

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
Sept. 2, 2020
dwrfcollaborative.org
6 pages**

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Tim Kylo (Montrose Forest Products); Molly Pitts (Colorado Timber Industry Association); Bruce Short (Consulting Forester); Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist); Jim Spratlen (Emergency Manager, Montezuma County); Robert Meyer (Chair of Mancos Trails Group); Ashley Downing and Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Rebecca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado); Tim Reader (Colorado State Forest Service); Patt Dorsey (National Wild Turkey Federation); Mike Preston (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Steering Committee and DWRF Coordinating Committee); Ellen Roberts (Southwest Colorado Wildfire Mitigation Environmental Impact Team); Anthony Culpepper, Mike Remke, Dana Hayward and Aaron Kimple (Mountain Studies Institute); Jason Lawhon (RMRI Project Manager for the U.S. Forest Service); Derek Padilla and David Casey (Dolores District, San Juan National Forest); Kenneth Charles (Town Manager, Town of Dolores); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commissioner); Ann McCoy-Harold (Sen. Cory Gardner's Office); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Community education and outreach:

- Danny said the postcards promoting rapid risk assessments in Dolores have been mailed. Ken said he's heard some responses from people who question who is behind this effort, Danny said the introductory paragraph on the website explains where the framework came from and who was involved. He showed the postcard on the screen. Becca noted that it cites WAP and Dolores Fire & Rescue's logo.
- Danny recently gave a presentation on DWRF activities to the Montezuma County commissioners and it went well. He did not ask for funding from the county, but in the future DWRF may want to do that.
- Anthony said MSI is mulling how to carry forward with the Forest and Fire Learning series. They have been using Facebook Live.
- Becca said Fire Adapted Colorado is hosting a virtual conference, The Colorado Wildland Fire Conference, Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. There will be many good presentations. The cost is \$125 to participate. More information is available at <https://www.wildfire-colorado.com/>
- On Sept. 16 at 1 p.m., Mike Remke will give a presentation on initial monitoring data for the Lone Pine Environmental Assessment. Danny said it will be an important and interesting conversation.

- A field tour for the Salter Vegetation Management EA is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 7, in place of the regular DWRF stakeholder meeting. Danny will work on protocols for social distancing.
- Alex said WAP just rolled out its Interactive Neighborhood Map, which depicts the neighborhoods across the five counties that WAP works with most frequently. These neighborhoods that have been very engaged over the years and would be good to integrate into the conversation. The map is available at <https://www.wildfireadapted.org/neighborhoodmap> and anyone with questions should contact him.

Montezuma County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Jim Spratlen gave a presentation on the draft update of the Montezuma County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan is to be updated every five years. It gives an overview of every hazard that poses a potential danger to the community, including wildfire, avalanche, lightning, floods, drought, winter storms, and more, and it discusses mitigations of the hazards. After public comment has been received, the plan is reviewed by the state, then FEMA, and then the Board of County Commissioners is to sign it. The comments deadline was Sept. 9.

Becca said hard copies of the plan are available at the Cortez library. To her knowledge, the county has never sought FEMA funds, but in order to do so, it must have this plan in place. It opens the door for the county to pursue grants for hazard mitigation.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan will be referenced in the plan and will be adopted by reference as recommended actions.

Mike Preston said cooperation between the Empire Electric Association and Dolores Ranger District on powerline rights-of-way should be called out. It is a mitigation measure that is under way or nearly so. He believes it's one of the most critical issues related to wildfire. David Casey agreed and says it would be good information to include in the document.

Bill Baker said this is an impressive document, but voiced concern about the wildfire threat index in the plan, Figure 4-46. The map does not match with known scientific research about fire risk. It shows piñon-juniper areas as high-risk, but ponderosa-pine forests are where there is a greater probability of ignition and fire spread. Mike Preston said PJ is where there is often an interface with housing, but the relative risk may be incorrect. Becca said she or Danny can help provide better maps based on risk-assessment work that has been done.

Jim said he would appreciate it if anyone with comments or concerns would tell him. He is open for presentations as well. He can be reached at 970-564-4137, 970-759-4253, and jspratlen@co.montezuma.co.us. The plan is at <https://ftp.co.montezuma.co.us:9000/rpc/cat/Website/MZCHMPDRAFT.pdf>

Next steps:

→Danny will send an email to the group.

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)

Jason said the RMRI group in the Southwest is looking at the broad landscape of 750,000 acres. They are using the Potential Operation Delineations (PODs) map, with the HVRA rankings, that is very much informing how they examine priorities. They can start to see where there is strong agreement between the collaborative, stakeholders, etc., and then ascertain which of those areas are in the RMRI's landscape. He believes this is going to be very valuable for funding opportunities, many of which are coming up over the next few months. There is an advisory network that includes Danny, Anthony and others who are on this call, and the network will be reaching out to stakeholders for their input.

The Colorado Water Congress had its 2020 virtual summer conference recently and RMRI was invited to present.

Patt said DWRP is doing great work and having robust conversations. She said there is a real opportunity to consider how to pool projects together and receive more money in this part of the state.

Mike Preston said RMRI is starting to connect with some of the resources it will take to achieve some of its ambitious goals. They are trying to manage 9,000 or 10,000 acres a year for 10 years. They are making progress.

Becca asked how this prioritization ties to getting work done on the ground. It would be helpful to have a better picture of the full menu of projects DWRP wants to do on this landscape. Some fit with CFLRP, RMRI or other projects, while some are on private land. More funding sources will be needed to support this implementation. Everyone should watch for potential sources and provide that information to Danny and the team.

Mike Preston said RMRI is trying to compile available sources and that information will be available. Much work is already going on in DWRP that will fit with these sources. The Steering Committee did an exercise ranking priorities and everything lined up well.

Robert Meyer asked how recreational assets will be impacted by the projects. The Salter EA will encompass Boggy Draw and he believes there will be considerable pushback. David Casey said that was identified in the scoping document as an area that needs coordination.

Jason said the Forest Service was able to secure some funding to assist with signage and additional support for trails and education.

Mike Preston said the next step in the POD exercise will be to focus on identifying PODs with strong recreational, wildlife and water values and to identify opportunities for actions that will

benefit these values. The forest health collaboratives and the RMRI Advisory Network will have the opportunity to participate in identifying key areas and potential actions. This will be helpful in identifying locations and potential efforts in key recreation areas.

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP)

Danny said Aaron, Anthony, Dana and he have been talking about how to proceed with some conversations regarding CFLRP once the decision regarding funding is made. Within 180 days after a CFLRP project is notified of selection, that project will need to have a work plan in place that describes the manner in which the proposals will be implemented, administrative aspects, costs, and more. The plan will be developed jointly by the collaborative and Forest Service. The collaboratives will need to work together to identify priorities and strategies. This proposal is for an area larger than RMRI, from the Lone Pine area past Pagosa Springs. There are plans to put together a cross-collaborative working group, possibly just a temporary group, to develop a structure for the conversation. The main task of this work group will be to develop a cross-collaborative engagement structure that will then be brought back to the different collaboratives – not necessarily to implement it.

Some stakeholders said they would volunteer for the working group.

Next steps:

→ Danny will send out an email and people can volunteer separately. Anyone who wants to participate in this conversation should let Danny know.

Bruce asked how private landowners will be able to tap into this pipeline of projects and potential funding. Aaron said this is a question still being discussed. CFLRP funding is designated to be used on federal lands but there is a need to work on a whole-landscape scale. RMRI funding is for public and private lands both.

Mike Preston said funding from the National Resources Conservation Service and other sources is also available. It's critical to look at which sources can address which needs.

Salter EA Monitoring and Adaptive Management Draft Agreements

Danny said Thursday's meeting focused on the EA and adaptive management. People really want to be involved in AM and monitoring conversations and have the collaborative be involved in the Salter EA. Another key outcome was that a desire was expressed to work through different perspectives on EAs and use the collaborative to try to avoid going down the objection route.

Danny has put together a table on Salter AM agreements. He said there seemed to be much general agreement with the document aside from a few specific concerns. He has received written feedback from only two people. The Salter EA is taking place somewhat in the context of the CFLRP and developing more formal understandings of how the collaboratives will work together and with the Forest Service in the future.

Danny displayed an agreement between DWRF and the San Juan National Forest regarding the Salter EA. He said the use of the term “recommendation” versus “agreement” in some of the language is a key point. There was some concern that “recommendation” isn’t robustly collaborative enough and that the goal should be framing the process as coming together on agreements rather than DWRF making recommendations.

Mike Preston said the CFLRP activity will take place on Forest Service land, so the agency has final authority and responsibility to execute. He is comfortable with the idea of recommendation. DWRF is set up to participate in the monitoring and will see the results that occur from various actions that are taken.

Danny said the DWRF Coordinating Committee does not have the final word on this. He wants the stakeholder group to be in agreement, but he believes the sentiment was that the level of making recommendations seemed appropriate for Salter, especially since the Salter EA was in process already. This will remain at the Salter EA level, not a broader agreement level.

Bruce said the idea of agreements raises the issue of a possible FACA violation or a semblance of that and it would not be to DWRF’s advantage as a collaborative to have a private logger say, “You violated FACA, so we’ll take you to court”. There probably is no actual FACA violation but someone could take DWRF to court over the issue.

After a lengthy discussion about whether the language adequately supports a collaborative process and follows the law, Danny proposed working through some of the language. He said he hears the concerns and will fine-tune some of the language, but he doesn’t think the structure can be fundamentally altered.

Aaron said that other groups that received CFLRP funding had to develop relationships. There is a year or two during which you’re incorporating. Then, in years 3-10, a strong process for including the collaborative process is developed. He thinks this project is starting much more in advance than other collaboratives did with early CFLRPs and this group should feel good.

Next steps:

→ Danny will connect with Bill and Derek to discuss the language further.