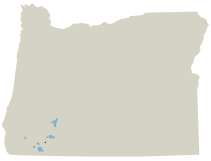
OWEB FOCUSED INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP
PROGRESS REPORT / BIENNIUM ONE: 2019-2021

Rogue Forest *Partners*

Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative

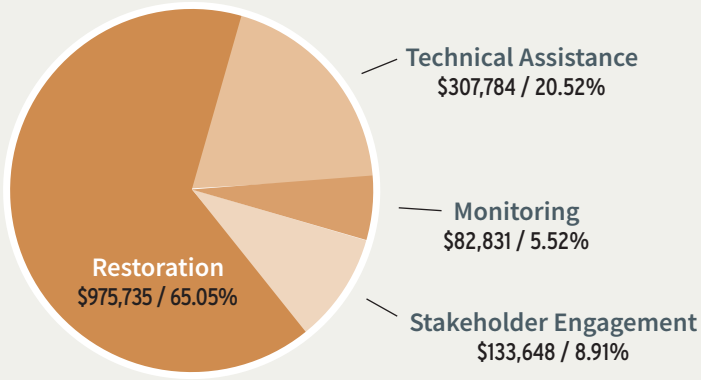
DRY-TYPE FOREST HABITAT
OAK WOODLAND AND PRAIRIE HABITAT
AQUATIC HABITAT FOR NATIVE FISH SPECIES



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, but 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 is a bold conservation approach that 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 an Implementation Focused Investment Partnership grant to the Rogue Forest Partners. This report documents projects for which funding was obligated during the first biennium of the initiative (2019 to 2021) to meet their FIP Initiative objectives. 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

- Apply forest treatments
- Deepen partnerships among public and private land managers, tribes, local governments, and communities
- Foster development of engaged citizenry
- Improve socioeconomic conditions and workforce capacity

IMPLEMENTATION (2019-2021)

Restoration

4,350 LEGACY TREES RESTORED

1,426 ACRES OF MIXED CONIFER/HARDWOOD FOREST AND WOODLANDS TREATED TO RESTORE OPEN HABITAT

6,110 ACRES OF DRY FOREST HABITAT PROTECTED OR ENHANCED WITH LIGHT UNDERBURNING

765 ACRES TREATED TO RESTORE COMPLEX HABITAT

Stakeholder Engagement

240 CONTACTS IN MEETING WORKSHOPS AND MONITORING EVENTS

194 ACRES OF PRIVATELY-OWNED LAND TREATED THROUGH RFP AND NRCS RECRUITMENT

1

COMMUNICATION PLAN DEVELOPED
+
MONITORING PLAN DEVELOPED
+
WEBSITE PLATFORM DEVELOPED
+
MONITORING ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORMED
+
IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW TEAM FORMED

Economic Benefits

5.97 MILLION BOARD FEET OF BYPRODUCT TIMBER PRODUCED

8.35 FULL TIME EQUIVALENT POSITIONS HIRED AS RESTORATION WORKFORCE

6 PRIVATE LANDOWNERS ENGAGED, EDUCATED, AND ENROLLED

Monitoring

3,703 ACRES MONITORED TO EVALUATE RESTORATION OUTCOMES

OUTCOMES

Near Term 0-10+ YEARS

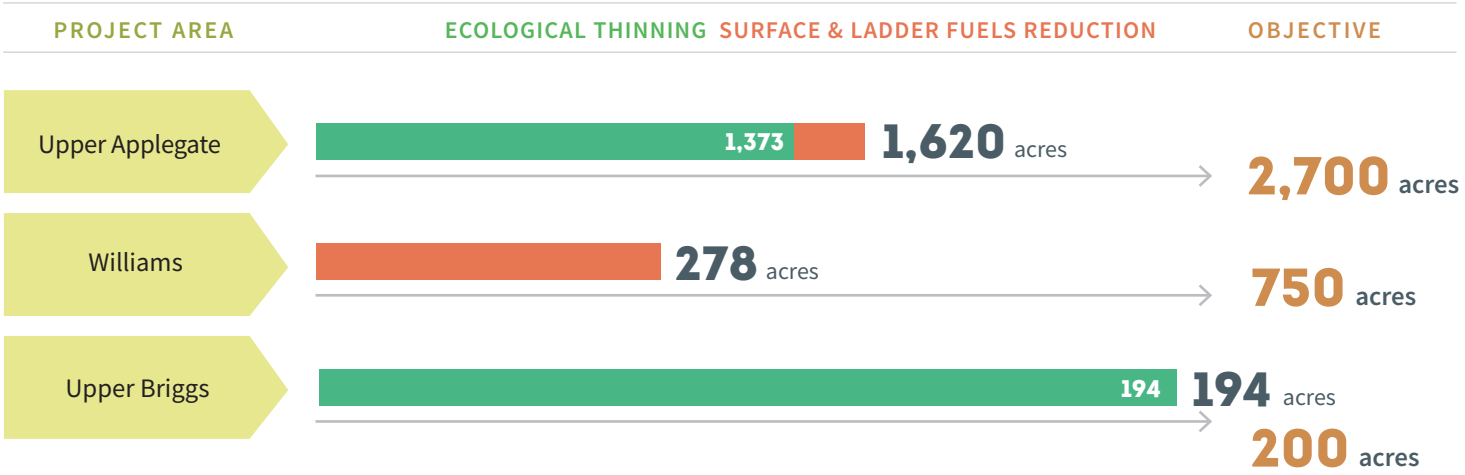
- Social conditions for using ecological thinning and prescribed fires are improved
- Density of smaller ingrowth and encroachment is reduced
- Stand proportion and vigor of fire-resistant species is restored and maintained
- Songbird indicator species shift, consistent with the planned changes in seral structural states
- Future legacy trees are promoted by growing under more open environment
- Nonnatives 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, Biennium 1

Progress on metrics reflects implementation supported by OWEB funding, and does not represent all progress achieved via other funding sources.



Monitoring Approach

Progress toward achieving ecological and social outcomes will be determined by evaluating progress toward shorter-term goals and objectives. Treatment effects will be quantified in OWEB funded units where partners will collect data to quantify changes in forest structure, composition, and fuel characteristics. Effectiveness at achieving ecological outcomes at a landscape scale will be assessed at the Upper Applegate planning area, as the project was planned at a scale for a landscape effect. Social outcomes will be evaluated throughout the life of the project.

Adaptive Management

Restoration

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
COVID-19 impeded layout schedules for two projects because of a need to change practices and safeguard employees. Local fires burned homes of workers and families reducing ability to meet targets.	Working with BLM vs. USFS requires different approaches. For example, BLM is more hierarchical about communications with partnerships.	Adjusted protocols consistent with CDC guidelines. Modified timelines and expectations.

Monitoring

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
Establishment of review teams was done entirely through email and phone calls. Songbird monitoring was delayed because of NEPA delays and layout delays.	Well facilitated Zoom meetings with small breakouts can help Adaptive management and treatment performance over time across a range of treatment types is enabled by monitoring, coupled with strategic outreach and engagement.	Plan Zoom meetings with small breakout rooms. Plan lots of time for modified, less efficient processes. Adaptive management to-date has largely been preparation for external review through the development of an external review process and population of the implementation review team and monitoring advisory committee.

Engagement

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
COVID-19 made both field trips and meetings unadvisable. Learning how to use the more sophisticated features of zoom and other communication technologies was necessary. Our communication plan was developed entirely through zoom. No outside events occurred.	Field trips through zoom requires more preparation than an in-person field trip—assembling photos, preparing PowerPoints, rehearsals, timing. A good logo and communication plan takes time and investment.	Website and social media as a communication tools became more important. Interest in expanding the work of RFP requires attention to governance through improvements in processes and clarification of roles.