

Kerns Rainbow Ranch, Inc.  
45917 Quail Road  
Haines, OR 97833  
April 5, 2016

Blue Mountain Restoration Strategy Team  
72510 Coyote Rd.  
Pendleton, OR 97801

RE: Eastside Resiliency Project EOS Scoping Comments

Dear Sir,

First, we would like to commend you for the positive, and forward looking approach to possible solutions to enhancing the health of the Wallowa Whitman Forest. We attended the public meeting in Baker City, Thur., Mar. 31, and felt it was a very valuable experience. The information given by the moderator, as well as the interaction with the staff and public in the breakout sessions was excellent.

We agree that logging and thinning are two primary tools to be considered in bringing the forest back into a more healthy condition. However, we feel more focus needs to be put on watershed health of the entire forest. Overall watershed health must be a top priority in the resiliency project.

We farm/ranch on the west side of the Baker Valley, and depend on the Pine Creek/Willow Creek/Rock Creek and North Powder River watershed(s) for our irrigation water. These 4 watersheds provide irrigation water to roughly 15,000 acres of crop and pasture lands in this end of the valley.

A healthy, resilient watershed provides a slower release of water as well as reduced runoff erosion during spring melt and storm flashes. Healthy riparian areas can also help to provide cooler water, and bank vegetation cover which provides "catch materials" that prevent siltation in the creeks and rivers. Healthy riparian areas also have stabilized banks which protect water quality and quantity.

The 2006 fire on Red Mountain essentially created a clear-cut landscape. Due to the granitic soil in that area, there is now little vegetation materials to give water retention for late season flows. The North Powder River watershed was negatively impacted by the results of the fire.

We also would like to have grazing be more of a management tool for vegetation management. Cattle can very effectively harvest the wolfe plant and grass materials which become tinder in a lightning strike. Adjacent private forests which utilize grazing demonstrate a forest floor which does not have a heavy ground fuel load for a fire to make a catastrophic ground-run.

Thank you for your efforts to find workable solutions to restoring our beloved Wallowa Whitman Forest back to a healthy condition. We know your hands have been tied in many of your efforts. The solutions offered as possible actions in this management plan are good – and they can be workable.

Sincerely,

  
Tim and Jan Kerns