

UPPER DOLORES WATERSHED/ MCPHEE RESERVOIR PROTECTION INTEREST MEETING

Wednesday January 20, 2016, 10am to 12pm

Dolores Water Conservancy District, 60 S. Cactus St., Cortez

Summary:

Stakeholders met to continue the discussion of how to reduce wildfire risk to the watershed of the Dolores River.

Protect McPhee reservoir and other municipal water supplies by creating a resilient landscape in the Dolores River watershed. Improve and protect watershed health and functionality, lives and property, water-delivery systems, and other values at risk within the watershed.;

- Demonstrate that a healthy ecosystem and healthy economy are compatible goals. Assist industry in scaling up harvesting and processing applying best management practices.;
- Enable active management projects in all forest types to reduce the potential extent of high-severity wildfires, promote forest health and appropriate age, size, and class diversity, and provide a myriad of additional ecological and economic benefits.;
- Prepare for the potential outcomes of a “catalyzing event” such as a severe wildfire and post-fire erosion and flooding, including identification of critical resources and values at risk. Pre-plan and build relationships and communication to support an effective response.

Following the goals discussion, Shauna Jensen provided an update on the desired components of a watershed wildfire risk assessment and how that fits with the SJNF HVRA.

The group needs input on values to be included in our risk assessment. Please review the values list from the Pagosa HVRA and submit you additions and other suggested values to Becca @ montezumafirewise@gmail.com.

FireWise and MSI presented an update on coordination and project funding and will continue developing funding talking points and pursuing funding avenues.

The group looked at a brief outline of objectives for 2016 and 2017 and agreed to start a demonstration project committee to begin outlining the objectives for initial demonstration projects. The regional biomass working group will also be reconvened with an emphasis on projects that support scaling up industry and providing biomass outlets for SJHFHP and Dolores Watershed efforts.

The group is still unnamed, but if you have a great (or decent) name better than Upper Dolores Watershed Wildfire Protection Group, please send it to montezumafirewise@gmail.com.

NOTES

The meeting began at 10:05

Rebecca began with a meeting outline and introductions.

In attendance

Pam Wilson (FireWise), James Dietrich (MC), Thurman Wilson, Aaron Kimple (MSI), Shauna Jensen (SJNF), Mike Zion (Dolores FPD), Ken Curtis (DWCD), Mike Preston (DWCD), Ryan Cox (CSFS), Norm Birtcher (Montrose Forest Products), Dwayne Findley (Aspen Wall Wood), Rich Landreth (Cortez Water Treatment), Phil Ayers, Darlene Marcus (Field Rep. for Senator Tipton), Jim Mimiaga (the Journal), Rebecca Samulski (FireWise/facilitator)

Goals

The first topic was to work through the goals as prioritized through electronic communication since the November meeting. A draft of the compiled and re-worked goals was sent to stakeholders for review prior to the meeting. Changes were made from input during the meeting:

Goal 1: Some concern about the term protection – replace with resilience?

- Resilience represents current trends and discussions, presents the issues. Protection has different definitions for different folks. Protection does reflect direct goals
- Protect vs. protection – protection can represent drive for legislation
- Having McPhee included helps define project area

Goal 2: Add representation of best practices/ adaptive management? “Appropriately scaling up harvesting and using BMP’s”, What is appropriate? Remove appropriate and include Best Management Practices.

Goal 3: The group clarified that forest health includes insect and disease concerns and that spruce-fir is included. The group removed specific industry objectives from the goals and added, age, size, class diversity to make forest health less abstract.

Goal 4: The group liked this one as written.

Attendees agreed on the initial goals of the group.

Enhance opportunities for cross-boundary management across local, state, and federal public lands and private lands to:

1. Protect McPhee reservoir *and other municipal water supplies** by creating a resilient landscape in the Dolores River watershed. Improve and protect watershed health and functionality, lives and property, water-delivery systems, and other values at risk within the watershed.

**added per post meeting recommendation around watershed map that watershed above Dove Creek Pumps should be included.*

2. Demonstrate that a healthy ecosystem and healthy economy are compatible goals. Assist industry in scaling up harvesting and processing applying best management practices.
3. Enable active management projects in all forest types to reduce the potential extent of high-severity wildfires, promote forest health and appropriate age, size, and class diversity, and provide a myriad of additional ecological and economic benefits.

4. Prepare for the potential outcomes of a “catalyzing event” such as a severe wildfire and post-fire erosion and flooding, including identification of critical resources and values at risk. Pre-plan and build relationships and communication to support an effective response.

SJNF High Valued Resources and Assets

Following the great input on the goals, Shauna Jensen provided an update from the working group meeting on a watershed wildfire risk assessment. She started by providing more details on the SJNF High Values Resources and Assets study with examples from the Pagosa District study. This study will incorporate private lands but will be limited in what infrastructure and values will be included. A High Values Resources and Assets Risk Assessment framework shared during the meeting is attached to the initial distribution of these notes. The HVRA includes a broad value structure, models fire behavior and impacts to values. Dolores and Columbine model runs are expected by the end of summer 2016. We should be able to pull out the Dolores Watershed easily from these runs. The Pagosa model should be available in March. It may be prudent to have someone from the Pagosa District share more details of their study with us.

Steps to Complete the Watershed Wildfire Risk Assessment

The working group (Shauna J., Ken C., Jimbo B., Aaron K., Thurman W., Mike P., and Derek P.) that met on Thursday, January 14th would like to move forward with a fairly simple watershed wildfire risk assessment that they believe can be accomplished in house if Montezuma County can provide the GIS capacity. This group will work with James D. to set up a meeting with the GIS department and pursue a way forward. Identifying and possibly prioritizing values to be included in the assessment needs to be a next step for the stakeholders at large.

Step 1: GIS analysis (large group decided on upslope from McPhee during meeting, but half of group remaining after meeting reviewed watershed map provided by Shauna, and the additional area feeding into the Dove Creek pumps is relatively small. The assessment working group would like to include this area in the assessment and recommends to the larger group to include this area.)

Input Variables:

- Slope (<http://nationalmap.gov/elevation.html>)
- vegetation condition class (data that represents the current vegetation’s departure from a simulated historical vegetation reference condition; <http://www.landfire.gov/viewer/>)
- ignition location and/or location of historic large fires (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/rds/archive/Product/RDS-2013-0009.2/>)
- HVRAs (highly valued resources and assets; e.g., infrastructure, municipal watersheds, cultural locations)
 - HVRAs will be determined in part by “who is at the table”
 - Specific HVRAs can be identified by sub-groups (e.g., within infrastructure there could be sub-grouping for water diversions, utility lines, communication sites, etc.)
 - Larger group may want to prioritize HVRAs (e.g., infrastructure versus T & E habitat)

Outputs:

- Map of high risk areas (most useful for mitigation of active fire)
- Map of high risk watersheds (most useful for mitigation of post-fire effects)
- Map of HVRAs

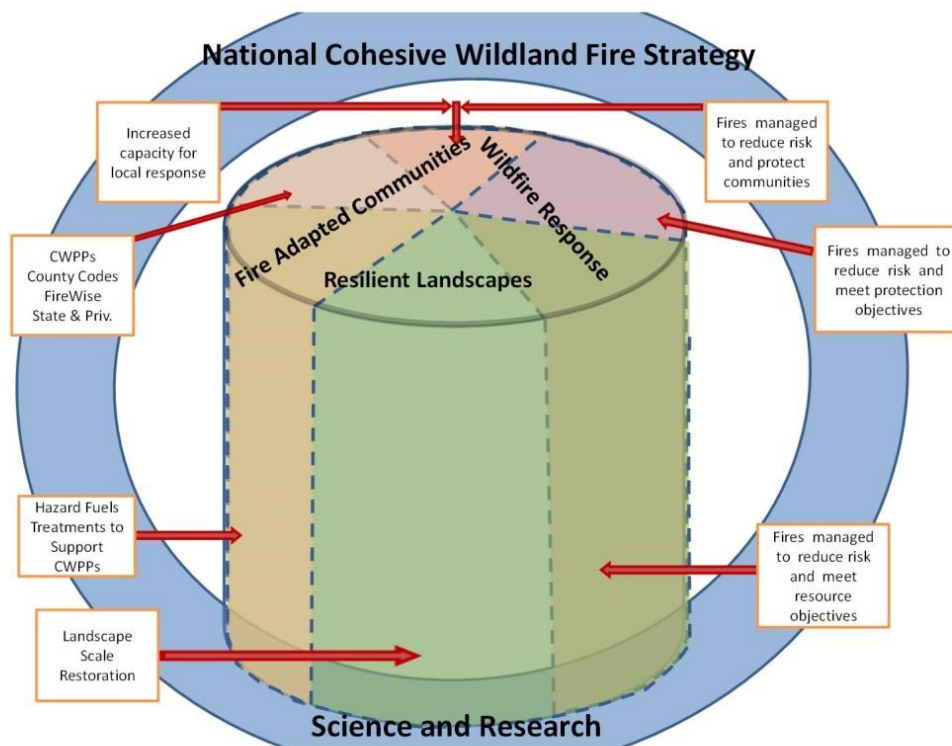
Step 2: Constraint analysis (where project implementation is constrained by Wilderness, Roadless, Special Management Areas, etc.)

Step 3: Synthesis (visual/map exercise) of model outputs, constraints, potential project areas (a further consideration....which ones have NEPA completed already?) by larger group

Funding Update

FireWise has secured funding to coordinate 3 meetings in the first half of 2016 through the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network. Dolores Water Conservancy District has also budgeted for coordination. FireWise, Mountain Studies Institute, and the Forest Service have been pursuing potential funding from USDA State and Private Forestry. While our area has been given a nod of approval to put in for some funding, the details were not yet available. *

*Since the meeting, we have been asked to put together a three year funds proposal to meet our regional needs in carrying out the Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy of “Creating Resilient Landscapes,” “Promoting Fire Adapted Communities”, and supporting “Safe and Effective Wildland Fire Response”.



Strategic Planning

In order to move toward our goals, and complete the assessment and start on demonstration projects this year, the group will need to work in committees based on interests and skills.

- The Risk Assessment group agreed to continue and hopefully work with Montezuma County to accomplish the GIS work.
- The funding group will complete talking points now that goals are set and keep working toward a short and long term funding strategy.
- A Demonstration Project group was started to guide the development of demo projects. This group will meet (in person or via phone and internet) before the next Stakeholders meeting (3/9/16) to determine the objectives of the initial demonstration projects.
- The Regional Biomass Working Group will be reconvened in February and will identify opportunities to develop and support industry for Dolores watershed restoration work and the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.
- An outreach committee may eventually be created. Several concerns arose during the meeting about language, tone, and participation that would maintain support for the work. An outreach committee would create consistent messages and employ a marketing strategy.

Next Steps

Task	Who	When
Determine initial objectives of Demonstration Projects	Ryan Cox, Aaron Kimple, Dwayne Findley, USFS Timber (Travis or new), Mike Preston	Before March 9th
Invite The Nature Conservancy	Mike Preston to Celene Hawkins	Done
Contact List	Becca	w/ notes
Assessment GIS meeting with Montezuma County	Assessment Team and James Dietrich	February
Review list of values included in Pagosa HVRA, and brainstorm changes and additions	All, send your suggestions to Becca Samulski	By Feb. 12th
Naming Our Group	All, send your suggestions to Becca Samulski	By Feb. 12 th
Next Stakeholders Meeting	@DWCD, 60 S. Cactus	10-12 March 9th

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.

Notes submitted by Becca Samulski, 1-25-16