

Dolores Watershed and Resilient Forest (DWARF) Collaborative

Meeting 7

5-4-16, 1:30 - 3:30 at Dolores Water Conservancy District Office

Becca Samulski, Pam Wilson, Bruce Short, Greg Kemp, Duncan Rose, Garrett Hanks, Eric Janes, Tanner Hutt, Jimbo Buickerood, Pat Seekins, Celene Hawkins, James Dietrich, Aaron Kimple, Derek Padilla, Dwayne Finley, Harold Ragland, Mike Preston, Mike Zion, Austin Cope – KSJD Radio, Jim Mimiaga – Cortez Journal, Gail Binkly – Free Press

Funding: Did not get Healthy Watershed Consortium grant; still waiting to hear on the CAFA grant (hopefully hear this summer). It may be time to put in a proposal to the Southwest Basin Roundtable.

There had been talk of a possible visit from Jim Hubbard, Deputy Chief of USFS State & Private Forestry in June, but no details are available yet. **Visit now possible in July*

Aaron met with Dan Jiron, Regional Forester in Denver, and Cal Joyner, Regional Forester in Albuquerque. They might want to do a Regional Director's road show in July

Risk Assessment: The GIS specialists supporting the risk assessment model were not available to attend. Brad Pietruzka, who will be running the model, was excited to see that we had narrowed down the values at risk and gave some suggestions to the rest of the team to improve the model. Montezuma County GIS has compiled the values data for Montezuma and Dolores County and provided that to Brad. The risk assessment working group will follow his schedule to set a meeting date to work through the fire response functions for each value.

Celene and Garrett were assigned to develop ecological values that are linked with water (riparian and aquatic species) and are spatially discreet. TNC looked at CO Heritage mapping that shows high quality riparian communities (area where something going on is rare). BLM or county should try to get info directly from TNC. Recent national wetlands inventory done (TNC can help get this info to county and BLM).

TU – priority watersheds for native cutthroat trout have already been sent to Brad

When we start looking at post-fire issues, it should help inform what types of preventive measures we might want to undertake.

The group clarified that the risk assessment is a multi-phase process – evaluating the impacts that fire a post-fire erosion could have to the identified values, then looking at actions that we might want to take to mitigate those risks to the values. The modeling will provide the assessment, then we need to look at various management options, including preventative measures.

Question on what modeling program BLM will be using. **Brad will use FSim*

Jimbo will send Becca some research from RMRS that shows that the further from the WUI you are, the less chance you have of affecting the severity.

Conference Updates:

Aaron: Last week's workshop on Collaborative Restoration had lots of representation from USFS and National Forest Foundation. NFF has been working with Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects (CFLRPs). Good for them to see partnerships happening outside of that model. USFS is beginning to understand the value of community based collaborative groups, especially with pre-planning work like NEPA.

The Collaborative Restoration workshop also included discussion on working with FS and making sure there is someone at the table to help with transitions of FS personnel. The importance of monitoring for the accomplishment of predetermined objectives was also discussed. Need to have the questions up front of what you are trying to achieve. Lots of models that can be brought to the process here.

Becca: Update on Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Workshop

Open Standards – many large conservation organizations use this for planning efforts – good model for adaptive management; this is a standard process that some larger funders will/may be looking for.

Aaron mentioned that some groups on the Front Range did not set objectives early. Good to take time to make that happen before you start work on the ground.

Dwayne – dynamics could be changed by new beetle outbreaks (i.e. Cherry Creek)

Celene mentioned that we may not want to just have objectives but also a description of how the work will be done (funders like this)

Becca shared diagram of participants that was also presented at the conference in Florida. Are there others that need to be added? Becca has talked to the conservation districts but need to encourage them to attend.

Additions – follow up

- JR Ford
- High Desert Conservation District
- Dove Creek Conservation District
- Dolores County
- Dove Creek

Using Fire as a Landscape Restoration Tool:

Pat Seekins explained that the San Juan National Forest is trying to ramp up their prescribed fire program – targeting ponderosa pine forests. He typically wants to A

Ponderosa Pine Forest typically sees fire every 8-10 years. Gambel oak is out competing other species. Working on Environmental Assessment for landscape-scale prescribed fire. Planning area is about 200,000 acres in the Ponderosa Pine zone on the Dolores District. This should allow for larger burns. Most burning has been occurring in the back 40, but they want to do more, closer to the WUI, but that requires more leg work in the communities. Currently, they have about 25,000 acres available for burning. When they do a burn, in addition to safety considerations, they have management objectives set for the ecological outcomes, maximum tree mortality, etc in each burn area, and they monitor to see if their objectives are being met and make adjustments accordingly.

Duncan asked how the USFS chooses where they will go. Douglas fir is difficult to burn in managed fires. Ponderosa is the most fire-dependent ecosystem and where the FS gets the biggest bang for the buck. RX burns can help reduce severity of wildfires. Make determinations on what season to burn in. Purpose is to burn duff layer and reduce the Gambel oak. Looking to treat 5,000 -10,000 acres per year on each Ranger District. Should be burning 40-50,000 acres per year to stay on top of fuels build-up.

Managing natural ignitions is another option for restoring fire to the frequent fire forests.

Harold mentioned that fire sometimes devaluates the value of the timber. Sometimes it is better to let the excess material just decay and rot on the ground. The trees become "freckled" if the fire is too hot. Harold also said there are some simple solutions that we could implement now – like doing away with firewood permits and allowing more grazing. Create low-grade spec roads so folks can get in and remove firewood (limiting travel to 300 feet off roads limits firewood gathering).

Tanner Hutt spoke to the management of fire on State lands: Division of Fire Prevention and Control is starting to conduct burns (Lone Mesa and near Ignacio). Right now, fire starts on state lands will have full suppression applied. Multi-mission aircraft can be ordered by any cooperator; software can map fires in real-time and be immediately relayed to folks on the ground.

Mike Zion emphasized that all fires that the local departments respond to are full suppression fires.

Updates:

Wildfire Collaboration Conference: May 17, 1:00 – 5:00. Would love to have some representation from DWARF group. Speakers will include Christopher Licata who wrote our regional timber supply study and Carole Walker from the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association.

Duncan mentioned that he just got his insurance renewal (from USAA) and if there is a fire within 3 miles of your home, USAA will deploy a private firefighting team.

June Tour Planning:

Start at Dolores Public Lands Center

Tour Objectives:

We will try to see as many different management activities as reasonable, and start talking on the ground about objectives for forest restoration.

- Prescribed Fire
- Lop and scatter
- Private land treatments
- Ponderosa pine thinning where fire occurred within two years – it's been 20 years – how does it look now? Any research from Romme? Where is there overlap in values that we've been talking about? Point at the time was to stay away from the WUI.
- Water supply and infrastructure

Possibly up Dolores-Norwood Road that didn't turn out so good, then down Beaver Creek (took out over 13 MBF). Could also look at Boggy Draw and then House Creek. Harold could help with recommendations.

Becca would like to institute policy of no uniforms on field trips – puts everyone on a level playing field. Duncan mentioned that we need to make sure new participants are aware of this policy and know that (FS) folks are in the group so they don't say something they shouldn't.

Next Steps:

Feedback on Healthy Watershed Consortium grant – did the folks that got money have any of these values and if not, what did they offer? Several unique values we are looking at:

- Biodiversity values
- Adaptive mgmt.
- Get beyond metrics of just acres treated

Regional Wildfire Collaboration Conference - May 17th - 1pm-5pm - Fort Lewis College Vallecito Room - [RSVP to Pam Wilson](#)

Watch Watershed Assessment webinar from front range watershed wildfire protection groups - [Part 1](#) - [Part 2](#)

May 24, 11AM: [National Stewardship Contracting Virtual Meeting: Case Studies from Recent Stewardship Contracting Projects](#)

May 24: 1PM: [Connecting downstream users with their upstream forests](#) – Rio Grande Water Fund Example

Wood Utilization in the Wildland Urban Interface - [Workshop in Colorado Springs - June 20-22](#) - several members of our regional biomass working group will be attending.

Invite High Desert Cons. District – Mike will contact Judy

Becca would like volunteers for Dolores River Days. First person to volunteer gets a free ticket to get in. Eric, Celene, and James are interested. At festival, present goals, list of partners, sign-up sheet, donation bucket, map. Partners are also welcome to share their basic materials at the DWaRF tent.

Ponderosa Pine Symposium in the fall – Aaron has reached out to authors of GTR-310.