

**Mixed Conifer Working Group
Meeting 4, November 19, 2010
Pagosa Community Center
Meeting Notes**

This fourth meeting of the Mixed Conifer Working Group focused on developing a mission/purpose statement, increasing understanding of insects, diseases, and fire regimes, and brainstorming on the concept of a resilient mixed conifer forest.

Attendees: Beverly Warburton, John Taylor, Ryan Bidwell, J. R. Ford, Larry Lynch, Bob Fry, Sam Burns, Thurman Wilson, Marsha Porter-Norton, Kevin Khung, Sara Brinton, and Steve Hartvigsen.

The meeting started with a quick review of the group's history and an update on outreach to potential new participants. Chuck Maguire is leaving the Sun so won't be participating. The Colorado State Forest Service will try to participate as time allows. Adrien Archuleta from CDOW will join the group in December or January. Ryan Borchers agreed to attend a meeting (maybe January) to discuss the Hinsdale County CWPP. The Board of County Commissioners will try to send a representative. Bev Compton isn't doing this kind of work now so she won't be participating. Bryan Bird (Wild Earth Guardians) is interested in interacting more with the group. Marcie Bidwell (Mountain Studies Institute) will try to participate.

The group composition seems to be good for giving local advice. We need other players involved at the San Juan National Forest or southwest Colorado level to help with political support, funding help, etc. but probably won't get those people to our meetings very often. We need to maintain a large email tree and occasionally go to other groups' meetings and also talk one-on-one to people. We should add the Congressional staffers to our email tree.

A presentation by Dave Dallison and Craig Goodell on the modeling work they are doing for the Forest Lakes CWPP was suggested as a potential new meeting topic.

The mission statement that Thurman had drafted was discussed and revised by the group to the following:

The Upper San Juan Mixed Conifer Workgroup is committed to collaborative approaches to improving the health and long-term resilience of mixed conifer forests and the communities located near them in southwest Colorado. The Workgroup will focus on strengthening understanding, sharing knowledge and lessons learned, developing management approaches, initiating high priority projects, and monitoring results using an adaptive framework.

Note the addition of “Upper San Juan” to include a more “place-based” approach. We didn’t add it to the mission statement, but there was agreement that we should strive to be a model for other aspiring groups (other locales or vegetation types).

We viewed and discussed several maps displaying insect and disease levels on the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests. Steve Hartvigsen also presented some materials and led a discussion on fire regimes.

The group brainstormed ideas on the meaning of resilient mixed conifer forests:

- Diversity of species (tree & wildlife) – mix of size and age classes
- Ability to recover from expected natural disturbance
- Presence of insects and disease (endemic levels)
- Resembles desired condition over long period of time
- Need a baseline (desired condition)
- How to define desired condition – our job
- Mix of natural and human factors – mix across landscape
- Historical perspectives (bring in)
- More natural further away from WUI – as natural as possible in WUI with limits
- Resilient = ecological conditions & community/ies (both are related and desired)
- Maintain connectivity (lack of fragmenting) for: wildlife habitat, other types, migration, natural processes
- Many forces in play
- Impacts of human population
- Resilient to changing climate
- Concept of working forest – industry – minimum amount of this – what is sustainable?
- Meaning varies in WUI, wilderness, and working forest
- Resilience = an overlay of social, economic, ecological

After the meeting, Thurman found the following discussion of resilience on the blog for the proposed US Forest Service 2011 Planning Rule:

“The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure is called “resilience.” For national forest system units (NFS units), which include national forests, grasslands and prairies, resilience means that even in the face of disturbances—such as wildfire, drought, pests and diseases, invasive species, and climate change—plant and animal communities across the landscape can continue to flourish, and intact waters and watersheds can retain ecological functions and processes. It also means that the systems can provide benefits, products and services (including ecosystem services) over time, enabling our neighbor communities to absorb or reduce losses from disturbance and to adapt economies to shifting conditions and needs. Ecological restoration is the process of helping ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or

destroyed to recover to the point that they are resilient and able to adapt to changing environmental conditions and human needs.”

Thurman, Ryan and Steve gave a quick update on the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute’s workshop in Montrose earlier in the week. They learned for ideas and techniques for ecological modeling that could be adapted to our situation. They also learned more about the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. The Uncompahgre Plateau project was one of 10 nationwide to receive funding in 2010, the first year of the program. The San Juan National Forest will explore a proposal for funding under that program in 2011 or 2012.

Marsha shared a handout that she had drafted for a one-year work plan and process steps. Marsha, Kevin, Steve, Sam, Ryan, and Thurman worked on those ideas more in the afternoon.

Next meeting: 12/17/10.