

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative  
Stakeholders Meeting  
June 3, 2020  
dwrfcollaborative.org  
5 pages**

**The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:**

Eric Janes (Retired BLM Hydrologist), Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist), Anthony Culpepper (Mountain Studies Institute), Jason Lawhon (RMRI Project Manager for U.S. Forest Service), Andrew Hawk and Kyle Hanson (Timber Age Systems), Molly Pitts (Colorado Timber Industry Association), David Sitton (Aspen Wood Products), Lo Williams (San Juan National Forest Partnership Coordinator), Ellen Roberts (Southwest Colorado Environmental Impact Fund), Ryan Cox, Melissa Simmons and Tim Reader (Colorado State Forest Service), Becca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado), Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited), Ashley Downing and Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Rich Landreth (City of Cortez), Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance), Matt Thorpe (Colorado Parks and Wildlife), Ken Curtis (Dolores Water Conservancy District), Mike Preston (DWRF Coordinating Committee), Page Buono (Independent Contractor for Mancos Watershed Group), Steve Monroe (Mancos Watershed Group), Patt Dorsey (National Wild Turkey Federation), Ann McCoy-Herold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office), Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator), and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

**Updates**

**Community education and outreach:** Anthony said MSI will be aligning its education and outreach plan based on the one developed for DWRF by Stacy Beagh and there will be some commonality between the two outreach plans.

**WAP Montezuma Ambassadors:** Alex said a WAP Montezuma Ambassadors meeting that is open to the public will take place Tuesday June 9, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. It will be a Zoom meeting and requires an RSVP. If anyone interested in the meeting is not on the WAP mailing list they should get in touch with him.

**Dolores Ranger District:** Danny spoke for Dolores District Manager Derek Padilla, who couldn't be present. The timeline for the Salter EA is being extended. The EA was supposed to be released in mid-June and there would follow a tour of the area in question. Now the Forest Service is pushing the EA back 1-2 months and it will probably be August before it is released. DWRF is planning to hold off on the tour until the EA comes out. Danny said stakeholders are providing some valuable feedback into the Salter EA.

San Juan National Forest Supervisor Kara Chadwick is currently on detail for 120 days in the Washington, D.C., office.

**Outstanding Waters designation:** Duncan said Dolores River Anglers and the local chapter of Trout Unlimited are working with the national TU to take the first step to seek an Outstanding Waters designation on about eight streams in the Dolores River basin and three to five along

the Animas River. This designation is intended to recognize and provide protections for streams and rivers that have high water quality. Three streams in the Dolores basin already have the designation.

**WAP site visits:** Alex said some homeowners have signed up for site visits from WAP but there is opportunity for more. Anyone looking to learn about defensible space/wildfire mitigation in Montezuma and Dolores counties can sign up at <https://www.wildfireadapted.org/home-wildfire-risk-site-visit>, or people can contact Alex at [agraf@wildfireadapted.org](mailto:agraf@wildfireadapted.org), 845-750-2914.

**Timber sale:** Ryan said there is a small sale of about 800 ccf of ponderosa pine and white fir in La Plata County. Plans are to end it this coming Friday.

**Timber equipment:** Becca said Steve Underwood, a stakeholder, recently acquired a truck with a boom, and Rent-All Rentals in Cortez now has a chipper available to rent. However, the chipper rental rebates are not currently available in Montezuma County.

**Resources:** Lo Williams recommended people check out the materials on fire and fire prevention at <http://swcwfc.blogspot.com/>

**Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP):** Danny said the FACA committee for CFLRP has been convened and will meet June 22-25. Meetings will be broadcast online. He will send the links when they are available.

**Policy recommendations:** Danny said Aaron Kimple of MSI has sent him some policy recommendations from the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition in support of business resilience and wildfire resilience in these difficult times. They are hoping many local or tribal governments will sign on in support of the recommendations. Right now the scope of the topics is greater than those DWRF generally talks about. For that reason, there was some concern about DWRF signing on in support as an entity, but Danny will send out the recommendations to stakeholders so the entities they represent can consider signing on. The link is [https://mcusercontent.com/b8a59f6e590eeae7988e208b/files/85b633b0-f323-4918-96ba-37129244f31a/RVCC\\_Rural\\_Resilience\\_paper\\_web\\_5.26.20.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/b8a59f6e590eeae7988e208b/files/85b633b0-f323-4918-96ba-37129244f31a/RVCC_Rural_Resilience_paper_web_5.26.20.pdf)

**Grant received:** Danny said DWRF has been awarded a grant for \$1,000 from the Ballantine Family Fund.

**DWRF Resilience Metrics and Desired Conditions:** Anthony said he is working on the table on draft Ecosystem Integrity Metrics. He is currently focusing on ponderosa pines, trying to make sure there are usable metrics for land managers and DWRF. He has been dealing with the vegetation metrics and will have follow-up conversations regarding the collaborative itself and community and economic metrics. The metrics will expand into forest types beyond ponderosa.

Danny said when the metrics are finalized they will be brought to the larger group.

**Southwest Colorado Wildfire Mitigation Environmental Impact Fund (EIF):** Ellen said two weeks ago, the EIF was the recipient of \$275,000 from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities. The funding was given to MSI as project manager for the EIF. The EIF is moving from the stage of feasibility study to implementation. The EIF will address wildfire risks on thousands of acres in Southwest Colorado using an outcomes-based financing approach. It will function as a revolving loan fund to finance forest health treatments. Initially the project area will be in La Plata County but it is the desire of the organizers to extend the project to Montezuma, Dolores and possibly Archuleta counties. They are developing the legal framework for an MOU that will allow for additional members. Ellen said RMRI is also helping the EIF move forward.

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

Jason said he is starting work with the SJNF as project manager for RMRI. He hopes this will ultimately be a pilot for large-scale restoration strategies across the West. He discussed his background and said he has been involved with RMRI since its beginning. He praised the collaboration and interface he has seen so far between DWRF, the EIF, and the Columbine collaborative.

Eric said the Dolores County commissioners have been quite active in DWRF stakeholder meetings over the past several years but the Montezuma County and La Plata County commissioners have not, although Montezuma County sometimes sends James Dietrich, the county's federal lands coordinator, as a representative. He asked whether it would be beneficial to do outreach to them, particularly regarding the area of economic impact and the importance of RMRI to the local economy.

Jason said he plans to join in when the Montezuma County commissioners meet monthly with Derek Padilla.

It was noted that two seats on the Montezuma County Commission will be open at the end of the year and there are candidates competing in the primary in June. It was suggested that it might be good to chat with the candidates.

Anthony said La Plata County is one of the more active counties regarding participation in the as-yet-unnamed collaborative in La Plata County and EIF has gone before those commissioners quite often.

Becca suggested that Jason has the perfect background to connect with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and strengthen that relationship.

Mike said RMRI Colorado has a biomass workgroup and a workforce development workgroup. Those discussions have been supported by the matrix that came out of the DWRF timber industry workgroup. State-level resources are being brought to bear on these challenges. On the subject of biomass there will be two tracks: small diameter products and biomass power. RMRI also has a communications subcommittee that is working to brand the effort. Lo Williams

may be involved with that group, but more representation is needed and anyone interested in being involved is welcome.

Becca asked about the idea of a rail-line spur to connect the local area with Gallup, N.M., and make it more feasible to move wood and other products. Mike said he has been involved several times in studying that possibility and although having a rail spur clearly would be beneficial because it would allow easy shipping of low-value projects, the complexities involved are enormous. It would take decades to establish such a connection.

### **Mancos Watershed Group**

Page showed a PowerPoint on “Climate Smart Strategies in Future Planning Efforts”. The Mancos Watershed Group, which has numerous partners, works to understand the current status of the Mancos River and identify opportunities to develop drought-resilient strategies in the watershed.

In 2011 the group completed the Mancos Watershed Plan, which still guides its efforts. Since then they have worked to fill in some gaps and determine what they still need to know about the river.

As part of a WaterSMART grant-funded project they worked with Renee Rondeau, an ecologist with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, and others to develop a framework for adaptation strategies for the Mancos watershed. They worked to define key vulnerabilities and stressors under future climate scenarios. Page said she can share this and the products when those are in their final form. They worked with stakeholders to brainstorm strategies for achieving goals. They welcome final feedback on the top-ranking strategies. They have begun moving forward with grant proposals for actions to implement the strategies that rose to the top.

In answer to a question about why the focus was on the lower-elevation forests rather than the high forests where the snowpack is present, Page said this was partly because of the vulnerability to wildfire. There is interest in the higher portion of the watershed, but the areas that are dominated by piñon-juniper are of concern because of fire danger.

Under a 319 grant, the Mancos Conservation District is looking at contamination on the East Mancos River. Findings are supposed to be published this summer and there will need to be continued study.

#### ***Next steps:***

- Page said anyone interested in learning more should email her at [page.buono@gmail.com](mailto:page.buono@gmail.com).
- They will circulate their completed documents when they are ready. Anyone who wants one should contact Danny.
- The group also created a booklet called *Drought and Change in the Mancos Watershed* and Page will share that as well.

## Events

**Science Team introductions webinar:** Danny said the cross-collaborative group and RMRI are putting together a Science Team. Several people have committed to serving on it and a few others are being sought. Mike Remke of MSI and Mike Battaglia of the Rocky Mountain Research Station will be having a webinar in mid to late June to introduce the Science Team.

**What's My Wildfire Risk webinar:** Danny said the recent webinar was the first he has done and possibly the first that DWRf has done. He asked for feedback.

There were several comments saying it was an excellent webinar.

The YouTube platform was discussed. It is somewhat less familiar to people than Facebook Live but not everybody is on Facebook. Outreach for the webinar was also discussed. It would be good to increase participation.

Danny asked whether everyone could share information about future webinars through their own organizations if they were given adequate notice, as that would be hugely helpful. There were about 20 participants in the webinar while it was live, and it's been viewed about 80 times on YouTube.

### **Next steps:**

→ It was suggested that someone make "bite-sized" sound bites of key points in the webinar as a next step. Danny said he will probably bring the outreach team together to talk about this.

**Articles about DWRf:** Jim Mimiaga will write an article for the Journal about DWRf regarding forest management and adaptive management. There are a few other articles DWRf wants to put together regarding the timber industry, recreation, and water.

### **Next steps:**

→ Danny will be connecting with everyone on next steps.

→ Danny will send out the link to the article by Becca that was published in the Four Corners Free Press. The link is <https://fourcornersfreepress.com/you-me-and-the-dwrf-collaborative-what-will-you-do-to-ensure-better-fire-outcomes-in-southwest-colorado/>