

## Pilot Joe: A Failed Experiment

The [Pilot Joe Project](#) is being touted as a huge “success” and a blueprint for future planning for all of the O & C Grant lands which by statute must be managed to produce timber and revenue to support county economies. Not only is this approach likely illegal, the facts paint a very different picture about what the project actually accomplished.

The pilot projects were an outgrowth of the Medford and Roseburg BLM districts’ inability to manage the O & C grant lands to maintain forest health, provide wood products to create jobs in rural communities and to generate timber receipts to replace money received from the now-expired Secure Rural Schools legislation. It was believed, by some, that these objectives could be met by adopting the “restoration forestry” philosophy being promoted by Drs. Johnson and Franklin. The Oregon Congressional delegation was also led to believe that the projects would identify and/or address the roadblocks to implementing needed timber management projects.

Unfortunately, Pilot Joe and the restoration forestry philosophy that drove it merely resulted in slight changes in how trees were selected for harvest. The project failed to address the real reasons the BLM is unable to manage the O & C Grant lands. In the end, the BLM and Drs. Johnson and Franklin were happy providing a demonstration area for people to see what this style of boutique restoration forestry would look like on-the-ground.

The Pilot Joe Project completely failed to address both the primary factors that obstruct the BLM’s ability to manage the O & C Trust lands and BLM’s internal policy decisions to abandon management of lands to avoid any and all controversy. These include:

- Protests and potential litigation concerning:
  - Entering any areas currently without roads
  - Building new roads, even if temporary
  - Protecting “Survey and Manage” species such as slugs and mushrooms
  - Any management in riparian areas
- Deferring needed forest management on Matrix acres simply to avoid formal consultation with federal fish and wildlife agencies over potential impacts in endangered species.
- In an effort to avoid formal consultation with the federal fish and wildlife agencies the BLM opted to water down the project in order to receive speedy, informal approvals.
- Managing in order to meet Survey and Manage requirements that result in huge set asides for plentiful species such as the Red Tree Vole.
- Deferring needed forest management to avoid *any* habitat change in Spotted Owl Critical Habitat
- Deferring needed forest management, dropping any unit, or changing a sound forestry prescription to appease any group that threatens to protest or litigate the BLM’s actions

The primary objective that the BLM and Drs. Johnson and Franklin were trying to accomplish with the Pilot Joe Project was to design a project that could be sold in one year that demonstrated how restoration forestry looks like on the ground. In order to accomplish this, they had to avoid every controversial issue, thus rendering the effort useless as a blueprint for future management of the O & C Grant lands. Looking at how the BLM ended up treating the 245 acres encompassed by the Pilot Joe Project clearly demonstrates this.

	Resulting Project Acres
The BLM started by looking at the entire Applegate Watershed	50,000
They limited the area to that which was already covered by existing NEPA	7,622
They then removed areas with the concerns mentioned above	1,938
They only included areas where all Survey & Manage survey requirements had already been met	1,384
They excluded “uneconomical” areas due to light touch management	463
They avoided other areas to address additional public concerns	245

Any real solution to the issues facing BLM management of O&C trust lands must do the following:

Allow the BLM to treat more acres	Pilot Joe treated 5/1000 of the watershed
Lower the cost of sale preparation	Pilot Joe cost 3-5 times more than normal sales
Harvest more trees per acre	Pilot Joe harvested 1/3 less than historic harvests
Generate more income for counties	Pilot Joe appraised for 1/2 of historic appraisals
Address Survey & Manage restrictions	Pilot Joe stayed away from all of these areas
Address issues with ESA consultation	Pilot Joe eliminated all areas needing consultation
Enter areas without roads	Pilot Joe eliminated all areas of controversy
Build roads to access some stands	Pilot Joe eliminated all areas of controversy
Allow for treatment in riparian areas	Pilot Joe eliminated all riparian areas

Using the restoration forestry principles, the 245 acres in the Pilot Joe Project produced 1.2 million board feet. At these levels the Medford BLM would have to triple or quadruple the number of acres they treated last year to meet their Northwest Forest Plan timber volume. A similar increase in appropriated funding would also need to be made available, which is highly unlikely.