

Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest (DWRF) Collaborative
Stakeholders Meeting
December 8, 2021
dwrfcollaborative.org
5 pages

This Meeting was conducted via Zoom. Present were:

Steve Garchar (Dolores County Commission); Derek Padilla, Jason Lawhon, Emma Reinenmann, and Beth Anderson (San Juan National Forest); David Sitton (Aspen Wall Wood); Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service); James Dietrich and Rachel Medina (Montezuma County); Rich Landreth (City of Cortez); Eric Janes (Retired Hydrologist); Molly Pitts (Colorado Industry Timber Association); Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance); Chris Garner (Mancos Conservation District); Ken Curtis (Dolores Water Conservancy District); Phil Ayers (Wildfire Adapted Partnership Board and Southwest Colorado Cycling Association); Patt Dorsey (National Wild Turkey Federation and RMRI); Helen Katich (Senator Hickenlooper's office); Danny Margoles (DWRF Coordinator).

Introductions, operating principles, agenda

Updates

CFLRP update (Danny): all should have received an email invitation from Samuel Wallace from Peak Facilitation reaching out to have an initial conversation about what the governance structure can look like, what CFLRP will look like for this area. All are encouraged to participate in first meeting (doesn't obligate participation in every governance discussion).

- Christopher Garner has not received this
- Heather Bergman is the other contact from Peak Facilitation
- CFLRP is not a done deal yet! Pending funding allocation
- Motorized community participation? Jason will reach out to someone in the motorized community per Molly's request, but it is likely they were already contacted. Should be publicly available, may put something in the Journal, please reach out to anyone who may be interested
 - Molly would like to make sure there's a distinction between CFLRP and RMRI

RMRI update (Jason Lawhon):

- Stakeholder and leadership team meeting happened (Colorado-wide)- Mark Finney and Sarah McCaffrey presented at the meeting to discuss fuels treatment effectiveness and social impacts. Presentations will likely be shared publicly soon
- Will have upcoming meetings to discuss accomplishments from 2021 and have meetings to look at priority focal areas and what cross-boundary strategies will look like

Salter EA (Derek Padilla): Salter EA signed, changes were made to resolve some objections

- SWCCA: will evaluate reroutes in another EA which will be completed prior to implementation in Boggy area. Created a larger area of influence that will be discussed with partners to maintain scenic integrity and maintain features that add to mountain biking experience/grooming for snow biking. SWCCA withdrew objection.

- Town of Dolores: will provide timber operators a handout with requirements in town. 2 of the treatment units will be required to use a western transportation route. Dolores withdrew objection.
 - David Sitton has concerns about the town ordinance that will impact all trucking, will be detrimental to hauling logs out of groundhog area. Hours are unusable. Requested to get onto the town council meeting to discuss the ordinance.
 - Derek: the town hasn't adopted the ordinance yet. The Montezuma County Commission put on a demonstration to show the noise impact when everything is working. The noise levels weren't as significant as anticipated. Trustees may incorporate this into their assessment. Our commitment is that whatever they come up with will be passed onto the timber operators
- Did not reach resolution with other objectors, but did add to EA base: committed to using descending order of preference protocol, clarified that $\geq 50\%$ canopy cover will be left in Goshawk habitat
- Derek expressed appreciation for everyone's involvement in the EA process.
- Danny: DWRF would like to move Salter conversation to larger stakeholder group. This project had more collaborative involvement than with Lone Pine, still room for improvement. We should figure out best practices and lessons learned for other projects moving forward

Infrastructure Funding (Jason, Helen): what does this mean for forest health programs?

- Helen: Expecting to know more about how the money will be allocated in the next 1-3 months. Some of the infrastructure money is starting to come through, EPA in Colorado received some money for clean water recently. Not sure how this will look in term of forest health programs. Starting to have lots of calls with people who have "shovel-ready" projects, most of the money will be going through state, so any way to connect to state or way to uplift "shovel-ready" projects is good, now is a good time to start pitching those projects
- Jason: emphasis on cross-boundary WUI. Will likely be phased, early phases will be focused on shovel ready projects in priority firesheds, so we may not be in the initial rounds.

Snowtography update

- DWRF partnering with nature conservancy, western watershed assessment, and USDA Agricultural Research Service put in a beta test site for snow soil moisture monitoring and looking at how forest treatments are influencing snow and soil moisture. Some transects installed ranging from thinned to unthinned areas. They're installed, having some technical headaches, but it's going forward. Nature conservancy put together a handbook that can be found here: <https://azconservation.org/>
- Goal is to be a cost-effective way for groups to measure the effects of landscape and environmental variables (canopy cover, slope, treatment, elevation, etc.). How do all these treatments affect snow/soil moisture and answer some of the questions we have as a collaborative?
- Lots of thank yous to the many people who helped out!
- Preliminary- won't give us all the answers, but will feed into a larger network, others are planning to add additional transects.

- DWCD will be doing ongoing monitoring of snow density
- Cameras will be remotely recording snow depth
- MSI and Fort Lewis will hopefully be processing data (funding?)

Wood Innovation Grant (David, Aspen Wall Wood): they're working on it! David Casey assisting in how to put a grant together. Plan to put in 6-8 ton/hour mills, start by using their own waste, looking into what it would take to ship small diameter timber and dry chips (wouldn't be part of the grant, potential phase 2). Part of the infrastructure for pellet mills is already installed. They already have one, looking to add 2 more, room for 6 total (6 would go through 12-15 ton/hour, more than they generate so they'd have to invest in facilities to log specifically for pellets). David will be reaching out to Danny for letter of support, USFS & county have provided letters of support. Most of their waste is dry, so they don't have to worry about moisture content, but if they accommodate for more they will have to figure out moisture content. Green wood needs to be dried, equipment is expensive to operate and introduces fire hazards. Beetle kill wood wouldn't need to be dried.

Grants (Danny)

- DWRP was awarded \$3,000 through Onward Foundation via heartwood fund
- Submitted operations based grant to City of Cortez
- DWRP applied for Restore Grant (\$430,000) through Fish and Wildlife Foundation – partners are CO state forest, MSI, Mancos Conservation District. Goal is to support wildlife habitat and reduce wildfire risk. Proposal is to work on 2 private parcels that are important elk and mule deer habitat. Ponderosa pine thinning and hand thinning of oak. Pending selection. 400 acres would be thinned.

DWRP coordinating committee structure and membership (Danny): current membership maybe doesn't represent all the interests related to the forest. Missing: recreation, Montezuma County, private lands (home mitigation), ranching community. Danny has been talking to James Dietrich (Montezuma Co.), Dani Gregory (SWCCA), Alex (Wildlife Adaptive Partnership) about joining

Natural Resource Updates from Montezuma and Dolores Counties

James Dietrich (Montezuma County):

- 3 primary industries: (O&G, agriculture, tourism). All 3 have taken a hit, tourism is staying strongest of the 3. 30% decline in O&G, 50% of the county tax base is in O&G, how to backfill? How to transition and prepare for future? Agriculture is taking a big hit from the weather, helpless to change weather so working within the parameters we can control (conserving water). Tourism is something that we can affect, Mesa Verde and outdoor recreation (motorized and non-motorized trails), evaluating opportunities for trails expansions (Phil's, aqueduct). Not advocating for new motorized trails, just keeping motorized access that we have. Trying to construct trail to connect Cortez and Mancos. Looking to create route from Montezuma County to Moab (gravel biking on county roads, motorized)
- Supportive of pellet mill operations, will write David a letter of support. Ironwood has a large & growing pile of chips, fire danger

- Economic development team to recruit new businesses and grow existing businesses. Want to establish business to create manufactured homes. Navajo Nation has a need for 30-40,000 new homes. Integrating forest products would be ideal
- Making final edits to Community Wildfire Protection Plan, being circulated for review
- 30x30 conceptual project has created a lot of concern, lots of unknowns, conflicting information. What is acceptable? Farmland, conservation easements? What level of management can we have on remaining public lands? Is a hands off approach even viable?
 - USFS position is that USFS management of lands contributes to 30x30, but it's not well defined yet what will meet standards

Steve Garchar (Dolores County):

- Working on mountain bike trail from old tri state power line crossing of Dolores River up to the overlook
- San Miguel and Dolores County working on conservation area on lower Dolores River
- Irrigators saw less than 10% of their water this year. Dryland farming is doing well (normal to up to twice normal output)
- Working on application for 700 acre solar farm
- Ironwood is currently virtually shut down. Some activity, hauling off chips. They will start up again in spring, need to work through some of the issues (how they're piling chips, concerned neighbors).

Lone Pine implementation tour debrief

- Takeaways?
 - Jimbo: Helpful being on the ground to see what's happening and talk with partners
 - Phil Ayers (WAP/SWCCA): happy to see they were going for trees that already have a defect. Interesting that mills can't even handle trees over 24"
 - James Dietrich: interesting to see culling process. How to better use slash? Challenging.
 - Steve: seeing how much better the forest looks thinned out and see how the disturbance looks on the ground was informative
- Tried to look how pre- and post-treatment stands can be seen through DWRF desired conditions. How did this look? Was the document digestible?
 - Jimbo: Looking at what's left on the forest floor in terms of nutrients, and also wildlife. Some concern that the smaller dead standings can be left on the landscape, what does this mean from a fuels point of view?
 - Derek: Sometimes we have to go back again and retreat small DBH trees based on receipts from timber harvesting companies. RMRI and CFLRP can help address non-commercial aspects of need. Hopefully will have reduced basal area enough that the effects will be different than having done nothing at all. Not ideal, but lots of progress towards forest health and fire mitigation goals
 - Danny: This was a big discussion item. Even if the POL wasn't captured in a contract, how do you keep moving the stand towards the desired conditions? Other funding opportunities. Implementation isn't just a one-and-done, strategy is important
 - Phil: went pretty quick, but he didn't see any major disconnects or oversights

- Danny: let me know if there are any improvements to be made to the desired conditions document
- Danny: does anyone have any other tours in mind?
 - Jimbo: in-town tour of wood product facilities. Molly will help facilitate. Aspen Wall Wood is happy to participate.

DNR funding discussion: Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) has a few different funding paths, including conservation corps, state wildlife inmate fire teams, landscape-scale fuels reduction. This is a one time funding managed through DNR in partnership with state forest service and some other people. Focused on reducing wildfire risks to prevent damage to homes and infrastructure, but landscape-scale fuels reduction funds are not meant for defensible space. Meant to be collaborative. Have identified focal areas, RMRI geography is within this area. They are excited about prescribed fire. How do we use our partners to implement work? A good opportunity for off-forest work. Challenge for funding is on private, state, tribal lands. How do we make cross boundary efforts?

Derek: Wood for Life pilot project provided 300 chords of wood to Chinle Chapter House, National Forest Foundation was instrumental in helping. We removed a breakwater out of McPhee Reservoir with Ken's help.

Notes: Emma Reinenmann (thank you!)

Notes review: Danny Margoles