



San Juan Headwaters

FOREST HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership Virtual Meeting Friday, December 18, 2020

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Regular Meeting: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

In attendance: Dana Hayward (MSI), Al Myatt (WAP Board), Matt Ford (Clean Forest Energy/Pagosa Forest Products), Doug Secrist (SJWCD), Mercedes Siegle-Gaither (NRCS/CSFS), Bill Trimarco (WAP), Jerry Archuleta (NRCS), Matt Tuten (SJNF), Herb Grover (Weminuche Audubon, Lower Blanco POA), Jimbo Buickerood (SJCA), Mike Remke (MSI), Emily Swindell (MSI), Keith Bruno (Weminuche Audubon), Roger Jensen (retired FS)

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTES

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome and Introductions

9:10 – 9:45 Updates

- Thank Yous and Appreciations for Kevin Khung!
 - Kevin is one of the core folks that started this group and it's sad to see him go. He's been instrumental in the work of this group. Anyone willing to create more work for themselves for the good of their district is someone we should appreciate.
 - He's been a huge impact in this area, has brought a new way of doing work, and has pushed us forward in doing forest and resource management.
 - Going to miss the office culture he created.
 - Not going to be the same, we'll definitely miss him!
- EOY
 - Complete it!
 - Report and results available by January meeting
- FRWRM (Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation) Grant
 - Submitted by Mercedes and Dana on 12.11.20
 - Not a lot of funding this year, about \$700,000
 - Forest Atlas online mapping tool created with new FAP used
 - Thank you for letters of support!
 - Timeline
 - Pre-award information in February
 - Final Decision April 1
 - ~6 applications turned in to DRO CSFS office
 - Hoping to complete private lands fuel mitigation and ecosystem work done using this grant as EQUIP funding has been unreliable
 - EQUIP could serve as valuable added match if its available
 - Would help to fund work around WUI and other focus areas adjacent to Forest Service land
 - Grant written to treat ~50 ac in Four Mile drainage
 - Timeline
 - Will get pre-award information in February

- Final decision by April 1
 - The grant addresses properties in Merced target area. The application wanted landowner commitment before establishing funding, and Merced is working with landowners to create inventories of WUI properties in her area.
- Relevant partner updates
 - SJNF
 - Working with Bill T. and Ashley D. on a CAFA proposal
 - Scoping for the Turkey Springs project has begun
 - Scoping docs can be accessed via [Forest Service website](#)
 - Comments accepted through Feb 1, 2021
 - SJNF to share link with Pagosa Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA)
 - Anticipating decision analysis in spring and early summer 2021
 - This vegetation management project is a continuation of what's been happening the last 15-20 years
 - CAFA Proposal
 - Same proposal as Stollsteimer Creek Low Income Mitigation Program, 2017, in a different location
 - Lower Blanco/Navajo area where the goal is to protect properties and to enable conditions for managed fire in the backcountry and nearby wilderness area
 - Versions of this proposal have been put out a few times and this proposal aims to serve the entire Navajo/Blanco Watershed with the primary target area being the Lower Blanco Basin. In this area there are a number of homes surrounded by national forest where work is slated or occurring.
 - Lot of things coming together to make this a great proposal
 - Pagosa Fire District retracted their backing
 - Looking to work with San Juan Conservation District for 2021 proposal
 - Funders struggle with proposals without specific landowner commitments, but it's hard to get commitments from property owners for funding that may or may not be secured
 - Goal is to identify the strategic nature of unmitigated areas even if they aren't next to each other because we are filling in mitigated areas
 - Looking for funding through FEMA as well
 - CFLRP
 - This group has gotten a lot of good press in the last year for the great work we've gotten done
 - Forest Service is thinking about how to organize Rio Chama CFLRP
 - Talked with Jack Lewis on Carson National Forest about trying to schedule meetings in January to see how that's going to work – 4 forests working together will not be simple
 - WAP
 - Funding has come through for chipper rebate program across 3

- counties: La Plata, Archuleta, and Montezuma – a popular program
 - Have some funds to spend in La Plata County
 - Paper about FAC WUI grant to use on cost sharing work for PLPOA
 - About 2 years' worth of work done
 - Al Myatt
 - 2020 Activities
 - Helped Pagosa Fire with video about defensible space
 - Chipper project
 - Loma Linda tree planting project
 - Received Community Firewise USA Recertification
 - 30 Homeowners responded
 - Tree planting essentially pro bono
 - \$450 in donations from some residents

9:45 – 10:00 Collaboration and Public Participation: Forest Leadership Meeting Dec 17

- Overview of meeting, participants, outcomes and next steps
 - FLT is driving this effort including district rangers, Kara Chadwick, and Jason Lawhon
 - SJNF Leadership asking for feedback about an internal document they are developing about how to engage with public comments and collaborative participation
 - Proactive planning for large initiatives across the forest like CFLRP
 - Considering how we're going to tackle the complexity and potential challenges of communication as we move forward with large scale initiatives that involve many stakeholders
 - Colorado CFLRP is the only one that involves more than 1 collaborative group
 - Forest and watershed groups
 - Courtney Shultz (CSU) is interested in how we will navigate this situation, as we all are
 - How to utilize funding and leverage funds on public lands and across boundaries
 - Went through SJNF protocols and shared different stages of communication:
 - 3 goals
 - Clarify the decision-making process and identify how the Forest will operate using the SPP model
 - Identify the role of forest participation in different stages of the SPP model
 - Increase transparency and processes for public input
 - Model: Spectrum of Public Participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
 - 4 buckets/stages of communication
 - 1) Inform
 - 2) Consult
 - 3) Involve
 - 4) Collaborate
 - SJNF soliciting feedback from collaborative facilitators about:
 - The kinds of activities fit into the 4 categories
 - How to define which space on the SPP spectrum we're on at any given time during a project

- How the SJNF defines and communicates its responsibility to follow through with specific types of communication and on what timeline
 - The SJNF SPP is to be a living document that is evaluated for effectiveness at regular intervals
 - Will share notes from meeting when available
- Impacts and implications for SJHFHP
 - We have this spectrum framework *as well as* active and productive discussions in our collaborative groups with Forest Service employees as participants
 - One of the concept questions: How do forest service employees navigate their role in collaboratives as federal employees?
 - It's important to consider existing relationships and channels of communication that are already effective and how we can incorporate those into this framework and its application
 - Group Feedback
 - Headwaters has history and confidence about how things work that is unique across SJNF
 - Opportunity to scale and share our success of working to other parts of the forest
 - Not sure if anything specific needs to change at this time
 - The West side of the SJNF is getting a lot of funding and new stakeholders
 - 4 Rivers, DWRP
 - Lots of new activity at scale (acres treated annually, new industry)
 - USFS is trying to figure out as an organization how collaboratives and collaboration works best

10:00 – 10:15 Financials and 2021 Budget

- 2021 Draft budget process
 - Finance committee has been hard at work since November
 - Will send draft budget for review, along with prioritization spreadsheet
 - Goal is to approve as a group at January 2021 meeting
 - Quarterly budget reviews to occur in 2021
 - SJHFHP is not an independent entity because our fiscal agent is Mountain Studies Institute (MSI)
 - Because we have multiple grants routed through MSI, and have funds considered unrestricted, our budgeting process is complex
 - Process
 - Based on feedback from Education/Outreach and understanding of collaborative group interests, a Wishlist 2021 was created
 - Items were prioritized as A (must do), B (would like to do), or C (a priority, but not this year)
 - Budgeted by quarter for each bucket of funding for 2021 to create a budget projection
 - More rigorous process than we've done in the past, not as rigorous as direct quotes for projects, but did a good job at getting to Action Plan/Action List and assigning dollar figures to those items
 - Additional Information
 - Items specific to unrestricted funds/revenue appear at the bottom of

- the budget
 - Funds that come from grants (or other sources we have in hand) are categorized as expenses and represent the amount we have to draw out of our unrestricted fund balance each quarter
 - Helps us to understand beginning and end of year balances
- Key items
 - ~\$24,000 unrestricted funds left over for 2020
 - Goal is to have \$22,000 in unrestricted funds at the end of 2021
 - Based on: 60% for coordinator for ½ year
 - Want to be able to function next year even if we don't get new sources of funding (projected reserve from 2021 into 2022)
- Expenses: 3 main categories
 - Cohesive MOD 1: expires July 31 2021
 - ~\$53,000 remaining
 - Spent in Q1, Q2, and some wrap up in Q3
 - CAFA Funding: Low Income Mitigation Program
 - 1 major project left will take place after snow melts; is prescheduled and approved
 - Released subcontract in Q2 finished in beginning of Q3
 - Some expenditure in Q1
 - Donations: Budgeted to receive same amount of large donations as received in 2020
 - 2020: \$17,000
 - 1) Banded Peak Ranch
 - 2) Alpine Cascade Ranch
 - 3) Pagosa Water Sanitation District
 - 4) San Juan Water Conservation District
 - In the future, we need to:
 - Expand our pool of large donations
 - Get more small donations
 - Did not budget any for 2021
 - Usually \$200-\$300, want closer to \$1,000
 - Share your fundraising ideas with the Ed/Outreach and Finance Committee
 - Looking for fun, effective ways to raise money and/or find other groups and associations interested in donating
 - Remember: grants generally don't allow for the general operating of a collaborative
- 2020
 - Total revenue = money raised + money spent out of the grants = ~\$106,000
 - Difference between expenses and revenue: amount of draw from cash account
- 2021
 - Total projected expenses = \$112,000
 - Q1: ~15%
 - Q2: heavy to wrap up Cohesive MOD 1

- Q3: mostly direct expenditure by SJHFHP, some leftover from Cohesive MOD 1
 - Q4: only available funds will be unrestricted as all current grants will be exhausted. Will need to continue fundraising efforts in 2021 to support operations in 2022
 - Summarized action list and budget projection to be distributed
 - Finance committee met 5x to put this together and spent ~8-12 hours/person
 - Thank You Matt Tuten, Doug Secrist, Steve Hartvigsen, Dana Hayward, and Matt Ford, and Aaron Kimple and the Ed/Outreach Committee for reviewing documents and feedback
- 2021 MSI agreement and IDC rate
 - Funds get routed through MSI as the SJHFHP fiscal sponsor
 - Annual agreement between Headwaters and MSI that will be up for renewal in January
 - Document will be given to the group in January – signatories, board member, Marcie Bidwell, and Headwaters Finance Committee
 - Dates and indirect cost rate will be different from this year, but everything else will remain the same as the document was updated in 2020
 - Please direct questions, concerns and feedback directed to Matt Ford
 - MSI is in service to SJHFHP and wants to ensure the relationship is working for everyone
- Consider: capacity, funding for coordination, projects, and work on the ground
 - CFRI
 - Funding for Mixed Conifer monitoring
 - Some flexibility on how to spend CFRI contractor money to achieve outputs identified in that agreement
 - Agreement developed a few years ago and some funding aimed at building capacity at MSI, much of which has been developed
 - Working through how remainder of work outlined in the agreement will get done
 - Is this “leftover” contracting funding an opportunity to review the B-item on the priorities list for 2021?
 - Current science associated with spatial patterns and monitoring options?
 - There’s a need for this information and an effort like this could dovetail into this funding.
 - Beyond what’s in the budget now, looking forward to CFRI projects with 10% of funds going towards monitoring. There will likely be a way to work out an agreement between CFRI and MSI to address that kind of monitoring into 2022. Stay tuned!
 - This prioritization discussion is a prime example of how to use the Action List we’ve created for 2021.
 - budget ~\$2,500 for Science Literature review Zoom presentation on monitoring efforts to group.

- Perhaps another opportunity to talk about spatial patterns integrated into prescriptions for desired conditions.

10:15 - 10:45 Weminuche Audubon

- Rocky Mountain Community Science Conference, Dec 4
 - Presentation will be posted to Headwaters website and made available to Headwaters members and public
 - Highlights & Take-Aways
 - Keynote speaker: Ellen Candler from Univ of MN monitoring gut piles with game cameras to better understand ecology
 - Zooniverse Platform used
 - Many researchers used for remote watching/sensing
 - Researcher offered to help with bird monitoring efforts as supplemental service via Zooniverse
 - Urban City Nature Challenge
 - Bio Blitz – bio inventory
 - Nature Conservancy
 - Used Zooniverse to understand trail usage
 - Closing speaker: Ecologist Jason Baldes National Wildlife Foundation tribal coordinator
 - Restoring bison genetics and return bison to the landscape
 - Keith Bruno's presentation
 - Provided background about SJHFHP integration with bird monitoring project
 - Focus on objectives pertaining to research questions, and community science objectives (building scientific literacy), and the value of improving skills through education projects like this
 - Gave sense of where we're going with this work and potential expansion into ASCC project sites
- 2020 Bird monitoring community science results
 - 2nd year report: **Effects of Rx fire and shrub-layer Mastication on Bird Communities in Ponderosa Pine Forests of the San Juan Mountains, CO**
 - Project is affecting multiple generations of community scientists!
 - Marie Smith won scholarship from the chapter to attend bird camp in summer 2020
 - 35+ total participants
 - 2019: 25 participants at 400hrs
 - 2020: 29 participants at 800 hours
 - Objectives
 - Investigate potential effects of fire mitigation on bird communities
 - Promote better understanding of the roles fire plays in Ponderosa pine ecology
 - Provide opportunities to improve birding skills
 - Help participants better understand how field studies are conducted
 - Strengthen sense of community among chapter members
 - Study Sites & Results
 - Sample season: last wknd in May to 1st wknd in July

- Turkey Springs/Brockover Mesa
 - 2019
 - Rx fire late May/early June
 - 2020
 - Substantial recovery of shrub layer
 - Want to quantify recovery in subsequent years
 - Species observed
 - 2019: 26
 - 2020: 37
- Fawn Gulch
 - 2017
 - Mastication with Rx fire prior to 2017
 - Well-developed shrub layer
 - Species observed
 - 2019: 40
 - 2020: 39
- Jackson Mountain
 - Untreated site – many years since last logging or fire
 - Ponderosa pine forest with diverse tree layer and thick understory component
 - Species observed
 - 2019: 33
 - 2020: 45
- 72 different species observed
 - 2019: 54
 - 2020: 58
- Takeaways
 - More points in 2020 where birds were recorded and a greater abundance of birds: reflects sample density
 - Turkey Springs “recovered” numbers of bird species from 2019 to 2020 → Rx fire recovery in shrub layer
 - 40 common species across all sites → increased sampling, catching most of species present (sample density)
 - Greatest number of species: Fawn Gulch in 2019 and Jackson Mountain in 2020 (sample density)
 - Increased community diversity in 2020 → more even distribution of birds across species (sample density)
 - Feeding Guilds
 - Increase substantially at Turkey Springs → improved habitat for species with Ground Brush Foraging feeding habits
 - Nuthatches and other similar species might be responding to habitat quality
 - Nuthatches are known for high population variability annually, so we can’t tell yet
 - Greater number of flycatchers species at Fawn Gulch across all years compared to other sites
 - Something is important but haven’t quantified what that is yet

- “Nest Web” similar to “Food Web”
 - Keystone species
 - Eg: Northern Flicker will create cavities
 - Secondary species
 - Eg: nuthatches, chickadees, swallow, and western bluebird rely on preexisting cavities
 - Tertiary species
 - Eg: black-capped chickadee not as particular and will use exiting cavity if available
 - Promote decomposition of woody tissue because of fungal spore on beak – nutrient cycling in snags
- Species of Concern
 - Lewis’ Woodpecker, Warbling Vireo, Cassin’s Finch, Common Nighthawk, Pine Siskin, Band-tailed Pigeon, Grace’s warbler
- Major Successes
 - Valuable education experience, improved birding skills, and improved scientific literacy for observers
 - Increased dialogue between stakeholders and managers
 - Strengthened sense of community
 - Enhanced conservation ethic
- Moving Forward
 - Continue monitoring
 - Expand into ASCC project
 - Survey participants
 - Learning experiences regarding forest and fire ecology
 - Improved birding skills
 - Conservation ethic
 - In-group cohesiveness
- Final Thoughts
 - Short term: fuel reduction treatments simplify forest composition, structure, and reduce bird abundance but we’re seeing recovery of populations and habitat use within a few years
 - Long-term: decline of bird species richness and abundance when natural fires/thinning absent
 - Interannual variability needs better understanding
 - Snags critical for nesting
 - Landscape heterogeneity favors resilience of bird communities in response to fire and thinning
- Christmas Bird Count is on December 19th!
- Questions for Keith and Herb:
 - Have observers noticed anything related to habitat or bird numbers related to elevation? Are plots at same elevation?
 - All plots are within ~100ft of the same elevation. At Jackson Mountain there’s a bit more topography/slope compared to other sites. Difficult to find untreated sites to use in study.

- Will monitoring efforts expand into ASCC site on Jackson Mountain?
 - Potential options to do some bird monitoring in treatment sites in this area.
- Everyone invited, via Zoom, to presentation to membership in April – Keith planning bird ID workshops in May
- It must be difficult to cancel data “noise” because of annual variability – could you incorporate a baseline study using 2-3 of your best birders at each site for 1-2x years to compare broader monitoring efforts?
 - 2020: All 3 sites had an advanced birder team hit it 6 times. We did try to add this factor in for cleaner dataset, and there may be a more tangible way to do this at the ASCC sites.
 - Have gotten some pretty accurate data from 2020

10:45 – 11:00 Closing, Next Steps, Other Business

- Turkey/Devil Creek scoping reminder (Dec 17 release)
- Outdoor Restoration Force Act introduction and feedback (small group)
 - Senator Bennet’s office drafting Outdoor Restoration Force Act and we have a small group of folks giving feedback in early January
 - Bennet is looking for a cosponsor on the bill
- Coming up in January: Agreement with MSI, final budget and approval, 2021 priorities
- Thank you for a great year!
 - Happy holidays!
 - Consider a donation of any size to Headwaters
 - CARES Act: even if you don’t itemize charitable contributions you can donate \$300 from off bottom line and not pay taxes – if you’re going to donate, donate now
- Closing thoughts: Thank You!