

Spruce-fir Conversation
Pagosa Springs
District Office
01 April 2015

Attending: Aaron Kimple, Marcie Bidwell, Anthony Culpepper, Jimbo Buickerood, Kevin Khung, Tim Leishman, Matt Ford, JR Ford, Bill Trimarco, Bev Warburton, Renita Freeman, Nicole DeMarco, Greg Wells

Intro by AK

Kevin – chasing spruce from an economic standpoint his primary leg of the mgmt. triangle; social is a factor due to aesthetics; resource leg is minimal compared to mixed con and PIPO.

- Touched on the Farm Bill authority for mgmt. of spruce; driven by the language over collaboration

AK – are we addressing the community concerns and needs

Bev – how much is in Wilderness. – Most of our SF is in Wilderness and cannot be touched

- Roadless is off limits, authorized by the Gov. but too tricky to deal with
- Suitable base/ tentatively suitable are the areas looked at for entry

Concerns for the GMUG – Matt, focus on surface fire regime for restoration conversation, blurring of objectives with SF, the mill in Montrose is the unstated driving factor, reluctance to speak to the economic factor of “management”, most operation is salvaging timber not true restoration, length of time is very lengthy to recover, compounded by fire, SF is not altered in comparison to Mix Con, stand scale events are the norm. GMUG perhaps off track. Full forest EIS with mgmt. response. GMUG lesson is to focus on the NEPA issues and to not focus forest wide. Place based projects are better than forest wide, meaningfully broad is still needed.

Kevin – step back and talk about fire, we need to acknowledge that fire is not simple, perfect conditions need to line up, West Fork was the perfect “storm”, yet fire should not be seen as the leader, plays to emotions. The science is still evolving on the relation between SF, beetle, and fire

Matt – Climate is the major driving factor of fire, not just the OTG conditions

AK – aesthetic aspect and public perception, does the visual aspect change with management, is it positive, what is short, meso, and long term.

Jimbo – Timber targets, Kevin – 24000ccf, all species POTR, PIPO, PSEM, ABCO dom. Headwaters responsible for 12000 currently, pre JR 8000, most from public sale fuel wood, JR shifted operation forest wide to the east from aspen in Dolores, current is stable at 14-15k, credit is given when material is sold, can be claimed even if not cut

Jimbo – Do we have a recent number on mortality of spruce on the WC Pass? Tim – 85-90% prob higher, most canopy is CB fir, merchantable timber >8in dbh,

Tim – Veg crew for the summer, ground trothing the remote sensing data from spring/winter, stand exam of polygons from the RS data. SF focus this year and perhaps work down slope.

Kevin – invited the group to join crew

Matt – suitability, needs roads, 26000 ac of SF of suitable type outside of Roadless, Wolf Creek, Mosca, Falls Creek (tentatively suitable), Tent suitable is analogous to Roadless but could have road, more related to reforestation and long term production, suitable is related to the repeatability of entry for harvest, middle ground is based on other mgmt. goals

JR – How do you break down the 26k suitable acres? Kevin – that acreage dwindles. We don't really know what the actual acreage would be.

AK – What is coming up under the dead SF?

Matt – Regen, TandE concerns with Lynx, prey needs dense horz cover, goal to maintain. Units can be laid out to manage for cover fav to lynx. Treatments need to be designed to mitigate for lynx. Kevin, CE 200 acre, concern with regen at WC, small landscape buffered by Wilderness and Roadless, what else is happening on the landscape, counter is this area might be the most productive for regen

Jimbo – appreciates of looking at context, mentions Siebold's work on salvage and regen, publics need to see something happening

AK - Do we meet eco initiatives for mgmt.?

Kevin – convo with Montrose, they need 4-6k ccf to make it eco feasible for. A few small operators closer than Montrose shorter haul to operators in SL Valley. Volume per acre is a big factor as well. Quality of product or end product. Matt, WC perhaps has the best SD volume per acre.

JR – you want to increase value to a major player comes to the area, they need volume, current acreage is low

Matt – shelf life of the SD trees, this is the only time you will get a product off this land for 100+ years.

JR – “public” would really like a round number of acres suitable, and have mgmt. plan for the acres that are available, worried that if we don't come up with a plan R2 or DC will have a plan.

Kevin – has a forest plan but what level of detail do we need for our scope
Jimbo – we need to be straight forward with how we approach this acreage, be explicit with economic motives
JR – if plan in place then higher powers are not forcing towards a harvest and product that we might not want
Kevin – the Pagosa RD does not have enough SF to drive an industry, least here most over in the Dolores, but the Pagosa has the most dead stand. Is there a need to take this to the full forest, bigger? Different issues in this RD vs Dolores and very different public in Dolores vs Pagosa
Matt – we know why we do restoration at lower elevations but where is that distinction between restoration and ecological forestry, long term for eco forestry is production on the landscape, in SF we what extraction, we want to emulate nat processes, what we leave on the ground and how units are designed. Not just stand but site-specific approach. Mgmt. keeps up with current science, adaptive. We need to get o the same page of long-term goal of SF.

Maps with Matt

*Correction 26000 total, 10k suitable, and 16k tentatively suitable

The group should consider other timber besides SF in the consideration of what to harvest, Aspen, Doug, etc. or non-timber resources.

The public dose not realize how much Wilderness we have on the forest and how much of the forest is untreatable. They also do not understand how steep the terrain is.

Marcie – we could treat all of these areas and only a few people would notice, WC is the only visible area.

Kevin – we do not have a lot of utilities running through our SF and dead SF stands so no commitment on utility operators to maintain ROW.

JR – Is cutting in a green SF forest out of the question?

Next Steps

What other resource areas does the group want to hear about?

- Infrastructure – Matt F, things that are or mgmt. of is impacted by what they are next to.
- Kevin – HVRA, two meetings, only HV in SF is Wolf Creek Ski Area, some res values but not many
- AK – access issues, what is value
- AK – access issues, what and how do we get into a sale, affordable, impacts
- Kevin – HV asset, water! Mid reaches of water supply. Wetlands and riparian areas, more than human. Erosion.

- How do we treat right to mitigate impacts to water?
- JR – Slash removal; take more slash via euro model. Tim, YUM, spec in contract but you need to leave some for nutrient base, but we don't need to leave that much, hauling is a major concern for this biomass
- Marcie – public wants to see some thing done but they do not like the aesthetic of a timber sale. JR – public does see that non protected forest is multi use and might expect some timbering impact
- Marcie – more on regen on SJNF, are we doing the adaptive mgmt. piece correct, what research is out there?

AK – What does this effort look like going forth?

Kevin – look at what tools we have available, Farm Bill, CADx, CE, EA, EIS, perhaps grab and area and determine what the right assessment tool for that might be

Matt F – prioritization of polys, what as a group is most important to look at
Kevin – understanding the issues

Bill – WC is important due to its public view and attention

Bev – timeframe, informing the public of the real timeframe

Jimbo – looking at the SF WUI

Matt F- questions and answers, issues around fire, vs. snap judgments

AK – timeframe: Kevin – we need to treat at WC and we have a CE for 200 ac, have the authority done for the remainder acreage in the 2015/16 winter, need to get a sale. Mosca we don't have the pressure. Look at the WC landscape first. Good place to tackle first and test.

Logistical challenges, Matt returns to the GMUG, the Pagosa is missing a forester and GIS person, and hydrologist is not here so not accessible

Kevin – we do not truly represent the public, so how to we take our work to the broader audience.

- Who do we need at the table
Experts?? Fred Ellis, Tony Chang, a tool context person (need to dig into Farm Bill), conversation on WUI

Priorities

1 – Wolf Creek

2 – WUI Spruce, need to truth Mill Creek

3 – Mosca

Next meeting with Tony on 22 May.

Who else needs to be at these meeting?

CPW, CDOT