

2019 - 2023

STRATEGIC PLAN



www.dwrfcollaborative.org

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES



VISION

A resilient and adaptive upper Dolores River watershed that provides ecosystem services, maintains ecological integrity, and sustains community values in the face of environmental change, supported by a diverse and active collaborative group.

MISSION

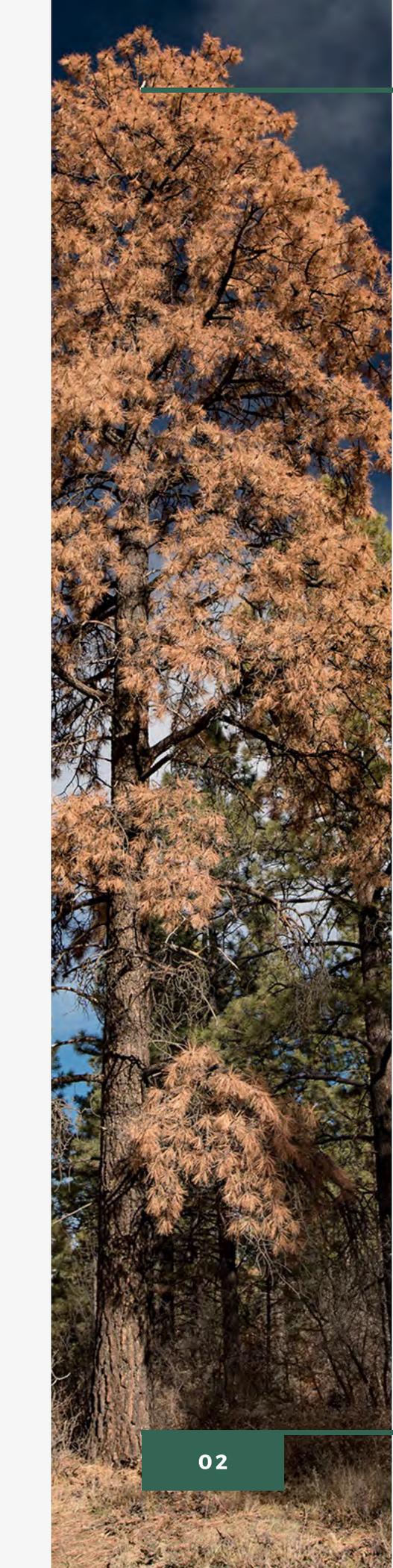
Promoting forest, community, and watershed resilience through collaboration.

VALUES

Effectiveness - Using the best available science and collaborative working model to sustain an impactful organization.

Community Benefit - Utilizing cross-boundary (jurisdictional) approaches that consider multiple resource values, resulting in a diversity of benefits for the communities of southwest Colorado.

Responsiveness - Evaluating results and being flexible/nimble to continuously improve actions, methods, and approaches as necessary to be successful.



TERMS & DEFINITIONS

KEY TERMS USED BY THE COLLABORATIVE CALL FOR CLARIFICATION:

Forest/watershed health: A healthy forest and watershed in the upper Dolores River watershed is a core focus of the Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative. Unfortunately, a clear definition of forest (or watershed) health remains elusive. Forest health has been defined and applied in a variety of ways, ranging from strict ecological functioning to human utility. The DWRF Collaborative explicitly acknowledges the value-laden nature of any forest health definition but also sees utility in use of the term to further communication with other organizations and the community. While DWRF will use the term, it refrains from providing a concrete definition. Instead, it is suggested that DWRF's usage of forest health conceptually encompasses components of our vision statement and the terms defined below.

Resilience: The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks (Walker et al., 2004).

Resistance: The ease or difficulty of a disturbance to change a system (Folke et al., 2004).

Adaptive capacity: The capacity of social-ecological systems, including both their human and ecological components, to respond to, create, and shape variability and change in the state of the system (Chapin et al., 2010).

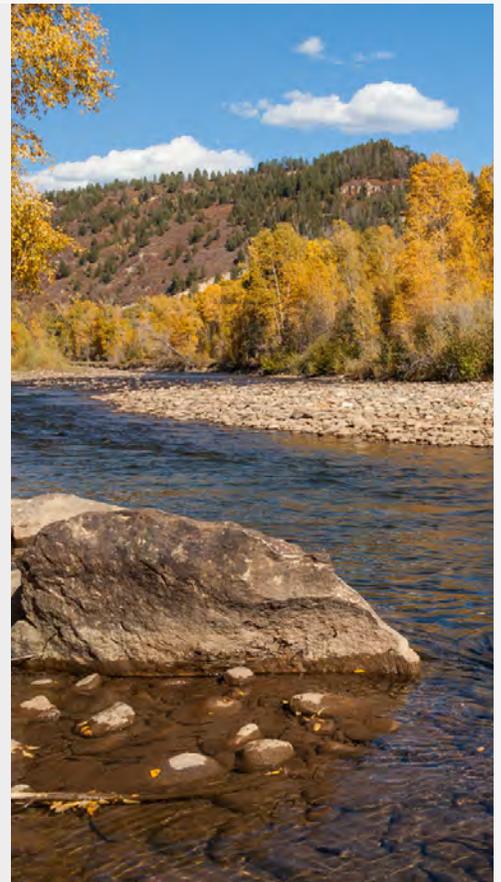
SCOPE

The DWR Collaborative aims to promote forest/watershed management that acknowledges/addresses environmental legacies and anticipated future transitions, ultimately enhancing ecosystem and community resilience and adaptive capacity at a regional scale. The focal area of Collaborative attention is the upper Dolores River watershed itself, mostly upstream from the 381,000 acre-foot McPhee Reservoir. The direct benefits of DWR's work, however, will impact a much broader region-

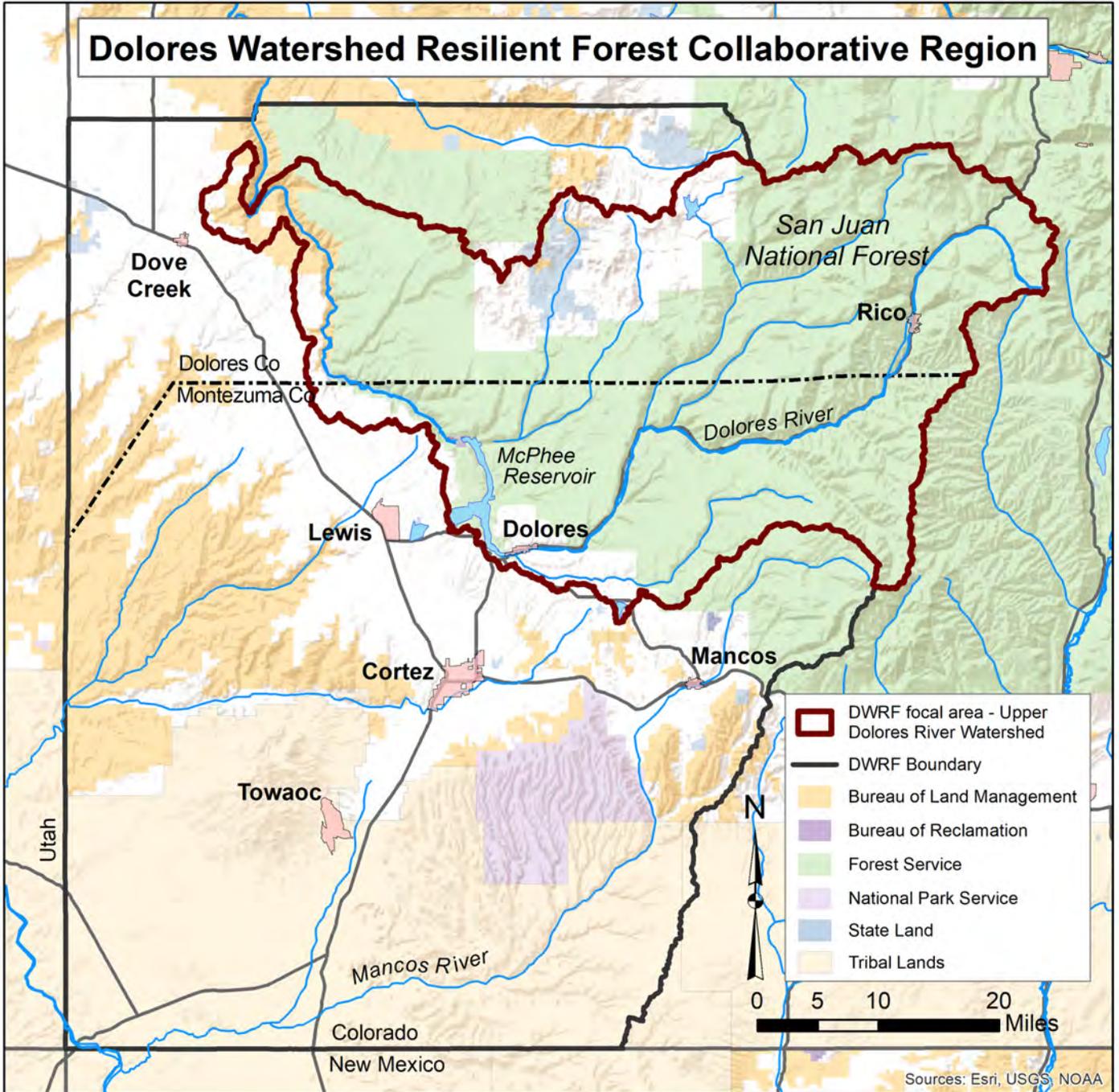
throughout Montezuma and Dolores counties, including population centers such as the city of Cortez, Towaoc, and town of Dove Creek. Multiple collaborative groups working throughout the San Juan Mountains and San Juan National Forest are focused on forest/watershed resilience/adaptation and wildfire risk reduction. DWR will coordinate closely with the other collaboratives - San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership, 2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership, and the newly-formed Columbine Resilient Forest Partnership.

THE PROBLEM

Forests and watersheds are vital to our communities, economies, and senses of place. Yet within the upper Dolores River watershed, inherently fire-adapted ecosystems, climate change, and legacies of past land management converge to put community and ecosystem resilience at increased risk to disturbances such as severe wildfire, insect outbreaks, and drought. Multiple landowners and public land agencies - with varying resources and management approaches - make implementation of broad-scale forest management a significant challenge. Effectively addressing these realities requires coordinated effort, innovative tools and solutions, and heightened public awareness and engagement.



Map shows the DWRF focal area and larger Collaborative boundary. Note that the larger Collaborative boundary incorporates both Montezuma and Dolores counties.





COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The DWRF Collaborative is open to participation by anyone in the community. Members pride themselves on being inclusive and representing diverse perspectives. Stakeholders currently engaged in the Collaborative include federal agencies/entities, water managers, timber industry, state agencies, local government, nonprofits and interested community members:

Agricultural producers
Aspen Wall Wood
Bureau of Land Management - Tres Rios
Bureau of Reclamation
City of Cortez
Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Colorado State Forest Service
Colorado State University Extension Fire
Management & Preparedness
Dolores County
Dolores Interagency Fire
(San Juan National Forest & Tres Rios BLM)
Dolores Ranger District
Dolores Volunteer Fire Protection District
Dolores Water Conservancy District
Empire Electric Association
Fire Adapted Colorado
Interested community members
Ironwood Group LLC
Mancos Water Conservancy District

Montezuma County
Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company
Montrose Forest Products
Mountain Studies Institute
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Retired professionals in related fields
Rico Fire Protection District
San Juan Citizens Alliance
Short Forestry LLC
Southwest Conservation Corps
Stonertop Lumber
Southwest Basin Roundtable
The Nature Conservancy
Town of Dolores
Town of Dove Creek
Town of Mancos
Town of Rico
Trout Unlimited
Underwood Forestry LLC Other
US Forest Service, San Juan National Forest
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Wildfire Adapted Partnership

PROGRAMS GOALS/STRATEGIES

The DWRF Collaborative endeavors to achieve four goals:

1. Collaboratively implement forest management activities, including active forest treatments, mapping and analyses, policy recommendations, and adaptive management. Priority areas will be public and private lands that enhance ecosystem resilience and adaptive capacity, and reduce risks to homes, water supplies, infrastructure, and community assets.
2. Increase the capacity, viability, and sustainability of local forest product industries by integrating them into forest treatment initiatives that reduce risk and enhance resilience.
3. Foster a network of professionals and residents to better prepare for, respond to, and aid recovery from severe wildfire, post-fire effects, and other disturbances.
4. Be a transparent, inclusive, effective, and engaged collaborative that is a community leader and resource for watershed protection and restoration.

The goals will be pursued via Collaborative activities in the following program areas:



**COMMUNITY
EDUCATION**



**COLLABORATE WITH
LAND MANAGEMENT
AGENCIES**



**COLLABORATIVE
EFFECTIVENESS**



**FOREST
PRODUCTS
INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT**



**RESILIENT
FORESTS AND
COMMUNITIES**

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

DWRF will...

- Maximize its strong and diverse membership as both a source of and audience for relevant outreach.
- Serve as a liaison to the community, initiating a community education program with strategic messaging and activities to support all other DWRF program areas.
- Improve regional understanding and develop joint priorities among other local and regional forest collaboratives.

Activities/Measureable Objectives

Year 1

- Create a strategic education plan that benefits all programs including goals, target audiences, key messages, and coordinated communication process. The plan will include SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goals.
- Establish communication channels (process, methods - website/print media) and build relationships with nearby local and regional collaborative groups with complementary missions, to share knowledge and resources, and prevent duplicative efforts.
- Prepare the first DWRF annual report to communicate program activity and progress on strategic goals; establish process to create the report annually thereafter.

Year 3-5

- Establish a forest treatment demonstration site and complementary communication tools that can be utilized in educational efforts.
- Implement the strategic education plan and conduct annual evaluation on that process, making adjustments as needed.
- Develop shared annual or semi-annual events/programs with local collaboratives.



COLLABORATE WITH LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

DWRF will...

- Be positioned and equipped to proactively and responsibly engage with decision-making processes that impact public lands.
- Ensure that agency decision makers/process leads are:
 - Engaged in the stakeholder group,
 - Committed to bringing relevant discussions and decision considerations to the group to facilitate productive collaborative engagement, and
 - Striving to incorporate the perspectives and decisions of the collaborative.

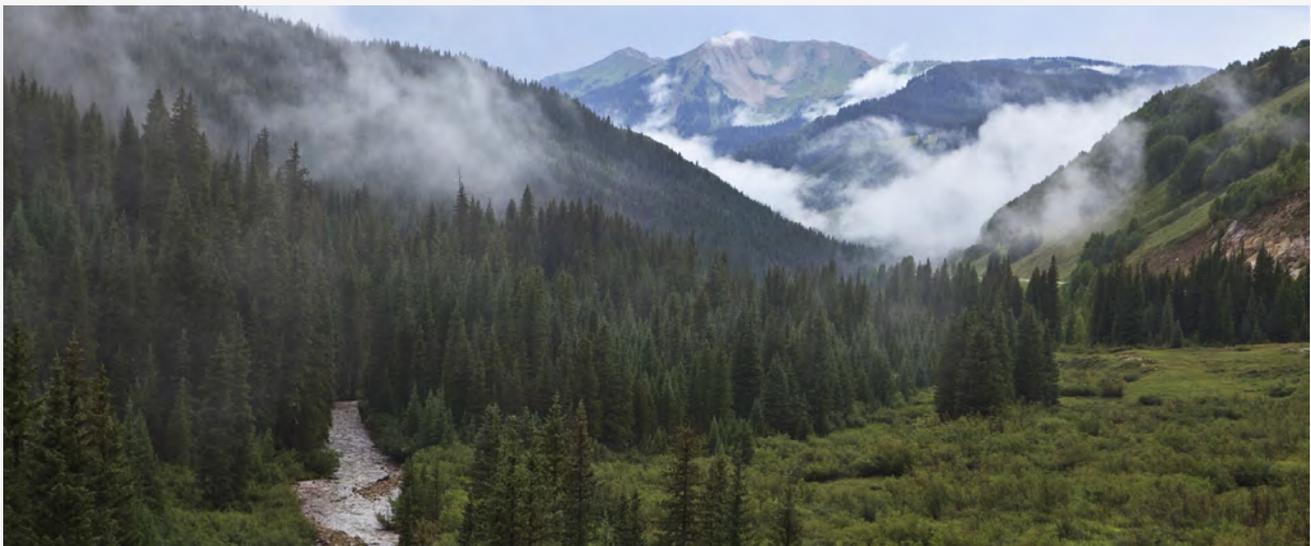
Activities/Measureable Objectives

Year 1

- Position stakeholders to be informed and responsive to developments concerning public land management.
- Design, pilot and adhere to a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process protocol, encouraging timely, consistent and effective stakeholder participation.
- Design an adaptive management framework in alignment with NEPA guidelines in coordination with the US Forest Service by year-end 2019.

Year 3-5

- Using lessons learned from the pilot phases, finalize and implement the NEPA process protocol and cohesive adaptive management process.
- Annually revisit and refine the adaptive management process.



RESILIENT FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

DWRF will...

- Support public land managers, and private and tribal communities, in holistic and cross-boundary forest management initiatives that both promote resilience and reduce risks from wildfire (e.g., asset mapping, prescribed and natural fire, revegetation, land-use planning, harvesting, promoting resilient private properties) through:
 - Partnering with land managers and owners, positioning and empowering them to undertake forest and landowner wildfire risk reduction treatment activities, including creating defensible space in priority areas through utilization of the Wildfire Risk Reduction Framework.
 - Supporting stakeholders to thoughtfully plan projects, covering all process steps (e.g., permitting, implementation, monitoring, etc.) and ensuring that multiple goals/benefits are realized.
 - Coordinating cross-boundary projects among partners, ensuring appropriate resources are engaged for successful treatments, leaning on stakeholders to provide technical support (e.g., establishing monitoring protocols, contracting for treatments).
 - Securing adequate funds to successfully implement projects with appropriate follow-up activity (e.g., monitoring).
 - Providing support to establish monitoring and maintenance systems to ensure that forest treatments and landowner adaptation (e.g., wildfire risk reduction treatments) are effective, and to understand long-term implications of these activities.

Activities/Measureable Objectives

Year 1

- Complete the Wildfire Risk Reduction Framework and establish process for periodic updates to the framework, prioritizing Year 1-3 project areas.

Year 3-5

- Fund and make progress on a minimum two priority projects, as identified in the Wildfire Risk Reduction Framework.
- Identify community-driven wildfire mitigation actions on private property and track DWRF's influence on these activities. Establish systems for monitoring and maintaining treatment sites.

FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

DWRF will...

Stimulate the involvement of regional forest products/timber players in forest management activities to enhance forest resilience and adaptive capacity.

Track resource sustainability and pursue opportunities to help those in the industry to problem solve current and future challenges (e.g. small-diameter wood utilization).

Activities/Measureable Objectives

Year 1

- Establish goals and evaluation metrics for the success of the forest products/timber industry program.

Year 3-5

- Evaluate progress, accomplishments, and challenges within this program.

COLLABORATIVE EFFECTIVENESS

DWRF will...

- Establish a Finance and Fundraising subcommittee, and strategy to:
 - Produce annual one- and three-year budget projections for both on-the-ground projects and operations.
 - Secure necessary funds on an annual basis for both project funding and operations.
- Foster timely communication, group learning and conflict management.
- Promote the continued commitment of stakeholders representing a diverse range of interests and organizations.

Activities/Measureable Objectives

Year 1

- Finalize the organizational structure of DWRF.
- Establish annual budget and resource development plan review process by the Coordinating Committee and stakeholders.

Year 3-5

- Assess the levels of stakeholder engagement. Acknowledge the time/energy of stakeholders who are consistently involved and thoughtfully re-engaging others to renew interest and participation.

DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK

To remain responsive and focused on the strategies in this plan, DWRF has created the following criteria to consider the merits of, and its involvement/leadership with, new and existing projects and programs:

- Does this project adhere to and support DWRF values?
- Will/does it make a significant impact toward meeting DWRF goals?
- Is this project within the current area of expertise of the stakeholders, or does it present an opportunity to grow expertise?
- Is there a role for DWRF to fill? Is DWRF the best organization to fill that role?
- Are there other organizations working on the issue this addresses? Are there opportunities for enhanced impact as a result of collaboration?
- Does DWRF already have, or can it attract, the resources needed to take on this project?
- Do the anticipated outcomes justify the level of resources required to implement/continue the project?

METRICS AND EVALUATION

Establishing specific objectives and metrics help track the Collaborative's success and progress toward the DWRF vision and highlight areas for additional focus. Metrics include quality environmental conditions, positively influencing the activities of participating organizations, and demonstrated alignment/coordination with other regional forest collaboratives. Collective goals for landscape and forest-structure, water quality, socio-economic impact, and collaboration have been set; action plans will provide the basis for evaluation of progress toward stated milestones and need for program activity adjustment. Measurement methods and processes will be established within the first year of this plan, with reporting to occur as is determined most helpful (e.g., annual, bi-annual). Please see attached metrics tables.

REFERENCES

Chapin III, F.S., Carpenter, S. R., Kofinas, G. P., Folke, C., Abel, N., Clark, W. C., Olsson, P., Stafford Smith, D. M., Walker, B., Young, O. R., Berkes, F., Biggs, R., Grove, J. M., Naylor, R. L., Pinkerton, E., Steffen, W., and Swanson, F. J.. 2010. Ecosystem stewardship: sustainability strategies for a rapidly changing planet. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, 25(4), 241-249.

Folke, C., Carpenter, S., Walker, B., Scheffer, M., Elmqvist, T., Gunderson, L., & Holling, C. S. (2004). Regime shifts, resilience, and biodiversity in ecosystem management. *Annu. Rev. Ecol. Evol. Syst.*, 35, 557-581.

Walker, B., Holling, C. S., Carpenter, S., & Kinzig, A. (2004). Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social-ecological systems. *Ecology and society*, 9(2).

Strategic plan funded by US Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART and prepared by Strategic By Nature, Inc.



Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative

DRAFT Community, Business, and Collaborative Metrics

Condition	Goal	Potential Methods/Sources
Private property wildfire risk	Reduce risk assessment ratings of homes, structures, infrastructure and other valued property	Rapid risk assessments, acres treated; Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP); Colorado State Forest Service
Public infrastructure wildfire risk	Reduce risk assessment ratings to infrastructure	TBD
Local business capacity/opportunity	Identify local contractors awarded restoration/mitigation/stewardship/timber sale contracts	US Forest Service; WAP; Natural Resources Conservation Service, Region 9 Economic Development Council data
Recreation	Increase community access/use; more resilient recreation areas and reduced wildfire risk	Recreation groups; USFS
Education/outreach	Effectively communicate DWRF’s vision/mission to community; educate and provide resources to community about local ecosystems, risks, and mitigation opportunities	Self-assessment; community questionnaire/surveys to measure level of awareness of community
Collaboration	Increase trust, diversity, effectiveness, responsiveness	Self-assessment scorecard ranking

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative

DRAFT Ecosystem Integrity Metrics

Condition	Ecosystem Parameter	Ecosystem Integrity Goal	Potential Methods/Sources
Plant species composition	Tree species	Within the historical range of variability and/or resiliency to climate change	General Land Office (GLO) data for historical conditions (other sources TBD); Forest Inventory and Analysis Data, US Forest Service data from Common Stand Exams (CSE) for modern conditions; Colorado Forest Restoration Initiative, Mountain Studies Institute
Forest structure	Tree density, basal area, diameters, regeneration		
Landscape composition	Forests, shrublands, grasslands, wetlands, riparian areas		GLO data for historical conditions (other sources TBD); <i>Landfire</i> existing vegetation map; USFS local vegetation maps for modern conditions
Landscape structure			
Fire regimes	Surface fuels; fire behavior; fire frequency (both planned and unplanned)		Tree-ring reconstructions; GLO and forest atlas data for historical (other sources TBD); Monitoring Trends in Burn Severity (MTBS) and local maps of fires for modern fire data; <i>Landfire</i> for existing vegetation/Landsat for openings/fire breaks
Insects and disease disturbances	Structural stage; mortality rates	Within the historical range of variability and/or resiliency to climate change; forests with resistance/resilience to insect disturbance	Aerial detection surveys; Mountain Studies Institute plots; CSE
Streamflow	Flow rates and quantities by season (month)	Within historical bounds and sufficient to support aquatic communities	USFS; BLM; USGS data; water users

Condition	Ecosystem Parameter	Ecosystem Integrity Goal	Potential Methods/Sources
Streamflow into McPhee Reservoir	Water yields to in relation to improved watershed resilience	Quantifiable improvement in water yields in response to improved watershed resilience, sufficient to store and release for human, native fish and other aquatic needs	Colorado State Forest Service; CSU; USFS (may have or be willing to contribute to a water yield monitoring framework)
Water quality conditions	Colorado Water Quality Standards and Quality criteria for water; chemical composition, sediment load and invertebrate communities	Protective of human and ecological uses	USFS; BLM; USGS data; water users; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Trout Unlimited
Wildlife Populations	Categorized population estimates	Self-sustaining populations matched to environmental carrying capacity	USFS; BLM; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Trout Unlimited; National Wild Turkey Federation; other interested NGOs