

UPPER DOLORES WATERSHED/ MCPHEE RESERVOIR PROTECTION INTEREST GROUP

Tuesday Nov. 17th, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

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

Attendees:

Shauna Jensen, USFS

Nicole Hackman, USFS

Derek Padilla, USFS

James Dietrich, Montezuma Public Lands

Mike Preston, DWCD

Ken Curtis, DWCD

Harold Ragland, Stonertop Lumber

Dwayne Findley, Aspen Logging

Mike Zion, Dolores Fire

Paul Hollar, Montezuma OEM

Jimbo Buickerood, SJCA

Aaron Kimple, MSI

Kent Grant, CSFS

Ryan Cox, CSFS

Thurman Wilson, MSI

Pam Wilson, FireWise SW CO

Darlene Marcus, 3 Congressional Dist.

Rebecca Samulski, FireWise SW CO (facilitating)

The meeting began at 10:05 with an overview of the previous meetings and a round of introductions. The “What You Bring to the Table” list was updated to include SJCA and Montezuma County Emergency Services.

Derek stated that this group has the support of our Dolores District Ranger and the Forest Supervisor as an effort to stay involved in during 2016. They are trying to work across boundaries to produce better outcomes and to increase funding potential.

The forest service sees value in getting stakeholder input on forest management, but it is important for the group to understand that any decisions and final actions are up to each land manager; their decision authority cannot be given up to any group. This collaborative group can give recommendations, but cannot set forest priorities. We cannot mandate work to be done on any lands, private, state, or federal. Derek added that it is very helpful to have a group like this to turn to for input and to work with.

The group continued with a review of the goals set forth during the Ponderosa Pine Partnership days, and brainstormed additional goal areas that are important to our group today. The group agreed to follow up by prioritizing these goals remotely. Seventeen goals were identified with the understanding that some of them may be dropped or added to an “additional benefits” category. All stakeholders are invited to send [Becca](#) a list of up to 6 of your top goals.

As the group discussed our goals, several needs or potential project came up. There was a question about Dolores River resident participation, with so many of the main river slopes owned privately. FireWise and the Colorado State Forest Service both actively work to engage landowners in forestry projects and wildfire risk reduction. Montezuma County also represents the residents of the Dolores River Valley within the County. A resident who has been involved in other Dolores River issues plans to attend future meetings. NRCS should be invited to participate; the Joint Chiefs (NRCS and USFS) grants could be a good funding source.

Opportunities for utilizing small diameter wood are going to be important. We may have actually slipped backwards on use of small diameter material. Besides the diameter issue, there is not much demand for ponderosa pine, so we also have a low value issue. The prospect of co-generation, mixing biomass with coal for electric generation, was brought up.

Mike spoke to a couple of aspects of collaborative groups that have made them successful, including the importance of an opportunity to practice. He anticipates that a pilot project with a commercial harvest component will be an important step for our group. Jimbo agreed that it would be good to focus on something specific such as watershed health and protection.

A few ideas that will directly feed into a watershed assessment involve looking at all of the treatment tools that are available and then looking at where they are appropriate. We may also need to determine our priority resources and values at risk to guide prioritization of treatment landscapes. Creating fire breaks along slopes was mentioned as one tool to deal with the extensive slopes throughout the watershed. The group would like to know what, if any, of these assessment recommendations can be accomplished through the USFS High Values Risk Assessment and which lands will be taken into consideration. Shawna had some ideas on analysis techniques that could be done with existing information that should be followed up on. Aaron and Thurman offered to do a presentation on the wildfire risk to water supplies analysis for Archuleta County and things they learned in that process.

Identifying the various funding mechanisms available for watershed restoration work is another important item we added to our parking lot.

With a comprehensive list of potential goals, and several side-bars guiding the direction of a future watershed assessment and other group questions, the group moved on to some operational issues.

FireWise has been able to start the coordination of this group through funding from the [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network](#) for the three meetings before the end of 2015. Additional funding is needed to continue coordination efforts in 2016. FireWise asked with our annual Montezuma County funding request, but were denied at this time. Dolores Water Conservancy District offered to help fund coordination in 2016 if there are other funding partners. FireWise will continue looking for grants to fund coordination. The group decided it is necessary to have some talking points for initial funding and would like to go to Montezuma and Dolores Counties, and possibly the former friends of the Dolores River group for coordination funding. The Southwest Water Conservation District, Southwest Basin Roundtable, Colorado Water Conservation Board, and National Forest Foundation were identified as potential funders to pursue a watershed assessment.

The group was fine with our informal organization 'structure' at this time.

Several participants advocated for monthly meetings in 2016 to build momentum. The first meeting of 2016 was scheduled for the morning of January 20th. Ad hoc groups were formed around funding talking points and determining the elements of a watershed risk assessment.

Next Steps		
Task	Who	When
Prioritize Goals	All	By Dec. 11 th
Develop funding talking points	Becca, Pam, Thurman, Jimbo, Mike review	Dec. 11 th ?
Talk to Montezuma County about funding request	James D.	Dec. 14 th ?
Talk to Dolores County about effort and funding request	Derek and Becca	Dec. 21
Find out more about high values risk assessment process including when we can provide useful input. Can our group help define desired product in addition to identifying values.	Derek, Aaron	January 13 th , or sooner if any action or input is needed from our group at Jan. 20 th meeting.
What will our watershed risk assessment need to include?	Thurman, Jimbo, Ken, Shawna	January 20 th – report to group – possible 9am mtg.
Next Meeting	All	January 20 th , 10-12 at DWCD
Invitations to Dolores County, Town of Rico, CPW, NRCS, Dolores River landowners	Becca	By Dec. 21 st

Notes by Becca Samulski, 11/30/15