

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRf) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
Nov. 4, 2020
dwrfcollaborative.org
4 pages**

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Eric Janes (Retired BLM Hydrologist); Mike Remke, Anthony Culpepper, Aaron Kimple, and Emily Swindell (Mountain Studies Institute); Dana Hayward (San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist); Becca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado); Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Hannah Millsap (Data Collection for Lone Pine); Molly Pitts (Colorado Timber Industry Association); Bruce Short (Consulting Forester, Short Forestry LLC); Jordan Van Sickle (NRCS), James Dietrich (Natural Resources Coordinator, Montezuma County); Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commission); Phil Ayers (Southwest Colorado Cycling Association); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Mike Battaglia (Rocky Mountain Research Station); Mike Preston (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Steering Committee and DWRf Coordinating Committee); Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service); Lo Williams (San Juan National Forest Partnership Coordinator); Derek Padilla, Dave Casey, and Keith Fox (Dolores Ranger District, SJNF); Shauna Jensen (Hydrologist, SJNF); Tim Leishman (Pagosa and Columbine Ranger Districts, SJNF); Jason Lawhon (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Project Manager for the U.S. Forest Service); Danny Margoles (DWRf Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Education and Outreach:

- Danny said the Chicken Creek tour will take place Monday, Nov. 9. Connections between recreation and forest health will be the focus.
- The Salter EA tour will be Friday, Nov. 20.
- Danny will be sending out more information for each tour.
- Rich reported that he presented Cortez's Source Water Protection Plan to the city council at its most recent workshop. It will probably be January when the plan is presented for public comment at a regular council meeting.

Collaboration with public land agencies:

▪ Initial cross-collaborative conversations regarding the Collaborative Forest Landscapes Restoration Program (CFLRP) will take place Friday, Nov. 13. Danny sent invitations to people who reached out to him to express an interest. If anyone who would like to participate was overlooked, let him know. DWRf will be well-represented in these conversations. This group will help put together the cross-collaborative structure and will probably have several meetings. This first meeting will offer an introduction to basic elements of CFLRP.

- Danny announced that the San Juan National Forest’s proposal has been selected as one of the CFLRP projects. There is no funding yet for this area, but the local proposal has been recommended for FY 2022 funding. Even without actual funding being provided, there are some expectations. Upon selection a project has about six months to develop a work plan and a multi-party monitoring structure. That is what the cross-collaborative group will help develop. Aaron said there is a time frame to develop the project’s structures, prioritization, third-party monitoring objectives and program. A solid structure should be created and put forth before the funding actually comes in.

- Danny said he is postponing the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI) PODs Prioritization meeting. It may take place the second week in December.

- Aaron said RMRI is working actively to gather input from the collaboratives and is appreciative of it. The collaboratives are the foundation on which all of these initiatives were built.

- Mike Preston said the Southwest Basin Roundtable is planning a meeting Thursday, Nov. 19, from 3 to 6 p.m., that will be focused on forest health. Danny and Anthony will represent DWRP at the roundtable.

- Anthony said a proposal has been submitted for a Colorado Watershed Restoration Grant for the Mancos River Watershed Group. This represents a multi-faceted approach involving instream and riparian work by the Mancos River Resilience Group, a science-based working group, as well as tying that with prescribed fire on private lands upland. The proposal seeks to employ a holistic approach to watershed restoration. It will probably not be known until early next year whether funding will come through.

- Danny applied to Onward! A Legacy Foundation for a grant to fund operations and has also applied for other grants from different entities.

- Derek said the weather forecast shows a potential for precipitation this weekend. If it arrives, there is a possibility the Dolores District could implement some burning of slash piles. The district might conduct some burning as well northeast of the compressor station on the Dolores-Norwood road, if fuel conditions are sufficiently moderated.

- Derek said the district is on schedule with the Salter EA and could release it on Dec. 2, but because of the holidays they will release it in January instead.

Ponderosa Pine Desired Conditions Document

Danny gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on a document titled “Ponderosa Pine Ecosystem Resilience Metrics and Desired Conditions”. The document is intended to articulate the shared values and vision of the stakeholders and to provide a useful tool for them.

Danny said the metrics and desired conditions were framed largely within the historic range of variability. Other factors must be considered, as well as the future range of variability.

This is an aspirational document. Desired trends may not be achievable within a short timeframe. The document will be revisited and revised periodically as needed.

Danny thanked everyone who participated in drafting and reviewing this document.

Presentation on Lone Pine

Mike Remke gave a PowerPoint presentation on “Monitoring Data and Desired Conditions: Lone Pine”. These represent basic current conditions – pre-treatment.

Lone Pine is on the east rim of the Dolores River. It is dominated by ponderosa pines. It has productive loam to silt-loam soils with high water-holding capacity. The area has a legacy of historical logging at multiple time points. Now, as a result, it has fairly even-aged stands.

Mike noted that there has been a recent mortality event involving roundheaded and mountain pine beetles. The Colorado State Forest Service has estimated that more than 20,000 acres are infested. On most of that, fewer than 10 percent of the trees have been killed.

All the beetles in the current outbreaks are native to southern Colorado, although this is the first time an outbreak on this scale has been seen.

Mike said the Lone Pine EA lists a number of different objectives. Thinning will occur across all size classes. There will be three different treatments:

- single-tree selection
- commercial thinning
- plantation thinning.

Uneven-aged silviculture involves more than two ages. Historically, uneven-aged stands existed on the San Juan National Forest. They help create resilience to things such as beetles and drought. They create a discontinuity of fuels for fires. There are open areas, areas with young trees, etc.

Fires were historically frequent in the ponderosa pine system and they varied in intensity. Tree density, crown base height and shrub cover can influence fire behavior.

Mike discussed the MSI plots and how they are measured and counted. There are 14 different monitoring units set fairly far apart, each representing different things. These units are highly variable. Among the data measured are the trees inside, the presence of bark beetles, the understory, grasses and forbs, and invasive species.

He reviewed Ormiston geography. In this block there are nine commercial thinning units, 12 single-tree selection units, and two units with a 20-inch diameter cap. The two units are in the

Ferris area near the Lower Dolores River. They were treated in 1998 as part of the Ponderosa Pine Partnership, an effort to pursue forest restoration and improve the forest-products industry in Montezuma County.

An important question regarding the two monitoring units in the Ferris area was what their basal area was post-treatment. Mike said this treatment did result in uneven-aged development and some large timber that can be removed. The area does have some undesirable characteristics, such as beetle mortality. Regeneration is occurring on Ferris in dense pockets of small trees, but seedlings are not common across the landscape. Dry conditions might inhibit ponderosa pine regeneration.

Ormiston is highly variable in stand conditions. Stocking densities are relatively high. Tree mortality is up to 12 percent. There is high variation in canopy cover. Crown base height is relatively high, close to 17 feet, which is normal for mature ponderosa pine forests. There are diverse species of shrubs. There is minimal grass cover in all these plots and the forb cover is even lower. Fuel-load levels are low across all fuel classes.

Mike said he is not comfortable drawing any inferences regarding patterns in Ormiston at large. This talk discussed a small subsection of a small amount of a large area. The monitoring units provide information on specific portions of Lone Pine.

Overall, Lone Pine is a highly variable landscape. Regeneration is variable. Beetle mortality rates also vary. Fire risk is highest in stands with higher densities and lower crown base heights. A key question is: What level of fire activity are we comfortable with?

Mike said the Salter EA provides an excellent opportunity to start thinking about what monitoring will be needed.

He said the wood-products and social-dimension portions of this data, including recreation values, were left out. That is something to consider in the future.

Next steps:

- Mike Remke will work on annotating the Lone Pine PowerPoint so that it can eventually be disseminated to stakeholders and posted on the DWRF website.
- The Ponderosa Pine Desired Conditions document will also be posted on the DWRF website.
- Danny will send out more information regarding the upcoming Chicken Creek and Salter tours.
- Danny will send out invitations to the RMRI PODs assessment meeting when it is rescheduled.
- At the next DWRF meeting, he will bring back information on the cross-collaborative CFLRP conversation.