

**Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
July 7, 2021
dwrfcollaborative.org
5 pages**

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commission); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Ken Charles (Town of Dolores); Andrew Hawk (Timber Age System); Anthony Culpepper and Michael Remke (Mountain Studies Institute); Rebecca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado); Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership); Phil Ayers (Wildfire Adapted Partnership Board and Southwest Colorado Cycling Association); Robert Meyer (Mancos Trails Group); Mike Preston (Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Steering Committee and DWRF Coordinating Committee); David Taft (San Juan Mountains Association); Marcos Robles (The Nature Conservancy); Matt Sturdevant (Colorado Parks and Wildlife); Derek Padilla, David Casey and Shauna Jensen (San Juan National Forest); Jason Lawhon (RMRI Project Manager for U.S. Forest Service); Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service); Ken Curtis (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Bruce Short (Consulting Forester, Short Forestry LLC); Bill Baker (Retired Ecologist); Travis Bruch (San Juan National Forest); Logan Davis (CO Division of Fire Prevention and Control); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator); and Gail Binkly (Meeting Recorder).

Updates

Community education and outreach:

- **DWRF video:** The video has been released and Danny has emailed a link to it to stakeholders. It will eventually be available on the DWRF website. He said everyone should watch it. Andrew Hawk and Rebecca commented that they have watched it and thought it was excellent.
- **Intern:** DWRF currently has a short-term intern from Fort Lewis College who is helping with the mapping work. Rebecca Samulski suggested If she could build on the graphic vision, that would be very helpful.
- **Mancos Trails:** There will be a Mancos Trails Group workday this Saturday, July 10, at Chicken Creek to start construction on a new trail.
- **Open position:** Rebecca has an operations and communications position open right now with Fire Adapted Colorado.

Collaborate with land management agencies:

- **CFLRP monitoring input:** Danny said a group met recently to discuss larger-scale monitoring questions and indicators. They consolidated the information and it was then passed on to the regional level. Those people will make recommendations to the national program.
- **CFLRP structure status:** Danny said the RFQ for a CFLRP facilitator for developing a governance structure is still open but will close soon. Danny, who is receiving the submissions, has received a handful so far and he thinks an excellent facilitator will be found. Any stakeholder can be involved in helping select the facilitator, but participants are asked to make a modest time commitment if they want to be part of the selection process, and to remain involved after the facilitator comes on board.

- **Salter EA:** The Dolores Ranger District has released the decision notice for the final Salter EA. Danny sent an email to stakeholders that provides links to the document. The objection period for those who provided a previous comment is open until Aug. 9.
- **Reforestation burned areas:** David Casey said the Dolores District is working via a Categorical Exclusion (a streamlined process for projects) for replanting areas that were burned in the Plateau Creek wildfire. They use seed that as closely as possible duplicates the original vegetation in the areas they are seeking to reforest. It is still possible to make comments on the project and those are welcomed.

Next steps:

→ Danny will send out a link to the group. The comment period closes Aug. 4.

- **Lone Pine and other areas:** David said the district is about half finished with contracting timber operations at Lone Pine. One large sale is going on. Implementation is occurring in some areas. This fall would probably be a good time to develop a better plan regarding post-treatment monitoring. Some sales at Chicken Creek are wrapping up and implementation will probably start implementing by fall of this year. One stewardship project is continuing on Haycamp. The large sale on Haycamp is completed.

Resilient forests and communities:

▪ **Highly Valued Resources and Assets/Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment**

Danny said there will be a pause on many of these conversations, as he will be on vacation the last two weeks of July. Smaller conversations will take place in August. He asked whether anyone is interested in serving on a DWRF working group focused on private lands. It may not meet until August. He will send out an open invitation to all the collaborative's members and possibly some focused messages to certain individuals to see when a meeting can be arranged.

Collaborative effectiveness and sustainability:

▪ **Congressional funding request:** In concert with the Mancos Conservation District and WAP, DWRF put in a request for congressionally directed funding for some outreach and coordination work. Danny said Helen Katich of Sen. John Hickenlooper's office urged him to put in that request.

▪ **BLM Community Wildfire Assistance Grant application:** DWRF also applied for a BLM Community Wildfire Assistance Grant through MSI that would be used primarily to map out and identify where burn piles are across our landscape.

Wildfire Adapted Partnership Activities Update

Alex Graf, Montezuma County coordinator for Wildfire Adapted Partnership, gave a presentation on WAP's 2021 activities. WAP has been in existence since 2003 and became a nonprofit in 2018. It operates in five counties in Southwest Colorado. It is a largely volunteer organization that provides education to local residents to help them mitigate the risk of wildfire around their homes. He said while it is important to have mitigation work done on national forest lands, if similar treatments are not done on private land, there is a missing piece. Both need to be done.

Alex said thus far WAP has done 22 site visits in Montezuma County. Site visits involve a walk-about the property. He and the landowners talk about the home ignition zone, which covers defensible space. These assessments are self-selecting. Many of the people who sign up for the assessments hear about them via word of mouth through the ambassador program. WAP has done 16 cost-shares as part of its defensible-space cost-share program, which reimburses landowners for a portion of the costs. This program mostly focuses on Zone 1, the zone directly surrounding a structure, but it can also include larger zones. Alex develops a plan with the landowner to create defensible space. They treated about 55 acres in total. Alex said he is ready to do many more assessments.

Mike Preston asked whether there are projects that involve landowners in the same subdivision getting treatments done in a coordinated fashion. Alex said he had one instance of that happening this year involving four landowners who live near each other in one subdivision.

Alex gave out his contact information:

Alex Graf
Wildfire Adapted Partnership
agraf@wildfireadapted.org
Site Visit Sign Up: <https://www.wildfireadapted.org/defensible-space-cost-share>

Forest Ambassador Program (San Juan Mountains Association)

David Taft, conservation director for SJMA, explained the Forest Ambassador Program. It involves a crew of five, largely focusing on areas in the ponderosa zone that are recreation hot spots as well as areas where various treatments are happening. The hope is that forest ambassadors will be able to communicate to visitors what is going on with the treatments, whether they entail logging or prescribed burns, and generate good will toward public lands. The crew received robust training from Danny, Mike Remke, SJMA staff and some others.

Alex said he is a forest ambassador and it involves simply talking to forest visitors. Many people merely want basic information about how far a trail goes, etc., but sometimes these discussions include deeper conversations about fire.

Jason said RMRI is very excited about this program.

Monitoring

Marcos Robles, lead scientist with the Arizona chapter of The Nature Conservancy, discussed a snow and soil-moisture monitoring opportunity that involves The Nature Conservancy, Western Water Assessment at CU-Boulder, and USDA Agricultural Research Service. He said they are developing a field handbook for forest practitioners to install monitoring equipment. He discussed Snowtopography, which he said is affordable, flexible snow monitoring. Through the use of cameras and soil-moisture sensors, Snowtopography monitors snow depth, the length of

snowfalls, and the duration of time that snow is on the ground. This information will help hydrologists better predict streamflows and the amount of water in reservoirs. What is happening with snowpack is key to understanding forest resilience. He said they are in the middle of drafting the handbook and will test a draft version in August or September in the Dolores watershed area.

In response to a question, Marcos said they are using the data from the monitoring system to link to a forest hydrology model that can talk about potential streamflow. They don't yet have models enabling them to take this to a larger scale but that is their plan – those models will be developed so they can connect the data to water yields, watersheds, and forest resilience.

Robert, who lives near the Chicken Creek treatment area, said there has been incredible drying of the soils since 2002. He asked how that will be assessed. Marcos said there will be soil probes.

There were several positive comments about this partnership opportunity. Ken Curtis said DWCD will volunteer some of its staff. DWCD has been monitoring snow above McPhee for many years. Danny said this is an excellent opportunity to get some on-the-ground data.

Mike Preston said there is very strong interest in pursuing this. It is understandable, logical and affordable. It should receive a positive reception from the water community.

Danny said the local group needs to do more work during the planning phase. More-defined questions are needed. Some people have already agreed to be involved with reviewing the handbook or other aspects of the handbook, but more can be used.

Marcos said they are very excited to work with this collaborative. This is a larger issue across the basin.

Tours and events

- **Escalante Days in Dolores:** The question of whether DWRF should take part in Escalante Days was discussed. Ken Curtis said he has appeared at the Dolores River Festival for many years, and it's important to have modest expectations about such appearances. These are social events whose focus is not in-depth education, and most conversations will be brief. However, such events do provide an opportunity to get your name out there, which has value.

Danny said he will probably staff a booth at Escalante Days with Alex. Ken Curtis said he can volunteer at least one hour.

- **Future DWRF tours:** Danny reported that he had a talk with the Coordinating Committee this morning about future DWRF tours, probably in September. Possible topics include old-growth trees and the diversity of the ponderosa pine zone.

Bruce said there aren't many old trees in the Salter area, but tour participants could visit McPhee Park to see old-growth ponderosa pines.

Next steps:

→ Anyone who has ideas for the DWRF tour should contact Danny. It will probably take place in September, perhaps in place of the stakeholder meeting.

▪ **Visit from RMRI leadership:** Mike Preston said the RMRI leadership team will be coming to Southwest Colorado at the end of August and will meet in Durango on Sept. 1. They tentatively plan to have a field trip on Aug. 31 focused on the Chicken Creek/Haycamp area and he encourages participation in that. Andy Hawk said he would be happy to offer a tour of the Timber Age manufacturing facility on the RMRI visit.

Next steps:

→ Danny can help coordinate that. Contact him if you are interested in the Timber Age tour.

▪ **Mancos watershed tour:** Danny said Shauna Jensen has scheduled a tour in the Mancos watershed for mid-August related to the Watershed Condition Framework Restoration Action Plan. ***[THIS IS POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER]***

Next steps:

→ Danny will send information about the tour to stakeholders. He urged people to attend.

Next meeting: Danny said he hopes to have the August stakeholders meeting be a hybrid meeting, both in-person and via Zoom.