Update: Upper Applegate Demonstration Unit

BY DON BOUCHER

The Upper Applegate Demonstration Units were designed to evaluate fuel and restoration treatments on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service (USFS) land. These units provide opportunities for public engagement, dialogue, and understanding of alternative fuels and restoration treatments with carefully designed, side-by-side examples.

Four treatment alternatives were replicated eight times on 10-acre units in a blocked experimental design. Merchantable tree removal was completed by helicopter this past winter.

Look for announcements of field trips to visit the units over the summer and fall.

Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project

The purpose of the Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project (UAWRP) is to restore structure and processes in the Upper Applegate watershed, providing landscape conditions resilient to disturbances and climate change, in order to protect the following important community-identified values: recreation (motorized and nonmotorized), late-successional forests (northern spotted owl habitat), biodiversity (both plant and animal), important connectivity corridors, roadless and unmanaged areas, sustainable flow of goods and services, and human life and property.

Last fall both agencies received comments on the Proposed Action for the UAWRP and reviewed all the letters and identified important issues, which will form the basis of the analytical work for the environmental analysis. Some of the more important issues included the protection of late-successional habitat, attention to limiting erosion and sediment from ground-disturbing activities, protection of old and large trees, treatments in areas currently without roads, impacts from recreation, and protection of botanical species and habitats.

Currently, USFS and BLM specialists are continuing surveys and developing a description of the baseline conditions to which the Proposed Action will be compared. An environmental assessment is planned to be available for public review in September. At a public meeting on March 29, the agencies explained the analysis process, which will be iterative and a slightly modified version of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. By iterative, we mean that the Proposed Action may be modified or improved incrementally as a result of public engagement in various stages of the NEPA process. By implementing iterative NEPA (or iNEPA, as it is termed), we hope to increase public interaction, as well as create efficiencies that reduce costs and timelines.

The iNEPA process for the UAWRP has three phases. The first phase, already under way, describes the current condition and examines the consequences of not implementing the Proposed Action. This phase will culminate with a public workshop scheduled for Thursday, May 31, when the resource specialists will share their findings. The second phase, the analysis of the Proposed Action, will include a public meeting on Wednesday, July 25. Both of these meetings will be held at the Applegate Valley Fire District Training Building in Ruch. The time for these workshops will be announced. The third phase is the preparation of the environmental assessment, which will be published for public review. The two workshops listed above will provide an opportunity for the community to interact with resource specialists to modify or improve the Proposed Action. This process will allow resource specialists, with their limited time, to focus on analyzing alternatives that are important to the community. The goal is a more transparent and inclusive analysis process.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Don Boucher
541-899-3840
Upper Applegate
Team Leader
Rogue River-Siskiyou
National Forest
dboucher@fs.fed.us

A Huey helicopter brings logs from the fuels demonstration units to the landing off Palmer Creek Road in February 2017.

The Upper Applegate watershed in February 2017. Note on the right side of the photo, the scorched trees from last summer's Burnt Peak Fire.