

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative

2-6-19 Meeting, 1:30 - 3:30 at Dolores Water Conservancy District Office

In Attendance:

Duncan Rose, Mike Znerold, Mike Preston, James Dietrich, Rachael Medina, Doug Roth, Karmen King, David Casey, Anthony Culpepper, Brad Pietruszka, Ian Barrett, Russell Anderson, Ashley Downing, Sheldonna Zwicker Ives, Ken Curtis, Thurman Wilson, and Danny Margoles (facilitating)

Updates

The Butler Corner Burn had to be put off again because of poor smoke dispersal conditions. Bruce Short is the project leader and will try again when conditions permit.

A statement of qualifications went out for leading the strategic planning segment of the WaterSMART grant. The work includes facilitating some DWRF meeting segments and a part-day retreat. Danny will also do a request for proposals for note taking at both DWRF meetings and some of the smaller working group sessions.

Ashley and Danny are scheduled to meet with Kara Chadwick and Anthony Madrid of the USFS to get to know them better and to discuss Cohesive Strategy funding.

Danny wants to start the timber industry working group (David Sitton, David Casey, Bruce Short, and Mike Preston) back up. He will be sending out invitations. Please contact Danny if you want to participate.

Dave Casey talked about effects of the federal government shutdown and some things they did to try to reduce impacts. Two timber sale administrators were allowed to work through the shutdown and Dave was able to come back on a week early so timber sales could continue. They are working on the Lone Pine – Bradford Bridge EA and hope to have a draft out for review about February 15 with comments in by late March and a decision notice in June. There is also an aspen EA in process. They are working with TEAMS (A USFS Enterprise Team) on it. They expect a Draft EA in May with a Final EA in August and a Decision Notice in October.

Personal use fuelwood sales were impacted because the office wasn't open to sale permits and roads were closed. They tried to take care of the commercial fuelwood people ahead of the shutdown but some of them wanted more and couldn't get it. They also got behind on an inventory contract.

Ian said it was an inconvenience for BLM operations. Some hiring continued. Some training was cancelled.

Brad said some hiring continued for the USFS and most of the selections were done. They cancelled some workshops and training. There is a crunch on US Forest Service agreements. Besides the shutdown, the Agreements Specialist position is vacant but they have a detailer in working on them.

Dave said the Forest Service is having trouble finding people to fill seasonal timber positions. There will be another short window for applying March 4th through the 6th.

Mike Preston was in Denver the previous week for the Colorado Water Congress. It looks like about \$2,000,000 of mostly federal money will be available for 416 Fire recovery. Another piece of good news is that both the San Luis Valley and the San Juan Mountains are going to get weather radar. The Valley

should get theirs this year and the San Juans next year. Mike related that last year he and Ellen Roberts challenged Water Congress participants to do more on forest health. The Congress now has an advocacy working group on that topic.

Anthony explained that the Mountain Studies Institute has a couple of foundation grants to engage the public related to recreation and the 416 Fire. They are also beginning to engage the Columbine Ranger District with a collaborative effort similar to DWRF on the Dolores District and San Juan Headwaters on the Pagosa District.

MSI is working on environmental bonding – getting money through a bonding authority for biomass and forest health. It would work similarly to a bond issue for a public works project like road and bridge repair but the purpose would be forest treatments. They are also helping plan for a San Juan TREX workshop in September. These are TNC prescribed fire training exchanges that help people get their fire qualifications and increase the pool of people available to work in fire.

Ashley let the group know that Amanda and her husband are moving. There is a job announcement posted on the Wildfire Adapted Partnership website. People commented that Amanda has been doing good work and will be missed.

Watershed Wildfire Protection Framework

This project, envisioned as a collaborative effort that would produce a document, was initially framed as a wildfire watershed protection plan. That thinking is evolving. DWRF doesn't have the authority to make decisions and implement projects for the most part. Individual participants in DWRF do, but not the collaborative itself. The gist of what we are doing is the same but describing it as a framework rather than a plan seems more accurate.

Three main activities have lead to where we are today on this effort. The Montezuma County GIS shop (Rachael and Doug with coordination from James) has compiled a database of relevant information about the watershed, such as topography, vegetation, water, fish and wildlife data, home locations and existing infrastructure. They have shared that with MSI and Anthony and Matt Cook are working on making it more accessible to partners and the general public through a geodatabase with visualization tools using ArcGIS Online.

Brad led a HVRA modeling effort focused on fire risk to high valued resources and assets. A DWRF working group provided input on which resources and values to consider and relative importance (numerically weighting them). This work was also reviewed at a full DWRF meeting. But it still needs more vetting by the larger DWRF group. There may also be some new things to consider such as the recently identified trout species. The USFS is nearing completion of a similar effort. A next step would be to compare the two. Then it would be good to consider whether it makes sense to maintain two separate efforts.

Shauna led a modeling effort with the Agricultural Research Service in Tucson using the Automated Geospatial Watershed Assessment (AGWA) Tool. Basically this modeling shows relative changes in pre- and post-fire peak flow and sediment delivery. It is used to identify areas that are likely to have greater impacts than other areas. That can help identify where treatments will be most helpful. It doesn't show debris flow but that correlates well with the highest risk spots; areas with the highest water and sediment flows will probably also have the highest debris flows.

At today's meeting, Anthony went through a slide presentation showing some of the data and results from these three efforts.

Brad and Ian identified a new effort that both the BLM and USFS are undertaking called PODS (Potential Operational Delineations). This breaks landscapes down into actionable units where you would have a similar response to fire. This lets the managers preplan and be better prepared when wildfires occur. It is also helpful in prioritizing where to do wildfire risk-reduction treatments. PODS is an iterative process but they hope to have something to share by April.

Danny will reach out to people to be involved going forward with the framework. Interested people are also encouraged to reach out to him.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 6, from 1:30 to 3:30 at the Water Conservancy Office.

Notes by Thurman Wilson with Danny Margoles edits.

Watershed Wildfire Protection Framework Activity

Danny split stakeholders into groups based on profession, and asked:

1. How could this framework help you prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire?
2. What specific questions/challenges could this help you address?
3. How could this framework help you partner with other stakeholders?
4. Are there other important and practical directions this framework could take?

DWCD:

Question 1

- Risk assessment helps identify emergency response plan
- Helps for seeking grants and funding for proactive treatments and postfire recovery

Question 2

- Where are specific risks that could affect DWCD water infrastructure
- What options are for risk mitigation
- Who should be worked with on what project
- How to prioritize work

Question 3

- Identifying which partners should be worked with on a given project

Question 4

- Outreach tailored for specific interest groups and geographic area

SJNF and BLM:

Question 1

- Helps to understand potential for wildfire – likelihood of occurrence, intensity, risk
- Think about how to prepare – how to coordinate and work together across boundaries
- Help to plan and fund implementation projects and actions to reduce risk
- Provides purpose and need for NEPA
- Helps the outreach and education efforts – helps develop public buy-in and understanding for mitigation and Rx fire.

Question 2

- Identifying priority work areas
- Who to work with
- How to fund projects

Question 3

Montezuma County:

Question 1

- Helps private property owners know their risk and whether they should develop a wildfire mitigation plan
- AGWA can help warn landowners about post-fire/monsoon erosion events
- Plan for needed infrastructure improvements or investments
- Inventory of data helps for FEMA disaster funding
- Prioritize roads and evacuation routes
- Cross-boundary treatment
- Data sharing -

Question 2:

- What is the risk, what mitigation needs, and how to prepare

Question 3

- Bridge public/private divide and make sure both are on same page

Non-profit/interested citizen group:

- Helping individuals prepare for and recover from wildfire
- Education and outreach
- Identifying where priorities overlap with others to work together for funding
- Developing collaborative monitoring plans
- Identifying knowledge gaps
- Needed is info about irrigators so info can be communicated to them in following an event.
- Helpful for cross-entity partnerships - like the Upper Dolores Watershed Stream Protection Working Group – to identify high risk and priority areas
- Help identify high consequence areas for specific groups, like trout habitat