



DWC Stakeholder Meeting Wednesday, July 3, 2024, 1:30-3:30pm MTG NOTES

In person: Dolores Water Conservancy District – 60 Cactus St., Cortez, CO 81321 AND Virtual:

1:30 Intros: Bruce Short (Short Forestry), Megan Maxwell (IFA and CTIA), Duncan Rose (TU), Jim Spratlen (MOCO Emer Svcs), Emma Reinmann (SJNF), Kyle Personnet (SJNF), Celeste Moore (WAP), Danny Margoles (MCD), Patt Dorsey (NWTF, RMRI), James Dietrich (MOCO), Tom Rice (SJNF), Derek Padilla (BLM), Steve Garchar (DOCO), Sheryl Gunn (SJNF), Logan Davis (COFPS), Doug Muscannel (Muscannel Millworks), Ken Curtis (DWCD), Nina Williams (DWC), Tara Harris, (MCD), Justin Pitts (MCD)

1:40-1:45 Approve/amend agenda

1:45-2:05 CWCB Wildfire Ready Action Plan (WRAP) Grant Application status update and feedback on project scope and RFP submission

Please see this [webmap](#) of possible outline of the planning area for the WRAP project proposal. Chris Sturm has suggested sending an RFP out to consultants currently working on these projects for preliminary bid estimates for the grant proposal.

LOR Foundation has approved a \$30K cash match for this project, pending CWCB grant approval.

Colorado Water Conservation Board has a program to help watershed groups assess things they can do before a fire happens to reduce post-fire risk. The collaborative has done some work but not to the degree of this program.

Stakeholder engagement, community outreach, data collection, where are the gaps, post-fire hazard analysis... looks at the hydrologic response, FHZ, and other hazards that we identify in our watershed. We get to define the scope of work on how large this analysis is.

Planning and Mitigation activities: watershed and stream restoration, infrastructure upgrades, warning systems, water supply systems, etc.

The Dolores Watershed is the priority. Mancos is doing their own because it has to be centered around a single watershed. How many HUC12 units are in our watershed - 35-36. It's a pretty big area. Chris suggested releasing an RFP to get bids so that we have an accurate idea of what the budget would be.

Northern Water's project is around the \$300,000 range

Does the collaborative like the idea of sending out an RFP? Is the geographic scope you want this to include?

RFP is a great idea to have an idea of costs and if we need to refine prioritization

Julie's RFP was lengthy and specific. Is there anyone who would work with Nina on adapting that RFP for Dolores? Ken will help. Duncan volunteered to review.

Grant application needs to be in before Sept. 30. Would like to get the RFP out in the next few weeks.

Once we talk about the RFP, there will be a lot of focus on outreach to Dolores and Montezuma counties.

Who would like to serve on the TA Team for this project?

- City of Cortez may step up for that

2:05-2:50 Dolores Ranger District FY 25 Work Plan - Presentation from Nick Mustoe

Postponed - Nick was called out on a fire

2:50-3:05 Mixed Conifer Rx Fire and Dozer Line NEPAs- Pre-Scoping Discussions Collect any new input or thoughts from stakeholders.

The notes from our discussion last month can be found [here](#).

Duncan presented his 4 questions for the group that are included in the notes document. Mixed conifer forests are in the heart of the TU interest areas..

- Do we have problems that need to be addressed on this scale?
- Mitigation of 300,000 acres is a huge investment. Is there a proponent for cost-effectiveness? Are we determining which treatment is most cost-effective? Are we open to not treating large areas due to costs?
- What is the relationship between landscape-scale fire mitigation and energy-water balance over time?
- Are there mitigation treatments that are truly cost-effective to protect streams and other high-value resources?

These questions will be helpful for the USFS to focus their NEPA development and communication. When did Mixed-Con come up? Pat Seekins brought it up a few years ago (2020), but it got tabled. Now it's back on the table. NEPA processes are not moving as quickly as usual. The supervisory NEPA person retired, so there is low capacity at the moment.

With the difficulties with timing and capacity to burn PP, why are we expanding? We had some opportunities when burning in Ponderosa to burn into mixed-con. Mancos residents were also concerned about fire at the top of the watershed.

Is there a perception that the lack of letting fires burn in this region has created a similar situation to PP? We are seeing an increase in insects and diseases. Even though the burn interval is long, we are not getting even small burns to create natural disturbance and control insects/diseases.

Having NEPA in place goes a long way to be able to manage fire.

Pat and Caleb are creating a map of the areas where they see this being more effective in the long term.

Bruce - Some of this is coming off mid-elevation upper-elevation Mosca (?) Burn that went on for several months and significantly reduced fuels. Similar to upper Mancos, Stoner, and Taylor Mesa. Stand-replacing fire could have a significant impact on the fisheries.

3:05-3:15 Forest-Water Working Group Update

The Forest-Water Working Group has met twice now and we are continuing to define specific objectives and action steps in two areas: Knowledge Building and Modeling.

Here is our draft statement of interest/inquiry: *Understanding how water availability and timing are changing and being changed by conditions and forest treatments. There is an interest in further understanding how changes in forest structure are impacting the timing and availability of surface water, this includes understanding ET, soil moisture, snowpack, and energy balance shifts. In addition, there is interest in understanding how changes in forest structure impact forest resiliency as it pertains to soil moisture, forest health, soil health, and how forest system functions impact fuels and wildfire.*

Here are some relevant papers for folks wanting to dig into this topic:

<https://academic.oup.com/jof/article/118/2/172/5734757>

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/water/articles/10.3389/frwa.2024.1374961/full> -

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-03735-6>

3:15-3:30 Updates and Field Trips

- July 12/13 Bark Beetle Workshop and Field Tour
 - Will send out a more detailed schedule. Meeting at the public lands office to carpool.
- Burro Fire; Mixed Con areas Field Trip - look at dates in Aug/Sep
 - August 2nd, Friday, full-day field trip - No objections/conflicts from anyone present
- DWC Program Assistant - position is still open, applications being received

Mancos Splash - Aug 3, 2024 - Would DWC like to participate in any way? Nina will try to find the water table.

BioChar - Should DWC be more involved?

- The best we could do is send a letter saying the activity could use biomass from forest management activities. Not sure it will do much, but it wouldn't hurt to bring up the need for the activity. Stay out of the personal/community aspects of it.
- Reservations about the person in charge but supports the need for this service.
- Maybe a statement from the USFS about it as an alternative to pile burning? USFS would have to be extremely cautious about getting involved in any way. Would be best coming from DWC.
- Nina will attend the public meeting and make a statement

MCD Updates

- New round for COSWAP was applied for and awarded. The scope is similar to the original COSWAP, but with a larger priority area, including the 184 corridor and Boggy Draw area. Also added prescribed fire through the Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) and a small pilot biomass hauling for compost or mulch to local farm, aka "forest to farm"
- MCD will be the fiscal agent for the La Plata County for a COSWAP application
- TRES is a good way to get red-carded
- Pilot biomass hauling program in new COSWAP grant. It would be great if we could find an on-farm location to start composting on a larger scale.

BLM - Working on a decision of NEPA project in the Aqueduct area - landowners have requested more treatment for that area. Utilizing Durango programmatic EA for the prescribed fire component. BLM has the authority to use NEPA that has already been created as long as it applies to this area. 50-60 acres that adjoins private lands.

Tom Rice - Working on a CE to clear an area at the main McPhee boat ramp, To have something shovel ready for a new inspection and decontamination station if they get the funds. Emma - if you want on the scoping list contact Emma. She will also pass it along to Nina.

Maxwell - Focusing on old growth rule. Taking a deep dive into that NEPA. Also works for Intermountain Forest Association. CTIA pays dues to IFA. Planning an IFA member trip for September. Hoping to meet collaborative members in person. (second or first week of September).

Patt Dorsey - Turkey hens are out and about this time of year. For anyone in the woods, if you notice a brood, let

me know how many hens and how many chicks.

3:30 Next steps and adjourn PARKING LOT (Future agenda items)