

# Rogue Forest Partners tackles major projects

BY TERRY FAIRBANKS

Here's an update on three major projects Rogue Forest Partners are working on.

## West Bear Initiative

In April, Governor Kate Brown visited the West Bear All-Lands Restoration Project to show her support for restoration efforts across the Rogue Basin. She praised the collaborative partners of the Rogue Valley for their ability to come together and advance win-win solutions that reduce wildfire risks to nature and people. The Rogue Forest Partners worked closely with an array of community organizations, public agencies, and fire departments to design the West Bear project boundary and objectives. The 27,000-acre footprint spans the wildland-urban interface west of the I-5 corridor, in the foothills of Talent, Phoenix, west Medford, and Jacksonville. This densely populated part of the Rogue Basin is ranked highest in need for forest restoration and risk reduction close to communities.

Lomakatsi Restoration Project planted the seed for the West Bear project after

securing funding of \$490,000 for the Anderson Creek Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Project through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Following the Almeda Fire, the Rogue Forest Partners worked with Sustainable Northwest—which brought a \$2 million grant—to leverage additional investments. The Partners helped delineate the West Bear landscape and Lomakatsi sponsored a proposal to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and received a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant of \$2.6 million. In addition to supporting West Bear, the Partners are exploring ongoing work with the Oregon Department of Forestry, two Bureau of Land Management (BLM) projects, and the proposed Jacksonville Community Protection project.

## Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative

Led by the Rogue Forest Partners, the RFRI is a collaborative effort to implement ecological restoration and fuels reduction

on 6,000 acres across six sites in the Rogue Basin.

Williams: RFP, BLM, and the NRCS partnered on an “all-lands” approach to cross-boundary coordination to treat adjacent parcels on both federal and private lands. Lomakatsi has completed fuel reduction on 194 acres of private lands and 80 acres of BLM lands. The work continues through 2023.

Upper Applegate: Klamath Bird Observatory conducted a pre-treatment bird monitoring survey on 36 commercial thinning units covering 1,371 acres. Surface and ladder fuels reduction work started in mid-May on 276 acres, consistent with the Upper Applegate Environmental Assessment, with more acreage to follow.

Shan Apple: These treatments are part of the larger Upper Briggs Project on the ridge above the Applegate River in the Illinois Valley, within the Wild Rivers Ranger District of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. A local workforce prepared 194 acres for ecological commercial thinning, and implementation will begin later in 2021.

## Multiparty monitoring and third-party review

Rogue Forest Partners want to thank the RFRI Implementation Review Team for their thoughtful review of the Upper Applegate project. In place of an in-person event, the Partners provided a virtual meeting with field maps, photos, descriptions of representative units, and thoughtful discussions. Implementation members included recreation, Tribal,

industry, and conservation representatives. The team expressed strong support for prescribed fire and continued progress toward a landscape where fire management options are improved. Climate adaptation approaches incorporated into the project were also broadly supported. The prescriptions, especially with the strong emphasis on spatial patterning, were perceived as beneficial for wildfire, fire risk mitigation, and forest resilience. For a full meeting summary, go to [rogueforestpartners.org/monitoring](http://rogueforestpartners.org/monitoring).

Monitoring Plan: The Rogue Forest Partners have drafted a multi-party monitoring plan based on past monitoring efforts, such as the Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Initiative; on input from recent public meetings; and on review by researchers and academics from the USDA Forest Service Pacific and Southwest research stations, Humboldt University, Oregon State University, Southern Oregon University, and others. The monitoring will keep tabs on restoration objectives: promoting resilient landscapes; reducing wildfire risk to people and nature; building public knowledge and support; growing capacity for planning, implementing, monitoring, outreach, and engagement; and improving socioeconomic conditions and developing a skilled ecological restoration workforce.

The Rogue Forest Partners recognize the importance of working in landscapes where people live and work. Their mission is to collaborate with communities to reduce the hazards to our homes, roads, woodlands, and forests while learning to live with fires that become more “mild” and less “wild.”

For more information, visit [rogueforestpartners.org](http://rogueforestpartners.org). Terry Fairbanks, Executive Director, Southern Oregon Restoration Collaborative Coordinator, Rogue Forest Partners [tfairbanks@sofrc.org](mailto:tfairbanks@sofrc.org)

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Severe wildfires and persistent smoke are a threat to the lives and livelihoods of our communities. We offer a science-based, practical, long-term approach to forest management – rooted in the belief that the connections that tie all of us to the forest are more powerful than our differences.

We are working to make our forests more resilient and our communities safer.