

Best Practice: Maintaining an Effective Web Presence

Summary

Communicating via social media helps collaborative groups maintain an effective web presence. This best practice shares examples from the Grandfather Restoration Project and Deschutes Landscape Restoration Project.

Keys to Success

- Create content that is easy to understand and share
- Identify someone who is responsible for managing the blog or Facebook page.

“The blog has allowed us to share information about our project in real-time with both members of the collaborative and the public. It is easy to link to from websites and social media, allowing partners to share information about the project with their constituencies.”

~Lisa Jennings, Grandfather Restoration Project Coordinator, Pisgah National Forest, U.S. Forest Service

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Communicating with the public via websites, blogs and social media

Collaborative groups are often in search of new and effective ways to share their message with members of the group, local communities, and the larger public. Social media tools, including blogs, Facebook pages, twitter feeds, and interactive web sites are proving to be effective in sharing information with interactive dialogue.

As Antuma *et al* found in [Restoring Forests and Communities: Lessons from the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project](#) (2014),

Social media provides a way to instantaneously share information and provide feedback. As projects expand to the landscape scale, stakeholders are located in a broader geographic area, often from outside the immediate location of the restoration activities. While informal, interpersonal relationships continue to form the core of working relationships in collaboration, social media offers a new way to share information and get people involved in two-way communication.

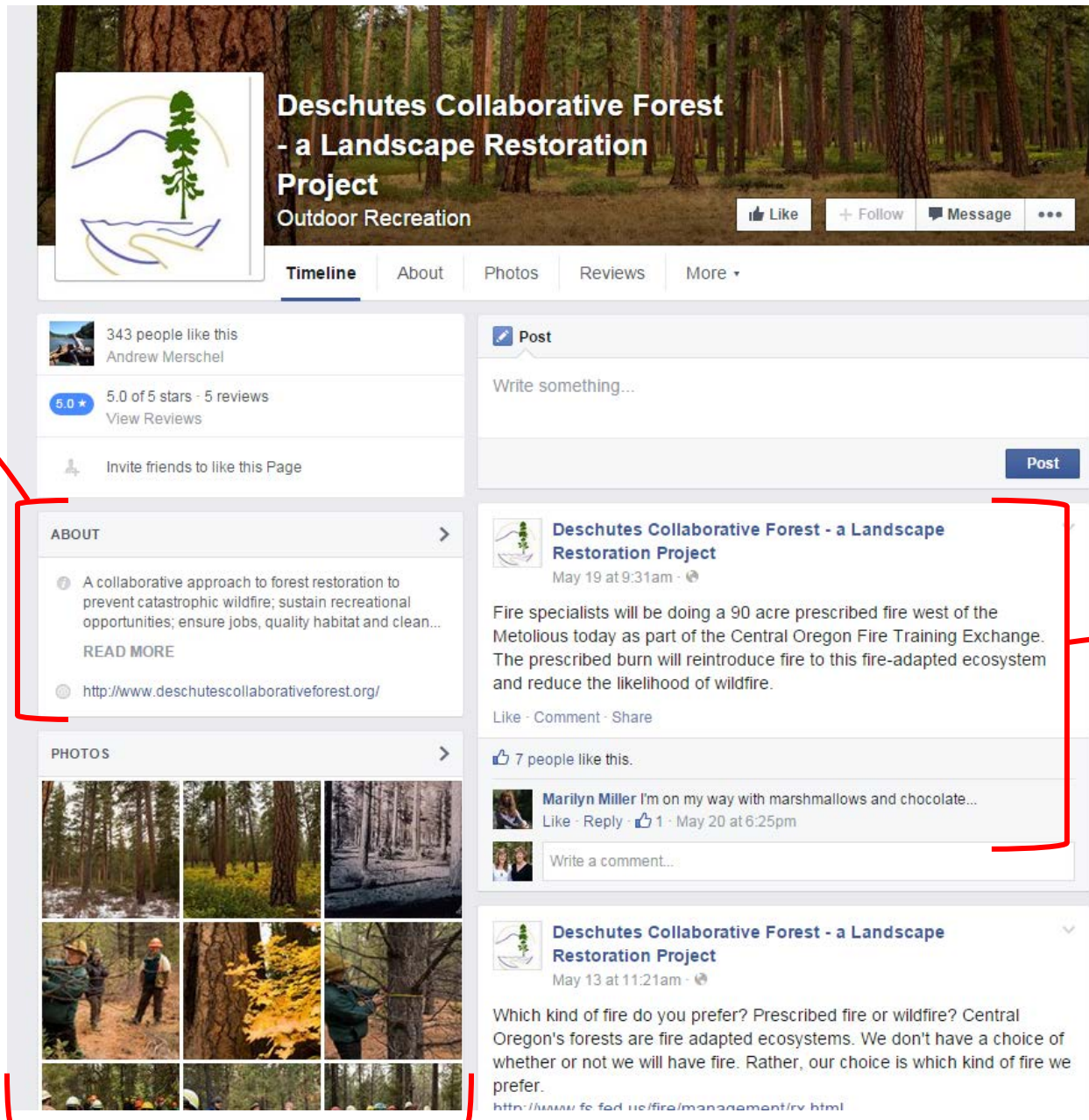
This best practice document highlights the Grandfather Restoration Project Blog and the Deschutes Landscape Restoration Project Facebook page, and includes examples, how-to tips, and words of advice from experts involved with both projects.

Links

- Grandfather Restoration Project Blog: <https://grandfatherrestorationproject.wordpress.com/>
- Deschutes Landscape Restoration Project Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/DeschutesCollaborativeForest>

Deschutes Landscape Restoration Project Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/DeschutesCollaborativeForest>



The About section offers key information about the group

The Facebook page has 343 “Likes,” and many people interact regularly on the page.

Photos help introduce restoration work – and members of the group – to the public.

Q&A with Nicole Strong

Forestry Extension Agent and Assistant Professor,
Oregon State University and Natural Resources Extension

Why did the Deschutes Landscape Restoration project decide to develop a Facebook page?

With limited capacity, it makes sense to pick one social media tool that is effective and efficient. Most people are on Facebook, so it is an easy selection. The Facebook page serves to drive people to our website, alert folks of timely events (prescribed burning, meetings) and to showcase our work using visually appealing media (video and photos).

Why has the Facebook page been an effective tool?

It is an effective tool because so much of our community is connected there. It allows for quick distribution of time sensitive information. We are in the final phases of building a new website, so we will have to see whether Facebook is an effective way to drive people to the new site. Ask us again in 6 months!

What advice would you offer to another collaborative looking to start a Facebook page?

Have a strategy in place that includes rules for posting, tone, and frequency. If you cannot hire a coordinator, consider making several members administrators and set up a calendar where members can take turns “hosting” the Facebook page. That way the duty is not too onerous for any one person. When possible, ensure that posts drive the public to your website or other place you want them to be able to learn more.

Grandfather Restoration Project Blog

<https://grandfatherrestorationproject.wordpress.com/>

Blogs are posted at least monthly (usually more often), and are written by a variety of authors who are involved with the Grandfather Restoration Project

The blog provides basic information about the Grandfather Restoration Project, blog contributors, and partners who are involved in the Grandfather Restoration Project

ABOUT AUTHORS PARTNERS

GRANDFATHER RESTORATION PROJECT

A COLLABORATIVE FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROGRAM

05.11.15
by Lisa Jennings

GUEST POST: CONTROLLED BURN BRINGS NEW LIFE

Guest Post by Owen Carson, Plant Ecologist, Equinox Environmental Consultation and Design Inc.

I have spent several days over the last two weeks hiking along Bark Camp Ridge through the Wilson Creek controlled burn as part of an invasive species control project along upper Wilson Creek. I also had the opportunity last year to observe the pre-burn condition of the forest. Through those successive visits I was able to see the full effect of the fire on the forest structure and how it has started to restore balance within the ecosystem. Before the burn, the dense understory was dominated by ericaceous species such as mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), punctatum (*Rhododendron carolinianum*), blueberries (*Vaccinium* sp.), huckleberries (*Gaylussacia* sp.), and dog hobbles (*Leucothoe* sp.); the mid-story was crowded with Eastern white pine saplings (*Pinus strobus*).

After the fire swept through, the shrub layer on mid to upper slopes was reduced significantly, and that's when I began to see an explosion of regeneration within the herbaceous layer. First to pop up was a suite of ferns; bright green stems of bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*), and hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) and robust, downy fiddleheads of Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) were in stark contrast with the charred ground.

Christmas Fern

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RECENT POSTS

- GUEST POST: Controlled Burn Brings New Life
- A Tale of Two Rare Plants
- The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
- Shortleaf Restoration: Seedlings Planted at Rose's Creek Project Sites
- Long Term Study on Prescribed Burning in Eastern Forests

ARCHIVES

- May 2015
- April 2015
- March 2015
- January 2015
- December 2014

Blog authors write in a casual tone and use descriptive language. Big, beautiful photos make the pages attractive to the reader.

Q&A with Lisa Jennings

Natural Resource Specialist and Grandfather Restoration Project Coordinator on the Pisgah National Forest, Grandfather Ranger District

Why did the Grandfather Restoration project decide to develop a blog?

When I came on board as the CFLRP coordinator, **one of the tasks the collaborative asked of me was to increase communication** – and so the Grandfather Restoration Project blog was born. We choose to pursue a blog because it allows for multiple authors, so both the Forest Service and members of the collaborative can post success stories and emerging science on restoration. I had previous experience setting up and running blogs, so it made it easy to get started.

Why has the blog been an effective tool?

The blog has allowed us to share information about our project in real-time with both members of the collaborative and the public. It is easy to link to from websites and social media, allowing partners to share information about the project with their constituencies. For example, when we posted on the blog a call-to-action about invasive species in our wilderness area, multiple partners shared the post through Facebook to educate the public on this important issue, resulting in over 100 visitors to the blog in a single day. Another benefit of having a blog is facilitating interactions – the commenting functionality on our blog allows for back-and-forth communication with the partners and the public about key issues.

What advice would you offer to another collaborative looking to start a blog?

The Forest Service has restrictions on using blogs, so it is critical that the blog is administered by a collaborative partner. Our blog administrator is with the Nature Conservancy. In determining what to post, it is important to keep the blog posts succinct and on topic, using links to other sources where more in-depth information is available. It's also important to include lots of pictures and videos for visual interest.