



San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership Virtual Meeting NOTES for Friday, April 22, 2022

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Regular Meeting: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTES

Attendance: Dana Guinn (MSI), Aaron Kimple (MSI), Julia Ledford (MSI), Jake Kurzweil (MSI), Bill Trimarco (WAP), Matt Tuten (USFS), Tim Leishman (USFS), Adam Tlachac (USFS), Fred Ellis (USFS), Josh Peck (USFS), Herb Grover (WAS), Jean Zirnhelt (WAS), Robin Young (CSU Extension), Kyle O’Neill (NRCS), Helen Katich (Senator Hickenlooper), Estavan Vega (CSFS), Doug Secrist (San Juan Water Conservancy District), Jimbo Buickerood (SJCA), Alvin Shaaf (Archuleta County Commissioner), Bob Milford (Pagosa Area Trails Council), Danny Margoles (DWRP)

Notes

News and Updates

- CFLRP project status and funding
 - Southwest Colorado and Rio Chama have both been awarded CFLRP funding to the tune of \$3 million/year each.
 - MSI is working on a new agreement with SJNF to support our efforts
 - A third-party facilitator was hired to create a governance structure for the Southwest Colorado CFLRP.
 - Jimbo and Dana on this governance team
 - The team is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders that represent many of the values and geographies within the Southwest Colorado CFLRP landscape.
 - The governance team meetings are not closed-door, so contact Dana if you are interested in listening in!
- Jackson Mountain project status
 - The Jackson Mountain [story map](#) is now available to the public
 - The open houses and public forums have been well attended.
 - The main concerns were about wildlife (big game) displacement as a result of the trail system. There has also been concern about range and cattle displacement.
 - The Forest Service is now gathering input from the public to help refine the catalog of opportunities for the proposed trail system.
 - You can contribute your feedback using this [form](#)
 - The next steps involve building a proposed action to take to NEPA late this summer or early this fall.

- Jackson Mountain will continue to be a topic of conversation for Headwaters
 - We can discuss scheduling another field trip to Jackson Mountain this summer if folks are interested.

Pagosa Ranger District and San Juan National Forest

- CFLRP project update for Pagosa Ranger District
 - USFS project status:
 - On-going projects:
 - Coyote Creek
 - Wolfy
 - Huerto
 - Little Jackson
 - Awarded funding but no activity yet
 - Two projects above Weminuche Valley
 - Future
 - Jackson Mountain veg treatment
 - Rito Dos
 - Mariposa cutting units
 - Blanco Basin
 - Completed
 - Pagosa Creek
 - Rio Chama CFLRP
 - Two mastication projects: 8-Mile Mesa and Big Branch Road
 - Noxious weed treatments in Blanco River Basin
 - Southwest CFLRP
 - Cultural surveys for Jackson Mountain to support the proposed trail system are expected to be funded in full
 - Noxious weed treatments in many places, focusing on Turkey Springs and Jackson Mountain.
 - The governance team is working to help justify and oversee the funding of CFLRP funding. Rio Chama is going about it in a different way.
 - The first projects to be completed with CFLRP dollars are projects that are already lined up and shovel ready. After the first few years there will be more opportunities for collaboratively developed projects.
 - Luckily, many of the projects getting started in the Pagosa District have already been discussed with collaborative groups.
 - The Price Lakes area offers a good opportunity to start working collaboratively on projects with surrounding private landowners.
 - USFS is working on a CE for the Bayfield-Pagosa powerline
 - This is not a CFLRP project
 - The goal is to do fire mitigation along the powerline (clear 50 feet on each side) and to replace some poles.
 - The project will begin implementation next winter.
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels planning for 2022 season
 - There is a small, prescribed fire planned in Brockover Creek
 - Hoped to get it done this week, but it was too windy
 - Opportunities for burning will probably be over by the end of April unless we get more precipitation
 - Priority has been given to Animas City Mountain in Durango
 - East of Chimney Rock Monument

- Priority for Fall
- The goal is to help preserve about 2,500 acres of old growth ponderosa pine forest
- A fire history survey in 2002 revealed that the average return interval for fire in this area was 11 years. However, that ended around 1870 upon the settlement of Euro-Americans in the area.
 - Some mechanical treatments have been done in the past, but prescribed burning is a high priority.
- Within Hidden Mesa Research Natural Area
- Kenny Flats
 - 3,800 acres
 - Primarily ponderosa
 - There was a prescribed fire in the early 2000s, so re-entry burns would be the primary goal
- Mechanical fuels treatment
 - 8 Mile Mesa
 - 950 acres of mastication
 - This project will potentially be funded by the Rio Chama CFLRP. Ideally, the project will be completed this summer, but it depends on the funding.
 - Working with non-profit [Stewardship West](#)
 - Big Branch Road
 - Mowing along roads to create a fuel break that would facilitate a large, prescribed burn and offer more options for fire suppression
 - Potentially funded by Rio Chama CFLRP
- Echo Canyon
 - 1,000 acres
 - Treated under long term stewardship contract 4-5 years ago
 - Some mastication was done last year, so now USFS wants to follow up with additional treatment

Fuelwood Banks

- National momentum and resources
 - The Infrastructure Law includes one line dedicating \$8 million for wood banks.
 - There is very little information about this and people across the country are trying to define applications for the money.
 - Areas in the northeast have employed some programs that are [like a food bank but with firewood](#).
 - They serve community members who need firewood at little-to-no cost
 - Funding will be coming through state and private forestry as well as tribal relations
 - Matt Tuten and some of his colleagues will be managing the funds for Region 2
 - In the coming weeks, the Forest Service will be accepting proposals for this fiscal year for small grants. This money can be used for feasibility studies and purchasing equipment, among other things.
- Regional fuelwood initiatives
 - Wood For Life
 - This program was started in northern Arizona through the USFS and funded by NFF in response to the closing of a local coal plant, which

provided coal for heating the homes of many tribal members. After this coal plant closed, tribal members needed a source of heat.

- USFS started this project to bring loads of wood from forest projects to tribal members in need.
 - San Juan National Forest has employed a similar project, which has been piloted in the Dolores Ranger District. The program was very successful and is expanding across other parts of the Forest.
- Boulder has a beloved sort yard which is operated by volunteers
- The Rotary in La Plata County operates a wood bank
 - There seems to be a need for firewood across the community outside of Tribal Nations.
 - This wood bank isn't deliberately providing wood for tribal members.
- Local applications and opportunities
 - The Headwaters group seems to be interested in investigating the need for a wood bank in Archuleta County.
 - We should find out who is already selling firewood or operating similar businesses in the County and build on their efforts. We don't want to usurp current operations with big new ideas.
 - Dana will connect a group of people to begin initial conversations. Eventually there will be a call for broader outreach so we can be sure to include many voices.
 - Our efforts could be a test run for how to use this funding for other people watching from across the country
- Next steps
 - Facilitate initial conversations among Headwaters partners and think about who else we want to get involved and reach out.
 - Explore what is already happening in the area.
 - Explore the need for this resource in the area.
 - Find a local champion in the Archuleta County government
 - Experience from La Plata County efforts suggest it has been difficult to find the right person to talk to within the County.
 - Start locally and then bridge conversations to neighboring counties

Projects and Engagement Opportunities

- WEP Ranking Report from April 7 Workshop
- 2022 Bird Monitoring with Weminuche Audubon
 - [New WAS video](#) about their community bird monitoring efforts
 - WAS members are still enthusiastic about bird monitoring projects, so they need to decide if they should run another year of bird monitoring (as they have for the past three years), or if they should focus on the Jackson Mountain site with upcoming work.
 - Need to decide by the last week of May, which is when the field season starts.
 - There is a lot of interest and support across the San Juans in this bird monitoring. Headwaters should explore how it can be incorporated into monitoring for CFLRP.
- Snowtopography concept development and field trip
 - The goal of snowtopography is to understand snow accumulation, retention and ablation across the landscape. We are interested in how forest treatments affect these dynamics.
 - It is not yet understood how these variables shift at a regional scale.

- Need to establish many snowtopography sites across the region to look at how different elevations, aspects, vegetation, etc. affect snow accumulation, retention and ablation.
 - There has been interest among Headwaters stakeholders in establishing sites on private and public lands.
 - Danny Margoles with the Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative (DWRF) has established a snowtopography site in Chicken Creek (near Dolores).
 - This was a beta site for developing the snowtopography [handbook](#)
 - We still need to better understand how this would work, so we could take a field trip to Chicken Creek to see their functioning snowtopography site.
- [May 14 birding and fire ecology field trip](#)
 - Please spread the word to any 7th-12th graders!
- May 20th concert in the park (Pagosa) to support non-profits
 - WAP will be advertising Wildfire Preparedness Day

Partner updates

- Robin Young (CSU Extension) is working on building technical advice for wolf reintroduction with CPW.
 - 30-150 wolves are set to be released on December 23rd.
 - Robin wants to have technical advice and stakeholder input to commission by the end of summer. The commission will then review it and release it to the public. This will be an opportunity for public comment.
- Wildfire Adapted opened programs for the season on April 11th and have had a phenomenal response so far.
 - The Marshall fire has gotten a lot of people's attention and there has been a lot of publicity about record droughts. This is likely encouraging people to act.
 - What WAP is offering this year:
 - Chipper rebate
 - Up to 50% for chipping services
 - Free property assessments
 - Cost-sharing program available for Highway 84 corridor and Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association
 - Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association finally just received the title for the greenbelt that twists through the subdivision
 - No work has been done on these green belts for many decades and it has become extremely overgrown.
 - The Property Owners Association has put together a 5-year plan to work on this greenbelt. This year will be the pilot project, where they will target key areas.
 - This project could be controversial because people have been relying on the overgrown green space as privacy from neighbors.
- San Juan Headwaters was awarded a FRWRM grant through Colorado Department of Natural Resources
 - Headwaters will use this to mirror NRCS' EQIP program and will target people who applied for EQIP but were denied.
 - EQIP is very popular in this area
 - Unfortunately, NRCS didn't receive much funding for EQIP this year. They received 60 applications and were only able to fund 1.
- Archuleta County has begun the process of updating their multi-hazard mitigation plan

- It is important to keep this plan up to date because it keeps them eligible for several grants.
- There is a big push to include wildfire mitigation as part of the plan. If this is successful, it will be a big deal because it will take our efforts to the county level.