

[These guidelines were developed early in SOFRC's formation when they were no longer the "Knitting Circle."]

## **PRODUCTIVE HARMONY GUIDELINES**

Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative

### **Overview**

We are a diverse group of stakeholders who share a long-term goal to remove small diameter trees from uncharacteristically dense forests in the Rogue Basin. We believe this is critical in order to improve ecological health and resiliency, reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire, and improve the region's economy and quality of life.

We have developed these guidelines to ensure that ecological, social, and economic goals are given equal attention and pursued together in a spirit of productive harmony, or sustainability. We have defined each of the three "legs" of our sustainability stool at three levels of detail:

1. Our **long-term goal** is the ideal which we strive to maximize. Different projects will come closer to meeting one or another of these goals, but we will maximize them all to the extent possible.
2. Our **minimum standard** is the threshold that any project must meet to gain our support. This is our "bottom line" in each category, and we will not support any project that fails to meet any of these thresholds.
3. **Specific guidelines** outline the way we will do our work. We recognize that every project and situation will be slightly different, and it is not possible to write a single set of specific guidelines that have universal application. The guidelines will be adapted to each specific project and will also adapt and evolve over time as we learn more and grow more comfortable working together.

### **Social Goals & Guidelines**

**Long term goal:** Forest lands contribute to a high quality of life and to strong communities by providing recreation, beauty, and other important values while being managed in a way that builds trust and community capacity.

**Minimum standard:** Any work we support must have broad based community support, providing more social benefits than social costs.

#### **Specific guidelines:**

1. *Focus on local priorities.* We will look to local communities to help identify priorities, such as plantations, projects within the Wildland-Urban Interface, and projects identified via Community Wildfire Protection Plans. (See table.)
2. *Be clear about what "small" means.* Since we are focused on reducing forest density by removing small diameter trees, we will explicitly and publicly identify the diameters of trees to be cut, and the ecological, social, and/or economic reasons for cutting them. In

general, we will avoid removal of trees over 20 inches dbh unless justified on ecological grounds (e.g. larger white firs encroaching due to fire exclusion.)

3. *Be open and transparent.* We will be inclusive, transparent, and welcoming to anyone who wants to work together toward our shared goals.
4. *Involve stakeholders early.* We will specifically seek to involve communities of interest, as well as local communities of place, as early and as fully as possible.
5. *Value all social benefits.* Forest lands provide diverse benefits, including scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, and a cultural legacy. We will seek to understand, value, and protect these many different benefits.
6. *Build community capacity.* We will seek to increase and sustain community capacity to harvest and process small diameter timber in ways that provide social and economic benefits for people in the community.
7. *Engage residents.* We will engage residents via community processes which are respectful, inclusive, comfortable, culturally appropriate, and build trust.

### **Economic Goals & Guidelines**

**Long term goal:** Forest lands support a thriving small-diameter timber industry that provides high quality work in profitable local businesses and generates revenues for local governments.

**Minimum standard:** Any work we support must generate more revenue than expenses. Revenue includes subsidies as well as the market value of the products removed.

#### **Specific guidelines:**

1. *Begin with more economically viable projects.* We will tend to focus first on projects that have good existing access, and where markets can be identified for the material to be removed. (See table.)
2. *Capture all economic benefits.* The benefits from small diameter projects include both the market value of the products removed, and non-market benefits (e.g. reduced fire risk, improved habitat.) We will actively work to establish the economic value of non-market benefits and develop strategies that pay for them.
3. *Seek maximum economic value-added.* We will strive to have small diameter material put to the economic use that adds the greatest economic value and generates the greatest level of local economic activity. (e.g. a two-by-four has more social and economic value than a log that is chipped for market because it adds more jobs and income; likewise, wood used in furniture manufacturing has more value than a two-by-four.)
4. *Catalyze economic activity.* We will strive to play a catalytic role in fostering the development of new economic ventures that utilize small diameter material and engage local workers, contractors, and entrepreneurs.
5. *Support business development.* We will design projects to support business development (e.g. via long-term contracts.)
6. *Spread opportunity.* We will strive to develop projects that spread economic opportunities to diverse organizations, businesses, and families.

## Ecological Goals & Guidelines

**Long term goal:** Forest lands are restored and protected as healthy, resilient ecosystems with high ecological integrity.

**Minimum standard:** Any work we support must result in a significant net improvement in ecological health and resiliency.

### **Specific guidelines<sup>1</sup>:**

1. *Focus on the most altered systems.* The priorities for active restoration include plantations, dry forests with historically low -severity fire regimes, and mixed-severity regimes that currently support a disproportionate number of small diameter trees and uncharacteristically high probability of crown fire. (See table)
2. *Seek adaptive improvement.* Reduce uncertainty of forest integrity and restoration by employing an adaptive approach based in monitoring, research, and scientific review.
3. *Build ecological integrity and resiliency.* The objective of forest restoration is ecological integrity and resiliency by restoring within the natural range of variability the functions, processes, structure complexity, and the composition of species and their interactive networks. Projects we support to remove small diameter material will not achieve this objective by themselves but should serve to support it.
4. *Solve for the context of place.* A spatially explicit prioritization that reflects conditions across multiple scales of watershed, landscape, and region over time is needed. This prioritization should analyze root causes of degradation such that specific restoration tools can be matched with those causes.
5. *Integrate conservation in restoration.* Prioritize and strategically integrate treatment and non-treatment areas, each with site specific prescriptions-- fostering regional and landscape heterogeneity and habitat connectivity, to preserve rare landscape elements, sensitive communities, old growth communities, critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats and associated species. Protect large contiguous or connected habitat while recognizing that some protected areas may require active (or passive) management.
6. *Use ecological references.* Guide restoration treatments through use of specific ecological references for composition and structure based in Plant Association Group and historic fire regime accounts.
7. *Apply "fire-safe" treatments.* Consider mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, but in all cases apply fire-safe principles; reduce surface fuels, possibly raking fuel away from leave trees, increase height to live crown, decrease crown density, thin and remove excess trees, etc.
8. *Retain large and complex woody biomass.* Integrate fire and structure by retaining the most fire-resistant, large live trees, particularly trees that pre-date Euro-American settlement, large snags and down logs, and retain the structural complexity of tree clusters while also retaining a component of younger trees for recruitment. This will generally mean avoiding removal of trees over 20 inches dbh unless justified on ecological grounds (e.g. larger white firs encroaching due to fire exclusion.)
9. *Restore understory composition and structure.* Reestablish healthy native forest understory, managing both composition and structure proactively.

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<sup>1</sup> Literature review and citations available from the Collaborative upon request.

10. *Use minimum tool necessary.* Minimize negative impacts of restoration and consider a staged approach. Elevate the priority of treatments in roaded areas and avoid construction of new roads; protect and maintain watershed and soil integrity. Remove ecological stressors where feasible as part of project design. Act conservatively in removing biomass materials to maintain soil productivity.

### **Opportunity Table**

These guidelines also provide a structure for prioritizing where we work and what kinds of projects we will support, based on ecological, economic, and social opportunities. For example, our ecological priority might be even-aged “plantations,” whereas economic opportunities might be greater in areas with good roads and our social priorities could include areas near communities. Our challenge in choosing and designing projects, and working through the necessary details, will be to identify areas where these multiple priorities overlap. The table below shows these issues graphically.

<b>PROJECT OPPORTUNITY</b>				
	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>SPECIAL CASES ONLY</b>
<b>Social</b>	Directly supports identified social benefits	Indirectly supports identified social benefits	No substantial impact on identified social benefits	Significant negative impacts on identified social benefits
	Highest hazard priorities identified via county or local Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) or other planning efforts	Medium hazard priorities in CWPPs or other plans	Lower hazard priorities in CWPPs or other plans	
<b>Economic</b>			Critical habitats for endangered species	Roadless or Inventoried Roadless Areas
	Great road access	Adequate roads, some skid paths may be required	Some helicopters required	Areas where significant new roads or helicopter logging required
	Guaranteed end user	Near infrastructure, markets	Infrastructure lacking, markets distant	
<b>Ecological</b>	End use is high value	End use is medium value	End use is low value	No identified end use
	Plantations in Matrix or Late Successional Reserve (LSR) locations	Matrix Lands or LSR (non plantation)	Steep slopes, fragile soils critical habitats for endangered species	Wilderness areas, roadless/inventoried roadless areas, Riparian Reserves, Wild & Scenic River Corridors
	Historical low severity fire regimes	Historical mixed severity fire regimes outside NRV	Historical mixed severity fire regimes within NRV	Historical high severity fire regimes