



Rogue Forest Partners

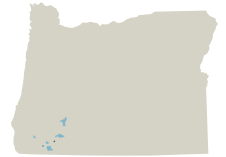
Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative

DRY-TYPE FOREST HABITAT
OAK WOODLAND AND PRAIRIE HABITAT
AQUATIC HABITAT FOR NATIVE FISH SPECIES



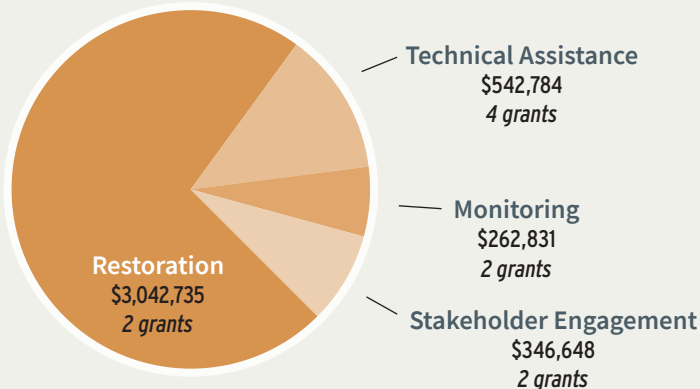
Applegate Fairbanks

The Rogue Forest Partners are strategically implementing ecological thinning and prescribed fire in the Rogue River basin to restore forest species composition, reduce tree density and surface and ladder fuels, and prepare stands for fires that sustain forest biodiversity and ecosystem services. Disrupted fire regimes, historical clearcut timber harvest, land conversion, and recent severe wildfires have reduced old forest habitats, needed by northern spotted owls and other species, and have led to excessively dense and homogenous forests. This altered landscape is at high risk from uncharacteristically severe wildfire, insects, and disease and these conditions are made worse by climate change.



Funding

OWEB awarded \$1,499,998 in funding that leveraged \$969,926 in matching funds.



Benefits

- Social conditions for using ecological thinning and prescribed fires to restore forest landscapes are improved
- Fire suppression effectiveness and safety are improved, along with increased options for managed fire
- Frequency and severity of fire and other disturbances are shifted toward the desired range of variability
- Threats of abrupt forest degradation and fragmentation catalyzed by climate change are reduced

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program supports high-performing partnerships to implement strategic restoration actions and measure ecological outcomes through coordinated monitoring. In January 2019, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board awarded a FIP grant to the Rogue Forest Partners (Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative, RFR). This report documents cumulative progress since the FIP was initiated in 2019. Work completed under the FIP grant program is part of a much larger on-going collaborative effort of federal, state and local agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations in the Rogue Basin. Accomplishments included in the report only reflect actions completed with OWEB FIP funding.

ROGUE FOREST PARTNERS



Implementation Review Team: Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Illinois Valley Fuels Resource Operations Group, Applegate Partnership Watershed Council, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Sustainable Northwest, American Forest Resources Council.

Monitoring Advisory Committee: Oregon State University, Southern Oregon University, Humboldt State University, retired - PSW Research Station, National Park Service, PNW Research Station

GOAL

The Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative strategic action plan identifies five strategic goals:

Improve landscape climate resilience by restoring natural range of variability in seral structural states

+

Reduce wildfire risk to people and nature

+

Increase public support for restoration thinning and beneficial fire

+

Increase the pace of restoration treatments in the Rogue Basin

+

Provide economic outputs and develop a skilled workforce



STRATEGIES



IMPLEMENTATION

Restoration

22,947

LEGACY TREES RESTORED

3,899

ACRES OF MIXED CONIFER/HARDWOOD FOREST AND WOODLANDS TREATED TO RESTORE OPEN HABITAT

Monitoring

6,933

ACRES MONITORED TO EVALUATE RESTORATION OUTCOMES

1

MULTIPARTY MONITORING PLAN, SUPPORTED BY MONITORING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Stakeholder Engagement

194

ACRES OF PRIVATELY-OWNED LAND TREATED

1

CHALLENGE COST SHARE AGREEMENT WITH USFS + COLLABORATIVE MASTER STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT + NEW PROJECT AREA IN WEST BEAR WITH 68 LANDOWNER AGREEMENTS

Economic Benefits

11.7

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT POSITIONS HIRED AS RESTORATION WORKFORCE

1

MISSION + VISION STATEMENT

74

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS ENGAGED

474

CONTACTS IN MEETINGS WORKSHOPS AND MONITORING EVENTS



OUTCOMES

Near Term 0-10+ YEARS

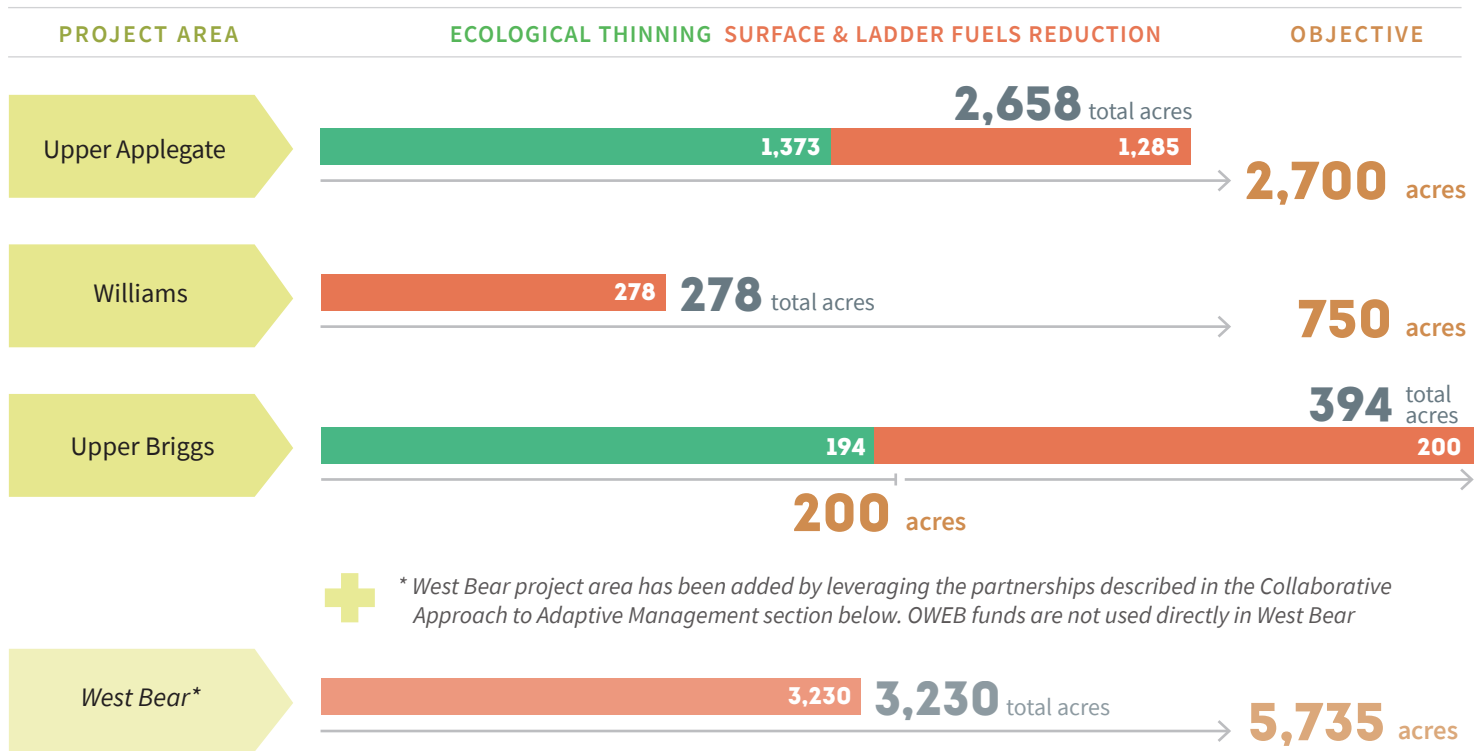
- Social conditions for using ecological thinning and prescribed fires are improved
- Density of smaller ingrowth and encroachment is reduced
- Stand proportion and vigor of fire-resistant species is restored and maintained
- Songbird indicator species shift, consistent with the planned changes in seral structural states
- Future legacy trees are promoted by growing under more open environment
- Nonnative species are reduced
- Oak habitat is restored
- Meadows are opened and maintained
- Wildfire hazard is reduced

Long Term 10+ YEARS

- Wildfire risks to forests and communities are reduced
- Risk from severe fire to critical late-successional habitat for critical species is reduced
- The proportion of open seral structural states is increased, consistent with adaptive range of variability
- Fire suppression effectiveness and safety are improved, increasing options for managed fire

FIP Initiative Progress, Biennia 1-2

Progress on metrics includes actions completed as well as actions proposed through obligated OWEB grants. Progress reflects implementation supported by OWEB funding, and does not represent all progress achieved via other funding sources.



Collaborative Approach to Adaptive Management

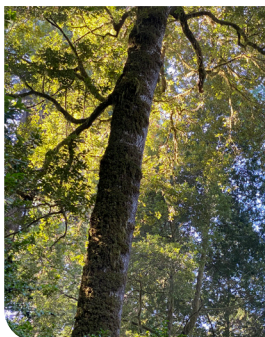
Progress toward achieving ecological and social outcomes

is being determined by evaluating progress toward shorter-term goals and objectives. Treatment effects are quantified in OWEB funded units where partners collect data to quantify changes in forest structure, composition, and fuel characteristics. Originally, RFRI envisioned that the Upper Applegate Watershed (UAW) was most likely to be completely implemented at the end of biennium three, and therefore envisioned that

effectiveness would primarily be assessed within this planning area. Through Biennium 2, RFRI's ability to complete the Upper Applegate Watershed (UAW) project has been leveraged through the Rogue Basin Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (USFS CFLRP) and state funding through the SB-762 Landscape Resiliency program totaling an additional \$1.5 million. BLM has also treated additional acres than originally planned.

As a result, RFRI is achieving the goal of fully implementing UAW at the landscape scale and developing the West Bear planning area into a landscape level project. This project has garnered \$11 million in leverage for mostly private land treatments. By the end of 2025, an additional RFRI project area may be developed into a landscape scale project.

In addition to ecological outcomes, RFRI continues to evaluate social outcomes throughout the life of the project.



Adaptive Management

Restoration

CHALLENGES

Challenges including pandemic-related delays and burnout make it difficult to accomplish collaborative goals. Partners are concerned about sustaining their broad collaboratively-developed goals beyond the FIP initiative.



LESSONS LEARNED

Grounding projects in strong rationale rather than opportunity results in more sustainable outcomes. Generally, the public is supportive of RFRI's work.

There is a strong need to clearly identify objectives and deliverables from meetings. Regularly scheduled meetings don't always have the urgency-and aren't always well-prepared for. However, regular meetings do enhance accountability and maintain progress.

Internal review within RFRI is as critical as external review.

Without specific funding, partners may not be as committed.

When working in fire prone landscapes it is important to think about the spatial arrangement of the landscape, to buffer communities and utilize PODS.



ADAPTATIONS

Prioritize workload and opportunities.

Define realistic objectives and timelines.

Hold meetings with clear agendas and purpose.

Add capacity for managing projects.

Assign roles and responsibilities to be effective at expanded workloads.

Monitoring

CHALLENGES

Geodatabase design: All RFRI partners engage in similar projects that could benefit from a common database and tracking system, but trying to create and use a database at the same time is challenging and time-consuming. No partner has the exact skillset to design an easy-to-use geodatabase. The task is highly complex.



LESSONS LEARNED

RFRI partners are finding ways to talk about complex issues and complex solutions. They are using data dictionaries, clear definitions, identifying source material and other metrics to solve this problem.

Having a written monitoring plan connecting goals and metrics to desired outcomes. A table that clearly links restoration objectives to metrics and indicators has been critical for communication within RFRI and externally.

When you have a thoughtful rationale for monitoring metrics, it is easy to recruit partners who want to use the protocol. Documentation of clearly articulated objectives and progress towards those objectives drive accountability and creates momentum towards those objectives. It articulates and demonstrates achievements.



ADAPTATIONS

Invest future funding in geodatabase support, design and dashboards.

Form agreements with university partners for help with design, using student help, and storage.

Adaptive Management

Engagement

CHALLENGES

Having multiple partners makes arriving at consensus time-consuming yet rewarding. Staying faithful to RFRI's communications plan is a regular challenge because of emerging opportunities and demands.



LESSONS LEARNED

Engagement drives future implementation by providing community perspectives. Engagement informs the community, so they are aware of ongoing activities. It prepares the communities for anticipated changes such as smoke, logging trucks, change in forest structure. This helps maintain support.

Engagement builds overall support for future project development and maintenance of future projects. Engagement also brings the public and partners together.

The website is key to clear communication. Starting the website development sooner would have helped recruit participation. The website highlights accomplishments and provides information and tools. Partners use the website to find up-to-date maps, blog articles and background material.



ADAPTATIONS

Additional funding for engagement in Biennium 2.

Communication guidelines are referred to in addition to the communication plan to provide a consistent approach to outreach and media engagement.

Meet monthly and discuss the RFRI approach and priorities.

Develop online maps and information about projects.

Partnership

CHALLENGES

Insufficient internal review of projects has challenged implementation and has caused some delays in project implementation.

RFRI helped write a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) proposal and it was awarded by the U.S. Forest Service in 2022. RFRI is working with the Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest to implement this 10-year project, but lack of agency capacity and a business as usual attitude is impacting implementation.



LESSONS LEARNED

Clear workplanning is essential to success. RFRI needs to review their original purpose, strategic goals and objectives. This will help ensure the right incentives for participation are present, and will help with prioritizing project work, planning new projects, tracking accomplishments and uncertainty about the future workload.

The CFLRP is serving as leverage to RFRI projects and will augment ecological outcomes for the high priority project areas.



ADAPTATIONS

Reviewing past accomplishments helped to assess and prepare for the future.

Surveys have been helpful. Consistency in the survey design allows for comparison and evaluating progress and changes in partner concerns.