

Dunes Restoration Strategy
Meeting Minutes - September 25th, 2014
3:00-6:00 pm
Community Baptist Church, Florence OR

Facilitator Kirk S. welcomed the participants to the meeting at approximately 3:00. He explained that he is an independent facilitator who has worked with the US Forest Service (USFS) in other collaborative efforts, and was asked to facilitate this meeting.

Purpose and goals: Michelle J., District Ranger for the Central Coast Ranger District (Siuslaw National Forest) discussed the responsibility of the USFS as good stewards of the land. The Dunes National Recreation Area (ODNRA) is one of the nation's premiere destinations for all-terrain vehicles (ATV) and other recreational uses, and as such is critical to local economies. The loss of dune habitats and open sand to invasive species such as European beach grass and Scotch Broom is potentially devastating to the area from both an ecological and an economic perspective. Restoration efforts have thus far been somewhat scattered and have had mixed success. Michelle reiterated that the USFS is eager to join forces with interested parties in this collaborative effort. She outlined the purpose of the Dunes Restoration Strategy with these three main premises:

- **Preserve the best** high quality dunes habitats, functioning ecological processes, and existing recreational experience
- **Restore natural processes** of sand movement that create native habitats and globally significant dune plant communities
- **Restore local conditions** to enable activities such as recreational riding in open sand, hiking, providing opportunities for vistas, and wildlife habitat for bird watching

Kirk asked the group if they agreed with these ideas, and whether these correctly captured what the group's concerns are. There was general head-nodding in agreement, and the group had nothing to add. Kirk and Michelle explained that the atmosphere of this project is to collaborate, engage, and learn and adapt together. The USFS will shepherd the process forward, yet the group's energy and input is vital to the success of this effort, and will lead to a better product in the end. Michelle gave some general sideboards to the Strategy, in terms of timeframe (producing a guiding document by early summer 2015) and the area covered (the ODNRA, and possibly the area directly adjacent to the north on Forest Service –administered land that is in a similar condition). The goals for this meeting are to update folks as to the status of this effort (i.e. the history thus far), share examples of implementation of similar projects, and work together to determine the next steps. The end goal of this Dunes Restoration Strategy effort is **to produce a guiding document for how we approach dunes restoration.**

Introductions: Kirk led the group through introductions, wherein they stated their name, what organization (if any) they were representing, and shared (in one breath, for brevity's sake) the thing that they were most interested in or passionate about the dunes.

History: Barbara and Sarah talked briefly about the history of this Dunes Strategy effort. Barbara gave a brief history of the formation of Save The Riders Dunes (STRD). She described how she and Jody (President of STRD) read and responded to a blog post by Sarah. They met and found that despite their disparate backgrounds and leanings, they had a lot in common when it came to their shared passion to save the dunes environment. They came to an agreement that they did not want to sit back, but wanted to do something about the state of the dunes, hence their involvement in earlier iterations of this current effort. Lance Rowland of STRD shared large photos and maps which showed the depletion of open sand and encroachment of invasives over time.

Examples of recently implemented, similar projects: USFS Wildlife Biologist Cindy gave a short Powerpoint that highlighted restoration projects in this and similar environments:

- Types of project goals: create snowy plover habitat, open sand riding, restore native plant communities.
- Types of treatment methods: manual removal, mechanical treatment, burning, herbicide application, repetitive burning, bi-control.
- Preserve the best: Northwest Youth Corps crews and local volunteers from the Florence area have been working hard to control gorse, Scotch broom and European beach grass in areas adjacent to Heceta Dunes by manual methods.
- Restore native habitats and natural processes: Baker/Sutton beach project as an example. Cindy shared an example of a collaborative effort that benefited all parties: the National Guard needed to train its people in how to use large mechanized equipment in desert environments, and thus these folks were put to work by the USFS in an invasives removal project on the dunes. Truly an example of a win-win for all!
- Restore local conditions: to enable activities such as recreational riding in open sand, hiking, providing opportunities for vistas, and wildlife habitat. Bull Run as an example.

Issues and concerns: Kirk reframed this with the question: What topics need to be addressed in the Strategy document? The following are some of the comments that ensued:

- Depolarization of the two sides
- Educational field trip: non OHV areas, European beach grass, native vegetation (retention ridge to the ocean = different geographical features, different topography)
- Dunes overlook
- Baseline inventory of plant species
- What will it (the document) look like? Idea: coffee table book
- Produce a visual representation of what is happening out there, so that the need becomes instantly recognizable
- What area is the biggest bang for the buck?
- Invite school Superintendents on field trips
- Get Congressional support- this is a national treasure

In addition to these ideas, Kirk pointed out that the topics that need to be addressed were largely brought up in the introductions when people shared their passions:

- Public access
- Recreation
- Wildlife, key species
- Partnerships
- Funding
- Dune/sand preservation
- Natural function
- Wetlands
- Road impacts
- Synergy
- Public engagement

Next Steps: The participants agreed to set the date of October 24th for a field trip which will be led by Cindy, Courtney, Dina, Sarah, and Jane. Invitations and details will be emailed out to the larger list serve. The next Dunes Restoration Strategy meeting will be determined via doodle poll, and will hopefully take place in November. It is possible over time that focus/work groups will arise, with people gravitating towards the areas and topics that they are particularly interested in. Funding still remains to be determined, but it was agreed that even small projects might bring people in, and could be leveraged to gain more visibility and bring in larger funding amounts.

Closing exercise: Kirk asked the participants to evaluate/respond to the meeting in seven words or less. There is a general feeling of hopefulness and excitement about this process, and the group is eager to move forward.