakeholders, and NGOs.
- The GBLCC/NWBR Synthesis exists to bring together regional stakeholders to increase consistency in land management of resources, establish common knowledge of resource conditions, and identify priority places for restoration and protection.
- Vision: The NW B&R is a valued landscape where residents work together to ensure healthy and interconnected habitats that support a diversity of wildlife species in perpetuity that help maintain vibrant economic communities for future generations in Oregon and Nevada.
- Vision Statement: Combine existing data on key species and habitats to define connectivity and create a blueprint for action on the NWBR landscape.

VII. Wrap-Up Discussion

Next Steps/Decisions Made:

- Target Groups for Outreach and Steering Committee
- Move forward on Science Symposium Planning
- Move forward on Open Standards Synthesis work
- Next Meeting (webinar/in-person)
- NWBR Contact List updated based on feedback

Target Groups for further outreach -- potential member of the Steering Committee

Important to get all the players together before we set the project goals in stone.

- Local Government: NV, OR, CA -- County Planners - Right of Way
- Cattleman's (Levi in contact with Oregon)

- More NGO representation (Levi in contact with several others - (The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Refuge Assoc., Western Watersheds, Wildhorse Educaiton, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, etc.)
- Tribal
- BLM RAC: Greg Hendricks--Wild Horse and Burro (Mark Freese idea)
- U.S. Forest Service - if keep Santa Rosa's in project boundary (Levi in touch with For. Sup.)
- NRCS and ODFW (Levi in conversation with both of these groups)

Science Symposium Planning

We held a vote to see if it was ok that the NWBR Backbone Team moves forward on planning for a mid-winter science symposium. The Steering Committee discussed the location and number of people to potentially invite. Levi will check on dates and potential topics for the Science Symposium/Workshop, tentatively planned for February 2017, in either Lakeview or Winnemucca.

Next meeting?

Levi will send out a list of the people that he visited to the steering committee. We will have a web-based meeting likely in late - July, and our next Steering Committee meeting in approximately three months, or when we get our other target audiences engaged.

Note: Master NWBR Contact list updated based on feedback: (Still missing several S.C. members edited Contact sheets - please pass them along if you don't mind!)

Appendix 1: Categorized Comprehensive List of Key Issues

Question/Assignment: For your respective organization, what are some of the key issues/problems that the NWBR Synthesis process could address in this geography at the landscape scale?

“*” means the participant put a check by the issue in the second part of the activity

Aquatic

- *Spring/riparian protection and rehabilitation: Livestock, wild horse and burro threats; climate change. Map water resources (e.g. NWI) and develop scarcity map---> identify water resource limitations and areas of importance. Put together priority list and action plan
- Wetland Management → issues surrounding wetland management
- *Groundwater use and effects to surface water availability (or just water use and availability)
 - Effects on key habitats and species distribution

Consistency of Management/Cross - Boundary Collaboration/Shared Priorities

- What do we want this landscape to look like? Look at values and plan. Where do opportunities exist? (wildfire resource protection areas)
- Increase communication between BLM, USFWS, DSL, the public, ODFW
 - Sharing data/Research
 - Partner Projects: research and restoration
- Data Sharing → lots of data on sage grouse and pygmy rabbits
- *Project location sharing
- Partnerships (Collaboration) → relationships between BLM/NRCS/SWCD/Private Landowners -- There is already a “Trust” relationship here
- *Generate common landscape goals amongst numerous collaborations/collaborators
- **Increase consistency in management of resources
- How our BLM management fits into the larger landscape -- are we on track?
- *Multi-stakeholder/Agency/NGO monitoring efforts to improve common knowledge of on-the-ground conditions and sharing of data
- Integration of agency efforts

Wildfire

- *Wildfire: threat pull together resources to ID at risk areas: model
Fire data and design prevention/suppression plan (e.g. fuel treatments, green strips)
- **Fire Resiliency → conifer removal and invasive annual grass reduction
- **Invasive Species and Fire
 - Landscape fuel brakes -- where/how, and other management means to prevent invasives

Connectivity

- **Connectivity and Habitats → telemetry data
- *Consistency of cross-boundary focus on connectivity for wildlife
- *Understanding connectivity issues across the landscape
- *Connectivity for wildlife species (pronghorn and other sage-steppe obligates)
 - Maintaining into the future
 - Defining core areas and connections - planning to prevent fragmentation

Rangelands

- Health of Rangelands
- *Outline and identify effects of landscape planning has on ranching communities

Development

- Development: i.e. mining, transmission, wind geothermal, solar etc. → ID current status and project (?). Where do resource conflicts exist? Make a plan to address
- Energy transmission needs next 50+ years -- where, what, and how much generation?

Invasives

- Invasive weed/species: Identify current states and model future. Develop a plan to address these issues
- Invasives: *Increase consistency on the management of invasive species across boundaries
 - Communal seed sources
 - Collaborative development of restoration projects
 - Identification of priority areas for restoration

Prioritization, Planning, Other Management

- Defining core areas - hot spots
- Roadway Issues:
 - *Habitat Connectivity
 - Pollinator habitat
 - Invasive species transference and disturbance
 - Material resource extraction: quarries have a potential for habitat impacts and/or restoration = invasive vs. native, Impacts on Sage Grouse etc.
- Habitat status
 - Restoration needs -- where/how priorities
 - Health - projection into future considering things like climate change
- *Wild horse management - maintaining native species and ecological health
- Political influences to management - fallout from Malheur occupation

Project Needs

- ** Note all plans should include spatially explicit tools
- Funding source for landscape projects
- Public participation