



San Juan Headwaters

FOREST HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

Meeting Agenda & Notes for Friday, January 21, 2022

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Regular Meeting: 9:00-11:00 AM

Attendance: Dana Guinn (MSI), Brian Gideon (Southern Ute Tribe), Brandy Richardson (SJNF), Josh Peck (SJNF), Anthony Garcia (SJNF), Paul Blackman (SJNF), Matt Tuten (SJNF), Fred Ellis (SJNF), Kelly Tuten (SJNF), Joni Vanderbilt (SJNF), Abe Proffitt (Public Affairs SJNF), Scott Owen (SJNF), Kevin Emde (SJNF), Lo Williams (SJNF), Tim Leishman (SJNF), Mike Battaglia (Rocky Mountain Research Station), Annie Sewell (DUST 2), Kevin Daugherty (DUST 2), Doug Purcell (CPW), Herb Grover (WAS), Hannah Whittaker (Chama Peak Land Alliance), Andrea Phillips (Town of Pagosa Springs), Darren Lewis (Town of Pagosa Springs), Doug Secrist (San Juan Water Conservancy District), Kyle O'Neill (NRCS), Mike Remke (FLC), Emily Hohman (The Nature Conservancy), Bob Milford (Pagosa Trails), Estevan Vega (CSFS), Keith Bruno (Audubon Rockies), Robin Young (CSU Extension), Jimbo Buickerood (SJCA), Matt Ford (Clean Forest Energy), Bill Trimarco (WAP), Roger Jensen (retired BIA).

MEETING AGENDA & NOTES

Ideal outcomes from this meeting:

- From USFS:
 - Present initial plans and ideas for Jackson Mountain and hear feedback from the Headwaters stakeholders.
 - Headwaters should bring forward issues and concerns so SJNF can build solutions.
- From stakeholders:
 - Express issues and concerns about Jackson Mountain planning.
 - Participate in the planning process.

Jackson Mountain kickoff presentation and discussion

- The Collaborative Landscape Forest Restoration Program (CLFR) provides funding for collaborative work in forest restoration. It is a sustained funding stream, providing \$3 million per year for 10 years.
 - Our region is likely to receive two CLFRs
 - Rio Chama CFLR is at the top of the list for the country.
 - The Southwest CFLR is second in line.
 - Jackson Mountain has been identified as a priority area because it fits well within the CFLR framework. It will be one of the first projects set into action when CFLR dollars are available.

- Jackson mountain is a hub of activity: research, prominent wildlife corridor, recreation.
 - The Forest Service is attempting to engage heavily with stakeholders (like Headwaters) before beginning the NEPA process.
 - They want to hear people's interests and concerns and build them into the proposed action.
 - They will also engage with the public.
- Recreation interests and planning
 - History of recreation on Jackson Mountain:
 - Mountain bike trails are new (within the last 15 years) to the Pagosa District.
 - The first mountain bike trails were established at Turkey Springs, where 20 miles of trail was built.
 - User-created trails have started to pop up on Jackson Mountain.
 - Within the last few years, projects have begun to develop on Jackson Mountain to establish a mountain bike trail system.
 - DUST 2 and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) signed a contract to begin reconnaissance on Jackson Mountain.
 - They created a catalog of trail opportunities in the Jackson Mountain area and presented it to the USFS in November 2021. This catalog of opportunities includes over 65 miles of trail.
 - USFS' concerns:
 - Should user trails be adopted?
 - Dispersed camping needs to be managed with consideration of other activities on Jackson Mountain.
 - Stakeholders in the planning process thus far: CPW, range permittees, SJNF, DUST2, San Juan River Village HOA, Headwaters.
 - Timeline (pre-NEPA process): next six months
 - Continue to engage with Headwaters and the public.
 - Continue to work closely with CPW, DUST 2 and other close partners.
 - Frontload the proposal process (pre-NEPA) to fine tune as many details as possible.
 - Trash and human waste concerns:
 - Anticipate increased use on Jackson Mountain so we are prepared to manage the associated increase in waste.
 - CLFR will provide the means to better manage waste issues across San Juan National Forest.
 - There is also the opportunity for the Town to work with SJNF to address increased recreational use on Jackson Mountain.
- Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change (ASCC) is a series of experimental silvicultural research sites across the U.S. and Canada that aims to partner scientists and managers
 - The goal of this project is to research long term ecosystem responses to a range of climate change adaptation strategies. This project is unique because it provides long term and large-scale operational experience.
 - There is a research site established on Jackson Mountain, which provides data for dry mixed-conifer forests.
 - Progress and plans:
 - The pre-treatment inventory is complete.

- Treatment units have been marked and are waiting to be harvested.
- After the harvest, a variety of data will be collected on:
 - Regeneration
 - Microclimates
 - Soil nutrients
 - Snow accumulation, etc.
- It is important to reduce interference from recreation in the research area. Specific concerns related to recreation on Jackson Mountain:
 - Vandalism of long-term sites (like removing tree tags) or research equipment on site.
 - User-made trails might not consider the presence of the research sites.
 - Recreation may interfere with wildlife, so this might not be a suitable ASCC site to conduct research on the presence of wildlife.
 - The increase in recreation might make prescribed burns difficult or impractical to conduct.
 - Buffers may need to be built around the research sites to keep recreationists out.
- This research site provides an educational opportunity for Jackson Mountain. Signs can be posted with information about climate change, the integration of science and management.
- ASCC wants to bring in other researchers that might benefit from this data (soil carbon, wildlife, etc.).
- With two sites already in Colorado (SJNF, CSFS) and another in the works (CSFS), Colorado will have three research sites in three different forest types.
- The Weminuche Audubon Society also has a research site on Jackson Mountain.
 - Preliminary results have suggested that standing dead snags are tremendously important for cavity nesting birds.
- Future vegetation management options on Jackson Mountain:
 - Three task orders in the Pagosa area long term stewardship contract:
 - Little Jackson 1 (to be completed summer 2022), Little Jackson 2 (the ASCC project, scheduled to start late summer/early fall 2022) and Laughlin.
 - All three projects are centered around the Jackson Mountain Road system, which provides optimal road access, making it a good place to start addressing forest degradation in this landscape.
 - The remaining work will take 3-4 years to complete.
 - When the long-term stewardship contract is up, the Forest Service has ideas for other areas to focus on:
 - The southwest corner of Jackson Mountain is very dense with pines. It would be the primary area of focus if it weren't for the lack of access. To do work in this area, FS will need to collaborate with private landowners for access and maintain roads that improve access.
 - There is a mixed-conifer and aspen stand near the Turkey Creek trailhead that is accumulating fuels on the ground. Pines are beginning to dominate, and it may be of interest to facilitate aspen regeneration in the area.
 - In general, areas with limited access need attention (the first three task orders are focused on easily accessible areas).

- Most of the landscape on Jackson Mountain is considered suitable timber, where the Forest Service will conduct recurring forest management.
 - There are questions and concerns about how to balance active forest management with the future increase in recreation because of the new trail system. Additionally, there are questions about how road improvements will work alongside recreation.
- Fuels opportunities around Jackson Mountain:
 - Need for hazardous fuels reduction treatments
 - Preliminary analysis identified areas of concern, but the data still needs to be ground-truthed.
 - There are areas right next to subdivisions that need to be prioritized.
 - When doing treatments within the buffer of trails and roads, the Forest Service should attempt to reduce closures to the public.
 - Ensure the integrity of ASCC research sites is maintained before, during and after treatments.
 - There is a lot of flexibility for designing forest treatments to align with other objectives.
- Developing Urban Singletrack Trails and Teams in Pagosa Springs (DUST2)
 - DUST2 works to create and maintain urban single-track trails and connectivity around town. This involves the construction and maintenance of trails, and DUST2 interfaces with the Forest Service on this front.
 - DUST2 is interested in developing a trail system on Jackson Mountain because of its proximity to town and the variety of terrain (vertical, variety of ecosystems) that isn't available elsewhere in the district.
 - DUST2 hired IMBA to work on the Jackson Mountain proposal because they have a strong background in creating trails on public lands and doing so responsibly (to keep wildlife in mind, erosion to a minimum, etc.).
- Wildlife:
 - The topography of Jackson Mountain acts as a funnel from the high country toward town for the movement of large animals.
 - Currently, there is a lot of recreational use on the east side of the mountain that acts as a "plug" to the funnel, restricting large animals from moving through the natural corridor.
 - CPW is not only interested in elk, although they do act as an indicator species.
 - Elk populations have been in decline since 2012. CPW is unsure of the cause, but development of recreation certainly plays a role.
 - An indication of healthy elk populations is usually 40 calves for every 100 cows. Currently, there are 20-30 calves for every 100 cows.
 - Specific areas of concern from CPW:
 - On the west and northwest sides of Jackson Mountain, there are important riparian areas that provide a diversity of habitats and resources.
 - There is agricultural land adjacent to Jackson Mountain. CPW wants to avoid forcing wildlife onto that land because it tends to cause damage to infrastructure (i.e., fences) and can harm livestock.
 - The south side of the mountain is important for winter range.
 - CPW wants to minimize impacts from recreation in these areas. They don't need to be closed to the public, but the new trail system should not draw attention to sensitive wildlife habitat.

- Jackson Mountain map and discussion:
 - The Forest Service might partner with Archuleta County to create a gravel pit that would provide gravel and reduce the cost of transport for the many gravel roads in Archuleta County.
 - SJNF and IMBA have decided that any concentrated infrastructure development would likely be located right at the beginning of Jackson Mountain Road (east side of Jackson Mountain, off HWY 160).
 - Dispersed camping
 - Restroom facilities
 - Not interested in a large infrastructure development on the west side.
 - There will be a lot of opportunities to improve wildlife habitat during the various proposed forest treatments.
 - How effective will the habitat be when we increase human disturbance and presence in the area?

Next steps

- SJNF will hold a public open house in the spring of 2022. The formal NEPA will begin in August.
 - The Jackson Mountain maps will be publicly available after the public open house.