

CHAPTER 4: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The inventory and analysis of biological and physical factors shown in Chapter 2, as well as the cultural features outlined in Chapter 3, motivate broad goals and more specific objectives for the management of the Elk Creek Conservation Area. The following goals and objectives are consistent with the mission shown here and in Chapter 1.

Mission

Allow dynamic ecological processes to create and sustain habitat for all bull trout life stages. Protect and promote habitat for all native plant and animal species in a naturally functioning forest. Recognize that this forest is part of a larger landscape that supports humans. Considering that not all natural processes (such as wildfire) can be allowed to proceed, we will follow a well-defined process for decision making to identify management interventions that simulate a naturally functioning forest.

Goal 1. Perpetuate native species and their habitats by allowing natural processes to occur.

Objective 1. Monitor habitat conditions for all bull trout life stages by a combination of quantitative and non-quantitative methods. Bull Trout have been selected as the primary stewardship priority for the following reasons: 1) this land was purchased with funds earmarked for native species

protection; 2) bull trout are an excellent surrogate representative for other native fish; 3) Elk Creek is the most important spawning tributary for the Swan Lake bull trout population; and 4) they receive federal, state and tribal protection.

Task 1. Collect existing baseline measures of bull trout habitat and establish timeline for completion.

Task 2. Monitor trends in bull trout baseline conditions every 1-5 years.

Objective 2. Protect all native plant and animal species by recognizing their presence and vulnerability as all management actions are planned and performed. Follow the decision-making protocol (defined in Chapter 5) to evaluate and document all management activities.

Task 1. Establish fire history for the Elk Creek Conservation Area and determine a timeline for completion.

Task 2. Inventory riparian plant habitat and community types throughout the Elk Creek and Swan River floodplains. Describe how geomorphological and other stream channel processes influence riparian vegetation and promote in-stream habitat.

Objective 3. Minimize the presence of non-native plant species, especially noxious weeds, focusing on road verges, landing areas, disturbed riparian areas, and other disturbed sites.

Task 1. Determine timeline to inventory weed distribution, density, and species.

Task 2. Propose a comprehensive strategy that may include mapping, spraying, pulling and encouraging growth of native species appropriate to the site.

Task 3. Monitor progress on weed control.

Goal 2. When natural processes cannot be allowed to occur, identify appropriate management interventions by means of a structured decision-making process.

Objective 1. Promote a biologically diverse forest that, over time, maintains areas of forage, thermal cover, hiding cover, etc.

Objective 2. Meet as a management committee on a set schedule, or in response to specific management proposals, to implement the decision-making protocol.

Objective 3. Document and archive all management decisions made for the property.

Goal 3. Integrate human use consistent with the mission statement.

Objective 1. Control public access to balance resource protection with recreational opportunity.

Task 1. Conduct a more thorough inventory of all roads and culverts, including their conditions.

Task 2. Define public access guidelines, appropriate to the mission, including the use of motorized and non-motorized vehicles.

Task 3. Inform the public about the rules of access.

Objective 2. Protect relevant historic and cultural artifacts and sites.

Task 1. Inventory historic artifacts and sites. Conduct cultural resource studies with the CSKT Preservation Office.

Task 2. Implement measures to protect relevant resources identified in inventories as soon as possible following their identification.

Objective 3. Inform the community about the value and role of the Elk Creek Conservation Area.

Task 1. Develop on-site education and interpretation programs that reveal ecological processes and human uses of the Elk Creek Conservation Area.

Objective 4. Develop monitoring programs, utilizing professionals, students and/or residents. Collect baseline and trend data to determine effectiveness over time.

Objective 5. Encourage appropriate recreational uses, including hiking, bird-watching, and other passive recreation appropriate to the mission. Identify and restrict recreation activities detrimental to the mission.

Task 1. Provide nature study programs at the Elk Creek Conservation Area.

Task 2. Support fishing regulations in Elk Creek.

Task 3. Include community members on the committee overseeing implementation of the management plan.

Goal 4: Respect our neighbors by recognizing that our actions have implications beyond the property's boundaries.

Objective 1. Understand and respect local traditions. Encourage meaningful participation by community members

Task 1. Develop community forums, field tours, news releases, and educational programs.

Task 2. Liaison with the Condon Community Council, as needed.

Task 3. Describe the role of Elk Creek to the Swan Lake bull trout population.

Objective 2. Coordinate management activities, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with neighboring landowners.

Task 1. Develop a system to notify neighbors of management plans and decisions. Likewise, encourage neighbors to share plans that may affect the Elk Creek Conservation Area.

Task 2. Create opportunities to meet regularly with neighbors through meetings and field tours.