

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative Stakeholders Meeting

December 4, 2019

dwrfcollaborative.org

draft - 4 pages

Present:

Derek Padilla, Matt Traynham, and David Casey (Dolores District, San Juan National Forest); Ryan Cox, Tim Reader, and Melissa Simmons (Colorado State Forest Service); Randy Johnson (Private Consultant for CSFS); Kevin Harter (Ironwood Group); Zingo Leach (RMTC); Clayton Tillia (West Fork Lumber Company); Anthony Culpepper (Mountain Studies Institute); Jeff Fowlds (Mancos Conservation District); Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist); Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Ashley Downing (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Alex Graf (Montezuma County Coordinator for Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Mike Pasquin and James Dietrich (Montezuma County); Steve Garcher (Dolores County Commission); Ken Curtis and Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Rich Landreth (City Of Cortez); Stacy Beaugh (Strategic by Nature, Inc.); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

RMRI: Southwest Colorado is being considered for major funding for forest health work from RMRI, a partnership between the National Wild Turkey Federation and Region 2 of the U.S. Forest Service. The San Juan National Forest and Rio Grande National Forest have put in separate proposals for funding. A group gave a presentation on the local proposal recently. Mike Preston said he believes it was well received. He and Ellen Roberts will learn the decision on Monday in Golden.

Danny said a total of seven groups presented and all had strong proposals. The idea is that the group or groups chosen will become a model for restoration efforts.

Derek said the Dolores Ranger District has a planned program of work that they will continue to implement regardless of whether the local RMRI proposal is successful; however, the pace of implementation will be faster if the SJNF receives the funding.

Stacy said DWRF's new strategic plan conditions DWRF to move forward with other funding proposals. Smaller funding opportunities are waiting to be seized.

Bill asked if the final RMRI presentation can be placed on the website. Danny and Mike Preston said it can.

DWRF funding: Danny said DWRF received \$3,000 in funding from Onward! A Legacy Foundation for general operations and support.

Dolores Ranger District: Derek said the Dolores District is continuing to work through the objection process for the Lone Pine EA. The objection period was extended an additional 30 days because there was one substantial objection that required more time. By Dec. 30 there will be a final decision.

The objection period for the Dolores Aspen Landscape Vegetation Management EA has closed with no objections being registered. After the decision is signed, the district will be able to begin implementation.

The district is in the process of burning piles across the district. Matt said they have done about 3,000 piles.

Scientific article: Bill said he has an article that is being reviewed and revised for possible publication in a scientific journal. He passed around a draft of the article, which concerns variable forest structures and fire across historical ponderosa-pine and mixed-conifer landscapes in Colorado. He will know in a few weeks whether it was accepted and he will make it available then on the website.

FEMA: Mike Pasquin said FEMA has concerns that there is not enough money for recovery efforts so they are starting to focus on mitigation.

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program: Jimbo discussed the EWP Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The program offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed. Jimbo said it is a valuable program but it's tailored to other types of damage than the type of impacts on local watersheds and private lands caused by wildfires such as the 416 Fire near Durango, which happened a year and a half ago. Jimbo and others are asking Sen. Mike Bennet's office to change the EWP program.

Strategic Plan and Outreach

Stacy said the members of DWRP should have received the plan in their inboxes. She is writing an executive summary that can be used in outreach efforts. The Coordinating Committee had a good discussion this morning about finalizing operating principles to guide how DWRP works. The Outreach and Education Committee has met twice and is putting together an education plan that will outline factors such as who are DWRP's target audiences. She will be working on that through the end of her contract, and then the committee will take over. The goal is to have the education plan distributed to members by the beginning of the year as well.

Stacy said the Outreach and Education Committee is still open to anyone interested.

Next steps:

→ Danny will put the strategic plan on the DWRP website and will send out another email with the finalized plan attached.

Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program (CFLRP)

The San Juan National Forest is applying for funding under the CFLR, a landscape restoration program for national forests. In answer to a question about the most recent version of the SJNF's proposal, Derek explained that the term "60 percent document" means that the proposal is 60 percent completed. After the latest round of input, it will be the "90 percent document". He said it probably will not be sent out after this final set of feedback because of time constraints. It is due to be sent to the Forest Service's regional office by Jan. 24. However, Derek said if people feel strongly that there is a need to see the latest version, it could be sent back out after the most recent comments are incorporated.

Danny said anyone with comments should send them to him by this Friday. On Monday morning there will be a meeting in Durango for people from DWRF, the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership and the Columbine Forest Collaborative regarding the CFLR proposal.

Bill voiced a process concern. He asked whether the current process is following the rules outlined in the CFLRP legislation. The legislation states that to be eligible for nomination, a proposal must meet various criteria, one of which is that it be developed through a collaborative group that includes multiple persons representing diverse interests. The collaborative group is supposed to be one that is not controlled or led by Forest Service employees. However, Bill said this effort appears to be led by the Forest Service.

Bill said he has been involved in two other CFLRP processes and in those cases the proposals were drafted through a collaborative group that produced the drafts. He said the Forest Service is not supposed to write the proposal, but the Tier 1 proposal for the SJNF was for the most part developed internally. He said he tried to ask SJNF Supervisor Kara Chadwick directly whether they were developing a Tier 1 proposal but at first he was not given an answer. After a couple of weeks, officials did release it.

Bill explained his concerns in more detail and then said he believes that something needs to change in order that the proposal complies with the law.

Jimbo said a recently retired Forest Service employee who had heard there was a CFLRP proposal in the works told him the employee did not believe it would get approved because of factors such as these.

Danny commented that the proposal spans multiple collaboratives.

Derek said Forest Service officials never said they didn't have a Tier 1 proposal, but at the time that Bill inquired, they didn't know what was releasable. They did share it eventually. It was developed in a collaborative manner, and that is why the Forest Service is putting it out to the three different collaboratives. Sections of the document are being written by Danny and Aaron Kimple. However, the compressed timeframe means the SJNF did not have the luxury of working on the proposal for years and had to craft it somewhat differently. Derek said they are not writing this document in a vacuum. They are asking for input at each stage. Derek said eight or more people in the Forest Service helped write this, in addition to Aaron and Danny.

Duncan said the group should make this work rather than begin the effort all over.

Derek said a sure way of not being eligible is not to apply for the funding at all.

Bill said his concern is the collaborative group that drafts this proposal cannot be led by Forest Service personnel. He proposes the collaborative take charge and draft the final version. The Forest Service can certainly participate. He has confidence this group could complete a successful proposal. He didn't know Aaron and Danny were involved in the writing. However, it doesn't have the input of scientists such as him. He said it needs a shared vision, not just input.

Bill and Jimbo said the map of priority areas should be under discussion at the meeting Monday.

Danny said DWRF cannot make any decision unilaterally for all three collaboratives. The goal of the meeting Monday is to draft collaborative feedback, though the discussion probably will not be limited to

that. He encouraged everyone who wants to be involved to come to the meeting. The location has not been chosen.

Salter EA

David Casey showed a PowerPoint titled “Salter Vegetation Management Environmental Analysis Project.”

He said the area is broken into six different treatment blocks, and 36,000 potential treatment acres have been identified. Every acre on the San Juan National Forest has a management area designation; there are eight different designations in the SJNF. This project is focused on Management Area 5, which makes up 24 percent of the SJNF, a total of 451,000 acres. MA 5 is an active MA, where there is multiple use and much activity. All Salter treatment areas are within MA 5.

The Forest Management Plan for the SJNF also talks about timber suitability, based on the National Forest Management Act of 1976. It excludes lands that would not be appropriate for timber harvesting. The remaining lands are tentatively suitable and are divided into:

- Suitable timber lands, where timber is the objective; and
- Other tentatively suitable lands, which have other objectives along with timber harvesting, such as recreation.

David said timber harvesting for the Salter analysis will take place only on the suitable sites, not the tentatively suitable lands.

Concerns in the Salter area include overstocked stands, insects, disease, mistletoe, lack of ponderosa-pine regeneration, crown-fire potential, high wildfire danger, and the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Values at risk are McPhee Reservoir, recreation destinations such as Boggy Draw, utilities, structures, the Nature Center at Butler Corner, and grazing lands.

David said the Salter area does not yet have a bark-beetle problem that is as urgent as Lone Pine’s was. The Forest Service is trying to deal with the situation proactively. They would like to work with the collaborative to develop treatments. Portions of the treatments could be funded by CFLRP or RMRI if those proposals are successful.

Danny said in January he would like to talk about geographic priorities, purpose and need, and proposed actions for the Salter area. He said a scientific committee involving all three collaboratives is being put together to provide feedback and recommendations on ecological concerns.

Derek said forest officials want to have another meeting with the group after the holidays to start drafting the Salter proposed action.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be Wednesday, Jan. 8, at 5 or 5:30 p.m. at the DWCD offices. The evening time was agreed upon to make it possible for more people to attend.