

# Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRf) Collaborative Stakeholders Meeting

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[dwrfcollaborative.org](http://dwrfcollaborative.org)

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## Present:

Derek Padilla, Matt Traynham, Brad Pietruszka, and David Casey (Dolores District, San Juan National Forest); Ryan Cox and Tim Reader (Colorado State Forest Service); Ann McCoy-Harold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office); Bruce Short (Consulting Forester); Eric Janes (Retired BLM Hydrologist); Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Alex Graf (Montezuma County Coordinator for Wildfire Adapted Partnership); James Dietrich (Montezuma County); Floyd Cook and Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commission); Ken Curtis and Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Rich Landreth (City Of Cortez); Jamie Johnson (Montezuma Land Conservancy); Lon Varnis (Retired, High Desert Conservation District Board); Danny Margoles (DWRf Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

## Updates

**DWRf:** Danny said the RFP for a person to develop the watershed monitoring plan will remain open for a few more days. Anyone with questions should contact Ken Curtis.

DWRf's strategic plan has been posted on the DWRf website. There is now an executive summary for the plan that will soon be posted on the site as well. Danny said these are public documents.

Danny said the Coordinating Committee has discussed the possibility of using WaterSMART funds to employ an AmeriCorps VISTA person to help further develop and implement an outreach strategy and wildfire risk reduction framework for DWRf. As RMRI funding becomes available, the VISTA person could also help set up structures and communication. Danny said the WaterSMART grant ends on June 20 of this year. The VISTA position would be a 12-month, 40-hour-a-week position, so the goal would be to get the person on board by April of this year. Danny said he would probably be the person's direct supervisor, but he would look to the Coordinating Committee and all DWRf stakeholders to help.

Eric said when he worked for the BLM in Washington D.C. he worked with presidential management interns and found them to be outstanding. Now that the BLM's headquarters are in Grand Junction, it might be a source for persons interested in the VISTA job.

Derek said Mark Lambert, the San Juan National Forest's public services officer, came out of the presidential management internship program and remains highly involved with it, so he could also explore the possibility of people who might be interested in the VISTA position.

**Dolores Ranger District:** Derek said the district was able to work through the objection process for the Lone Pine EA and come to a resolution. Changes were made to some provisions regarding:

- Temporary roads,
- Acreage outside the 15 project areas,
- The type of treatments allowed on slopes of 40 percent or greater and on places that have soils prone to mass movement,
- Language in timber-sale contracts regarding contractors and noxious weeds

- The amount of time between supplemental information reports
- The description of the Lone Pine monitoring areas and control units.

The district also agreed that of the 36,000 acres identified for treatment, 11,000 acres with a ponderosa-pine prescription that was developed in the 1990s would be incorporated. Derek said this will be an opportunity to compare different treatments against each other.

Jimbo said some items in the draft EA were of concern to both conservationists and the timber industry. He said the work on the objections was all done locally instead of at the regional level and this was very beneficial. San Juan National Forest Supervisor Kara Chadwick was the responsible official. It was a good process.

Danny said there are a lot of lessons to learn from this as the Salter EA moves forward. The collaborative wants to be more pre-emptive regarding this next large-scale EA. DWRF is called out in some of the language, so the collaborative will be involved.

Ken said he thinks DWRF can play a major role in public education. Danny agreed and said these demonstration sites should be made public sites.

**Roundtable meeting:** Mike said the Southwest Basin Roundtable will meet at the DWCD offices next Wednesday, Jan. 15. Russell George, who has held several major offices in the state and is now director of the Interbasin Compact Commission, will be there. A subcommittee meeting begins at 12:30 p.m. and the entire roundtable will meet afterward. These are open meetings.

#### **Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**

Danny said Southwest Colorado's proposal was successful in being awarded the funding for forest health work from RMRI, a partnership between the National Wild Turkey Federation and Region 2 of the U.S. Forest Service. This means the SJNF will be receiving considerable additional funding. The amount is not known, but the Cortez Journal reported it could be as much as \$50 million over 10 years.

Danny said the work can be done on all lands, including private, state and national forests. In contrast, Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program (CFLRP) funds are only for work done on national forest lands. How to strategize the work will be a major question and DWRF will need to work with different stakeholder groups and other collaboratives.

Mike said this effort will be an all-lands approach that includes working on the wildland-urban interface, protecting the power grid, and protecting primary water sources including Lemon, Vallecito, McPhee and Mancos reservoirs. Southwest Colorado presented an ambitious proposal that involves treating 300,000 acres (20,000 of those on private land and the rest on national forest land) in 10 years.

Mike said a steering committee has been put together that includes himself, Kara Chadwick, Aaron Kimple of the Mountain Studies Institute, Ellen Roberts, and Patt Dorsey of the Wild Turkey Federation. They are forming an advisory committee as well. A meeting took place in Denver today which he attended by phone. The assistant director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources will draw up an agreement for the parties present this morning. Mike said Clint Evans, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's state conservationist in Colorado, suggested at the meeting that Southwest Colorado apply for an RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) grant to help with the work. RMRI is asking what Southwest Colorado need to jumpstart its effort.

Eric asked whether the RMRI funds will be federal money. Mike said no. Eric said the Forest Service has numerous projects that are NEPA-ready, but for non-federal funds, the NEPA process doesn't have to be followed. Derek said that is correct as long as there is not a federal nexus.

Danny displayed a map of the area included in the RMRI proposal, which extends from east of Bayfield west to Dove Creek, a large area that includes Mancos, Dolores, the SJNF, and more. He showed an "Agreement between Forest Collaboratives and San Juan National Forest" and the draft tenets.

Eric said it would be good to encourage research and science, not just passively review scientific findings every year. He said DWRF should encourage scientists to help examine questions of forest health and effects on water yield. Mike agreed that well-ordered monitoring and science are critical, adding that Mountain Studies Institute is available to help.

Eric said he is willing to help with the scientific effort.

Danny said the Science Committee includes Julie Korb (Biology Professor, Fort Lewis College), Dan West (Entomologist, Colorado State Forest Service), Mike Battaglia (Silviculturist, Rocky Mountain Research Station) Peter Brown (Director, Rocky Mountain Tree-Ring Research), Mike Remke (Forest Health Research Associate, MSI) and others as needed.

**Next steps:**

→ Danny will send out by email the information he showed so it can be discussed further at DWRF's February meeting.

**Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program (CFLRP)**

Danny displayed a map of the area in the local CFLRP proposal. The focal area consists of ponderosa pine and warm/dry mixed-conifer landscapes. Yesterday there was a meeting of a self-selected collaborative group that includes members of DWRF and the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership, and they worked on editing and rewriting the final proposal. Danny said there will be a total of 20 or more proposals, so there will be stiff competition.

Eric asked for a table to be created to clarify the differences and similarities between the RMRI and CFLRP proposals. Danny said that was a good idea.

Mike said RMRI consolidates different resources over a geographic area. CFLRP is part of that tool kit. It may help with RMRI's objective but it's a tool larger than RMRI.

**Next steps:**

→ Danny will send out the CFLRP maps and other documents.

**Salter Vegetation Management Environmental Analysis Project**

David said the exact project area has not yet been identified, but he has identified areas he wants to treat. The project area is similar in size to that in the Lone Pine EA, meaning it is large, which provides flexibility. All Salter treatment areas are within Management Area 5, which makes up 24 percent of the SJNF and is an active MA where there is multiple use. All the treatment units are part of the suitable timber base.

David said overflights have shown that the Salter area is not at a point of critical need regarding bark-beetle infestations, in contrast to Lone Pine. Forest managers want to be proactive in treating Salter.

### **Highly Valued Resources and Assets (HVRA)**

Brad gave a presentation on HVRA's. He said in 2016 he did a quantitative risk assessment on the forest, using the Large Fire Simulator, which models extremely large fires. The modeling was based on the 2016 landscape and covers parts of the Four Corners states, an area bigger than the SJNF. The models predict 4,060 acres/year might burn on the SJNF but an average of 12,323 acres is burning each year.

He said HVRA's include resources, which are natural, and assets, which are human-made features such as homes and power lines. Resources are much less highly valued than assets but are prolific on the landscape. Timber has a low relative importance in the overall risk assessment. If a fire affects homes, power lines and an active logging sale, fire managers will evacuate the sale and focus on protecting the assets. Timber resources receive only 4 percent of the "relative importance" pie. Watersheds have higher importance.

Mike said merchantable timber can be considered a local bank account because the proceeds from timber sales will help provide funding for other treatment areas.

Bruce said firefighters will not send an air tanker to save a large stand of trees because it isn't feasible.

Brad said it is important to treat the entire landscape. A fire break may not save the WUI because fires can spot over the break. Improvement and maintenance of Home Ignition Zones is the best defense of the WUI. Proactive work can and should both reduce the threat and enhance benefits on a landscape.

### **Next steps:**

- Danny will put David's and Brad's PowerPoint presentation on the website.
- Danny said there will be a meeting to discuss next steps for Salter involving stakeholders, the Forest Service and other interested parties on Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., at the Dolores Public Lands Center.

**Next meeting:** The next DWRF meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 1:30 p.m. at the DWCD offices.