

# Public Expectations for Forest Restoration



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- Integrating fuel reduction treatments
- Forest dynamics after thinning
- Risk-based prioritization
- Whole-landscape management strategy
- Uneven-aged management
- Increasing ecosystem function & resilience
- All mixed up

# *Forest Restoration*



In the U.S., natural is desirable

Common strategy is to mimic natural conditions, often with techniques from restoration ecology.

# *Forest Restoration*



Problem is that we have a wide range of ideas about what “natural conditions” might be.

What does the public expect  
for forest restoration?

*It depends.*












## *It depends on...*

- 
- The setting... the place.
  - Who are the land managers?
  - Is there a history of fire ? Of fuel management?
  - The demographics
  - Citizen-agency relationships

## *Research from 15 states and 3 countries*



It's not just about what you intend to do...  
implementing the specific practice.

It's also about *how* you intend to get there... the  
*process* of planning and decision-making.

## *Public expectations involve*



- Helping people understand the problem
- Focusing on recognizable local conditions
  - ecological
  - social
- Giving citizens a role in the planning process
- Providing places for give-and-take discussion

## *Expectations include*



- Understanding the purpose and intended benefits
- Understanding the options as well as the trade-offs
- Having confidence that managers can effectively implement practices
- Having trust in managers to make good on their word
- Seeing managers speak with a unified voice

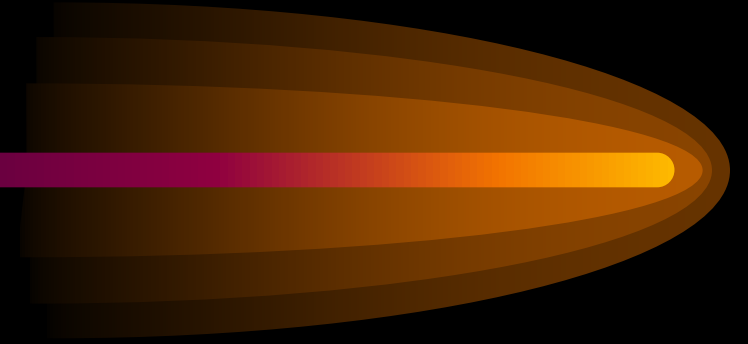


*Choices*



Cake or Ice Cream?

*Choices*



Spinach or Broccoli?

# *Dynamic Social Context*



- Increasingly diverse public uses and values
- Declining public confidence/trust in institutions
- Inherently complicated environmental issues

# *Dynamic population changes*



- In PNW, population growth driven primarily by in-migration
- Expectations of “new” publics
- Major implications for resource professionals
  - experience, knowledge, communication

# *Wildland Fire and Communities*

## Growing challenge

- 60% of new housing starts between 2000 and 2010 are in the WUI
- Over 11,000 communities at-risk





# *Why respond to public concerns?*



- **Dismissing concerns is unproductive...**
  - particularly if they are treated as “emotional”
  - concerns grow if not responded to
- **Groups may take other measures to be heard**
  - these usually circumvent traditional authority

# *Why respond to concerns?*



- **Concerns can be used productively**
  - seek out alternative viewpoints
  - alert managers to issues that may require action
  - opportunity to discuss and evaluate
  - teachable moments

# *Responses to the Challenge*



1. Acknowledge the reality of citizens' opinions and public acceptance
2. Because forest practices compete for resources and support, they must be contextually relevant
3. Create opportunities for people to learn about forest management and engage resource professionals.















# HERITAGE FOREST DEMONSTRATION PROJECT Metolius Conservation Area

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate ways to maintain healthy ecosystems and to perpetuate open, park-like stands of Ponderosa Pine.

## SITUATION:

- too many trees
- invasion of unwanted species
- crowded conditions
- exclusion of fire

## CONSEQUENCES:

- wind and snow damage
- unacceptable wildfire risks
- stunted growth
- insect and disease outbreaks
- loss of healthy old growth



## METHODS:

- thinning

## BENEFITS:

- maintain parklike forest
- reduce wildfire risks
- promote healthy growth
- sustain old growth
- maintain biodiversity

The project will be implemented Fall of 2001 through Spring 2002. Friends of the Metolius and Sisters Ranger District, Forest Service. For more information: [www.metoliusfriends.org](http://www.metoliusfriends.org)























*Help people see a different perspective*



Instead of a scenic aesthetic,

aim for an ecological aesthetic

# *Keys to improving public acceptance*



- Focus on decision processes
- Pay attention to local context
- Recognize local concerns and assets
- Agree on “natural conditions”
- Address uncertainty and tradeoffs
- Develop understanding, not just information
- Aim for more holistic evaluation of conditions



# *Management implications*



- Agreement on “natural conditions” is the first step to agreement on how to get there
- Open communication about trade-offs builds understanding
- Discussing uncertainty will help people accept consequences of decisions



# *Management implications*



- Communities focus on solutions to local problems, are less concerned with national agendas
- Provides environment for collaboration and partnerships.

*Finally...*



Most citizens are willing to accept the use of management practices on a small scale. Managers have an opportunity to build public confidence on a project-by-project basis while gradually reducing risks on the landscape.