

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative Stakeholders Meeting

July 17, 2019

dwrfcollaborative.org

Present:

Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service), Eric Janes (Retired, U.S. Bureau of Land Management), David Casey (San Juan National Forest), Bruce Short (Retired, U.S. Forest Service), Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist), Charles Lanoue (Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control), Norm Bircher (Montrose Forest Products), Anthony Culpepper (Mountain Studies Institute), Ashley Downey (Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District), Rich Landreth (City of Cortez), Sonny Frazier (Town Manager, Dove Creek), Ann McCoy Herold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office), James Dietrich (Montezuma County), Rachel Medina (GIS Specialist, Montezuma County), Stacy Beaugh (Strategic By Nature Consulting Services), Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator), and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

- Danny said the Coordinating Committee and another group have been working out how the WaterSMART grant from the Bureau of Reclamation will be implemented. More details should be available at the August stakeholders meeting.
- DWRF's tour of the Lone Pine area on the Dolores District took place in July. The comment period on the Lone Pine Vegetation Management Project EA just ended. Danny said this is a good learning opportunity for the collaborative. DWRF is moving forward to do monitoring in the area with Mountain Studies Institute, which is being given funds by the Forest Service. Details will be worked out. On Friday, there was a meeting about the Lone Pine EA with a number of stakeholders and the Coordinating Committee. One of the major outcomes of the meeting was DWRF will be involved in adaptive management with the Forest Service. Danny said it will be important to see the final EA and decision because they will let DWRF know how it is involved in the process.
- Mike said he went to a meeting of the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative in Golden on July 10. The initiative has been convened by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Wild Turkey Federation. He said is a strong group whose intent is to put resources together for restoration.
- Danny said that Kyle Hanson, who is trying to turn ponderosa pine into cross-laminated timber with Tiber Age Systems, will be taking part in conversations with the Timber Industry Working Group.
- Mike said the Timber Industry Working Group now has a draft fiber-utilization study prepared, but it makes sense to set the study aside temporarily in order to get it aligned with new activities. Many things are going on, including discussions on environmental impact bonding, protecting the power grid, and exploring biomass power.
- Norm said he has a sense and a major concern that timber capacity will exceed supply in a fairly short time.
- Danny said he went with WAP to the Fourth of July celebration at Rico to do outreach. Next week he will be helping WAP do rapid risk assessments in the Town of Dolores. The resulting information will be communicated to the group. Charles said he will be happy to join in this effort.

- Eric said he has been commenting on the Dolores Aspen Landscape Vegetation Management EA and the Lone Pine EA. He completely supports both.
- Eric noted that U.S. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt recently announced that BLM headquarters will be relocated to Grand Junction. The Public Lands Foundation, a national nonprofit that focuses on BLM lands, is unhappy about this. Eric, who has been involved with the foundation, said the move includes a transfer of 27 positions to Grand Junction. The Washington office is basically being broken up and divided among 14 states. He said this will result in weakened leadership, loss of agency policy development and subjugation of national interests to local interests.
- Ann said anyone who is interested in a letter from Secretary Bernhardt explaining the move should contact her and she will send it to them.
- Anthony said the San Juan TREX (Prescribed Fire Training Exchange) will take place from Sept. 9 to Sept. 23 or 24. He will email Danny a link to the website to send to the group. The intent of this training is to provide opportunities for local and regional firefighters, scientists and managers – anyone who has any interface with prescribed fire – to work and train together. The main focus will be the Vallecito/Piedra area. All people are welcome at the public events.
- Anthony said MSI is planning another series of lectures this fall. If someone has topics or people to suggest, they should tell him. Bruce said there is continuing interest among his clients in the Pine River/Vallecito area regarding spruce beetles. Anthony said Dan West, a forest entomologist with the Colorado State Forest Service, has been tentatively secured to give a talk Sept. 21. Dave suggested silvicultural treatments being done to the south of us in Region 3 as a topic. Eric suggested increased avalanches and how to manage the debris as a topic. He also suggested having a speaker from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Anthony said the Columbine collaborative had an initial stakeholder meeting last week. A name hasn't been chosen yet for the collaborative.
- James said Montezuma County provided letters of support for the Lone Pine and Dolores Aspen EAs.
- Rachel said Montezuma County is collaborating with Dolores County and Empire Electric to acquire high-resolution aerial images of parts of the county, mostly private land, next year. Montezuma County will be the fiscal agent and is trying to get buy-in from other entities to reduce costs. The images will be valuable data that will be mostly used for the assessor's office and 911. It will be publicly available on the county's online maps.
- Bruce said forest management needs to start including piñon-juniper ecosystems. Most private lands in Montezuma and Dolores counties have PJ.
- David said the Forest Service finally received approval to hire a NEPA coordinator. They are going through the comments on the Dolores Aspen and Lone Pine EAs.

Strategic Planning

Stacy gave a PowerPoint presentation about the draft strategic plan for the DWRF Collaborative. She hopes to have the document, which will be about six pages long, finished by next week.

She reviewed the process that was followed to come up with the strategic plan. She also reviewed key points of different sections of the plan.

Vision and Mission: Stacy said these have been shortened and edited.

Eric asked whether the meaning of the term “resilience” has been discussed. Anthony said this question is often asked by members of regional collaborative groups and there needs to be a long-term conversation. Stacy said that is a good point but it would be best to cross that bridge as DWRF moves through the process.

Rich said “resilience” could mean different things to different people and it may be a good idea not to define it in the mission.

Values Driving Our Work: Stacy said these have been grouped and have been reduced to Effectiveness, Community Benefit and Responsiveness.

Scope/Map: Stacy said this now includes the Dolores watershed, but also incorporates a broader area encompassing Montezuma and Dolores counties. Danny noted that much of the Lone Pine EA fell outside the actual watershed.

Mike said he thinks the new approach is a good one. McPhee Reservoir is drawing water out of the watershed. The broader geography depends on that watershed.

Stakeholders: Stacy showed the current list of stakeholders. The group suggested adding Stonertop Lumber, Montrose Forest Products and the Ironwood Group. Anthony also said MSI should not be placed under the heading of “Conservation Community.”

Goals: Stacy reviewed the draft list of Goals. She said the list was increased from three to four.

Rich said this section says nothing about the watershed or water, which was the top subject when DWRF was begun. Stacy said that is a good point but suggested he consider the goals in context with the vision and mission.

Bruce said infrastructure should be mentioned.

Eric said the phrase “recovery from severe wildfire and resulting post fire effects” may need to show that there are other potential disturbances to be dealt with, such as a tanker spilling.

Bruce said Lone Pine and his own property are affected by beetles and root rot, and a forest health element should be added.

Stacy said when people see the full text of the draft plan they should see if that addresses their comments.

Programs: These are:

- Education
- Advise the Forest Service
- Forest health treatments
- Forest products industry development

David suggested inserting “tribal” into the description following the third bullet, which calls for supporting public land and private landowners/managers.

Eric said “resources” in the description of the fourth bullet, which says to “track reliability of resources,” should be better defined.

Norm said all those in the collaborative will probably be concerned with long-term sustainability because having an imbalance between capacity and supply causes problems.

Stacy said this is the group’s document so she welcomes everyone’s input.

Supporting a Strong Collaborative: Stacy said a group put together metrics that can be used to measure indicators. These include ecosystem integrity metrics, community risk metrics, business metrics, and collaborative metrics.

Regarding ecosystem integrity metrics, Danny said a group met a couple times and tried to identify key areas within the landscape. This is largely based on an adaptive management framework put together by a Front Range roundtable.

Stacy said at the retreat the group talked about committing to review these indicators regularly.

Mike said having a simple structure for what you’re trying to track is important. He said the Dolores River Native Fish Monitoring & Recommendation Team has a report that lists nine opportunities to improve health in the Dolores River. The team goes through those, some every year, some every four or five years, and tracks where progress was able to be made.

Danny said developing the structure will be key.

Eric said a lot of work has been done on the last two of the ecosystem integrity metrics: watershed conditions and wildlife populations. He is willing to be part of the conversations on those.

Danny said community risk metrics, business metrics, and collaborative metrics aren’t entirely finalized, but these are the areas that have been chosen. A self-assessment may need to be done yearly for the collaborative. This will be a larger conversation.

Dave said to add NRCS numbers to business metrics (potential methods) and add timber sale contracts to goals.

Next steps:

- Everyone should review the draft strategic plan when it is sent. If there are major questions or concerns, Danny and Stacy will address those at the August meeting. The document will be in Word and people should use Track Changes to make suggestions on the document.
- A 3-to-5-year budget projection and a draft fundraising plan for DWRF will be developed.
- Danny will be sending out follow-up information from this meeting.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be Aug. 7 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the DWCD offices.

Feedback

Danny said he would like feedback on how the collaborative engaged in the Lone Pine EA. Could it have been done better? What did DWRF do right? He said people can discuss it now or contact him later.

- Bruce said he would like to see DWRF develop a more formalized process to work with the Forest Service.
- Norm said he thinks extending the comment period for the EA was appropriate and the document will be better as a result. The adaptive management proposed under it will be valuable. He thinks adaptive management is the way to go.