

Forests in the Gorge: Building Resilience in a Changing Climate

Summary of questions and discussion throughout the evening

September 29, 2021 | 6:00-8:00 pm

Forest Practices

Question: *Have the two state Forest Practices Acts (FPAs) been updated to reflect climate change?*

Responses from ODF and DNR - Oregon Department of Forestry is looking at policies across the board relating to climate change. ODF's [Draft Climate Change and Carbon Plan](#). The WA Board of Natural Resources is also considering climate change, but have not yet issued any new rules.

Question: *How long before changes are made to the FPAs?*

Response: Forest Practices Acts were enacted by the legislature, so the legislatures would need to decide to update or change the statute.

Question: *Would eliminating large scale clearcutting reduce carbon emissions and result in more fire-resilient forests?*

Response (we did not get to this question in the meeting): The National Scenic Area Act protects forest practices; they are managed by Oregon and Washington state Forest Practices Acts. In the SMA, the Forest Service reviews forests practices for consistency with the Management Plan.

We are looking into carbon storage (methods to assess and track, state initiatives to provide forest carbon storage, etc). Two example carbon inventories are helpful reference. Both are generated using Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) plots and are referenced in the Forest Service's Columbia River Gorge, Mt. Hood, and Willamette National Forest Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment.

- [Washington Forest Ecosystem Carbon Inventory: 2002-2016](#)
- [Oregon Forest Ecosystem Carbon Inventory: 2001-2016](#)

For discussion of carbon storage, forest disturbances and management, see page 358 of the [Forest Service Vulnerability Assessment](#) for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Mt. Hood and Willamette National Forests.

Ecological Resilience Strategies

Question: *What are PODS?*

Response: Potential Operational Delineations (PODs) allow managers to pre-plan for fire using a risk management approach, and to give land managers a formal process for developing landscape-scale wildfire response options before fires start. See: <https://fireadaptednetwork.org/changing-the-game-with-pods/> They can be community-led, incorporating a range of values and perspectives. DNR and USFS are using PODs, but not all fire managers are supportive. Forest collaboratives are talking a lot about PODs in the region. [Storymap: Strategic, Cross-Boundary Wildfire Response Planning – Potential Operational Delineations \(PODs\)](#)

Question: *Do you know if, in the east end of the gorge, fire frequency was linked to indigenous management or were the fires caused by lightening or other starts? Wondering if we need to engage our indigenous partners in prescribed fires in our east forest areas?*

Response: Eastside fire frequency was as often as every year, including indigenous management and natural fires. USFS works a lot with Warm Springs and Yakama Nation on prescribed burning training and work. (Added after the meeting) Participants in the CCAP effort from the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes are sharing examples of prescribed burning with benefits to forests, First Foods, and communities with the CRGC and USFS staffs. We hope to continue exploring ways to support tribal priorities for cultural and ecological burning. Example publication: [Traditional knowledge of fire used by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in the eastside Cascades of Oregon.](#)

Question: *Can you comment on whether the withdrawal of private homeowner insurance in forests with high fire risk will reduce the construction of new homes in the woods?*

Response: It's a hot topic in Washington. Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) is working on a webinar and educational opportunities around insurance. Hilary will share more information when that is scheduled, likely in November.

Question: *How is Commission staff aligning efforts with statewide initiatives in Washington and Oregon? Specifically in [Washington HB1168](#) and [Oregon SB762](#), related to forest resilience and wildfire management?*

Response: The Forest Service is working a lot on these topics, in partnership with both Oregon and Washington. (After the meeting) Individual Commissioners engage legislators in Oregon and Washington in a variety of ways and may be able to advocate for fire resilience legislation by the states.

Question: *Do the thinning operations on the Yakama Nation lands generate income?*

Response: Yes, Yakama Nation does some contracting with tribally owned businesses, and they can benefit economically from thinning work. Yakama Nation staff are certified to do the prescribed burning.

Comments from participants: As a Klickitat County landowner, I want to commend and thank the Yakama Nation for your forestry standards and practice of utilizing beetle infested and burn damaged trees. The Yakama Nation management practices both in fuels management and wildlife and forest enhancement is the Gold Standard.

Question: *Can you all talk about the fine line between fuels management (mechanical) and ecologically resilient habitat management? How can objectives for both wildlife habitat and fuels management be met?*

Response: Underwood Conservation District) has partnered with DNR on "SLOPPS" – snags, logs, openings, piles, patches, and shrubs – to create structural diversity while achieving defensible space goals. Ken Bevis has developed videos, papers, and more on this topic. Example publication on wildlife habitat and wildfire management.

<https://knowyourforest.org/sites/default/files/documents/Wildlife->

[Friendly%20Fuels%20Reduction%20in%20Dry%20Forests%20of%20the%20Pacific%20Northwest%20v2.pdf](#)

Here is a short video from Ken Bevis and the Kittitas Fire Adapted Communities Coalition about managing fuels and managing for wildlife: <https://www.kittitasfireready.org/kfacc-video-series>

Wildlife friendly fuels management <https://woodlandfishandwildlife.com/publications/eastside-dry-habitats/wildlife-friendly-fuels-reduction-in-dry-forests-of-the-pacific-northwest/>

Forest management in the NSA

Question: *Will the USFS close its forests during red flag fire danger periods? Why not? Private and state lands close them. Will burn bans over longer periods of time and a variety of places be a likely tool in reducing fire activity going forward?*

Response: The Scenic Area does not close its lands during Red Flag events. The Forest Service does consider a lot of factors when deciding whether to close the forest including how effectively they can enforce a closure. The NSA is very difficult to effectively close, due to the number of entry points and how dispersed they are across the gorge. USFS meets regularly through the fire season to consider whether a closure might be appropriate.

Question: *Can burn piles be managed to create biochar? This would benefit the soil and sequester carbon. I've noticed a number of burn piles in this presentation.*

Response: (Forest Service) Piles can be used for biochar with the right machines, and a huge amount of water. Not effectively without a large-scale air burner machine.

Other participants shared resources and examples: San Juan Islands Conservation District is doing pile burning/conservation burns to create biochar. Here's a recording of their presentation: <https://vimeo.com/452100302>.

Additional resources: United States Biochar Initiative: <https://biochar-us.org/> • USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rmrs/people/ddumroese> <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rmrs/people/nathanielmanderson> • Utah Biomass Resources Group: <https://ubrg.usu.edu/> • Brewer Biomass Thermochemical Processing Research Group: <https://wordpress.nmsu.edu/cbrewer/> • USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sciencetechnology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation> • Quivira Coalition Carbon Ranch Initiative: <https://quiviracoalition.org/carbon-ranchinitiative> • Arizona Log & TimberWorks, Inc.: <https://azlogs.com/> • Great Plains Biochar Initiative: <https://nfs.unl.edu/great-plains-biochar-initiative> • TrollWorks, Inc: <https://www.troll.works/> • Wilson Biochar Associates, Inc: <https://wilsonbiochar.com> • GO Biochar, Inc.: <https://gobiochar.com/>

Understanding and encouraging private landowner action

Question: *Is there any outreach done to landowners to surmise if they are open to prescribed burns on their property?*

Response: Glenn shared that OSU has six specialists. [Amanda Rau](#) works in the Gorge and is passionate about prescribed burning and works on social science.

Other comments: There is variability state to state and managing risk on private lands. Insurance is a challenge for more complex burn operations. Many associations are emerging (e.g., in California) for complex landscapes.

For those who are working on prescribed fire outreach efforts, the Washington Prescribed Fire Council has developed a toolkit of resources, templates, key messages, photos, etc.:

<https://www.putfiretowork.org/>

Oregon prescribed fire council <https://www.oregonrxfire.org/>

Question: *When I worked at the NSA, we couldn't get input from fire districts to help make development more fire resistant. Rowena Dell area is an example of a dangerous place. Would the Commission consider requiring vegetation management or perhaps not allowing new development in fire prone areas?*

Response: In the recent Management Plan update, the Commission made strides to ensure that new developments in forested areas consider and minimize fire risk. Some of those policies that we had and updated include providing access (driveways and turnaround) for fire equipment, building design and materials to reduce opportunity for ignition and for fire to carry, having a water source on site, etc. The plan now requires planners to provide information about Firewise to landowners building in forest areas.

Other response: County Planning Departments need to play a role in the process for allowing or not allowing building in WUI's.

Additional resources compiled for and shared during this meeting

Oregon resources

[Eastern Oregon Climate Change](#) Coalition

Oregon Department of Forestry Online Resources: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Pages/index.aspx>

- Fire: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Fire/Pages/default.aspx>
- Fire Prevention: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/fire/Pages/fireprevention.aspx>

Oregon Department of Forestry contacts: The Dalles Unit (541) 296-4626 www.odfcentraloregon.com

Oregon State University Extension <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/find-us>

- Fire aware webinars and resources: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/fire-program/online-webinar-guide>

Washington resources

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- See [fact sheet](#) on DNR Cooperative Forest Management Grants Program
- Forest Resiliency Division - wd@dnr.wa.gov; 360-902-1300
- Forest Regulation Division - fpd@dnr.wa.gov; 360-902-1400
- Pacific Cascades Region (westside) pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov; 360-577-2025
- Southeast Region (eastside) southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov; 509-925-8510

Washington State University Extension - <https://extension.wsu.edu/locations/>

Washington Prescribed Fire Council – Put Fire to Work toolkit <https://www.putfiretowork.org/>

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) resources

- Conservation programs - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Markets and innovation - Community Wood Energy Program (CWEP) and the Timber Innovation Act (TIA)
- U.S. Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration program
- Cross-boundary project grants to reduce hazardous fuels

NRCS The Dalles Service Center

2325 River Road, #3, The Dalles, Oregon 97058

Phone: (541) 298-8559

NRCS Goldendale Service Center

1107 South Columbus Avenue, Goldendale, WA 98620-9268

Phone: (509) 773-5822

NRCS Hood River County Field Office

6780 Hwy 35, Parkdale, OR 97041

Phone: 541-352-1037

Oregon Soil & Water Conservation Districts

East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District

Portland, OR | Phone: 503 222-SOIL

Website: www.emswcd.org | Email: andrew@emswcd.org

Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District

3007 Experiment Station Drive Hood River, OR

Phone: 541 386-4588 (call first)

Website: www.hooddriverswcd.org | Email: info@hooddriverswcd.org

Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District

2325 River Road, Suite 3 The Dalles, OR

Phone: 541 296-6178 Ext. 3

Website: www.wascoswcd.org | Email: wasco.swcd@oacd.org

Sherman County Soil and Water Conservation District

302 Scott Avenue | P.O. Box 405, Moro, OR

<http://sherman.oacd.org/> Phone: (541) 565-3551

Washington Conservation Districts

Clark County Conservation District

(360) 859-4780 | 813 West Main Street, Suite 106 Battle Ground, WA 98604 | staff@clarkcd.org

Underwood Conservation District

Office: 170 NW Lincoln, White Salmon, WA 98672

Phone: (509) 493-1936 | Email: info@ucdwa.org

Central Klickitat Conservation District

1107 S Columbus Ave, Goldendale, Washington 98620

Phone: (509) 773-5823 EXT 5 | Monday - Friday 8:00 - 4:00 | cdoffice@ckcd.org