

Friends of Lolo Peak Monitoring

Fall 2024 Update on Carlton Ridge Trail 1311 and Surrounding Landscape

1. Janet and Jim Surrena's 2024 Fall Hike

The larch trees were at their prime and set off magnificently by a very clear blue sky. The major windfalls from the big storm in August were cleared from the trail. Someone had done some major chain saw work. There were several other single logs across the trail (from the later storms we suspect) that one could either step over or easily go around.

2. 2024 Forest Survey Work Reported by District Silviculturist Time Seaman, Lolo NF:

Following a fire, we prepare a Reforestation Assessment Report, which was completed in late 2017 for the Lolo Peak Fire. The report split up the burned area into areas to be planted (and at this time, we don't have plans for any more planting), areas where natural regeneration is expected, and areas without reforestation needs. It focused on lower elevation areas with better access, with only long-term monitoring in more remote & wilderness areas.

We typically survey for natural regeneration several years after the fire, and we've recently been able to spend some time in Lolo Peak. The goal of these surveys is to ensure that adequate tree regeneration exists and consider planting if appropriate. All of this is done to meet the requirements of the National Forest Management Act and REPLANT Act. We do a combination of plots and walkthroughs to estimate the number of trees per acre, species composition, and identify 'nonstockable' areas—places unable to reforest quickly.

So far this fall, I've spent three days out there and looked at around 2,500 acres. As is readily apparent from the trails, trees are indeed regenerating! The overwhelming majority of the areas I've seen average 250 to 2,000 trees per acre—some very dense young stands. Most areas are dominated by lodgepole pine, but western larch is prolific in certain areas, notably in section 8, near Tevis Creek. In this section, the fire burned at mixed severity under larch forest, producing a great mosaic of young trees under large old trees. Western larch dwarf mistletoe is very prolific in there! Aspen regeneration is also widespread across the north side of Lolo Pk, most of which is scattered individuals, but a few great clones are present in some places. Aspen provides some welcome species diversity that should break up the homogeneity of the lodgepole stands as they mature. Very few areas do not have much regeneration. (Map and photos were included in message).