

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

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Eric Janes (Retired BLM Hydrologist); Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Tim Kylo (Montrose Forest Products); Anthony Culpepper, Mike Remke, Aaron Kimple and Dana Hayward (Mountain Studies Institute); Becca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado); Ashley Downing and Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Melissa Simmons and Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service); Ed Millard (Montezuma County Representative to Southwest Basin Roundtable); Mike Preston (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Steering Committee and DWRF Coordinating Committee); Jason Lawhon (RMRI Project Manager for U.S. Forest Service); Derek Padilla and David Casey (Dolores District, San Juan National Forest); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Thomas McNamara (Regional Field Manager, Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management); Jamie Johnson (Montezuma Land Conservancy); Matt Sturdevant (Colorado Parks and Wildlife); Steve Monroe (Hydroecologist); Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commissioner); Gigi Richard (Visiting Instructor of Geosciences, Fort Lewis College); Page Buono (Communication Consultant); Ken Curtis (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Ground rules: Danny briefly revisited the ground rules and meeting agreements. Noting that DWRF has been meeting on Zoom for a while and probably will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

Updates

Community education and outreach: Danny said DWRF and the Town of Dolores are moving forward with sending out postcards regarding rapid risk assessments done in Dolores. The town is paying for printing and DWRF is paying for postage. They are working with the WiRē (wildfire research) Team, a partnership between wildfire practitioners and researchers, on a small-scale research project. The outreach is being randomized so that some postcards contain language regarding community wildfire risk, while other postcards address personal wildfire risk. The idea is to understand what type of communication will spur more action and interest. An unpublished email address associated with DWRF has been created so people can email for more information. Additionally, there is a link and a unique code on each postcard. When recipients go to the link and enter their code, they receive their personal risk assessment. They then can sign up for site assessments and other links to resources. Some 400 postcards are being mailed out, all to people whose properties were given rapid risk assessments.

Collaborating with land management agencies: Danny said the Dolores District of the San Juan National Forest continues to work on the Salter Vegetation Management Environmental Assessment. Danny will be sending out an invitation for an open meeting for conversations

regarding monitoring and adaptive management. Next month there will need to be a larger conversation with the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute and DWRP regarding adaptive management in other parts of the state.

Aaron gave a brief recap of a meeting that took place in the morning on Aug. 5 that brought together representatives of all of Colorado's different forest collaboratives. It was led by people connected with RMRI as well as other efforts and institutions. This has historically been an annual meeting. Among the topics discussed were RMRI and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP).

Jason Lawhon gave an update on the RMRI process. He thanked the DWRP stakeholders for their work and input on the PODs priorities and said RMRI has not yet prioritized any PODs. The Steering Committee is in the middle of discussions on finding where there is strong agreement. This input will be combined with input from the collaboratives and other members of the Advisory Network. All this information will be used to inform the Steering Committee's decisions on establishing shared priorities.

David Casey said this year the Dolores District contracted two large timber sales. One is going out this week and will be awarded before the end of the fiscal year.

Mike Remke and Anthony reported that MSI has had a monitoring crew in the Lone Pine landscape for several weeks. Monitoring is going very well and they are working on the first preliminary analysis of the data collected.

Danny displayed a map of the Salter EA area with stars showing the places that were prioritized for treatment during an exercise by stakeholders at the last DWRP meeting, High-priority areas generally are closer to communities and infrastructure. Mike Preston said it is appreciated that both collaboratives delved into this prioritization. RMRI is working on how to integrate this input into the whole collaboration.

Anthony said there are some large pods that cross national forest boundaries. The group is seeing high concern and high priorities. There are many cross-boundary needs and issues. There is a collective desire to have a high focus on the wildland-urban interface (WUI) across the collaborative.

Desired conditions: Danny presented a table showing resilience metrics and desired conditions for the ponderosa pine zone. It was produced as a result of DWRP's strategic planning process. Draft resilience metrics were written and put into the last pages of the strategic plan as placeholders for a more comprehensive set. MSI has been helping on a contract basis to develop and flesh out the resilience metrics and desired conditions for the collaborative.

Danny said this is a living document and certainly not perfect. It should be revisited regularly, though not more often than annually. as monitoring results come in. Danny said the goal is to develop metrics that are measurable, desired conditions that are measurable, and a document

that is meaningful for DWRP and its partners, not just a thought exercise. This should be a document that can be used by the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and private landowners.

Anthony discussed and explained the table. He said the ponderosa pine zone was chosen as a priority for the initial conversation because of the Salter and Lone Pine EAs. He said feedback is welcome. Anyone with questions or concerns should relay those. This involves trying to encapsulate complex and nuanced concepts.

Becca asked how it ties to different management activities – not only thinning projects but grazing, prescribed fire, and other management activities. What has happened in this area in comparison to a different plot?

Anthony said the prescribed fire aspect and grazing aspect are still gaps. That will be a conversation happening in the near future.

In an online comment, Bill Baker wrote that historical data should be included in each desired trend. He said the Methods column does not list any historical sources, but since attention is being paid to HRV (historical range of variability) , the Method column needs to list these sources.

Anthony said how to bring up HRV is a subject of discussion. HRV helps provide guidance, but is it a goal we are working toward? The workgroup is looking at it as more of a source of knowledge, but it could be incorporated into some of the methodology that involves monitoring.

Bill said when discussing restoring a ponderosa pine forest, it is important to pay attention to historic conditions, not merely to create the kind of ponderosa pine forest that people desire. He commented on one of the Desired Trends that calls for “heterogeneous Gambel oak and other shrub density that. . . enables forb and grass abundance”. Bill said the term “heterogeneity” is very vague. Such phrases and terms don’t provide useful information. He said “enables forb and grass abundance” is likewise not useful, and any actions taken will enable forb and grass abundance.

Becca said if HRV is going to be added as guidance, climate trends should also be taken into account.

Mike Remke said the main aspect of this document that he struggles with is understanding where variation exists on the landscape and why. He worries about being either too specific or too vague, as well as how to actually implement management that achieves desired conditions. He is also concerned about the document’s usability.

Aaron agreed, saying this is a full spectrum of opportunity and it’s going to be very challenging.

Anthony said other documents he has looked at are either overly specific or very vague. If someone knows of such a document that walks the fine line between those extremes, let him know.

Ryan agreed. He said this is more a guiding document than a prescription. Being overly specific – for instance, saying “We want this specific density” – would not be beneficial. This seeks to describe desired conditions, not expected conditions. However, it would not be helpful to be too general, either.

There was general agreement that too much discussion about this topic would take up a great deal of time. Danny said there may be more discussion in future meetings. He will send out another email associated with the resilience metrics.

San Juan Cross-Collaborative Science Team: Danny said a great deal of good feedback has been received about the Science Team. The purpose of the Science Team is to support learning within collaboratives in Southwest Colorado. Danny has sent out notes from the team’s June 10 meeting.

Bill Baker commented that the Science Team is a start, but has very significant limitations. He voiced four specific concerns:

- Any qualified scientist who wishes to join the Science Team should be able to join it. The DWRF strategic plan emphasizes open, inclusive, transparent, and collaborative involvement.
- As many scientists as possible are needed to analyze the evidence together in detail and synthesize it for DWRF. Two scientists are insufficient.
- The types of expertise in members of the current team are insufficient for the scientific issues that will be raised during RMRI, CFLRP, etc. Missing is expertise on forest ecology, fire history, ecological restoration, landscape ecology, hydrology, economics, social science, climatology and more. Scientists in local agencies and at Fort Lewis College are needed.
- It is troubling that the Forest Service and MSI created this team behind closed doors and included only Forest Service and MSI scientists. This violates the open, inclusive, transparent, and collaborative standards in the DWRF strategic plan. It is also a specific legal requirement of CFLRP, which cannot be led or controlled by Forest Service employees. The collaboratives themselves must control this Science Team. An inclusive, open, diverse science team should be created through a transparent process that is fully controlled by the collaboratives.

Danny said there was not as broad a conversation as would have been ideal in the development of the team. He said the Science Team is not a working group of DWRF and the team’s goal is to help inform the collaborative.

Aaron said the team has been presenting this concept since December or January and is still soliciting input on the proposal that has been put forth. Nothing is set in stone. The goal is to construct as effective a team as possible that will provide information to the collaboratives.

Becca commented that Mike Remke and Mike Battaglia are excellent people to lead the team, but open invites for participants are important. However, people who want to join need to do their homework and catch up with what the team is working on. The team should not have to constantly help bring new people up to speed for every conversation.

Bill reiterated that DWRF's Strategic Plan emphasizes open and inclusive collaboration. Any citizen can join DWRF. Any qualified scientist who wishes to participate in this Science Team should likewise be able to join it. Bill said he asked to be included in the Science Team and was rejected. This team should have been developed by the collaboratives, and any scientist should be able to join. More scientists with different areas of expertise are needed. Bill said this should be a larger group and it should never be exclusionary, because that is not collaboration.

Melissa asked how big the team should be. The larger a group is, the more unwieldy it becomes.

Aaron and Danny said this was never designed to end with the two Mikes. There will be questions that require more scientists and more expertise. It is crucial to be inclusive and transparent as possible.

Eric said there are certainly disciplines not currently represented on the team. Those should be specified. The message should be that this is a team with plans for dynamic networking to bring in as-needed disciplines in other areas, whether biology, geology, hydrology, or something else. Danny said that is an excellent recommendation.

Mike Remke said it would be valuable to have someone with the right expertise to read over his interpretation of data.

Danny said the next step is clearly developing what the task of the Science Team is and how it will best support the collaborative. Additional conversations will be needed. Nothing is set in stone at present.

Next steps:

- Danny will send out another draft document of resilience metrics and desired conditions for ponderosa pine for people to review.
- There will be further conversations about the Science Team.