

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
Feb. 3, 2021
dwrfcollaborative.org
5 pages**

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Ellen Roberts (Southwest Basin Roundtable and Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund); Ed Millard (Southwest Basin Roundtable); Phil Ayers (Wildfire Adapted Partnership Board and Southwest Colorado Cycling Association); Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commission); Anthony Culpepper (Mountain Studies Institute); Gretchen Rank (Mancos Conservation District and Mancos Watershed Group); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Derek Padilla, Travis Bruch, Shauna Jensen, and Keith Fox (San Juan National Forest); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Ken Curtis (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Becca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado); Ashley Downing and Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Mike Preston (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Steering Committee and DWRF Coordinating Committee); Scott Clow (Environmental Programs Director for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe); Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service); Robert Meyer (Mancos Trails Group); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Community education and outreach:

Anthony reported that MSI will be hosting its third Forest & Fire Learning Series in April. A marketing flyer for the series will be available soon.

Becca said she has been working with others on updating Montezuma County's Wildfire Protection Plan. They will be gathering input for it in virtual meetings. These meetings are always open to the public. Anyone interested should register with this link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAkd-2vrzssGtG2EpdxsJv8hw6DKOb-0D0r>

Ed said the Southwest Basin Roundtable produced an educational video on forest and water issues. Danny said it is an excellent video and he will put it out to stakeholders.

Collaboration with land management agencies: Derek said the Dolores District is on schedule to release the draft Salter EA next Wednesday. It will be posted on the San Juan National Forest website and there will be a legal announcement in The Journal.

Danny said he will host a stakeholder discussion regarding the Salter EA outside the regular DWRF stakeholders meeting. The goal is to work through some of the language in the EA, along with the collaborative's desired conditions, to frame recommendations the collaborative will make. He will report any intended recommendations at the DWRF stakeholder meeting in March.

Shauna said the Dolores District has been working on the Watershed Condition Framework and she is collating the data. It is focused predominantly on watersheds on national forest land, though a small amount of private land is included. This year they focused on the RMRI boundary; in three years they will create a Watershed Condition Framework for the entire San Juan National Forest. Shauna can present the framework to this group at a later date.

Danny said collaborative coordinators across the forest have been talking with the Forest Leadership Team about aligning expectations around the language the collaboratives are using, expectations of the Forest Service, and the process of working together. This will be important given how the Forest Service and collaboratives will be working together more closely in the coming years through various programs and initiatives. There have been two meetings around this topic. There will be a workshop about a month from now involving the collaborative coordinators, Forest Leadership Team and a number of members from each collaborative. It will be facilitated by Jessica Western from the University of Wyoming. She has facilitated other CFLRPs in the past. Danny has been discussing participation and possible participants with the Coordinating Committee and will send invitations to individuals to make sure there is a diversity of participants from conservation, industry, water, community, and recreation interests. Anyone who is interested in participating should email him directly.

Mike Preston said RMRI has been working on POD designations. The collaboratives are actively involved and it's progressing. They met with the Ute Mountain Ute this week. The tribe has a great deal of interest in the non-federal part of RMRI. RMRI will use the survey input over the additional nine years of RMRI to help set priorities. The broad base of participation in these collaboratives will make for good information.

Danny thanked everyone who participated. They provided comprehensive input into the POD exercise. The information will be helpful for RMRI and the collaboratives and the work we are doing together.

Collaborative effectiveness and sustainability: Danny said there will be a meeting, probably in early March, to focus on the people who provided feedback about DWRF through the survey and work through the survey outcomes. There will be next steps as this is an iterative process. The WaterSMART grant will be funding many of these activities. The grant will be ending in June, and there will be more conversations around that.

Outreach in 2021: Opportunities and Priorities

Outreach plan review:

Danny said that insufficient outreach was frequently cited in the DWRF survey as a way in which DWRF did not meet its goals.

He presented a PowerPoint on the DWRF Outreach Plan. The plan was developed by a DWRF committee that met from fall of 2019 through spring of 2020. He reviewed the plan's objectives, strategy, key guiding concepts, outreach audiences, and key messages.

Opportunity/priority brainstorm: Danny asked stakeholders to suggest ideas for meeting presentations. Suggestions included:

Stakeholder meeting presentations

- Maybe a presentation from industry on their production, capacity, output, needs, etc.
- Sharing of resources that each stakeholder brings to the table, perhaps building an actual table so we understand available programs and projects occurring on all lands together
- Science-based environmental and human impacts of catastrophic wildfire

Stakeholder meeting topics:

- Fuels treatment opportunities on nearby lands with forest industry potential, such as Ute Mountain Ute land and Mancos watershed

Tours:

- Public tour of the Boggy area
- Tour tied to project work in Lone Pine
- Opportunities or projects on non-national forest lands (e.g., what is tree marking and how to mark?)
- Show off some work on private lands
- Tour examples of Good Neighbor Authority (cross-boundary work)
- Field trips with San Juan Mountains Association and student groups

Workshops and webinars:

- NEPA and LRMP (Land Resource Management Planning)
- Prescribed fire training exchange, a day where DWRF participants can go learn to burn
- Overview of the BAER process
- Pre and post-fire water-quality monitoring

Danny asked whether people would be interested in some prescribed fire activities, such as a training exchange.

Becca said there's a huge opportunity for training regarding pile-burning on private lands.

Mike Preston suggested using the terms federal land and non-federal land rather than federal and private. There is Ute land and state forest land as well as federal and private. It magnifies the opportunities if we can incorporate state and tribal lands into these discussions.

Jimbo asked whether a one- or two-page informational handout on DWRF is being developed. It will be useful to have something to share with audiences when in-person activities and meetings resume.

Danny said he has been thinking about two different one-page handouts. Anyone who wants to be part of that conversation should let him know.

Becca said it's very difficult to summarize information in one or two pages. The message and call to action are different for every group that DWRF might be presenting to.

Mike Preston and Danny agreed that this can be problematic, but said there is intrinsic value in having handouts to create a positive buzz and to have a general presence. Danny hopes to brainstorm with other folks on this subject.

Active Public Engagement:

Danny said DWRF had a workshop webinar last year that was very good. He learned from the outreach.

Some suggestions were:

- A joint DWRF-WAP tour
- Hands-on chainsaw workshops
- Beetle workshops and presentations
- Workshops or demonstrations looking at wildfires and discussing, "Why should I care?" and the real risks of wildfire
- The science behind smoke
- The benefits of prescribed fire

Potential activities:

- Community workshops/webinars
- Connecting people to their watershed at breweries and coffee shops
- Overarching need to connect with events/outreach we're already doing – a shared calendar so we can see other events
- A booth that can be staffed at events such as the beer fest and other social gatherings
- Presenting on CFLRP and other plans such as source water protection planning, hazard mitigation plans, and DWRF HVRAs and how people can help implement those plans
- A great community to highlight during a workshop or tour would definitely be East Canyon. Topics could range anywhere from HIZ, community preparedness, post-wildfire effects, the list goes on!
- The thinning of beetle-killed trees in Cherry Creek.

Scott Clow said the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is waiting for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make a final decision regarding a critical habitat designation for the Chapin Mesa milkvetch, a plant that lives on Chapin Mesa. Land on the mesa is owned by Mesa Verde National Park and the tribe. One of the biggest threats to that plant is catastrophic fire. He said this presents an interesting management decision. The tribe has been working on fuels management programs in some areas where the plant grows. The fuels treatments will damage some of the plant's habitat, but if you don't do such treatments and there is a catastrophic fire, that will really

damage the plant's habitat. They have spent a lot of time working across the boundary with the National Park Service on this particular issue. Scott said he hopes this effort on the RMRI priorities will invigorate some other resource managers to take a more active role in organizations like DWRF.

Scott suggested comparing pre- and post-fire runoff samples in areas where a wildfire takes place, with comparisons to where fuels have been reduced along the river. Some people see logging as a negative activity. He also suggested signage in areas where logging takes place, such as Cherry Creek, that cites the benefits of logging beyond increased timber sales.

Derek said the signage idea will be happening with projects in the RMRI landscape this summer and into the future on national forest lands.

Becca suggested one key component in our landscapes should incorporate cultural importance and historic/prehistoric management of these lands.

Danny thanked everyone for the conversation and said he will be reaching out to some people individually.

Priority activities for 2021:

Becca expressed concern about constraints on management tools.

Danny said having a decision support framework that would say where to prioritize has been the missing tool for DWRF. He sees some utility if the model is being run and other regional areas are going down this route, but he will talk with Becca more about this.

Anthony agreed there is frustration with different models. Under the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute's Risk Assessment and Decision Support (RADS) model the current HVRAs have been identified. He could do a presentation on that for the collaborative. He has talked with Jason Lawhon on integration of all these modeling tools and wants to make sure they have a high degree of utility for all users.

Anthony provided a link to the RADS work CFRI completed for Chaffee Co.

<https://cfri.colostate.edu/2020/02/10/new-publications-chaffee-county-wildfire-risk-assessment-and-fuel-treatment-prioritization/>

He said they are in the initial phase of values input and setting up the model for La Plata County.