

## CHAPTER 7

# Where Do You Go from Here?

## Planning and Getting Help

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### Planning

The previous chapters illustrated why and how you might conduct an aspen restoration project. But before you jump in the truck with your chainsaw and fence posts, there are a few steps you can take to make success more likely.

#### Bounce your ideas off someone

Start with your neighbors and other ranchers or woodland owners. They often have great practical experience and know who the local contractors are. You might consider attending an aspen restoration field tour or workshop (Figures 61 and 62). Valuable experiences are shared at these events. Getting together with groups such as the Oregon Small Woodlands Association or Oregon State University Extension Service is a great way to get practical tips on aspen management, as well as to make new friends!

Your neighbors may be private landowners, the U.S. Forest Service, or Bureau of Land Management. Don't shy away from contacting your area district office of state and federal agencies. Many agencies are working on aspen restoration, and an area wildlife biologist or forester may be willing to visit with you. Oregon Department of Forestry stewardship foresters,



Figure 61. Landowner and Master Woodland Manager Maureen Kirby shows her management plan to neighbors as part of a field tour. (Photo: Nicole Strong)



Figure 62. A group of landowners and agency professionals head out to Kevin Westfall's field site near Chiloquin, Oregon. (Photo: Nicole Strong)

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists, and OSU Extension foresters are available to help.

#### Have you written a management plan?

A plan will lay out your vision for your restoration project to anyone who will be working with you, such as technical professionals, contractors, and family members. A plan may be required if you want to receive funds from a cost-share program.

There are many management plan templates, but four elements are essential to any plan:

- A statement of goals and objectives
- A description of your property
- A description of what you intend to do on your property to reach your goals and objectives
- A plan to monitor, or measure, your success

As of 2010, The Oregon Department of Forestry and NRCS offer cost-share funds to hire help in writing a management plan. Another resource is the OSU Extension Service, which offers management planning classes.

### Have you planned for monitoring?

Just as you assessed your grove prior to taking management actions, you will want to keep checking on your project after treatment to ensure that you are meeting your goals. If you received technical assistance, monitoring may be required. If so, check with your resource professional to see whether specific protocols are required.

Not every project is successful. Monitoring may help you identify potential problems and prevent you from repeating them. Sometimes, unexpected events occur, such as a storm, pest outbreak, or invasion by unwanted plant species. If you experience undesired changes, you may need to adjust your management practices.

Goals often are achieved, however! Monitoring your success is a way to keep in touch with your property after the planning process is complete. Monitoring is often the most rewarding part of a restoration project. You will be able to see what you have accomplished through your hard work and careful planning. The landscape developments that occur, as well as sightings of new aspen seedlings or wildlife, are very satisfying. Simply writing down or taking a picture the day you saw a nuthatch making a nest is fun and will create a record for your children or grandchildren to enjoy.

### How to monitor?

There is more than one way to monitor your project, just as there is more than one way to assess it. The best method for your situation will depend on your comfort in collecting data,

as well as on your interest and time. Choose a method that will give you relevant information and that you will stick with. Options include the following:

- If you established plots as described in Chapter 3, you can revisit those sites, collect the same data using the same methods, and take photos. Time-sequence photos are a great way to tell your story.
- If you are not interested in collecting data, or feel you don't have time, simply taking photos and keeping a journal (somewhere handy, such as in your truck) is a good way to keep track of your progress and the returns on your investment of time and money.

### What to monitor?

One of the challenges of monitoring is choosing the indicators of desired change. At a minimum, you will want to set monitoring goals that help you determine whether the project has achieved your desired production, ecological, economic, or social (e.g., recreation) goals.

Once you have identified the goals you want to monitor, you must select the indicators used to measure success or failure. An indicator is simply a unit of information measured over time that documents changes in a specific condition. A good indicator is measurable, precise, consistent, and sensitive to changing conditions. When choosing indicators, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are they relevant for the site and treatment?
- Are they sensitive to change within your time frame? You can see an increased number of regenerating seedlings within 1 to 5 years, while it takes 10 to 70 years to create a multistructured forest grove that will house woodpeckers.
- Are they measurable with your available methods and time?
- Are individual indicators integrated so that the whole suite of indicators provides a reasonable picture of change?

The key is to pick indicators that are important to you and your property management goals. A good place to start is to review your short-term,

mid-term, and long-term goals and reword them to serve as monitoring statements.

For example, let's say your long-term goal is to "create a two-aged healthy aspen grove as a legacy for future generations." Based on an assessment, you learn that there is significant conifer encroachment and no regeneration. An immediate goal could be to "within 5 years, increase regeneration of aspen trees within the designated patch."

If you were to just thin out the conifers, you might miss the fact that heavy elk browse is occurring. Thus, although there is now sufficient light to produce aspen regeneration, your goals cannot be met without further intervention (in this case fencing).

In the example above, you would want to measure regeneration success. Checking up on the site to see whether aspen are regenerating and whether they are being browsed will help ensure that you meet your goal of creating future aspen stands.

What if you removed conifers with the goal of increasing forage for late-season cattle grazing? You could measure forb height before and after treatment or measure forage weight in small plots before and after treatment. You also could monitor livestock indicators of increased forage production, the most obvious being weight gain.

## Help is available

We are very lucky in Oregon to have one of the strongest forestry and natural resources programs in the country. The following agencies, groups, and individuals are available to help you make decisions and find technical and financial assistance for your aspen restoration project.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

NRCS, as well as your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), can help with conservation planning and practices that maintain and improve soil, water, and other natural resources that support productive and profitable agricultural and forestry operations. Look for the nearest NRCS office in your phone book's federal government pages or visit <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/>

To find the SWCD in your area, contact the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

at 650 Hawthorne Ave., Suite 130, Salem, OR 97301; 503-566-9157; <http://www.oacd.org/>

### **Oregon State University Extension Service**

Extension foresters, most of them based in county Extension offices, give classes, tours, and workshops for woodland owners. Extension also has more than 100 how-to publications in print and online and maintains websites with even more resources. Find the Extension forester nearest you via the phone book's county government pages, or visit <http://extensionweb.forestry.oregonstate.edu>

### **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has several regional offices throughout the state. Their Conservation Strategy includes aspen woodlands as a strategy habitat. Individual wildlife or Conservation Strategy biologists can help you enhance your property for fish and wildlife. Visit [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/directory/regional\\_offices.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/directory/regional_offices.asp)

### **Oregon Department of Forestry**

ODF stewardship foresters give technical forestry assistance and advice. They also administer the Forest Practices Rules. They can advise on options for managing your forest and on how to comply with rules and laws. Find the ODF forester nearest you via the phone book's state government pages, or visit <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/>

### **Oregon Small Woodland Association**

This not-for-profit group provides useful information and a forum for forest owners to share with one another. OSWA also represents forestland owners to the general public and before legislative bodies and regulatory agencies. Contact OSWA at 775 32<sup>nd</sup> St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301; 503-588-1813; <http://www.oswa.org/>

### **Professional forestry consultants**

A good forestry consultant will help ensure that harvesting, marketing, reforestation, and other forestry activities and related contracts are done right and serve your interests. Hiring a professional forester can be the best option, particularly when substantial timber values or other economic

considerations are involved. Ask Extension foresters, ODF foresters, and fellow forestland owners for references to qualified consultants.

### ***United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management***

The Forest Service was established in 1905 and is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Forest Service manages public lands in national forests and grasslands encompassing 193 million acres.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is part of the Department of the Interior. The BLM manages grasslands and shrub steppe in eastern

Oregon and Washington as well as aspen, ponderosa pine, juniper, and white fir forests.

Fifty-one percent of all forestland in Oregon is publicly owned. Thus, chances are good that you have a nearby public land neighbor. You can contact the district office nearest you and ask whether they are doing any aspen restoration. You could then schedule a time to visit their site or to meet and learn from their experience.

*Oregon Forest Service website:* <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/pdx/forests.shtml#oregon>

*Oregon BLM website:* <http://www.blm.gov/or/st/en.html>