

Restoration Principles, Objectives: Colville National Forest

THE NEED FOR RESTORATION

The Colville National Forest has, in [areas of previous forest management and warm-dry biophysical environments](#), an unnatural forest structure. In making this statement first, it seems to put vegetative restoration as the biggest priority, and for most instances I would beg to differ. There is a need to reestablish ecological integrity and ecosystem function in these areas by restoring historic conditions, which will benefit native fish, wildlife and plants. To effectively accomplish this goal—taking into consideration various forest types, ranging from warm dry forests to cold wet forests—restoration must integrate a variety of restoration treatments, including treatments to the transportation system (road maintenance and removal), wildlife habitat and watershed restoration, invasive species control, and fuel and fire treatments. I think the highest priority for restoration actions ought to be: “Remove the human-caused impediments to natural ecosystem recovery.” I say this because without faith in natural processes, we’re permanently stuck in the “manipulate and control” paradigm that’s got us into the mess of needing to restore. What’s also missing is “restoring fire-adapted ecosystems,” meaning allowing fire to play out naturally where practical, and preparing private land/people for the inevitable eventuality of fire, so as to make people as comfortable as possible with natural fire. Alternatively, in continuously suppressing fire, we’ll be setting up the perpetual need to manipulate and (delude ourselves into thinking we can) control.

In doing so, NEWFC will adhere to the guidelines outlined below.

OVER-ARCHING RESTORATION PRINCIPLES

In addition to specific forest-type objectives included later in this document, principles generic to restoration of all forest types include the following:

1. Preliminary Assessments: The level, range, and scope of assessments required will be determined by existing law, regulations and official agency guidance in place at the time the assessments are conducted. **Short-term** adverse impacts to biological legacies, soils, water quality, wildlife and botanical resources, weeds, and impacts from roads **that are determined in a risk assessment to be unavoidable in accomplishing the overall restoration objective shall be minimized to the extent practical. Impacts determined in a risk assessment to be avoidable shall be mitigated.** Under conditions where adverse impacts outweigh the potential benefits of active restoration activities, such activities will not take place.

[Note: NEWFC needs to develop a risk-assessment protocol] Please see the Forest Restoration Principles and Criteria (attached to my email) where it discusses this same thing, and includes something on the **size** of a project (deficient from these principles). In other words, if restoration actions involve some degradation, the plan **up-front** must be to try small-scale project first, including the commitment to

monitor and thus verify any assumptions that benefits will in fact outweigh the damage.

2. Monitoring: The assessment and corresponding actions are then followed by improved programmatic and effectiveness monitoring that measures progress towards restoring a degraded system. Effectiveness monitoring will provide a means to assess progress and make a determination regarding the need for subsequent/additional treatments in order to continue progress toward the desired future condition.
3. Adaptive management: Adaptive management is key to successfully managing biological systems. Adaptive management, based on monitoring results, will serve as a reality-check for the above assessments and will enhance the ability to achieve the goal stated above.
4. Priorities: In the interest of getting necessary work done, restoration effort should be focused initially on already roaded, grazed, and/or logged portions of the landscape.
5. Economics: If materials generated from implementation of site-specific restoration prescriptions are not to be left on site, they may be made available to the forest products industry. In planning restoration projects where there will be a significant number of units in which implementation costs exceed the value of such by-products, project planners should strive to include enough units in which the value of by-products will exceed implementation costs that the project will, at minimum, break even economically. However, in doing so, the restoration objective of the project must not be compromised. Based on my experience, I think that this blue section will do little but make false promises. Restoration-type logging will always cost more since NEPA, administration, monitoring—the whole ball of wax will make ‘em money losers. If done right though, the investment will be worth it, because genuine restoration would be the outcome.
6. Variation in Prescriptions: Prescriptions to accomplish restoration objectives will vary, depending upon site-specific conditions, including but not limited to, plant association groups and historic fire regime. (Note: the inclusion of “plant association group” shall not be construed to imply that we are managing for a seral climax condition across the entire forest.)
7. Water Quality and Quantity: Restoration includes restoring streams and riparian habitat, fish passage, stream temperature, sediment load, addressing erosion problems at road stream crossings, and restoring the land’s capacity to absorb, store, and filter water, including restoration of water table levels.
8. Weeds: Minimize noxious weeds by conducting integrated weed management. The thing is, disturbing soils will always increase the risk of new/more weed invasions, especially using machines. When I read “integrated weed management” what I understand is, disturb the land then resort to a regime of herbicides which haven’t been shown to work economically over the long term.
9. Grazing: *[committee members all agreed that development of language should be postponed until we’ve consulted with grazing interests.]*

10. Soils: Restore soils, in accordance with site-specific prescriptions. I'm not clear what "in accordance with site-specific conditions" means. It sounds like FS language that really means, "if you can do it while making the logging the priority." If soils need to be restored, then that is a high priority and that ought to be the "prescription" itself.
11. Wildlife Habitat: *[committee members all agreed that language for this item will be developed in tandem with language for the same item in the restoration principles, allowing us to assess (with assistance from independent biologist) the extent to which Restoration and Wilderness zones allow for habitat protection.]*
12. Roads: *[Language regarding roads will be tiered to a NEWFC board-approved roads policy. This policy is currently under development by NEWFC Project Committee.]*
13. Species and Structure: Restoration of structure, ecosystem function, and species diversity are key objectives of all restoration projects, and restoration projects should make use of the least intrusive treatments in implementing site-specific prescriptions.