

**CONSENSUS COMMENTS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST**

Butterfly Creek Proposed Project

Bitterroot Restoration Committee
June 2009

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Collaborative Framework

Issue Statement

There is a need and an opportunity to increase the ecological integrity of the Butterfly Creek area. It is the Committee's initial intent to improve the fire resistance of about 250 acres so it can tolerate a natural fire regime without losing old growth Ponderosa Pine ecosystem components and be maintained in the long term, through prescribed fire.

It is understood that an amount of mechanical treatment will be necessary in the first entry to position the area for ongoing maintenance through prescribed burning.

The possibility also exists to expand the treated area to include about 350 adjacent acres.

Interests

The Committee shares the following interests regarding the area:

- Protect and restore old growth Ponderosa Pine stands by making them more resistant to fire.
- Protect water quality threatened by catastrophic wildfire and potentially impacted by access for management activities.
- Provide for low-impact, long-term access for ongoing maintenance.
- Maintain visual quality from the Valley floor and from adjoining areas.
- Enhance recreational opportunities with improved habitat and visual quality.

Desired Future Condition

The Committee seeks the following desired results:

- A healthy fire-resistant area with a preponderance of large Ponderosa Pine and some Douglas fir.
- Uneven age class.
- A well-established, managed fire routine.
- A low impact access strategy for ongoing maintenance.
- Improved watershed function in the Butterfly Creek area.

Guiding Principles

The Committee believes:

- That in order to retain/enhance old growth Ponderosa Pine characteristics in the area, management is required.
- In keeping sedimentation to a minimum to protect fisheries and water quality.
- In retaining existing recreational uses because treatments should not preclude future use in this area.
- In approaches that reduce long term maintenance costs because the Forest Service needs to reduce its deferred maintenance backlog on a limited budget.

Thoughts about Prescriptions that might Achieve the Desired Condition

1. In a portion of the project area, reduce density of Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine (Reduce Ponderosa Pine 8" < dbh; thin Douglas Fir trees up to 16"; leave large trees.
2. In a portion of the project area, apply the restoration prescription developed by the Forest Service.
3. Leave some dense area.
4. Protect large trees from mortality with prescribed fire.
5. Leave snags over 16".

Committee Recommendations

- Honor the above described Collaborative Framework developed by the Committee for the Project area.
- Per access:
 - Reconstruct/construct a suitable minimum standard road access for logging trucks on a route south of and away from Butterfly Creek utilizing existing road prisms as much as feasible.
 - Obliterate an amount of existing unneeded road prism in the project area that is equal to or greater than the amount of new road construction.
 - Obliterate the section of road next to Butterfly Creek to the extent necessary to protect water quality while retaining an adequate horse trail. Obliterate the junction with Road #13111.
 - Use a gate to close the new access road after project completion in a manner that restricts vehicular access except as required for future management; the road should be classified as a Management Level 1.

Committee Recommendations cont.

- Whatever the eventual access strategy, design it so that:
 - It supports creating conditions that make the site better able to tolerate wildfire or prescribed burn without losing old growth character.
 - It provides low impact, long-term access for ongoing maintenance of the area.
- Fix/pull the culverts on the Butterfly Creek Road where the road is being obliterated.
- Restore the Willow Creek road regardless of what happens with this Project.
- Recognize that this is not an area for motorized recreation use.
- Evaluate whether a Stewardship Contract would be appropriate for the Project.
- Continue to involve “the Committee” as the Project moves forward.