Results from the Upper San Juan Mixed Conifer Working Group Survey

A compilation of 19 replies (numbers are averaged):

1. In thinking about the considerations for where forest restoration work should be done, please rank your support for each item. (Items were ranked on a scale of 1-10 with a 1 being highly supportive and 10 being least supportive.)

2.7 In already roaded areas
2.4 In the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)
4.7 In areas that are more "wild" (the backcountry, Wilderness, etc.) *(note: some treatment options such as commercial logging would not be available)*
2.5 In areas that are the most changed from historical ecological conditions
3.2 In areas that need compatible treatments to improve wildlife habitat
2.3 In areas where work is also being done on adjacent properties – either other Public Lands (e.g., State Lands) or Private Lands
2.0 In areas with the highest risk of wildfires that might damage watersheds or private property

1a. Are there other considerations about where to work that you would like to add to this list?

Watersheds, yes – private property, not necessarily. The public-at-large should NOT be responsible to foot the bill for other Publics that choose to build in wildfire hazard areas. Rather, legislation like California's should be sought.

Where there is developing forest insect and disease problems, especially near private lands.

Wherever deemed necessary by the forest service.

I would separate watershed areas from private property (your last in the list). Then I would put watersheds near the top of the list and private property at the bottom, as I did for WUI.

Distance to Markets.

In areas where we have known understanding/acceptance/support from affected publics. Also, in areas containing municipal water sources and associated critical water distribution systems.

In areas most vulnerable to climate change: SW facing slopes, the highest & lowest elevations, areas without aspen understory

I don't believe it's entirely true that logging would not be available in the Wilderness. While mechanized equipment couldn't be used without special authorization, I don't believe non-mechanized methods such as horse logging and crosscut saws are specifically precluded by the 1964 Wilderness Act. While perhaps not practical, treatment in Wilderness could be possible even with commercial methods (currently being done in areas such as Idaho) – especially if it was beneficial to Wilderness. Also, mechanized equipment could be used in "backcountry" that is non-Wilderness, but would likely have to be done in non-traditional ways (fewer roads, more rehabilitation work after treatment, etc.) to maintain natural qualities – all within federal regulations and forest Land Management Plan standards and guidelines. We need to figure out how to treat vegetation in these areas in non-traditional ways in order to maintain desired conditions in the future.

Ponderosa pine should be the highest priority vegetation type.

Where there is the most chance for sustainable forests.

2. The following is a list of many of the <u>parameters</u> that are taken into consideration when selecting forest restoration projects. (Items were ranked on a scale of 1-10 with a 1 being highly supportive and 10 being least supportive.)

2.3 Restore ecosystems to more natural conditions
3.2 Improve wildlife habitat
3.6 Protect critical and/or sensitive floral and vegetation communities
3.7 Protect other ecological values. Please list:
- Old growth
- Control of invasive plants/noxious weeds
- Reduce wildfire risk in areas prone to mass movement or highly erosive soils and fall in proximity to transportation routes & municipal water sources
- Old growth and old Douglas fir
- Wilderness, backcountry
- Large trees
- Open pastures
- T & E species

2.3 Reduce the potential for insect or disease epidemics
2.5 Reduce wildfire risk from dead or dying trees
1.8 Protect urban water supplies and distribution systems
3.3 Work closely with adjacent private landowners
- This could mean different things to different people - confusing

3.1 Increase local employment via forest product utilization
4.2 Sustain recreation opportunities
4.1 Protect other human/community values. Please list:
- Infrastructure, cultural resources
- Homes and subdivisions
- Maintain economically viable and socially accepted forest/wood product and service industries
- Trails access
- Archeological sites

2.7 Increase opportunities for medium-size wildfire to occur safely
4.1 Carry out projects where there is a lot of public support
- And if there isn't?

3.0 Strive for the best cost ratio *(meaning that the highest number of acres can be treated in relation to available dollars)*
3.1 Focus on the safest areas to protect fire fighting personnel and communities
4.6 Work on projects that are in key view corridors for tourism and aesthetic purposes

2a. Are **there other <u>parameters</u> you would like to add to this list?**

Provide opportunities for the production and utilization of forest products to help foster and sustain a needed local forest products industry.

Consider the potential for collaborative watershed/landscape scale projects, or smaller ones, involving multiple land ownerships.

Look for and utilize potential grant and other funding assistance for proposed forest restoration projects (i.e., Stevens/Allard Funds, State Fire Assistance Grants, Colorado Community Forest Restoration Grants, etc.).

Forest types and site-specific conditions increase the likelihood of success; project area can be demonstrated to be significantly outside of HRV.

Timing for smoke in the case of prescribed burns – air quality for breathing and because it will upset people involved in tourism.

Recreation areas (such as trails) closest to WUI

Need sawmills

In areas where we can meet multiple objectives (fuels reduction in WUI, plus protect domestic water sources, plus…). Also in areas where multiple treatment options are possible (e.g., mechanical, plus Rx burn, plus personal-use permitting)

Projects that meet or move toward the vision statements; projects that improve resistance or resiliency to climate change; projects that increase or maintain landscape diversity in terms of species composition and age class as defined in the vision statements

Access for treatment will likely become a big issue later in the process. While some sort of access is necessary for treatment, it does not have to come in the form of building new, permanent roads in currently un-roaded or low road areas – that access for treatment could come through methods that are sensitive to desired post-treatment conditions such as temporary roads that are removed when work is completed, and use of non-motorized equipment in the most sensitive areas.

Where you can restart local industry or build new.

If the goal is a sustainable forest, then factors that lead to it are the most important. If the forest is sustainable, the other parameters will follow.

3. Do you have any ideas, issues, opportunities or concerns that you would like to share?

Above all, any activity in the forest needs to be evaluated in terms of its ability to sustain a healthy forest for future generations. We should proactively manage the forest to lessen the chances of catastrophic fire and epidemic tree mortality (beetles). JR's project seems to be the best option since it avoids the smoke issue altogether and is independent of the elusive weather conditions that are needed for controlled burns. JR's project also seems to be more cost effective than traditional thinning followed by controlled burns. Rather than allowing the potential energy that's stored in the biomass to go up in smoke, a biomass plant could convert this energy into a clean energy resource for the community.

As the Echo Canyon Ranch Firewise Ambassador, I recommend having a CD that can be given to residents, particularly seasonal second home vacation owners. The CD, professionally created, can dramatize more effectively examples of local area fires in Bayfield and Durango (Missionary Ridge). Present the overdue wildfire conditions and the ancillary benefits to healthy trees through mitigation.

The forest service needs to do more to transfer the responsibility of protecting homes and subdivisions to the local governments and to federal disaster relief. The forest service needs to take care of forests, not the people who choose to move into the forests and build homes. If local governments must face responsibility, they might make appropriate changes to their land use codes.

Compared to other parts of the state, I feel that most residents and landowners in the Pagosa Springs/Archuleta County area are at least somewhat knowledgeable about forests, wildfire and prescribed fire, and natural resources. Public opinion/perception in regard to management of the mixed conifer forest and other forest types may not be as negative as in other parts of the state/nation, and although I know there are exceptions, there probably is not the resistance to the idea of implementing resource management treatments that is often experienced in other areas.

When talking to people about wildfire hazard mitigation and CWPPs, an explanation about forest ecology, climate change, and the natural role of fire in the environment in addition to fuels reduction, defensible space, and home fire has proven beneficial. I think this probably holds true with mixed conifer management and appears to be a tact that is being readily used, so this is a good strategy.

It appears that the working group may be confusing a couple of wildfire concepts. Fire risk and fire hazard are two very different terms. For example, dead and dying trees do not affect fire risk, they affect hazard. Fire risk is difficult if not impossible to control.

Fire size is different than fire severity. Typically, managers strive to affect fire severity in different forest types. For example, ponderosa pine and xeric mixed-conifer would historically experience mostly low severity ground fires. Whereas, mesic mixed-conifer and spruce-fir would have experienced a distribution of fire severities from ground fire to crown fire (complete stand mortality). It is difficult to control fire size with fuel or restoration treatments; typically, size is controlled more by weather conditions at the time of the fire.

We cannot typically take any action to avoid fires like Missionary Ridge and Wallow (other than fire restrictions and maintenance of powerlines). These fire phenomena are largely driven by drought index and annual weather not fuels treatments. We can take actions that will reduce the likelihood of high fire severity in forest types where it was rare. Much of the Wallow Fire behaved as it should have normally, it's uncharacteristic in ponderosa pine forest types which were only a portion of the total fire area. See report on fires severity in 2011 fires here: http://bit.ly/wildearthreports. It will be difficult to control the size of fires in the future under most climate change scenarios, especially if windy conditions continue to increase.

Hire a local marketing P.R. firm to coordinate getting the message out (with the correct spin on it) to the public (why we need to do this), and to build a protocol for how the public is kept informed, especially of present burn activity. Aim for a huge public outreach at all levels and into all corners of the communities. This is not something to leave to the government agencies – it is worth budgeting for.

Research to find profitable commercial uses of timber that could be combined in restoration activities.

Invite public that has experienced, first-hand, the effects of large-scale wildfire or bark beetle epidemics, to share the challenges they faced in or around their communities; and what words of wisdom they can offer re: being proactive.

Models have been developed to predict how vegetation in the future might change under different climate change scenarios. These predictions could be overlayed on existing mixed conifer stands to get an idea of how vegetation is predicted to change. Projects could be prioritized based on areas most vulnerable to change. Projects could be designed to manage for drought tolerance and bug tolerance. Projects should also consider how they affect the carbon balance; i.e., are they increasing sequesteration, decreasing or carbon neutral and for how long?

The term "natural" is debatable today. The MC group should recognize this and attempt to determine what natural conditions might be. We should be conservative in our projections of natural conditions, e.g. not reduce tree density to the lowest estimates from scientists today, which has been a problem in other communities.

I would like to see us emphasize small mills in local communities and explore ways to seek agency ability to provide an incubator environment for re-starting small to medium local mills. Example: Colorado Plateau Pulpwood Sale Contract (http://archive.gao.gov/f0302/096690.pdf).

Firewood for public use should be available.

Fire and other reforestation efforts should be as natural as possible. They found the cover put down after the Missionary Ridge fire was too deep. Now they're doing mushroom implanting to create a better forest vegetation. A question is: Are the mushrooms first or is the environment first? I have just had my first season of mushroom production from throwing out leftover pieces. It actually works, but not all mushrooms grow in the same micro-locations. So, the environment is important but it needs to be appropriate for what you want to grow. Covering bare ground is important here, and sun

protection is also important along with all the other needs. The forest is adaptable – we need to be too.

More imagination – let's fund some projects that are new and creative as well as fine-tuning those from the past.

Discuss how we can identify and reduce obstacles to the use of prescribed burns on private land.

4. Please give feedback about the quality of the information and presentation tonight. How could it be improved?

Excellent job x 4

Outstanding! Power Point very helpful

Very good presentation – needs to be shorter to be better at reaching the public – we were the choir

The introductory speaker's message could have been summarized in much less time. I found them vague and left me not knowing much. Steve's was good, informative and engaging. Allow more time for discussion by cutting back the introductory stuff.

The Power Point was very good and Steve did a good job presenting it. Since I'm a forester it made sense, but I'm curious what someone with a limited awareness of forest management, forest ecology, wildfire, etc. would get out of it. I'd like to believe they would learn a great deal, but this would be interesting to find out. In some ways, I felt we were pretty much preaching to the choir.

Our polygon maps were not uniform in legend/design; need more time to finish. And, I forgot to mention availability of insect and disease aerial survey maps, both for single and multiple years.
I think the program is good. The topic is very complex, with lots of information to get out to the public, and this version of things is good. I would think the program will get even better as we progress.

CD/Flash drive of slide show available for distribution and public use.

Length of time – presentations in public meetings should not be longer than 30 min. with another 30 min. for Q&A.

5. Are there other stakeholder groups who you think would be interested in learning more about the Mixed Conifer Working Group? Please recommend name and contact information.

Wildfire Council of SW Colorado, Pam Wilson, 385-8909, chamisa02@earthlink.net
There will be a new Archuleta County coordinator appointed in the near future who would be another good contact.

San Juan Tree Farmers chapter of Colorado State Tree Farm Committee, Marilyn Bunch, 731-0951, raspberryrosey@aol.com and also Ron Chacey, 264-6275, rchacey@centurytel.net

Colorado Timber Industry Assoc., P.O. Box 32, Delta, CO 81416, 275-5494, ctia@montrose.net

Local forestry and natural resource consultants and service providers (see attached CSFS Durango District lists)

Forest Guild in Santa Fe, in particular Zander Evans, Research Director, zander@forestguild.org or http://www.forestguild.org/

Rich Lindblad, C.D.C. for Archuleta County

Outfitters – perhaps reach them through state association or licensing board or get a list from the Ranger District

Back Country Horsemen and other horse user groups

The Chama Peak Landowner Alliance, of which Lesli Allison/Banded Peak Ranch is a rep.

It would be great to see representation from a sportsmen's/women's group such as Rocky Mountain Elk foundation (Natalie Woodruff), Trout Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, or similar group.

Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation

SJOC, Audubon, SJBCH, convene Roundtable trail users via Ivo Brieven at PATC

Monique DiGiorgio, Rep., Chama Peak Landowner Alliance 406-451-0051