



Quarterly Connection

Research Uncovers Social Attitudes Toward Changing Forests

By Joel Hartter, Larry Hamilton, Forrest Stevens, Russ Congalton, Mark Ducey, Michael Campbell, Dan Maynard

“Do you think that forests in your area are more healthy, less healthy, or about the same as they were 20 years ago?” More than 60 percent of Wallowa County residents think forests are less healthy, according to a survey conducted last fall by scientists on the Communities and Forests in Oregon (CAFOR) research project.

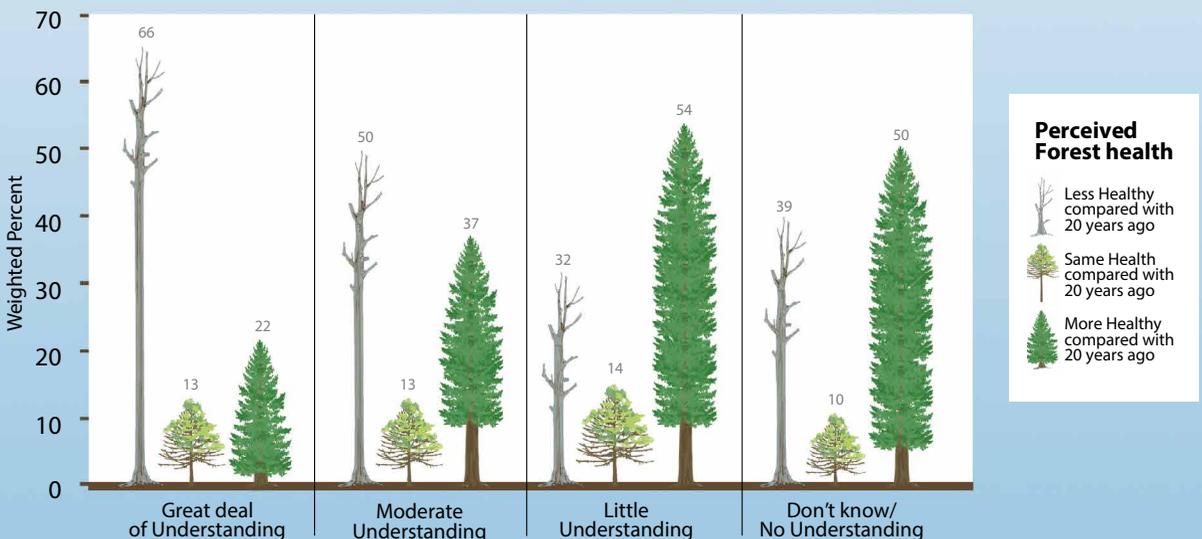
This was just one question in a telephone survey of more than 1,500 residents in Wallowa, Baker and Union counties. The telephone survey made up one part of a multidisciplinary research project led by scientists from the University of New Hampshire and the University of Florida.

Over the last several decades, northeastern Oregon has experienced dramatic changes in forest management, markets and policy, and the demographics of people who own forest lands. The CAFOR project will contribute to understanding the social and ecological changes of northeastern Oregon’s working landscape. Funded by a 3-year grant from the USDA’s Disaster Resilience for Rural Communities Program, the project’s main objective is to match detailed information on forest conditions in the three counties with the perceptions that area residents have about those changes, and how they think forests should be managed as a result.

The team of researchers led by UNH geography professor Joel Hartter, visited Wallowa Resources and the Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee in early July, and also held public meetings in Enterprise, La Grande, and Baker City, to talk over the survey results and hear residents’ views about how to interpret the findings.

The project has three parallel parts happening simultaneously. The first aims to learn how the landscape of the three counties has changed over time. Satellite data quantifies changes in the landscape, providing multiple “snapshots” over time tracking

Continued on page 2 ►



Perception of forest health by self-assessed understanding

In a 2011 telephone survey of Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties, residents were asked their views about how local forest health compares now with 20 years ago. We categorized responses in relation to how much people said they believe they understand about forest health along a spectrum of a “Great deal” to “Don’t know or nothing.” In general the trends indicate that the more people think they know, the less healthy they believe forests are now.

changes in forest, agriculture, and other types of land cover across the three counties.

The second part of the project is to characterize local forest conditions. The species mixture, age structure, forest stand density and height, and canopy layers have important implications for the management of timber, wildfire, insects, invasive species, and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, most methods for measuring these forest characteristics are time consuming, expensive, or inaccurate. Project members are developing and field-testing two new methods that should be helpful to forest landowners in assessing forest conditions.

The third part of the project involves learning more about how area residents view the forests and other changes in their communities. The questions in the fall 2011 survey asked about perceptions of natural resources, the environment, and the future of their communities.

The survey turned up some interesting patterns, such as one-half of the people surveyed report that forests in their area are less healthy than they were 20 years ago. About a third favor eliminating wolves from the region; the strongest feelings on this issue occur in Wallowa County. A larger group (41 percent) favors limited

hunting of wolves instead. More results can be found in a report here: www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/IB-Hartter-NE-Oregon-Survey.pdf. Overall, the pattern of survey responses reflects a region transitioning from historical resource dependency to a more diversified future based to a greater degree on natural amenities.

By putting all three pieces of data together, the scientists hope to paint a richer picture of the changes that have occurred in these three counties. The information might find local perceptions largely match the satellite and forest-survey data; or there may be areas where perceptions about forests diverge from actual conditions. This information could be useful to Wallowa

Resources and other organizations in identifying where management may be implemented or altered and where education or extension activities could be targeted. The research findings will provide “real numbers” to quantify situations and inform policies regarding issues that many people already are concerned about, from local to national levels.

For more information or questions about the project and ongoing research, please contact Dr. Joel Hartter (joel.hartter@unh.edu).



Biomass Heats Wallowa Resources' Stewardship Center

By Matt King

Ah, the subtle fragrance of Oregon's woods... in the basement of the Wallowa Resources Stewardship Center! Yes, a pile of fresh pine pellets fills the old coal storage bin. These pellets are the feedstock for a set of new biomass boilers that now provide thermal energy for the building in the form of hot water. Water heated by the boilers circulates throughout the 60,000 square foot building, keeping our offices warm and cozy - even when the winter weather here in Enterprise isn't.

The old oil boilers were nearing the end of their life and the price of fuel oil was skyrocketing. So last year we compared financial scenarios among various technology options. We selected wood pellet boilers, which had the added bonus of supporting forest products businesses. We also secured grant support. One oil boiler was replaced by the pellet boilers, and a pneumatic system was installed to transfer the wood pellets from the coal bin to the boilers. The other oil boiler was left as a backup.

Those of us here at Wallowa Resources are tickled to know that our building's energy demands are being met using a home-grown renewable resource. We're buying Eastern Oregon

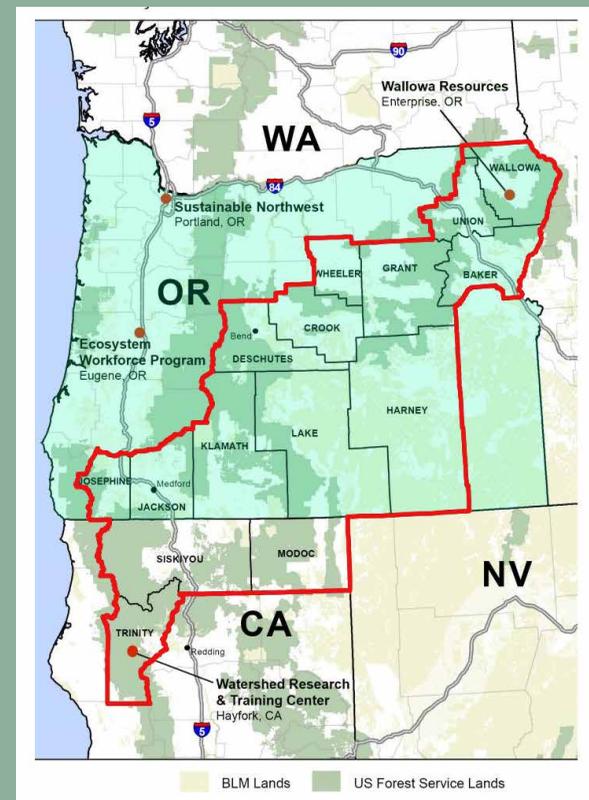
wood products, sourcing pellets from John Day until Wallowa County capacity is developed. This benefits the Northeastern Oregon economy and our communities, because we are supporting regional jobs and natural resources instead of exporting dollars to import fuels. In addition, we are creating a new market for biomass, which will offset the costs of doing local forest stewardship projects, such as thinning, restoration, and hazardous fuels reduction.

Given the recent technological advances in biomass systems, wood pellets have the potential to replace a portion of electric, oil, and gas energy for space heating, particularly near Western forests where biomass waste is generated as a by-product of forest stewardship activities. We are excited about sharing our knowledge with others who are considering conversion to biomass fuels at a commercial scale. Contact us at www.wallowaresources.org if you would like to learn more.



Biomass boilers producing heat for Wallowa Resources Stewardship Center

Dry Forest Zone Supports Stewardship and Job Creation



By Emily Jane Davis and Dylan Kruse

An invisible thread runs through Oregon's eastern forests. It weaves from the Ponderosa pines of Wal-

lowa County to the Blues and along the Cascade crest; through oak and Manzanita and into the Trinity Alps of northern California. This thread ties stewardship of

forestlands to the resilience of communities in what we call the Dry Forest Zone.

The Dry Forest Zone project has ambitious land management, biomass utilization, and policy goals focused on 15 counties in eastern Oregon and northern California. It supports the development of practical projects to improve community and forest health, and share lessons learned along the way. The Integrated Biomass Energy Campus being built in Wallowa County is an example of these efforts. The Dry Forest Zone is a constellation of networks and people separated by hundreds of miles, who nonetheless are facing similar challenges and seeking similar goals in their local communities.

It is difficult to capture the function and significance of these networks in

words. But they are having powerful effects. The Dry Forest Zone project targets vulnerabilities in the social and economic fabric of this region by creating forums where community-based organizations and collaborative groups face common issues. Where these groups have been active, diverse stakeholders have been able to find agreement on land management, restore forests, and support jobs. For instance, there are now three selected Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program projects in the Zone, projected to treat 481,580 acres and create 350 jobs over the projects' durations.

By helping boiler conversions and integrated wood utilization projects come to fruition on the ground, the project has provided evidence to spur future investment in biomass

development. When the project began, there were two biomass boilers in Oregon. Today there are 12, and many more are planned.

Finally, after listening to rural voices from the Dry Forest Zone, federal land agencies are now seeking ways to break down institutional divisions to accelerate restoration across watersheds, larger landscapes, and landownerships.

The premise of this project remains challenging, particularly when belts are tightened. Yet its promise continues to draw people in: by working together, there are great possibilities.

Wallowa Resources is a partner on this project with Sustainable Northwest, the Watershed Research and Training Center, and the Ecosystem Workforce Program. To learn more, visit <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/programs/dfz>



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Help Us Raise Funds for Youth Jobs and Local Programs!

Here are two fun and easy ways you can help Wallowa Resources raise money for our programs:

FACEBOOK Competition: Vote for our Wallowa Resources project on the Go Wild for Oregon Wildlife Facebook contest and we can win \$10,000 for Aspen Restoration – Involving Students in Evaluating Success. Go to the link at: <http://bit.ly/UC1P48> You will need a Facebook account and will need to “Like” the Oregon Wildlife Facebook page in order to vote. Voting ends at midnight on Monday 12/17, so vote now and share with your Facebook friends.



Trophy Bull Elk Tag raffle: Wallowa Resources was awarded a 2013 bull elk tag by The Nature Conservancy. The winner will have a rare opportunity to hunt the big bulls on the 33,000 acre Zumwalt Prairie Preserve, in the Chesnimnus Unit. We will be selling tickets for \$50.00 each, limited to 200 tickets. Check our website for upcoming information on buying tickets www.wallowaresources.org.

In addition to the articles presented here, Wallowa Resources is working on a broad variety of educational, range stewardship, natural resource, policy and watershed restoration projects throughout Wallowa County.

To find out more about what is happening at Wallowa Resources, just go to www.WallowaResources.org or call us at 541-426-8053 today!

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