

Experiences and Recommendations from the Field

Restoring the West Conference
2008



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Market conditions – assess where/what they are at project start
- Design outcomes before project start – think it through first
- Fence out at the beginning/ right after the treatment is critical
- Net wire, 8' tall works to keep elk out
- Each aspen clone presents a different challenge in creating regeneration



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Browsing pressure varies from area to area and even year to year
- Steeper slopes create better regeneration success
- Protect regeneration on gentler topography
- If ungulate pressure expected, protect it
- Every aspen clone has regenerated initially



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Fire is treatment most successful on large acres for aspen restoration
- Rest the treatments for at least 2 years from livestock use
- Avoid early/late season livestock use once they are back on
- Use exclosures to determine success -3 way show the issues best



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Treatments can be successful during all seasons of the year
- Protection of sprouts is a must – 8' fence is effective
- Prioritize treatments in stands where conifer are taller than the aspen
- Coordinate with wildlife mgrs pre-treatment to lower ungulate populations & strategize protection areas



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Success is defined to be 2000-5000 stems/ac in 10 years and a height increase annually
- Focus on habitat - don't manage for a single species
- Generally used clearcuts in aspen, although partial cuts also yielded suckering
- Use Mueggler's 1989 Age distribution and reproduction of Intermountain aspen stands to consider areas for treatment.



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Collaboration in land mgt goals allows us to streamline tools – ie. A confine strategy on a wildfire may allow vegetation to be treated successfully, safely and cheaply.
- Do what you say you are going to – incredible things happen when you are credible
- 1 in 10 year window to burn “pure” aspen stands – year 2000 was an example year



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- You've got to burn when you can burn, don't miss a window
- Cut, remove & burn in a single year – if projects are longer, you'll damage suckers
- If you are burning in riparian, you **HAVE** to fence it for protection
- Reduce cost of fence by tacking it to burned trees – lots of maintenance due to windthrow



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field

Lessons

- Interagency partnerships w/shared goals are key to financing larger, long term projects
- Fuels, wildlife & other partners are critical for funding projects
- Spring burns will allow grasses & forbs to recover, aspen seems to make it during any season
- Fence critical areas – attempt to prohibit grazing pressure based on expected use post-treatment, allow for migration corridors
- Even as few as 20 aspen trees/ac will be enough to create aspen regeneration



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Sudden Aspen Decline is a changed condition
- Fence at least 50' outside the previous aspen edge – it will move out in area
- Fire is the best, biggest tool to deal with the scope of the problem we have on a landscape scale
- Wildland fire is the tool of choice due to cost and scope
- Communicate, collaborate, cooperate & coordinate to get something done on the ground – figure out what you CAN do



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Lessons

- Describe an objective, then describe WHY you want that...
- We want aspen is the objective – why do we want it? Good reasons behind the mgt
- Other than Sudden Aspen Decline, stands have not been found which have senesced so far as to not be able to sucker after treatment (even if it is just fenced)



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field Tools

- Inventory



Experiences and Recommendations from the Field

Hurdles

- Long term elk use - seasonality
- Is there a way to predict treatment area size based on pre-existing numbers of grazing ungulates?
- Stable ungulate pops don't allow for plant pops rest/recovery – how do we create rest – Canadians are looking at cyclical pop mgt to get rest
- Political will to manage for cyclical wildlife populations is not around right now – concern is based on little plant population rest

