



**San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership  
Virtual Meeting NOTES for Friday, September 18, 2020**

**Location:** Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Regular Meeting:** 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

In attendance: Dana Hayward (MSI); Aaron Kimple (MSI); Emily Swindell (MSI); Mike Remke (MSI); Matt Tuten (USFS); Lo Williams (USFS); Bill Trimarco (WAP); Ashley Downing (WAP); Robin Young (CSU extension); Mercedes Siegle-Gaither (NRCS/CSFS); Jerry Archuleta (NRCS); Steven Hartvigsen (retired USFS); Doug Secrist (SJWCD); Matt Ford (Clean Forest Energy); Keith Bruno (Audubon of the Rockies); Anne McCoy-Harold (Senator Gardner's office); Marin Chambers (CFRI); Danny Margoles (DWRF)

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTES

**9:00 – 9:10 Welcome and Introductions**

**9:10 – 9:45 Updates**

- CFLRPs: Rio Chama proposal, SW CO proposal
  - Sonny Perdue and Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen have been briefed, but no official word yet – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> priority on list of recommendations
    - Rio Chama
      - Setting up that project for success discussion
    - SW CO Proposal
      - Will talk about later in this meeting how to set ourselves up for success
  - We now have 2 CFLRP programs here in this landscape and this group deserves a *lot* of credit for all we've accomplished!
  - Moving forward
    - Important to maintain, recognize, and acknowledge hard work of partner contributions
    - When possible, utilize existing structures and keep our approach simple due to limited capacity and limited abilities of partners to participate in meetings
    - Remain focused on private and tribal lands
      - Emphasize cross-boundary needs
- RMRI/EIF
  - RMRI
    - Continues to progress
    - Have built steering and advisory committee: Aaron Kimple is on steering committee

- Looking at priorities and values on the landscape
  - Using PODS structure and weighing values based on geography
  - Considering community centers and connectors while building on private lands pieces and the EIF
  - Thinking through how to increase pace and scale of work while ensuring we're working on the right acres at an appropriate scale and time
- Gleaning info about fires in Oregon
  - Oregon has a different association with fire, so it's not fair to compare, but it could help inform us and our group about fire in places that have been mitigated and what it will take for our community to be ready for big fires in the future
  - Recognizing that we have some tough conversations ahead about how we live in the forest and where/how we get work done
- Upcoming
  - Advisory group meets week of Sept 21 with the goal of informing some priority setting and balancing applications for funding within RMRI
  - Grants
    - CSFS LSR Grant (for EIF): Florida River
      - WAP to be implementation partner
    - Joint Chiefs
      - Not this year
      - Maybe Forest Lakes
    - Restore Grant: Mancos watershed
- EIF
  - Working with La Plata County to measure their level of interest
  - Looking at City of Durango
  - Ramp up EIF so it can build on momentum in other areas
  - Challenges
    - TABOR laws – investment means our communities are comfortable with taking on a bond
- Important to think about how to align monitoring for RMRI, EIF, and CFLRP
  - Tell a story across all efforts
- 2-3-2 Full Membership meeting
  - Questions addressed
    - 1) How does the 2-3-2 Collaborative function and relate to the Forest Service?
    - 2) What kind of decision making structure exists and what needs to change/stay the same?
    - 3) How to include diverse stakeholder voices while expanding the 232 geography
    - Maximizing and developing economy and industry while minimizing administrative hurdles
  - Highlights

- 2-3-2 remains committed to working in the entirety of its designated geography and across jurisdictional boundaries
  - 2-3-2 committed to moving forward while:
    - Respecting diverse stakeholders and contributions from the beginning while welcoming and forming new relationships and future projects
      - Currently expanding the 232 boundary to include the Santa Fe National Forest and want to ensure representation in that geography while also respecting and maintaining relationships built while operating in the previous geography
  - Presentation from snow science researcher about modeling snow water equivalency, forest types, and other dynamics in Rio Grande watershed
    - 2-3-2 will provide letter of support and stakeholder engagement for that research
  - CFLRP in Rio Chama landscape
    - Recognizing that adjacent, non-federal lands offer opportunities to leverage funding
    - Ensure that state, tribal, and private lands are intricately involved and benefit from collaborative work
    - Work across all lands and boundaries should be an accomplishment for everyone
  - Continued discussion about defining active membership and using an active membership model for decision making
  - *Question: Does 2-3-2 complete an EOY Report? ~ Yes*
    - Make this report available to the SJHFHP annually
- MSI Presentation to USFS Leadership 9.16.20
  - Presentation to highlight accomplishments of last 5 years
    - MSI accomplishments are partner accomplishments built around your work and investment, so Thank You!
    - Topics discussed:
      - Timeline of San Juan Headwaters
        - In 2009, we asked, can we get CFLRP in this area?
          - Then, the answer was no
            - Since then: Joint Chiefs funding, Fourmile, J.R.'s operations (Forest Health co.), Forest Service Chief has visited for a landscape tour and more
          - NOW we have 2 CFLRPS, the EIF and RMRI, all built on a lot of work that began here with Headwaters
          - Stakeholder engagement and collaboratives are key to allowing communities to help inform projects
      - Other programs
        - Citizen science

- Audubon birding work in treatment areas
      - Work with pika and bighorn sheep
    - Watersheds
      - 416 Fire and runoff
  - Areas to focus more and expand as partners:
    - Recreation
    - Bringing scientists even more into our conversations
    - Monitoring
      - Advance social and economic monitoring
      - Need a GTR for this region
      - Reports needed to help inform future decision making processes
        - Eg: Technical report that includes data about the relationship between tree cover and shrub growth and outlines the influence of this relationship on forest dynamics
    - Conversations between communities and Forest Service
      - Groups can help front load processes for NEPA
  - Forest Service acknowledged important connections between science, communities, and management decisions
  - *Question: Were there any decisions made by FLT that would impact MSI or the Partnership?*
    - No official decisions but lots of support. The goal of this meeting was to inform the FLT of efforts and accomplishments over the last 5 years as MSI nears the end of its 5-year master agreement with them. MSI actively solicited input and direction by FLT and will need to draft a new master agreement
- Jackson Mountain Tour
  - Good to get out and see a project the Partnership is supporting that has important implications for the landscape and our communities
  - Site I
    - Task order for JR Ford
    - Steve H. shared history of how this prescription/project began and has evolved over time
    - Discussed different types of logging operations
  - Site II
    - Conversation about unit closeout requirements, reseeded, water bars, regeneration, wildlife, and multi land-use benefits/impacts
    - Jackson Mountain is a managed landscape and part of and adjacent to a massive unmanaged wilderness landscape
  - Site III
    - ASCC
      - Happening on 2<sup>nd</sup> task order on Jackson Mountain (Little Jackson II)
      - Haven't started working in ASCC units yet
      - Monitoring is underway

- Talking through different treatments and goals
- A need exists for local coverage and we have an opportunity to get original, meaningful content on social media and out into the community
  - Currently working to get information out to local media outlets, Pagosa Sun

### 9:45 – 10:00 Private Lands

- Wildfire Adapted Partnership and CAFA
  - CAFA
    - Work with low income households to help with wildfire mitigation and defensible space around homes for the last few years
      - Mostly Aspen Spring and Stollsteimer watershed
    - 2 important take-aways:
      - CSFS granted permission to cover most populated areas in Archuleta County, expanding the eligible geography for the program this year
      - This program has helped to protect 20 homes and treat 8 acres with only \$54,000 – tremendous accomplishment!
        - Leftover funds can extend into 2021 and will likely be used by July/Aug 2021
    - MSI and WAP to continue working together on CAFA program
  - WAP
    - Chipper Rebate Program
      - Funds available for 2021, advertising to begin
    - Grants
      - SFA WUI
        - Covers about half of Pagosa Lakes for 2021
      - Working with Pagosa Fire Protection District on a FEMA grant
        - Cost share mitigation program
        - 3-year project
    - East Rio Arriba Soil Conservation District
      - Received an RCPP grant
        - CSFS + NRCS involved
        - 2 large ranches in Chromo area and smaller ranches
        - Cost share program
        - WAP to subcontract under CSFS for smaller properties
        - Should be a go for spring 2021
- NRCS/CSFS: summer update
  - Jerry Archuleta report
    - 2020
      - ~30 landowners applied for work and only 6 were funded
      - Treated ~300 acres this year, less than the normal ~500-1000 acres in a year
      - Half of work has been related to forest management
        - 2 projects approved in mixed conifer

- Good because this forest type is often adjacent to USFS land, helping to encourage cross-boundary work
- Strong response from private property owners for forest mitigation work
- 2021
  - ~30+ projects
  - Looking to allocate additional and diversified funding
  - Lots of interest and hoping to get a lot work done
  - Funding
    - Need ~\$500,000 to fund all projects
    - Mercedes working to target areas like Four Mile, Fawn Gulch, Mill Creek, and Upper Blanco
      - Starting to have larger impact as work is frequently completed on adjacent properties
- Fuelwood
  - The challenge of what to do with leftover wood always exists
  - If landowner and/or contractor doesn't want wood products, it would be helpful to create a list of people in the area who want it and how to transport it
  - *Question: Way to partner with firewood producer for donations to in-need folks in Archuleta County?*
    - *Look at churches in area with firewood ministries*
    - *Great models for how people are making this happen right now, eg. Tribal fuelwood programming in AZ*
    - *Challenge: fuelwood often spread over a large space and having a transfer station or sort-yard would be helpful to organize and then redistribute wood*
- Mercedes Siegle-Gaither
  - Working on refocusing AFF plan and getting work done on the ground
  - Currently have 14 active projects
  - Funding
    - CSFS funding for wildfire mitigation
      - \$2500 from taxes
  - Would like to work more in tandem with Forest Service in the future to match timeline of work for properties bordering National Forest
    - AFF, NRCS, and CSFS can work together to prioritize target areas and incorporate properties bordering national forest to accomplish cross-boundary work

### 10:00 – 10:15 USFS and SJNF News

- Upcoming Turkey Springs/Devil Creek vegetation management analysis
  - Haven't started scoping yet
  - Geography
    - Area just west of Pagosa Springs in Turkey Springs landscape: from east side of Piedra area to edge of Pagosa Lakes Owners Association
    - Landscape split between several areas:

- Turkey Springs trail system, Coyote Creek trail system, Chris Mountain
      - Pagosa Springs forest health completed thinning ~ 5 years ago in the area west of Devil Creek and the Middle Mountain restoration study area
    - Important landscape to Pagosa Springs, large WUI component, recreation focus
  - History
    - 25+ years of management with various level of decision-making and changes to those decisions over the years
    - 1998: Devil Creek EA
    - Early 2000's: some categorical exclusion projects
    - 2005: Turkey Springs EA
    - Instead of working under old decisions that are somewhat relevant but not current, the goal is to have a new dialogue, revise boundaries and treatment areas
  - Goals over next few months
    - Light touch management because we have really good conditions
      - Ponderosa pine forest probably closest to what we envision in the West as a restored Ponderosa pine forest
    - Competing treatments around Chris Mountain from 2005 EA
    - New area: West of Devil Creek
      - Most dense ponderosa pine forest on the Pagosa district, not under contract for completion
      - Details forthcoming
      - Constantly managing because of it's importance, so we want current, accurate, and evidence-based direction for this landscape over time
    - Look to how we manage oak and provide direction for oak-brush management
    - Partnership to engage and provide feedback in the coming months
    - Probably not making any new trails for recreation but we must consider recreation, but things could change after responses from public via scoping document
    - Let's plan to talk about this in the group in the next few months after scoping document has come out – stay tuned!
- NEPA
  - Big picture overview of national changes:
    - Forest Service will be revising some aspects of NEPA
    - Guidance released June 2019
      - ~ 43,000 comments on proposed rule
        - Goals and updates:
          - How documents and sections of EA's, CE's, EIS's are ordered
          - Increase efficiency

- Reduce timeline for production since EIS's can sometimes take 4 years
      - A few years for a EIS
      - <1yr for EA
      - Even less for CE
    - Forest Service was to codify direction of Categorical exclusions, aka: Adaptive NEPA
      - Flexible docs
    - Adjustments to scoping requirements
    - Categorical exclusions
      - Categories to exclude actions from full NEPA analysis:
        - Forest restoration
        - Road construction
        - Trails management, reconstruction, and maintenance
        - Special uses
- Implications to SJHFHP
  - Won't change much about how the Partnership operates
    - Community involvement very important and we have a good track record of that going back at least a decade
      - Documents are important for maintaining that history
      - As we go forward, we can advance dialogue to think through projects and monitoring efforts before we begin work on the ground
    - Always room for improvement when it comes to monitoring
    - Adaptive NEPA concept: build and review definitions of success on the front end of projects, then leverage information and lessons learned from past projects for current/future projects

#### 10:15 – 10:45 CFLRP Cross-Collaborative Structure

- How does the SJHFHP interface with other collaboratives across San Juan National Forest: Identifying and acting on values and efforts that overlap
  - Headwaters group is working with 2 other collaborative groups on the SJNF
  - Goals of working together:
    - Develop opportunities
    - Support initiatives
    - Coordinate planning
    - Offer consistent messaging
  - Headwaters is a signatory to the SW Colorado CFLRP, which outlines 2 obligations:
    - 1) Development of a work plan
    - 2) Dedication to multiparty monitoring
      - *Talk about how we want to do this since Headwaters is part of this reciprocal and obligatory structure*



- Ensure stakeholders have a say and are bought into planning
  - Meet our commitments and define how we work with the Forest Service to prioritize and complete work on the ground
- Strategy
  - Cross-collaborative working group to help build structure for CFLRP prioritization, messaging, and work with science group for multiparty monitoring
- Collaboratives involved: 4 Rivers, DWRF, Headwaters, WEP, Mancos Watershed, ARC Forum
  - There is 1 forest and 1 watershed collaborative in each of the three ranger districts on the SJNF = 6 collaboratives total
    - Conversations about dynamic connections between forests and watersheds have been important and timely
- Questions for the Headwaters group:
  - *1) What kind of questions do you have?*
  - *2) Who from Headwaters is willing to join the cross-collaborative working group?*
- Working group Expectations
  - ~3 people from this group representing diverse interests
  - Heavy lift for the first few months with more meetings, then work will drop off precipitously
    - Work plan and multiparty monitoring set up
    - Figuring out how to work across the SJNF and with the Forest Service
  - Don't want the working group to be too large but want to think this through together
    - Representatives to bring work back to individual collaboratives
    - Goal is to create something that will benefit our communities and we need local knowledge to do that
  - Want to get rolling with this by mid to late October
  - Once a formal word is given that we have CFLRP funding, the cross-collaborative group and the USFS will have ~180 days to roll out a plan
  - Cross-collaborative members don't have to commit the full 10 years of the CFLRP
    - Can swap in/out over time
    - Just need a group to get things started
- Benefits
  - Members get a say in what a successful CFLRP looks like
  - Could serve as a think tank conduit/working advisement body that moves information from the SJNF level to the collaboratives and back again by elevating localized values and messages
  - Potential to become a decision-making body in the future if we think that works best, but it will evolve based on feedback
- Get in touch with Dana and/or Aaron!
- CFLRP context: requirements, best practices, non-requirements
  - Postponed until October

- CFLRP policy and practice
  - Postponed until October
- Cross-collaborative working group and general planning structure
  - Postponed until October

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

- Legislation and permitting committee
    - Forest Health Advisory Council
      - Sunsetting in 2020
      - Discussing:
        - Carrying forward
        - Changing structure from council to commission that has a direct line to the governor
          - Has had some initial, formal nominations and would probably still function that way
        - Bring in more of the shared stewardship component
      - Think through what a state-wide forest collaborative would look like
        - This state-wide group would have a seat on the commission
- Cross-collaborative science application and engagement
  - Postponed until October: ongoing conversation
- Watershed and forest connectivity
  - An important and ongoing discussion from a research and collaborative perspective
  - Conversation about how forest and watersheds are connected and why it's important to work together at a landscape scale
- Annual review is forthcoming, be thinking of feedback
  - To be presented in December
- Finance committee to be contacted for planning
  - Will be contacted sometime soon

**End 11:05 am**