

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative Stakeholders Meeting

October 2, 2019

dwrfcollaborative.org

draft - 4 pages

Present:

Derek Padilla (Dolores District Ranger, San Juan National Forest), Lorena Williams (Partnership Coordinator, SJNF), Anthony Culpepper and Mike Remke (Mountain Studies Institute), Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited), Sonny Frazier (Town Manager, Dove Creek), Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist), Becca Samulski (Executive Director, Fire Adapted Colorado), Ellen Roberts (Natural Resources Consultant), Alex Graf (Montezuma County Coordinator for Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Rachel Medina (GIS Specialist, Montezuma County), James Dietrich (Public Lands Coordinator, Montezuma County), Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District), Stacy Beough (Strategic by Nature Consultants), Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator), and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Senator Gardner: Danny said Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner came and toured the Excelsior plant in Mancos recently and that it's good that local representatives are becoming familiar with the DWRF collaborative.

WaterSMART grant-funded work: Danny said the Coordinating Committee will be sending out scopes of work for a monitoring plan and GIS work.

Funding: Danny is talking with the Colorado Water Conservation Board about the CWCB providing some funding for WUI fire mitigation.

He said the Laura Jane Musser Fund, which assists with projects in rural areas, has been approached to help with rapid risk assessment in Dolores County.

Danny will be trying to put together an Action, Implementation and Mitigation (AIM) Grant proposal to pay for a VISTA support person.

Ponderosa Pine Partnership: Mike Preston said some of the main participants in the Ponderosa Pine Partnership, which in the 1990s did pilot projects to thin local ponderosa forests, are coming back Thursday and Friday to see the treated sites and how they have fared. Danny said he hopes to develop a tour for the collaborative from that.

Mountain Studies Institute: Anthony said MSI is coordinating with the San Juan National Forest on monitoring in the Lone Pine area.

MSI will host three talks in October and November on fire history and forest health. The first talk, *Fire & Forests*, on Oct. 23, is about forest ecology and the historical role of fire in the SJNF. The second, *Post-Fire Effects*, on Oct. 30, is about ecological lessons learned post-fire. The third, *Resilience*, on Nov. 6, is on human impacts post-fire.

Dolores Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest: Derek said the objection period for the Lone Pine EA continues through Oct. 15 and the objection period for the Dolores Aspen Landscape Vegetation Management EA will continue through Nov. 8.

The Dolores District completed a prescribed burn on a small unit in the Boggy Draw area. This fall the district will focus on further prescribed burning in the Boggy and Haycamp areas as soon as there is more moisture. Derek said the district exceeded its plan for prescribed burning this year. They had identified about 7200 acres but actually completed about 8600 acres. In addition, they allowed natural fire to burn another 2500 acres in Doe Canyon.

Derek said the abundant snowfall last winter helped, providing a lengthier-than-usual spring window to conduct burning. He said forest managers took some risks and a prescribed burn they did in August was on the hotter end of the prescription. Of 2000 acres burned, there were 100-200 acres at House Creek that burned at high intensity. This was fire behavior that officials really did not want, but in the end things went well and there were no catastrophic issues. However, the area of the high-intensity burn is very visible and the district has received considerable feedback. He is going to be more careful when utilizing such conditions in the future. In the natural world that is the way fire burns, but when a fire is human-started, especially by the agency, there is some negative reaction.

Ellen asked about the community's response. Derek said most of the people that district officials spoke with directly did understand the prescribed burning. Some people do not support any prescribed burning, but overall there was fairly good support. He said smoke management is the other major issue. The district received calls from people directly affected by smoke who didn't support the burning, but he believes 2-3 days of smoke is better than 20-30 days resulting from a wildfire.

Mike Remke said MSI compiles information on factors such as burn units and smoke and can make that information, which includes maps and a text summary, accessible to DWRF.

Ellen said the report on the Southwest Colorado Wildfire Mitigation Environmental Impact Fund is out. She will email the report to Danny so he can send it out. Anyone with feedback on the report is invited to share it with her.

DWRF Strategic Plan

Stacy gave a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the final DWRF Strategic Plan. A WaterSMART grant provided funding for DWRF to develop the long-range strategic plan as well as an organizational structure. The plan is now being edited. The final version should be sent to DWRF stakeholders by Oct. 18. She said she will complete an executive summary and a template budget that can be filled in.

She said a communication/outreach plan is a major component and she will create an outreach plan with the help of a working group that will discuss DWRF's messages and how best to define them. She said the group will have one or two meetings before the end of the year, and asked for volunteers.

Becca, Duncan, Alex, Anthony and Lorena said they will serve on the working group.

Stacy said it is also important for DWRF to establish a Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee.

Comments: Becca said using the term "forest management" means overlooking other ways of protecting the local infrastructure from wildfire. Bill agreed and recommended using a broader term.

After discussion, the group agreed that the term “Resilient Forest and Communities” was preferable.

Bill said the strategic plan, or parts of it, should be revisited every year or so. Stacy said there is a section about evaluation included in the plan and it is a living document.

Organizational structure: Stacy said she and the Coordinating Committee evaluated different options for DWRF’s organizational structure. The three main options were:

- Becoming a 501c3,
- Becoming a program of an existing nonprofit,
- No change.

She said DWRF’s current status precludes it from applying for Part 2 of a WaterSMART grant because an entity must be a 501c3 or dba as a 501c3 to apply for that.

Stacy said the idea of DWRF’s becoming a 501c3 was taken off the table because it would add a large administrative component and didn’t seem to have additional value.

The main issues requiring a discussion about organizational structure are liability and insurance coverage. She said becoming a program of a nonprofit would solve those concerns and also enable DWRF to apply for Part 2 of a WaterSMART grant.

The Coordinating Committee talked to three groups: WAP because it is already DWRF’s fiscal sponsor; MSI; and Onward! A Legacy Foundation. The committee decided that it is not the appropriate time to make a change and DWRF will continue to have WAP as its fiscal sponsor.

Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program

Derek explained that CFLRP is a landscape restoration program for national forests, based in a law that was passed about 10 years ago. A forest can receive up to \$8 million a year for restoration projects. The benefiting forest must provide 50 percent of the funds for any project. The money can’t be used for planning, only for implementation or monitoring.

Derek said officials with national forests in Southwest Colorado had not planned to submit proposals to CFLRP because there were so many projects in the northern part of the state, but it was later decided that local forests need to be seeking these funds. About mid-August, the SJNF put together a Tier 1 proposal, which is designed to identify whether there is support for a Tier 2 proposal. A few weeks later SJNF received support to move forward with the Tier 2 proposal. It is in that process right now. Derek said he met with Danny and MSI’s Aaron Kimple a couple of weeks ago to identify how the collaborative will be involved.

Derek said the final proposal is due in January. Local officials have a self-imposed December deadline to have their proposal completed so it can be sent to the regional office. In February or March they will know whether Southwest Colorado was successful.

He said most of the projects identified in this proposal are not commercial. For example, many projects were identified in the Lone Pine area that the Forest Service would have to implement, such as wildlife

improvement, trail reconstruction, and noxious-weed treatments. Derek said there would be a meeting in Cortez tomorrow.

Danny said there will be a subgroup that is involved in editing and giving feedback on the draft proposal. He will send an email to the collaborative and asking for involvement regarding CFLRP.

Bill presented concerns he had about whether the proposal had overlooked some of the strengths of local programs, such as the Ponderosa Pine Partnership, the HVRA analysis, and the DWRF collaborative. He said some key topics are also missing, such as some reports by Bill Romme and Lisa Floyd-Hanna.

Derek said Tier 1 had to be a very short proposal and the level of detail Bill was talking about was not possible.

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative

Danny discussed RMRI, which is a partnership between the National Wild Turkey Federation and Region 2 of the U.S. Forest Service. Its goal is to provide substantial funding to accomplish major forest health work. Southwest Colorado is being considered for such funding.

Becca said she had concerns about the entire strategy because it is pitting locations against each other and places need to be united on a statewide scale regarding wildfire mitigation. She said the state needs to provide more than \$1 million a year for WUI management.

Mike Preston agreed but said the intent with RMRI is to see what would happen if concentrated resources were utilized on a smaller scale. The idea is that other people can learn from the results and there could be more investment in the future. He said whoever is selected for RMRI funds is just who will do such treatments first, not the only locations to ever receive such funds.

Becca said the issue is there's not enough money. Projects that are being done on the ground are working, but more funding is needed.

Danny said Southwest Colorado will be submitting a proposal on Oct. 31.

Polygon exercise: Participants ended the meeting by drawing polygons on maps to mark the areas they thought should have priority for local mitigation projects.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be Nov. 6 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the DWCD offices.