

Dry Mixed-Conifer Restoration Recommendations

Approved by the Steering Committee, Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project 10/11/11

The following recommendations were produced for three different scales:

1. **Landscape-level:** A clear picture of the scale and scope of the restoration need (at the Deschutes Skyline **landscape-level**; 145,000 acres but with application for the Deschutes NF, 1.6 million acres).
2. **Project-level:** Where restoration can be appropriately and effectively implemented given project values/ needs/ constraints.
3. **Stand-level:** Type of restoration treatments needed to return the forest to a healthy and resilient condition.

1. Landscape-level recommendations represent an ecologically-based approach to forest restoration based on restoring ecological pattern and process in fire-adapted forests towards the **Historic Range of Variability (HRV)**. The sub-committee agrees to use **Plant Association Group (PAG)** or forest type) and HRV as the basis for guidelines to determine the desired future condition of a healthy and resilient fire-adapted forest across the landscape, with the understanding that HRV goals should be applied at the appropriate scale and will not be met on every acre.

Collaborative Recommendations

Dry Mixed Conifer:

- Manage landscape so resilient to natural processes
- Use HRV to guide understory and overstory species structure and composition goals:
 - Maintain and promote legacy structure at densities within HRV
 - Manage for diversity on the landscape, including species diversity and structural diversity within the HRV
 - Manage for diversity where it appropriately falls or is maintained on landscape (e.g., white fir on north-facing slopes)
 - Achieve lower densities of late-seral species (e.g., white fir) where appropriate through larger and/or more group openings to return stands to early-seral dominant forest (e.g., ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, western larch)
- Recognize over-abundance of “mid-seral closed” stands and focus restoration activities on these stands
- Increase area of forest where conditions allow fire (prescribed or natural start) to be used as a tool to achieve restoration goals
- Provide wildlife core habitats and corridors for wildlife species diversity

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2. Project-level recommendations integrate the ecologically-based, landscape-level recommendations with **collaborative values** and **public forest management guidelines**. The characteristics of each project-planning area dictate which values, objectives, and constraints warrant consideration at the project-level.

Collaborative Recommendations

Dry Mixed Conifer:

- Put in context of landscape's HRV as measured in % successional stages (structure descriptions based on age and density), tree composition and as seen on the ground by legacy material and evidence of fire
- Ensure successional stages are located in a mosaic to imitate natural disturbance patterns as we currently understand (using best available science)
- Use existing structural and compositional opportunities already present on landscape (enhance openings, choose clumps from dense patches)
- Use fire as appropriate, taking into account other values (ecological, social, health and safety)
- Treatment entries:
 - In stands with old-growth trees and characteristics, strive to meet target density to achieve restoration goals with one mechanical entry and maintain with fire or fire surrogate (e.g. mowing)
 - In 2nd growth/ black bark stands, look for opportunities to utilize re-entries to meet restoration goals (approximately > 20 years)

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3. Stand-level recommendations provide concrete, on-the-ground prescriptions for restoration treatments in stands with specific issues that have had a lack of management agreement within stakeholders in the past.

Such fine-scale guidance is not needed or planned for stand types where there is broad agreement on desired outcomes. However, in certain stand conditions, these recommendations could help increase support for management and help planning teams, silviculturalists, foresters, marking crews, and equipment operators appropriately and efficiently envision, locate, and implement collaborative restoration recommendations.

It is important that stand-level prescriptive recommendations be realistic and operationally feasible.

Collaborative Recommendations

Dry Mixed Conifer:

- Where stand is being managed for restoration goals, utilize multiple tools and guidelines to develop and achieve restoration tree composition and structure goals:
 - Promote tree species that are resilient to fire
 - Retain dominant ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and western larch regardless of spacing to achieve large structures and clumps
 - Utilize variable spacing to achieve stand-level “clumpy, gappy, patchy” structure
 - Use skips and gaps as defined by best available science to achieve stand-level “clumpy, gappy, patchy” structure and promote/protect dominant species appropriate to historic species composition for dry mixed-conifer PAG (e.g., ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and western larch)”
 - Plan for and implement ecologically appropriate fire as a restoration tool
 - Look for opportunities to increase use of natural and prescribed fire