



TREMBLINGS

NEWSLETTER & BULLETIN BOARD

Vol. 2(3), August 2011

"...partnering to preserve and restore healthy aspen ecosystems."

NOTICE: The WAA is a user-driven organization. *Tremblings* will attempt to capture the greater aspen user group's wants and needs. Please send suggestions, contributions, **recent publications**, photos, and commentary ideas to Paul Rogers (p.rogers@usu.edu).

WAA HAPPENINGS

New Dieback Survey Available—The Intermountain Region of the US Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, has produced a survey of aspen conditions in Utah, Nevada, southern Idaho, and western Wyoming. They set out to make a regional assessment of Sudden Aspen Decline conditions reported elsewhere and you can view their results here: <http://www.western-aspen-alliance.org/pdf/AspenSurvey.pdf>

Private Land Conservation on the Rise—The summer of 2011 has seen WAA involvement in at least three private-land aspen conservation efforts. Undoubtedly, such cooperation is happening with other natural resource issues as well, but we view the cooperation of interested aspen landowners with state and federal managers as a positive development. Interestingly, aspen issues involving resource use and allocation on adjacent – state, federal, private – lands and with state-managed wildlife constitute the prime concerns of private land owners in considering future actions to sustain aspen communities. Clearly there is incentive to work together!

Large Landscape Aspen Restoration—The U.S. Forest Service, Fishlake NF, initiated a collaborative process to address aspen sustainability on Monroe Mountain in early July. This multi-year effort involves land managers, conservation and industry groups, local government, livestock interests, and university personnel. Much of this 175,000 acres

(70,820 ha) area is covered with pure and mixed-conifer aspen forests. Key issues involve potential treatments and wild/domestic browsing impacts.



*Fence design incorporating a two foot (0.6 m) gap at the base, which restricts elk (*Alces alces*) and cattle (*Bos spp.*), but allows deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and smaller mammals. The area within the fence was not cut or burned. Aspen recruitment inside the enclosure (left) indicates relative impacts of the above herbivores (Photo: Paul Rogers, Book Cliffs, Utah, USA).*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Poplars and Willows on the Prairies—A joint event of the Poplar Council of Canada, International Poplar Commission 'Environmental Applications' Working Party (WP6) and the Poplar Council of the United States. The program will include technical presentations, discussion and several days of field



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visits addressing general poplar/willow issues, genomics, breeding, and environmental applications. Edmonton, Alberta 18-22 September, 2011: <http://www.poplar.ca/events.htm#AGM11>.

Aspen Ecology & Management Session—Drs. Eva Strand and Dale Bartos will be hosting a special session at the annual Society for Range Management Meeting, Jan. 29 – Feb. 3, 2012 in Spokane, WA, USA. Abstracts are due Aug. 19 or contact the hosts if you have further interest. Details may be found at: http://www.western-aspen-alliance.org/pdf/SRM_aspen.pdf.

COMMENTARY

Prescribed fire for aspen and wildlife near Jackson, Wyoming, USA

Steve Kilpatrick, Contracts Director, Teton Science Schools, Jackson



Those of us interested in aspen often wonder about the progress and status of aspen projects being conducted in other locales. It is noteworthy that the folks I call the “aspen gurus” - Dale Bartos, Wayne Shepperd, and Bob Campbell - initiated aspen enhancement projects using prescribed fire in the Jackson, Wyoming area back in the early 1970s. These folks “broke the ice,” so to speak, and while there have been some setbacks over the years managers continue to implement prescribed fire with associated aspen objectives. I would like to provide a short update on what has transpired in our area since the ground work provided by these aspen-prescribed fire pioneers in the U.S.

As you can imagine, aspen enhancement-related projects have become a bit more complicated

since the 1970s. We now have the Jackson Interagency Habitat Initiative (JIHI) group which consists of biologists and fire managers within the Bridger-Teton National Forest, US Fish and Wildlife Service (National Elk Refuge), Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and the National Park Service (Grand Teton National Park). Formed in the early 2000s, managers from the JIHI group collaborate on every aspect of prescribed fire projects including vegetation/wildlife assessments and inventories, project design, NEPA compliance, public information/education, funding, implementation, and pre-/post-monitoring.

While the primary purpose of the JIHI group is to improve winter and transitional ranges for native wild ungulates in the Jackson area, the indirect results seem equally important especially in an age of ever growing bureaucracy. First, projects are well vetted during the early planning stages with respect to effects on innumerable wildlife and plant species. Second, project designs, including mitigation measures, are established for species potentially impacted from the project (i.e. greater-sage grouse, northern goshawk). Third, the agencies prioritize coordination with respect to public information and education activities. Fourth, solicitation of funding from outside sources is greatly enhanced with multiple partners participating. Fifth, since implementation and monitoring are joint efforts including all JIHI members the results are much more likely to positively affect entire landscapes.

In summary, while the primary JIHI objective of providing a mosaic of vegetation succession (or age) classes across the landscape is accomplished, secondary benefits which set the stage for additional prescribed fire treatments may also be achieved.



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Since the groundwork provided by the “aspen gurus” and their pioneering efforts in the 1970s, tens of thousands of acres have been treated with prescribed fire within the Bridger-Teton National Forest and Grand Teton National Forest.. Most recently, managers have all but completed a 17,000 acre (6,880 ha) project in the lower Gros Ventre Drainage, are planning for a 20,000+ acre (8,094+ ha) project in the upper Gros Ventre drainage, and are now collaborating on an 80,000 acre (32,375 ha) fuels reduction project near Jackson where aspen regeneration will be emphasized. Thus, the legacy continues and we pay tribute to the pioneers of aspen regeneration via prescribed fire!

RECENT ASPEN PUBLICATIONS

Burke, A. R. and T. Kasahara. 2011. Subsurface lateral flow generation in aspen and conifer-dominated hillslopes of a first order catchment in northern Utah. *Hydrological Processes* **25**:1407–1417.

Calder, W. J., K. J. Horn, and S. B. St. Clair. 2011. Conifer expansion reduces the competitive ability and herbivore defense of aspen by modifying light environment and soil chemistry. *Tree Physiology* **31**:582-591.

Clark, A. L. and S. B. St. Clair. 2011. Mycorrhizas and secondary succession in aspen–conifer forests: Light limitation differentially affects a dominant early and late successional species. *Forest Ecology and Management* **262**:203-207.

Guyon, J. and J. Hoffman. 2011. Survey of Aspen Dieback in the Intermountain Region. R4-OFO-Report 11-01, USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, Ogden, Utah. 19 p.

Kaye, M. W. 2011. Mesoscale synchrony in quaking aspen establishment across the interior western US. *Forest Ecology and Management* **262**:389-397.

Kimble, D. S., D. B. Tyers, J. Robison-Cox, and B. F. Sowell. 2011. Aspen recovery since wolf reintroduction on the Northern Yellowstone Winter Range. *Rangeland Ecology and Management* **64**:119-130.

Kimble, D. S., D. B. Tyers, and B. F. V. Sowell. 2011. Quaking Aspen Ecology on Forest Service Lands North of Yellowstone National Park. *Natural Resources and Environmental Issues* **16**, Article 8.

<http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol16/iss1/8>

Morelli, T. L. and S. C. Carr. 2011. A Review of the Potential Effects of Climate Change on Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) in the Western United States and a New Tool for Surveying Aspen Decline. Albany, CA.

http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr235/psw_gtr235.pdf

Morton, M. L. and M. E. Pereyra. 2011. Mining Patterns of the Aspen Leaf Miner, *Phyllocnistis populiella*, on Its Host Plant, *Populus tremuloides*. *Western North American Naturalist* **71**:33-37.

Smith, E. A., D. O’Loughlin, J. R. Buck, and S. B. St. Clair. 2011. The influences of conifer succession, physiographic conditions and herbivory on quaking aspen regeneration after fire. *Forest Ecology and Management* **262**:325-330.

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