

## **Dolores Watershed and Resilient Forest (DWaRF) Collaborative**

### **Tour 2**

**10-20-16, 9am-12pm beginning at Summit Lake Community Church**

#### **In attendance:**

Christopher Short , Bruce Short, Pam Wilson, Rebecca Samulski, Amanda Brenner, Dave Casey, Derek Padilla, Allen Maez, Ryan Cox, Aaron Kimple, Pauline Ellis, Doug Pickering, Jimbo Buickerood

The group began at the Summit Lake Community Church and did a quick overview of the Community Assisted Forests Adjacent award (CAFA acronym correction). Then the group got in three vehicles and went to three stops that embody the diversity of values at risk and ecology on this greater Joe Moore area landscape. The focus on the first stop at the Adam's Ranch was on the plan to burn piles remaining from thinning work a decade ago. We want to avoid these long-term fuel piles with future projects, but what to do with the slash will be an ongoing struggle. Driving through the Adams Ranch and the Millwood State Land Board school section, the group accessed the San Juan National Forest across from San Juan Bible Camp. This stop enabled a discussion of specific treatment prescriptions and what the land managers and timber industry is looking for as well as how that has changed over time. The final stop at Joe Moore Reservoir brought the group a little more out of the woods to see the values at risk, other than ecological values, within the landscape. Returning to the Summit Lake Community Church, Becca pointed out a property on Road 40 where the CAFA thinning work will begin on one 40 acre private parcel that is surrounded by a dozen homes in the p-j/ pondo transition zone.

#### **First site/ Adams Ranch**

##### **-Becca discussed CAFA award**

- Big Pine Lake subdivision surrounded by Forest Service land
- Community Assessment
- Great place for cross boundary work and desirable for CAFA grant.

##### **-Allen talked about past work that has been done on Adams Ranch and future work.**

- State Forest working on proposal for the area
- Large slash piles are a concern
- Thinning work was done 10 years ago and oak is coming in
- Some mastication work has been done
- They would like to get slash piles burned this winter

##### **-Ryan Cox**

- ~67 machined piled slash piles large and medium sized
- CAFA grant



**Bruce Short talks about burn plan. Notice machine build pile in background. Photo courtesy of Allen Maez**

- Bruce is contracted to help plan and carry out the pile burning
- CSFS will be working on more thinning and mastication in the future

**-Bruce**

- Bruce started with a draft burn plan by Tess Johnstone and simplified it with a focus on a medical plan
- Basic Rx:
  1. 12 in. of snow
  2. hand fire
  3. 25% humidity or higher
- Oak leaves are not considered an issue
- Some pine could scorch
- The burning needs to be done early in the season so that heavy fuels do not get too wet.
- Smoke could be biggest issue, but not as much the further away it is from the road.

**-Pauline discussed Rx on Columbine and the Wyden Amendment that allowed the Forest Service to burn on private land.**

- Suggests the same program could fit with this project
- Possibly has to be a no cost agreement
- Suggests looking into it

**-Ryan responds to Pauline**

- The State can only burn on state trust land
- Millwood section and Colorado Parks and Wildlife land would qualify

**-Allen responds to Ryan**

- NRCS can fund forestry work

**Second site/ Forest Service land**

**-Becca discusses the site**

- Many small understory trees have been removed, but there is still a continuous crown.

**-Dave discusses the site**

- Previous treatment has been done in the Lost Chicken area. Trying to figure out how to get timber cut and sold. This was originally offered as a timber sale, but now SJNF is putting it up as a service contract. There is a lack of industry here right now to use what is available.



- Dave has a cut, skid, and deck proposal and hopes that someone will want to come in and buy the decked logs.
- At 343 acres, this is a large area to get done
- Identify areas that are best for a service contract
- Decking here would be the same as what was done on Adams Ranch
- There are concerns with what to do with smaller diameter materials and issues with getting rid of mixed materials as well as tops and rotten materials being mixed with good materials.
- Lop and scatter approach would be too dense for this area.
- More wood than the Forest Service can get rid of in a year
- They have more than 2000 acres that still need prescribed fire following thinning or mastication treatments.

Participants observing connected canopy in Lost/Chicken timber area. Photo courtesy of Allen Maez.

**-Becca asks what desired conditions do we want done on the ground for this area based on the ecosystem and areas that are at risk.**

- NEPA has been done on all this land
- The land has been cruised, marked, and is ready to go

**-Dave**

- As markings continue to fade, investments are lost and work needs to be redone
- Suggests group clump and variability approach
- Not many seedlings are returning here

**-Jimbo** asked if the district is taking a stems per acre approach.

**-Dave suggests using groupy, clumpy and basal area and not stems per acre as it is more about concentration.**

**-Becca mentions Santa Fe and their varied prescriptions**

- There is desire for different prescriptions in different areas
- Different areas need to be treated differently

**-Bruce agrees that different areas have different objectives based on location and needs**

## **Thoughts on desired ecological attributes**

**-Dave**

- Burn to allow seedlings to take hold – if you burned this area now, none of the seedlings would survive.
- Every stand is different for burning and timing may be different. Burning depends on the project and the stand.
- Hold off and see what the forest does

**-Pauline asks how you balance the need for fire around the WUI if it is not the right time for the forest.**

**-Aaron mentions Turkey Creek regeneration and burning in the condition vs. this one.**

**-Becca observes that there is not much diversity within understory vegetation but the oak isn't too dense.**

**-Aaron and Dave both suggest opening the forest up will change the diversity in the understory.**

**-Dave states that the vegetation is there, but the oak is competing and there is not much sunlight reaching the forest floor.**

**-Becca: "What would MSI inventory?"**

**-Aaron: "It depends on the question and end goals."**

- What does the GTR 310 suggest?
- Habitat?
- Response?

**-Becca:**

- What do we want to see on the Forest Service land?
- Outcomes on land?
- Could we create better grazing?

**-Dave**

- Considerations for wildlife habitat such as Goshawks and the Abert's squirrel
- No cut no touch reserves around goshawk nesting sites.

**-Aaron**

- Consider long term impact when making management decisions
- Look beyond 1-3 years and look at 100- 500 years

**-Jimbo**

- Look at everything
  1. Wildlife
  2. Human population
  3. Water issues
- What are we monitoring for?
- Create more diversity

**-Aaron comments that water is hard to measure. Studies suggest that it takes a lot of thinning to make an impact.**

**-Pauline**

- Examine at larger landscapes when looking at this piece
- What is the plan on a larger scale?
- What did we do before and after?

- Did we do what we intended?
- Do we need to change the prescription?
- Concern for silviculture is important, but what about the big picture?
- Before treatment. After treatment. After green up. What do we do?

**-Aaron**

- Building the stand work into the bigger picture
- How does this fit into the mosaic?

**-Becca: Of the values at risk that the DWaRF Collaborative has identified, these are the values that stand out in this area:**

- One of the most populated areas in Montezuma county
- State wildlife area and major wildlife component in this landscape
- Lost Canyon drains into McPhee right at the beginning of the Reservoir and nearer to the municipal water outtakes than any other major drainage
- Joe Moore Reservoir supplies irrigation

**-Derek**

- Will we even have Ponderosa many years from now?

**Third location/ Joe Moore Reservoir**

**-Becca talks about the site**

- There are two homes here that are occupied year around
- Surrounded by Forest Service and CPW land
- Residents limbed trees but left the crown and were hesitant to remove screening
- A Community Risk Assessment was done
- CPW interested in doing work as well as residents
- Mancos volunteer fire department did training here last fall – followed swiftly by their response to a garage fire last winter
- Water is used for irrigation and it is also used for wildlife and recreation



Tour group overlooking Joe Moore Reservoir. Photo courtesy of Allen Maez.

**-Dave discusses methods for thinning on the Forest Service side**

- Hand treatment with forest account (internal Forest Service employees cutting)
- Southwest Conservation Corps thinned and a contractor skidded for fuel wood
- Timber sales

- Mastication
- Pile burning of slash
- They've tried every method in this area

**-Becca**

- Boundaries are an issue
- Fire risk and boundary issues closed the campground

**-Derek**

- Issues here are that the prescription for this area was a timber sale, but the desired conditions are not there. Small scale is happening.

**-Dave**

- To meet desired conditions we need to work with timber harvesters.
- The main approach is fuels reduction in this landscape, but forest health and silviculture practices are incorporated.
- Hand treatments are relatively easy to accomplish, but are not very efficient.

**-Bruce**

- Reduce density
- Introduce fire back
- Suitable timber base will maintain future sale

**-Jimbo**

- Move from fuels to forest health

**-Derek**

- CPW concerns about taking out too much and not leaving enough wildlife cover
- CPW was brought out for pre-treatment tour and mentioned that roadside screening was important. The Forest Service adjusted their prescription while still accomplishing their wildfire reduction goals.