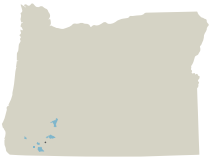
OWEB FOCUSED INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP
CUMULATIVE PROGRESS REPORT 2024
COVERING BIENNIA 1-3

Rogue Forest *Partners*

Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative


Applegate Watershed *(credit: Terry Fairbanks)*

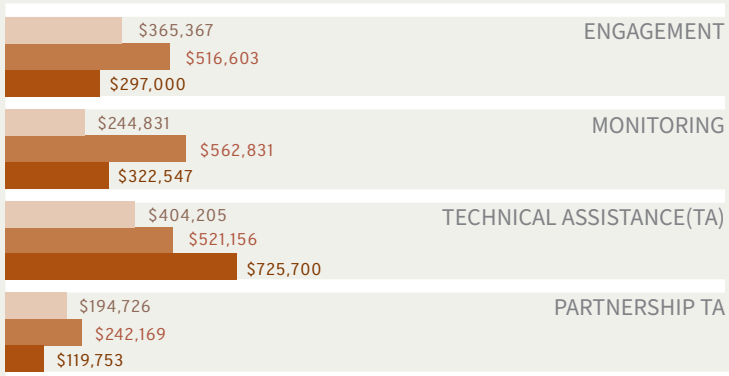
DRY-TYPE FOREST HABITAT
OAK WOODLAND AND PRAIRIE HABITAT
AQUATIC HABITAT FOR NATIVE FISH SPECIES



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, 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 $6,000,000 in funding.
At the time of application, the FIP anticipated leveraging an additional $969,926 throughout the life of the initiative.



paid to date, as of this report *(6/30/24).* obligated in grant agreement proposed in application

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 July 2019, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board awarded a FIP grant to the Rogue Forest Partners (Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative, RFRI). 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

- 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

Restoration

25,197 LEGACY TREES ENHANCED

1,376 ACRES TREATED TO RESTORE COMPLEX HABITAT

6,110 ACRES OF DRY FOREST HABITAT TREATED WITH UNDERBURNING

5,370 ACRES OF MIXED CONIFER/HARDWOOD FOREST AND WOODLANDS TREATED TO RESTORE OPEN HABITAT

+

3,052 ACRES OF RESTORED OPEN HABITAT

6,933 ACRES MONITORED WITH **1,057 ACRES** OF POST-TREATMENT MONITORING

Economic Benefits

155 PRIVATE LANDOWNERS ENROLLED

20 FULL-TIME-EQUIVALENT POSITIONS SUPPORTED

Stakeholder Engagement

714 CONTACTS THROUGH ENGAGEMENTS

6 FIELD TRIPS & TOURS (OVER 130 ATTENDEES)

OVER **150** PARTICIPANTS IN INTER-TRIBAL ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING SUMMIT

7 PARTNER MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS (OVER 107 ATTENDEES)

2 COMMUNITY EVENTS (OVER 90 ATTENDEES)

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

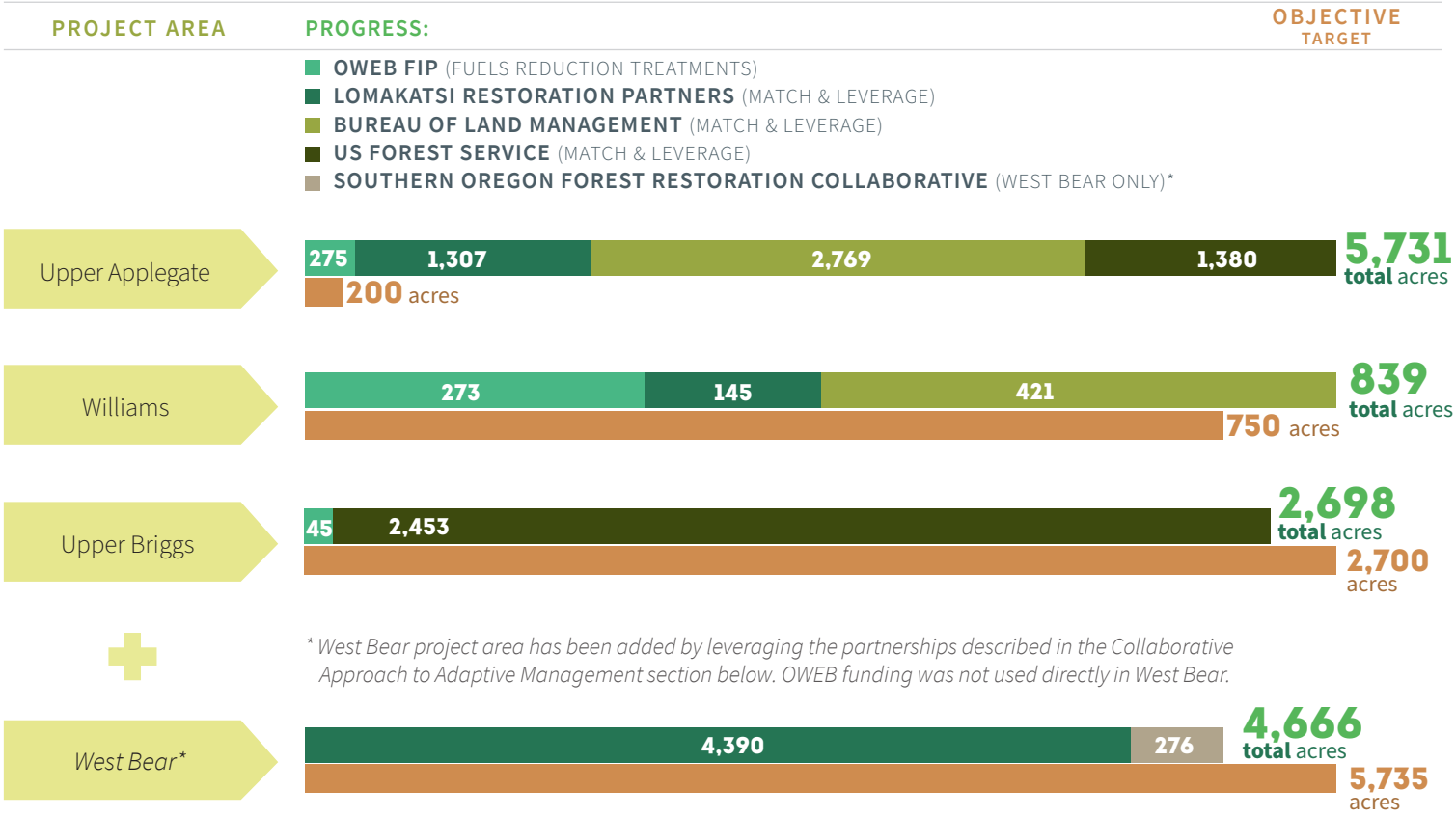
Long Term 10+ YEARS

- 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 1-3

Progress on outputs shown below represents actions completed through OWEB grants.

Partner organizations accomplished additional acres of treatment in the same project area that contributed to landscape resiliency. These partners include: ODF, USFS, NRCS, BLM, SNW, and FEMA.



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.

AFR Underburn *(credit: Rogue Forest Partners)*

Adaptive Management

Restoration

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
Partner projects affecting RFRI.	Aligning monitoring and treatment prescriptions is helpful but multiple projects taken on by partners have competing timelines.	Work to hold efficient meetings that are necessary to coordinate work. Ensure that partners have sufficient project management capacity.
Commercial accomplishments and Douglas-fir mortality.	One project lost all of the Douglas-fir commercial value due to insect mortality.	Lack of receipts from commercial treatments needed to be offset by additional leverage.
NEPA documents interfered with ability to adapt to changing conditions—Douglas-fir mortality.	There are ways to adapt existing NEPA.	Additional NEPA documentation used to address changing conditions.
Inflation has played a role in meeting acre objectives that were set years ago.	High-end costs have become the norm instead of being part of a range of costs.	It's better to underestimate objectives if prices are likely to change over time.

Monitoring

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
Linkages between monitoring and engagement still need to be more fully formed.	Greater linkages between monitoring and engagement are needed.	Beginning to integrate the two through meetings/projects for example, production of Douglas-fir mortality briefing paper was a joint effort.
Field trip adaptive management fatigue.	Target field review and employ planning with clear roles objectives, and participants.	RFRI Partners developed a document to guide adaptive management and field reviews.
Ambitious monitoring plan—not cognizant of the resources need to fully carry out.	Pre and post monitoring of treatments is well developed—it was good to concentrate on this to fully analyze effectiveness.	Combine other project monitoring such as CFLRP where they overlap for additional monitoring support.

Adaptive Management

Engagement

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
Turnout at project events is at low end for general public.	Project tours need lots of lead time. Don't rely on rsvp's or social media as an indicator of attendance.	Projects will be advertised 3 weeks in advance. Considering regularly scheduled tours for specific groups.
Knowing which engagement method is best, what generates interest.	General knowledge and support is widespread using a variety of methods—website, social media, local media.	Monitor responses of various engagement methods with appropriate metrics.
Participant feedback low.	Minimal feedback from questionnaires about participant feedback.	Continue to explore QR codes, follow-up interviews, onsite evaluation.

Partnership Capacity

CHALLENGES	LESSONS LEARNED	ADAPTATIONS
Working with all partners and their employees.	Regular meetings keep partner leaders informed but not necessarily other employees within partner organizations.	Since Biennium One, relationships with partner organizations have strengthened due to activities like partnership workshops, leading to greater employee participation. Examples include workshops with 25 attendees representing the majority of partners.
Multiple projects by partnership.	There are common themes in each of the three projects RFP is working on but keeping them straight is a challenge.	Spend less time discussing each project; look for commonalities; share resources.
Different levels of participation by partners.	Some partners only attend occasional committee meetings.	Continue to reach out, share successes and take the time to re-envision the future of the partnership as Biennium 3 comes to an end.

Upper Applegate Watershed project area *(credit: Kerry Metlen)*