

Arid Veg Management: A Multi-Agency Look

Arid vegetation management – three precise words that encompass a myriad of imprecise problems – recently brought together a congeries of the Northwest's premier practitioners in state-of-the-art revegetation principles and techniques.

A May 14-15 workshop, hosted by the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument (JODA) in eastern Oregon, featured expert leadership from the Bureau of Land Management, the Soil Conservation Service, Oregon State University, the NPS/CPSU at U/ID, Nez Perce NHP, Whitman Mission NHS, NPS Pacific Northwest Regional (PNR) headquarters, and the JODA park staff. Participants spent two days sharing data, techniques, theories, and field results, discovering one another's unique capabilities for developing and implementing effective arid lands management.

Steve Gibbons, PNR Natural Resource specialist and workshop coordinator, kicked off the proceedings with a run-through of NPS mandates and management policies – a recurring subject as field managers described the practitioners' views on these imperatives.

Prudent flexibility in the evolution of both policy and practices emerged as an efficient working process. If policy says that something can't be done, but practice finds that it **must** be done, then creative management that is true to the spirit of policy mandates seems to be evolving as the pragmatic path to desired results. Merging perspectives – from variously involved agencies at federal and state levels, from universities, and from local "participants" in the managed land scene – have brought both wisdom and workability to the sometimes agonizing process of restoration.

Larry Larson and Boone Kauffman, from the OSU Department of Rangeland Resources, led the workshop discussions and field trips on weed control and fire ecology research, respectively. Sue Burnworth of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) described "Native Plants for Parks," a cooperative program between the SCS and NPS that makes available to NPS the expertise and plant materials from 26 SCS plant materials centers around the U.S.

Rocky Beavers, NPS Technical Advisor for revegetation projects, (at the NPS Denver Service Center) will contribute an article on plant materials for the fall issue of **Park Science**. Kauffman and Larson have promised to deal in some detail with the art of returning disturbed areas to native plants and the role of fire in restoring natural ecosystems.



A return to native grasses at Whitman Mission NHS was accomplished thanks to the flexibility of NPS management policy that now allows the use of plant materials "historically appropriate for the period or event commemorated." Basin wild rye grass – the original stand – was impossible to achieve following the pigweed, cheatgrass, and yellow starthistle invasions that had resulted from years of human disturbance at the site. But native bunchgrasses and fescues, shown here, give much the same aspect to the site as the original stands of basin wild rye. (Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo by Jeff Horner)