

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
Oct. 6, 2021
dwrfcollaborative.org

The meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Mike Preston (RMRI/Weenuchu' Development), Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator), Patt Dorsey (NWTF), Bill Baker (Ret. Forest/fire ecologist), Eric Janes (Ret. Hydrologist), Anthony Culpepper (MSI/ Four Rivers Wildfire Coalition), Alex Graf (Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Dan Kaufenberg (USFS AFMO/ Fuels), Derek Padilla (District Ranger, USFS), David Casey (Timber, USFS), Emma Reinemann (NEPA planner, USFS), James Dietrich (Montezuma County), Jason Lawhon (Southwest RMRI/ SJNF - USFS), Ken Charles (Dolores Town Manager), Chris Ives (SJNF Fire), Molly Pitts (Colorado Timber Industry Association), Nick Olson (Southwest Conservation Corps Forest Health Program), Rich Landreth (City of Cortez), Robert Meyer (Mancos Trails Group), Tracie Hughes (City of Cortez Planning), Rebecca Samulski (Fire Adapted Colorado), Kara Chadwick (Forest Supervisor SJNF), Mike Remke (MSI), Travis Bruch (SJNF Fuels), Duncan Rose (Trout Unlimited)

Danny reviewed agenda and Operating Principle: Participate, speak up as needed, raise hand to participate, don't use chat for separate side conversations, ask questions, show respect, don't dominate the conversation, tough on ideas - easy on people

Updates

Community Education & Outreach:

- o **Chicken Creek event with SJMA:** May mtn biking excursion and Aug in Chicken Creek looking at forest ecology and management questions with the public. Alex and Derek thought these are valuable to do. Becca asked if there was any way to measure if they are accomplishing the desired outcomes. Mike suggested doing some alpine backcountry high elevation forest ecology tours and that just getting people out in the forest is good. Derek clarified that the Southwest Colorado Cycling Association and Town of Dolores aren't opposed to management action, but are just raising some concerns to better manage potential impacts of Salter Vegetation Management.
 - o **Escalante Days:** Had a table with Danny and Ryan Cox - had signups for DWRF list and tours
 - o **DWRF Newsletter:** Danny sent out a DWRF newsletter on 10-5. Look to see if it went into spam
 - o **MSI:** working on themes and speaker list for Forest Health Series in April 2022
 - o **Mancos Trails Group:** hosting work day at Aqueduct BLM parcels Oct. 16th and last work day Nov. 13th, Mancotrails.org
 - o Becca Samulski and Aaron Kimple will be participating in Western Governors Association Working Lands Working Communities Roundtable in Denver this Thursday and Friday:
- Collaborate with Land Management Agencies**

- o **CFLRP status update:** No update yet on funding, but should keep moving forward in anticipation. A contractor to facilitate design has been selected and contracting is just being finalized for that process.
- o **RMRI updates: None now**
- o **Salter EA status:** In objection response process. Should have more info by Nov. meeting.
- o **Chicken Creek After Action Review:**
- o **Rx fire this fall:** Burn units have almost gotten 1 ½ in rain in September, so not sure there is going to be a fall burn window. So they are shifting over to pile burn projects.
- o **BLM - Public Lands Foundation 9/17** Secretary of Interior announced that BLM headquarters will be relocated back to Washington D.C. and the Grand Junction office will become a Western Region Headquarters. State Directors will go back to reporting to D.C.

Resilient Forests and Communities

o Snowtopography updates

Ag Research Station, Mike, Ben with DWCD, Joel, and Danny laid out transects for some snowtopography studies - looking at how canopy cover affects snowpack. They are looking at this in the Chicken Creek area to start with. Going to post snow stakes and wildlife on Oct. 13th. Let Danny know if you want to come help put out cameras and snow stakes with the research team.

Forest Products Industry Development

- Danny helped coordinate a tour for Montezuma County Economic Development Team to visit Timber Age Systems

Collaborative Effectiveness and Sustainability

o Grants updates: working with partners on grants. Mancos Conservation District may partner on risk assessment

- Working with Montezuma Land Conservancy to consider a watershed enhancement feasibility study. Becca suggested connecting with West Fork Fire Chief Tommy Johnson about building fire station (and possibly retrofitting county roads yard) with biomass heating.
- NFWF/GOCO - considering another Restore Colorado grant proposal
- WaterSMART grant just wrapped up. DWRF has some USFS funds and some requested grants. Will be putting in Onward!, Ballentine Foundation, possibly SWBasin Roundtable with MLC for West Fork of the Dolores [THIS DID NOT GET SUBMITTED]

Other

Wildfire Risk Reduction Framework & ongoing HVRA identification and risk assessment

WaterSMART grant included funds for Risk Reduction Framework

Wanted to update HVRA and Quantitative Risk Assessment with newer info and more closely integrated watershed assessment. Danny will be submitting the summary document on all of the assessment work that has been done is a living document that will be submitted to close out the WaterSMART grant. Danny wants to use this to put in a Joint Chiefs or RCPP proposal together. Danny will share this document out to the group.

Chicken Creek AAR

Lost Turkey Sale AAR on Sept. 10th. Review soil disturbance and cutting along the nordic ski trails. Notes were shared and Derek asked that if anything was missed from the site visit, to please suggest changes to the after action review documents as needed. Send feedback by October 20.

There was some concern expressed, so a site visit was scheduled. Usually, slash piling happens concurrently with logging. The slash was left distributed throughout the units and piled later. Dragging these later left more brittle pieces behind and the ground was wetter when the work occurred, and so there was some heavier ground disturbance than usually occurs in similar activities in the past. Discussed what had happened and future mitigations to address these concerns for the future. Where there is high use recreation, they may look at being more specific in the contract language about equipment, soil moisture, etc. Also talked about working with partners with high interest in specific landscapes to help identify areas of influence. The Forestry Contractor wasn't able to attend, but Molly Pitts from CTIA and Tim Kylo with Montrose Forest Products were able to attend and reflect from a timber industry perspective.

SJNF will keep working to address community concerns and adapt projects to be responsive to needs and conditions on the ground.

Danny thanked folks for the process. Having open conversations and working through those challenges is really beneficial. This is an opportunity to see how adaptive management works.

Eric asked for an update on opportunities to target the area for noxious weed abatement. Derek responded that the area has been put on the radar as a priority for weed treatment with the Range Manager.

Mike Remke spoke to the complexity of monitoring and how we can use monitoring as an engagement and trust building tool as we use monitoring to inform changes to management practices as work ramps up.

Fox Den Salvage Categorical Exclusion

Dave Casey shared slides on a salvage logging project. This is in an area covered by the Taylor and Stoner Vegetation management Environmental Analysis (signed Dec. 2017). There is severe decline from Western Spruce Budworm defoliation. Gunnison Forest Health folks helped develop prescriptions to try to support the healthy trees. The first sale, 460 acres, sold Jan 2019 completed July 2019. Derecho wind event June 6-7, 2020 did serious blowdown damage in the Fox Den sale area. There is also a lot of root rot in the area. Damage was more widespread than this area, but this area will be easier to manage given previous analysis. Forest Health team and Danny went with Dave on a site visit, and their recommendation is to get those trees removed ASAP to help reduce risk of spruce beetles getting established in the blowdown area.

The EA didn't include salvage logging, but this fits within a categorical exclusion option for less than 250 acres with minimal road building to address blowdown and burn salvage areas. Looking at if there are planting needs, included in the initial EA.

The CE is out for comment right now.

Chris Ives asked if the possible negative impacts of salvage logging had been reviewed. Dave explained that the full ID Team which works on EAs reviewed the project and that all of their concerns have been addressed. Blowdown areas are where spruce beetles really get established, so it is important to get those out. This focused area was outside of the spring and fen areas on the mesa and topographic features are minimal. All of the initial vegetation management erosion control measures from the timber sale will be followed.

Comments are due by October 15th.

DWRF Tour

Wednesday, November 3rd – Current and future implementation in Lone Pine.

There is a lot of work happening, and we want to follow up on the work as it moves through from planning to work on the ground and afterwards. Danny shared the route map: moving through the Salter Vegetation management area all the way across to Narraguinnep Canyon Lone Pine. The tour will review some sites seen before and to see treatments done through marking, designation by prescription, and still to be cut.

Danny wants us to start aligning expectations for what these projects are going to look like on the ground.

Mike Remke suggested spending more time at a couple stops focused on current and desired conditions. Dave did express that Narraguinnep stop is along the way. Mike wants us to really focus on a specific tangible objective. Bill wants to see the difference between areas with/without a diameter cap. One stop has a past treatment that included a diameter cap that we'll get to see, but that was cut in the 1990s. Duncan expressed that maybe there are two separate tours, but Danny will see if they can drill a little more into the objectives for each stop with Dave and Mike.

Probably meet at Dolores Fire Station at 9AM and caravan and finish around 3:30 and have a happy hour at Dolores River Brewery. Eric suggested developing a snow contingency plan/map.

Becca will look into options for closing out at the brewery.

Strategies for building and maintaining community support for partner efforts

Danny wants to get the outreach committee back together.

Notes submitted by Becca Samulski, 10-6-21

Reviewed by Danny Margoles