

Dolores Watershed and Resilient Forest (DWaRF) Collaborative

Meeting 12

1-4-16, 1:30 - 3:30 at Dolores Water Conservancy District Office

In Attendance:

Pam Wilson, Harold Ragland, Duncan Rose, Mike Znerold, Phil Ayers, Brad Pietruzka, Ian Barrett, Greg Kemp, Richard Morris, David Sitton, Vern Harold, Dwayne Findley, David Casey, Doug Roth, Rachael Medina, James Dietrich, Ryan Cox, Scott Clow, Rich Landreth, Bruce Short, Mike Preston, Ken Curtis, Celene Hawkins, Jim Mimiaga, Thurman Wilson, Rebecca Samulski (facilitating)

Updates:

Our team of Celene Hawkins, Aaron Kimple, Becca Samulski, and Ann Oliver was accepted to participate in the Water Fund Training session offered by The Nature Conservancy in Santa Fe. The team (which has interests in the Mancos, Animas, and San Juan River systems as well as the Dolores) will look at defining a larger watershed or group of watersheds for the purpose of this training and exploring the feasibility of a water fund for Southwest Colorado. It will be a good chance to look at a successful example of funding watershed health work by the people that live in a watershed and use the water. If you are interested in learning more about the Rio Grande Water Fund example, follow this link: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newmexico/new-mexico-rio-grande-water-fund-2016-highlights.xml> to their 2016 update.

Becca, David, and Ryan spent the morning looking at one of the first demo sites in our CAFA (Community Assistance Funding on Adjacent [to National Forest lands]) grant.

Becca has been getting more involved in with the Mancos Watershed Resiliency group. Celene, Duncan, and Scott who were in the room have also been participating in that group as well as Shauna Jensen, Derek Padilla, and Mountain Studies Institute.

Pam announced that Becca is the recipient of a national award from the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Association of State Foresters, and the US Forest Service for fire mitigation (her work as Montezuma/Dolores Counties FireWise Coordinator as well as DWaRF) and hopefully will go to Reno to accept the National Wildfire Mitigation Award and network with others.

Becca gave an update on DWaRF to the Dolores County Commissioners (the newly elected ones as well as the current were in attendance). They seemed supportive. She didn't think it was the right time to ask for funding support. She would like to see them come to a few meetings first.

The Biomass Working Group of SW Colorado met on November 21st. They are going to put out a request for proposals for a market study. This would build on [the 2015 Regional Assessment of the Timber Industry in Southwest Colorado](#), which was focused on available biomass and wood processing capacity. They are also working on a paper linking our fuel types with biomass opportunities.

Duncan reported that the Dolores River Anglers completed the coldwater fisheries adaptive framework they had been working on with Mountain Studies Institute for the last two years. It should go to the printer in mid-February. A very good PowerPoint presentation on the study can be found at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwH0TcHiDjZsLTiCeHFoMmxZRM9kX0hNNGhROtZ6V0FacGIB>. We have 46 trout streams in the study area, totaling approximately 295 miles. Climate change, particularly in terms of increased temperatures and changes in the form and timing of precipitation, is likely to increasingly affect our area between now and 2100. The study concluded that extreme drought and temperature increases could result in reduced water flow. For instance we could see more situations similar to the 2002 drought, which resulted in a 46 percent decrease in water flow.

Rich is still exploring getting some funding in the City of Cortez budget.

Becca is looking at some of the old Ponderosa Pine Project studies, particularly Denny Lynch's, "Ecology and Economics of Ponderosa Pine Forest Restoration on the Mancos-Dolores District of the San Juan National Forest." Bruce mentioned that he thought it was still relevant for chain saws and skidders but it would be good to update it to include feller-bunchers, which weren't in use here at the time. Bruce also noted that a similar study was done for mixed-conifer forests on the San Juan and that he could get Becca a copy of that report.

Mike Preston reported that he has been appointed to the new State board on forest health. Aaron Kimple has also been appointed.

Becca went over the 2016 financials. See that handout for details. Let Becca know if you have suggestions about organization or level of detail for the financial reports.

Then we looked at the initial budget for calendar year 2017. See that handout for details. Mike Preston stated that we shouldn't expect the Dolores Water Conservancy District to provide as much funding as in 2016 because that was to jump start the initial effort; we could expect something in the \$1,500 to \$1,750 range. Mike complemented Becca and the group on the good start; he hadn't thought we would get as much funding or from as diverse of sources so soon. Becca mentioned that we need to keep up local funding because it is a key to getting outside funding.

The pilot group met – James Dietrich, David Sitton, Harold Ragland, and Mike Preston with Aaron and Anthony on the phone from Mountain Studies Institute. Mike gave a recap of the meeting. [\[Do you have a copy of the meeting notes to link to?\]](#) They talked about the need to understand both the ecological and the social/economic sides. Our initial pilot is basically the CAFA grant, which includes state and private lands near Joe Moore Reservoir that is mostly ponderosa pine at the transition zone from pinyon-juniper.

Each of the landowners has different objectives but from a pilot project perspective, our purpose would be to advance science, showcase work, and build capacity with many different players. We are going to need some help with monitoring. We will want to get people out to see this project. Questions remaining include: who will do the work, how to get people to the table, and how to bring the community along.

Additional questions for the future include:

How can we work most effectively across multiple ecosystems and ownerships?

Are values at risk being protected?

Are treatments being effective (state of the science)?

How to best coordinate burning with mechanical treatments.

How to be commercially successful (economic dimensions).

Can we do anything on steep slopes?

Can we increase water yield at the same time as improving forest health?

It was mentioned that there is a market for blue-stain pine and we should explore connecting that with thinning needs.

It was suggested that we explore whether the new trail from Dolores to House Creek has any lands needing treatment that could be an educational opportunity. The USFS is already working on interpretive signs for the area. Scott volunteered to visit with Tom Rice of the Dolores Ranger District about the potential opportunity.

Becca mentioned that she will be working on a marking and monitoring field trip to one of the CAFA project areas this spring.

David Casey reported that the San Juan National Forest did submit a supplemental fuels funding request for Chicken Creek that should be enough to complete work in that area if they get it. They haven't heard back yet.

David Sitton said he is concerned that it has become more complicated to apply for contracts with the USFS. It has become more computerized which could be a barrier to some. It would be good to have a training session to help people.

The Open Standards for Conservation Planning training session (to learn more about this concept, follow this link: <http://cmp-openstandards.org>) hosted by TNC is scheduled for February 7 and 8 in Cortez.

Risk Assessment

Brad (Southwest District BLM) gave a slide show update on the risk assessment modeling work. The PowerPoint presentation, as well as much of the supporting data, can be found at this link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1JDPNbcxUtpXzY3eW9HMm1yQ28?usp=sharing> (use the link to get to the folder on google drives, download and open it, then open the PowerPoint file). The Highly Valued Resources and Assets Wildfire Risk Assessment approach is outlined in the publication RMRS-GTR-315, which can be found at: https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr315.pdf. Risk is based on three components: the likelihood of an area burning, the probable intensity of the fire, and the susceptibility of the values to fire. An eight-acre pixel size is used. Historical weather comes from RAWS, the Salter weather station for this analysis. FSIM was used to see how a fire would be likely to burn if it occurs in a certain location. It runs tens of thousands of simulated fires so that you can see where large fires are more likely.

Most of the losses of values occurred on about 1/3 of the landscape, with the other 2/3 seeing mostly benefits from fire. Most of the losses occurred on private lands, which indicates that we should focus mitigation on private lands (or public lands that are most likely to affect private). We need to take a harder look at power lines in the analysis. Brad did not include data for values of commercial timber as the prepped and sold timber units change from year to year.

Next Steps:

Everyone give **Becca** ideas for future meeting topics. Two that were mentioned at this meeting were a Climate Change Presentation and a presentation by MSI (**Aaron** and/or **Anthony**) on the monitoring work they have been doing for the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.

Anyone interested in the Open Standards training needs to let **Becca** know.

Next Meeting: We will stick to our normal first Wednesday schedule as much as possible in 2017 but will need to do something different in April and May (maybe a field trip on a different day). Next meeting – February 1, from 1:30 to 3:30 at the Dolores Water Conservancy District Office in Cortez.

Notes by Thurman Wilson with Becca Samulski edits