

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
March 11, 2020
dwrfcollaborative.org
4 pages

Present:

Derek Padilla and David Casey (Dolores Ranger District, San Juan National Forest); Keith Fox (NEPA Planner, SJNF), Ann McCoy-Harold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Kevin Harter and Derek Smith (Iron Wood Group LLC); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Becca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado), Phil Ayers and Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Luke Kline (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cortez); Sonny Frazier (Town of Dove Creek); Ken Curtis and Mike Preston (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Brent Schoradt (San Juan Mountains Association); Ed Millard (Southwest Basin Roundtable); Lorene Bonds (grazing allotment owner); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Scheduled events: **(NOTE: EVENTS ARE COMPLICATED BY THE CORONAVIRUS. CHECK WITH THE ORGANIZATION PRIOR TO ATTENDING)**

- The Southwestern Water Conservation District's annual seminar was to be April 3 at the Doubletree in Durango. At present it was still on schedule, despite concerns about the coronavirus. **(NOTE: The seminar was later canceled.)**
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership was planning a neighborhood ambassador training in Durango on March 24.
- WAP is planning the Home Ignition Zone workshop May 15 and 16 in Bayfield.
- A chainsaw basics class is being tentatively planned for mid-June.
- Alex hopes that Cedar Mesa Ranches subdivision in Montezuma County will have a live wildfire evacuation drill on May 2, which is Wildfire Community Preparedness Day.
- The Forest and Fire Learning Series was scheduled to offer three lectures examining the spectrum of wildfire on April 1, 8, and 15 at Powerhouse Science Center in Durango.
- A DWRF science meeting with presentations on the Salter area was scheduled for Monday, March 16.
- Danny hopes there can be a tour of the Salter area in May.

DWRF and WAP are working with the Dolores Fire Protection District to mail some outreach materials as part of the fire district's effort to get a mill-levy increase passed in May. WAP's cost-share and site-assessment effort is planned to be beginning in April. This involves hour-long site assessments of defensible space and reimbursement of landowners for defensible-space work. However, the cost-share program is looking limited this year.

Dolores Ranger District: Derek said the Salter scoping document is out for comment until March 23.

David said he hopes to put the first "single tree selection" sale out for bid in three weeks. He has applied for a ReStORE Colorado grant. Such grants fund large-scale habitat restoration and stewardship projects.

Resilient Forest Communities: Jimbo said he, Danny, and staff with the Forest Service and Mountain Studies Institute attended a Collaborative Forest Restoration Program workshop in Albuquerque recently and there were good conversations.

Danny said one of the major topics was adaptive management. The Lone Pine EA has stipulated that DWRF is to be consulted regarding AM prescriptions, and the EA includes an AM template of sorts.

Danny said a group of entities put in for a grant for a wildfire training exchange program, which offers an opportunity for people to obtain their red cards. DWRF will be applying for funding from the Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund, and DWRF and MSI will be applying for a grant to coordinate a cross-collaborative exchange involving the Columbine collaborative and the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.

Forest products: It was agreed that there was a good meeting among some DWRF stakeholders regarding forest products on March 9. David said considerable progress has been made in getting the industry going again and many issues have been worked out.

Mike said it appears that industry capacity and the need for forest-health treatments are in good balance with each other, but the situation involving biomass needs to be rounded out. One of the key issues for the forest industry is employees and training. Another major issue is road access and conditions.

David said there is a need to get rid of the stigma attached to road work, because without roads, all the necessary restoration work can't be done.

Ken asked a question about who arbitrates disputes over road use. He noted that certain allotted users go into the national forest at different times for different purposes. For instance, in the fall, hunting and cattle-moving are taking place. There can be an odd mix of traffic at different times of year.

Derek said the district does not have much need for arbitration. He receives few complaints regarding the uses of roads, only their condition.

David said the district has begun public-relations efforts to inform people about the forest treatments and logging occurring on Lone Pine. The district, for example, advises people on UTVs that they need to pay attention to sale areas and logging traffic. There will be some PSAs on the radio regarding Lone Pine. The district has also posted more signs in the Bradfield area.

Danny said he has been meeting with groups such as the Montezuma County Recreation Advisory Committee and Montezuma County Rangeland Stewardship Committee.

Lorene said the Southwestern Colorado Livestock Association has a list of all local allotment owners.

Next steps:

→ Danny will talk with Lorene and try to connect with the allotment owners.

Cortez Source Water Protection Plan

Rich gave a PowerPoint on Cortez's Source Water Protection Plan. Cortez is in the late stages of completing the plan. He hopes to present it to the new city council, which will be elected April 7, and to

have it accepted by the council in June, then sent to the state. If the state accepts it, which they likely will, that will open up funding opportunities. He has received a great deal of useful feedback on the plan so far and is open to other suggestions. The document is fairly complete but if there are small points or corrections to be made, he will be glad to hear about them.

Next steps:

→ Danny will send out the latest version of the plan to the group.

Danny said the plan identifies risks to the watershed. Wildfire, aquatic nuisance species and abandoned mines pose the greatest threats. The plan is not binding, but it provides a framework for funding opportunities.

Mike asked whether the plan links to prescribed forest treatments. Rich said It does point to specific documents such as the county's emergency response plan but it's more of a general document. Mike said the door should be open to identify desired treatments and put those on the radar. Rich agreed, saying there are plenty of grants and funding opportunities that are open once this is completed.

Danny said once the plan is completed the next question will be how DWRF can assist with implementing.

in response to a question about RMRI funding Mike said treating the non-federal land is complicated. There are many players, including the state, tribal and private lands. The Wild Turkey Federation has been successfully largely in the East. They want to try to fill gaps but they don't know what gaps there are yet. If there are private lands ready to treat but there are barriers RMRI would try to fill them. It's going to require a local match. If WAP can define what you need to jump-start your program that's the kind of funding that will be pursued. Nobody's going to write a \$50 million check.

Ken said the money is coming down on the federal side but the private part is difficult.

Danny said the conversations are happening. This is not a traditional funding source. It is innovative.

Outreach

Danny said a group of DWRF stakeholders has been developing an outreach plan for DWRF. Danny, Becca, Brent, Alex, Duncan Rose, Anthony Culpepper of MSI, and Lorena Williams with the Forest Service have been involved. The plan is fairly well fleshed out and he will send it to the collaborative. The goal is to strategize DWRF's efforts and develop a plan for prioritizing and messaging what DWRF is doing.

Danny announced that DWRF will be getting a VISTA member at no cost, probably beginning in May, and the person will help implement the outreach and education plan.

Brent said SJMA, which is a partner with the SJNF, offers science-based lessons and is launching a Forest Fridays program in Mancos that will take children into the forest. SJMA is thinking about including kids from Cortez. SJMA recently merged with Durango Nature Studies and that has provided a great deal of synergy.

Danny showed a PowerPoint on the Outreach and Education Plan. It will be posted on DWRF's website. Danny suggested that stakeholders support it in whatever capacity makes sense to them, and try to

integrate messages.

Mike expressed the need for a presentation kit about DWRF that stakeholders can take with them to share at meetings, conferences, and similar places. Danny said that is on his list of things to do.

Upcoming events: Upcoming events were discussed, including the March 16 DWRF scientific presentation and the Dolores River Festival.

Next steps:

→ Danny will put a calendar on the DWRF website. Most stakeholders said that would be valuable.

Public comment: Ed said that water quantity needs to be considered as well as water quality. He said the current tree density in the forest means less water and that this is a completely different forest than it was when it was natural. Becca and Danny agreed that quantity is a key issue.

Next meeting: The next DWRF meeting is Wednesday, April 1, at 1:30 p.m. and will be held online. This meeting can be attended through this link:

DWRF is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

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