

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative

Meeting 21

1-3-18, 1:30 - 3:30 at Dolores Water Conservancy District Office

In Attendance:

James Dietrich, Steve Garchar, Floyd Cook, Dewayne Findley, Liz Manus, Ken Curtis, Pam Wilson, Bruce Short, Mike Preston, Ryan Cox, Dave Casey, Rich Landreth, David Sitton, Rachel Medina, Victoria Petersen Lewis, Jimbo Buickerood, Vern Harrell, Thurman Wilson, and Rebecca Samulski (facilitating)

Updates

James will create an illustration of the group vision. We will do an exercise later today to help with that.

Liz has been working on our four goals. We will work more on that today.

We are working on two grant applications that are due in a little less than a month. The Health Watershed Consortium grant is due February 1. We will work on that one later in the meeting. The WaterSMART grant is due January 31. A core team of Becca, Mike P., Ken and Thurman is working on that and has requested help from some others for specific parts of the proposal.

David Sitton attended the Intermountain Forest Association (IFA) meeting in December. There were a lot of industry and agency people there from Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota. Much of the conversation was on products other than logs (POL), slash, and biomass. There was discussion of the US Forest Service slash requirements and the possibility of leaving more non-merchantable material on the ground rather than removing it. There was also discussion of the US Forest Service creating an aspen sawtimber category. Currently all aspen is treated as POL.

Mike Preston said there is a Colorado Water Congress meeting scheduled for January 25. It will include a 75-minute panel on forest health that Mike will moderate. Brian Ferebee (USFS Regional Forester), Mike Lester (Colorado State Forester), and Sean Babington (US Senate staffer) will be on the panel. J.R. Ford has been invited but hasn't confirmed. Ellen Roberts will take his place if J.R. can't attend. One thing Mike hopes to come out of it is a pitch to the power industry, specifically Tri-State, to make it easier to sell biomass energy because it is in their interest to keep power corridors open. They will follow-up with a webinar in March and at a summer Water Congress workshop. Mike said, in response to a question from Jimbo, that people can send him ideas about things that should be discussed by the January panel (but the panelists probably already have things in mind that they want to focus on). Jimbo said Brian Ferebee has seemed open and interested in community input and connections. Mike agreed.

Dave Casey said the Dolores Ranger District is working on two timber sale EAs in pine, one for 2018 and one for 2019 covering areas from Lake Canyon to the Slater Y. They are also working on an aspen EA. Due to our warm, dry weather conditions, logging is still going on in areas that would normally be snowed in. On the other hand, it is hard to burn with these conditions. In response to a question, Dave said that he hasn't seen any calls for new Joint Chiefs project proposals.

Ryan said that the Colorado State Forest Service is working on a 200 acre timber sale on Ute Mountain Tribal Lands and also on the first good neighbor authority project in La Plata County.

Victoria Petersen introduced herself to the group. She is the manager for the High Desert Conservation District (formerly the Dolores Conservation District) and will try to start attending our meetings. The district is interested in adding forest health and sustainability as a resource concern.

Jimbo recently traveled through some of the northern California areas that burned last fall and said it was a sobering scene. It appeared to him that decades of fire suppression and no thinning caught up to them in the Santa Rosa area. He added on a lighter note that it was interesting to see the three Colorado state record trees in the Hermosa drainage: a ponderosa pine, a 17 ½ foot circumference Douglas fir, and a 166 foot tall, twin-topped blue spruce.

Bruce is now doing timber sale reconnaissance for the US Forest Service under a special employment provision for government retirees. Some of the units he is working in he also worked in decades ago.

DWRF UPDATES:

Becca reported that a core team has met and is working on an application for a WaterSMART grant from the Bureau of Recreation. Some people currently have assignments to help with that. If we get it, it should help us do more organizational and strategic planning over the next couple of years.

Two timber working group meetings were held right after the December DWRF meeting. One focused on biomass. It was good to have Josh Dellinger from Empire Electric there. There are 44 co-ops under Tri-State (which is itself a co-op), so no individual local co-op can drive it. We might be more successful getting Tri-State to support biomass energy if a number of the local energy co-ops were pushing it. Dewayne asked why J.R. Ford had to switch his concept for the Pagosa District Long-term Stewardship Contract from biomass energy to biochar. Basically J.R. couldn't get a contract to sell the energy he would generate. LPEA eventually supported the concept but Tri-State didn't. The other working group meeting consisted of Bruce, Dave C. and Becca working on small diameter market opportunities. It seems like there is good support from local government on that topic.

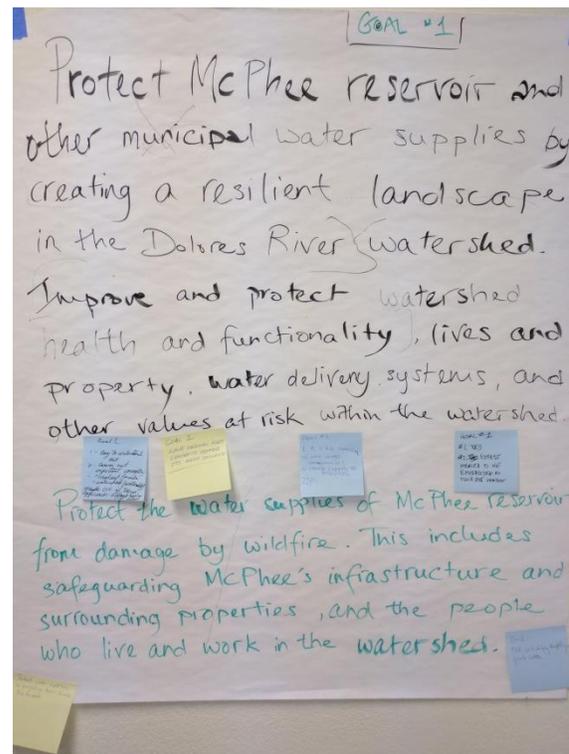
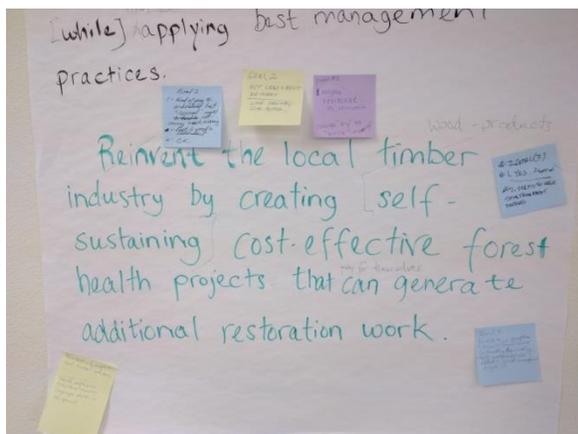
Liz is working on "display" language, such as an "elevator speech" and summaries of our goals. She noted that it always takes longer to write short.

Becca handed out a draft work plan for 2018. There wasn't time to discuss it at the meeting but she asked people to look at it to see if anything is missing and get back to her before the next meeting. Also let her know if you want to help with any of the items.

ILLUSTRATED VISION:

Everyone individually brainstormed ideas to help James with the illustrated vision. Participants wrote notes on sticky pad sheets in response to the question "What do you see possible by 2030 because of the DRWF Collaborative?"

We then split into two groups. One worked with Liz to refine our goal language. Our original wording for each of the four goals was displayed on a flip chart, followed by versions Liz rewrote in an effort to make them shorter and easier to understand. People individually wrote down their thoughts on whether the rewritten versions were clear and easy to understand and whether they still captured the original intent. Then the group discussed their comments in pairs and then as a larger group. Here are examples of that work. Liz took this input and will be incorporating it.



The other half of the participants worked with Becca to help focus a proposal for the Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant. The grant priorities to protect healthy watersheds through investments that build capacity or innovation in watershed protection were highlighted. The group spent some time discussing the wood industry working group needs, as that had been intriguing to the grant manager during conversations in 2017, but we weren't far enough along to submit a proposal at that time. The group questioned whether or not we are far enough along now. The grant is highly competitive, but the group agreed that if we can fit this in, it is good to be on the radar for the future, even if our proposal doesn't get funded this year. Becca agreed to further scope up the proposal concept and run it by the Coordinating Team and the grant manager before putting time into grant writing.

Before adjourning, Becca gave a quick update on the Watershed Wildfire Protection Plan. Shauna Jensen and Rachel Medina are working on some mapping. We need a team to look at examples of this type of plan and develop an outline for us to use. People didn't disagree that that would be helpful but no one in attendance thought they had time to volunteer to work on it in January. We will revisit the idea.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 7, from 1:30 to 3:30 and the Dolores Water Conservancy District Office.

Notes by Thurman Wilson with Becca Samulski edits