

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRf) Collaborative**  
**Stakeholders Meeting**  
**February 5, 2020**  
**dwrfcollaborative.org**  
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**Present:**

Derek Padilla and David Casey (Dolores District, San Juan National Forest); Mark Loveall (Colorado State Forest Service); Ann McCoy-Harold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office); Anthony Culpepper and Mike Remke (Mountain Studies Institute); Kevin Harter (Iron Wood Group LLC); Bruce Short (Consulting Forester); Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Alex Graf (Montezuma County Coordinator for Wildfire Adapted Partnership); James Dietrich (Montezuma County); Keith Keesling (Emergency Manager, Dolores County); Ken Curtis and Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Ed Millard (Southwest Basin Roundtable); Danny Margoles (DWRf Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

**Updates**

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI):** Mike Preston reported that a Steering Committee and charter for the RMRI effort in Southwest Colorado are being developed to determine how to govern the effort. Organizers are also trying to define a local network that brings all the collaboratives together. They believe the local network is in the best position to weigh readiness and priorities for mitigation treatments as well as any barriers to the work and what will it take to remove them.

The annual convention for the National Wild Turkey Federation, which created the RMRI in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, will take place in Nashville next week and Mike will attend.

Mike said the Southwestern Water Conservation District's annual seminar will be April 3 in Durango and will include an RMRI panel. Additionally, an RMRI meeting will be held locally the day before the SWCD seminar to take advantage of the fact that so many people involved with RMRI will be coming to Southwest Colorado.

Danny said there will be a meeting soon with a number of partners within the WUI to identify immediate and long-term goals in the RMRI. It will be the first of numerous meetings for that purpose. There will be meetings with David Sitton, owner of the excelsior plant in Mancos, and others in the timber industry to identify barriers to getting the work done on the ground, including infrastructure, workforce capacity and more.

**Timber industry:** Kevin said Iron Wood is operating at about 45 percent of production capacity right now and has 34 people working. The company expects to employ 50 to 55 people when it hits full stride. He said they are working on two timber sales totaling about 2,000 acres in the Dolores Ranger District and those are going well. They started on another sale this fall near Pagosa but they are snowed out of it at present. They will move forward in the fall with a pellet mill handling commercial pellets for use in places such as power plants.

Ken asked about the impacts of forest health efforts on water. He said the municipalities of Rico and Cortez are particularly interested in their source water protection areas.

Anthony said there is an opportunity to build a monitoring program around impacts to water quantity.

MSI is considering that, but gathering the data is a complex matter.

**Mountain Studies Institute (MSI):** Anthony said Aaron Kimple at MSI will be stepping up to work on the RMRI effort and Anthony is taking on responsibility for the Columbine collaborative. Also, MSI has a new staff person who will work with the headwaters group. Mike Remke will serve primarily in a science role.

MSI is hosting a set of three talks this April on issues regarding forest health. Danny will send out that information when it is finalized.

Danny said the DWRP Coordinating Committee is pleased that MSI is taking on the watershed monitoring plan for DRWF. The Coordinating Committee put out an RFP and MSI was the only entity that responded with a full proposal. They are fleshing out on the contract now.

**Stream protection:** Duncan said the stream protection group for the Upper Dolores had a very successful work session Monday. They discussed protecting streams against oncoming disturbances related to climate change. Three people from the Forest Service, a biologist from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Mike Preston, Ken Curtis, and Trout Unlimited members were at the table. They have identified 42 high-value streams that are expected to be trout strongholds to the end of this century and are looking at specific work programs that address protecting these strongholds.

Danny said coordinating all the information in the watershed as much as possible is good.

**Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP):** Alex said WAP and DWRP are working on rapid risk assessments. He and Danny finished the assessments this summer, going to every property in the town of Dolores. There is definitely wildfire risk in Dolores and they hope to use the assessments to prompt action and increase awareness. Now they are deciding the best way to disseminate this information to individuals and are thinking about doing a mailing that would provide homeowners with a link to only their own individual risk assessment.

Alex is working with residents at Cedar Mesa Ranches on a wildfire evacuation drill plan. They hope to conduct a live evacuation drill in late spring.

May 2 is Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. NFPA and State Farm, which partner in sponsoring the day, offer grants for community preparedness activities on that day, typically for \$500. The deadline to apply is Feb. 28. Alex will send the link to Danny to disseminate.

Alex said the Mancos Brewery has agreed to host a fundraiser for WAP of Montezuma County on June 13.

**Montezuma County:** James said he attended a meeting yesterday with the Colorado Department of Transportation. They discussed matters involving the Central Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration, in particular identifying some of the main roads that provide access to public lands. The county has identified the Dolores/Norwood and Taylor Mesa roads as two such routes. James said there are possible funds attached to some of the programs the highway division has going that could mesh with some of the projects in DWRP.

Danny said he viewed a webinar on wildfire prevention work and prescribed fire, and Southwest Colorado was one of the areas that was highlighted.

### **Lone Pine Vegetation EA**

David said the Lone Pine EA was signed Jan. 23 and the decision notice is in place. Now the focus will be on implementation. He discussed different blocks and timber sales in the Lone Pine EA area. The total sales will be four larger ones as well as probably four or five service contracts .

A question was asked about whether necessary coordination with Colorado's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) slows down projects such as this. Derek said the district and SHPO have a fairly good relationship regarding vegetation management projects and it is not SHPO that is holding up implementation on Lone Pine. Derek said doing the surveys and creating the reports is where the bottleneck is at this point. The district will try to catch up with such work and then move ahead. He hopes about 9,000 acres will be treated in 2020 if the district receives all the money it is supposed to.

Anthony discussed the Lone Pine EA monitoring framework. He said MSI is working with the Forest Service and they have identified dedicated monitoring areas. While the Forest Service has its own implementation monitoring to do, MSI is focusing more on monitoring how effective these treatments are, primarily in terms of regeneration. MSI has established monitoring plots akin to those in the Salter EA area. Anthony said repeat monitoring to determine the metrics of change will take some time.

Kevin asked about whether monitoring of rangeland is done. Anthony said MSI is not really monitoring that type of habitat. Derek said the Dolores District collects information from its grazing permittees on a regular basis.

Mike Preston said there is considerable interest in water quality and quantity. Anthony said those factors will be beyond the scope of the monitoring MSI is developing with the forest. If there is a research question they want to have a baseline first. He said soil moisture probes can be added onto these monitoring areas to help answer some of these questions.

Duncan said the questions that might be asked need to be framed so there is a master list.

**Next meeting:** The next DWRF meeting will be the second Wednesday of the month, Wednesday, March 11, at 1:30 p.m. at the DWCD offices. Danny will be gone the first Wednesday for a Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program (CFLRP) conference so the meeting will be moved to the second Wednesday. Discussions of the outreach plan and source water protection plan will be on the agenda.

#### **Next steps:**

- Danny asked people to fill out the Google survey he sent out last week on outreach. The feedback will be very helpful. He will resend the survey.
- There will be emails from Anthony and Danny on coordinating for the watershed planning effort.