



San Juan Headwaters FOREST HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership Meeting Agenda for Friday, May 20, 2022

Location: Western Heritage Event Center (County Fairgrounds), 344 US-84, Pagosa Springs, CO

Regular Meeting: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

In Attendance: Dana Guinn (MSI), Herb Grover (Weminuche Audubon), Bill Hudson (Pagosa Daily Post, PAWSD, SJWCD), Aaron Chavez (Triangle Custom Milling and Logs, Stateline Firewood and Logging), Steve Hartvigsen (retired USFS), Adam Tlachac (USFS PRD Silviculture), Bob Milford (PATC), Matt Tuten (USFS R2 State and Private Forestry), Adam Hirshberg (Studs Lumber), Matt Ford (Pagosa Forest Products, Clean Forest Energy), Doug Secrist (SJWCD), Bill Trimarco (WAP), Kyle O’Neill (NRCS), Robin Young (CSU Extension), Laura Hanna (MSI), Aaron Kimple (MSI)

MEETING NOTES

Plumtaw Fire

- Severity
 - No official release yet
 - Visual assessment: Patches of torching, patches of low severity (Mixed severity)
 - Mixed severity wildfire is necessary
- Community conversation
 - The fire is likely to have a strong impact on conversations/policy surrounding fire in this area.
 - This could be an opportunity to educate the public. Especially concerning forest treatments and the importance of fire on the landscape.
 - The fire will encourage nearby community members to do their own “research” on fire. This is a good time for experts to promote fire science via media.
 - Counter: some people prefer to hear via word of mouth. Different people have different views on what a “trusted source” is, and many folks will listen to their family/friends before they listen to experts.
 - Repetition and creativity in messaging are key
 - It is especially important to reach out to young people
 - A cultural shift may be necessary.
 - Influence social will towards being prepared and efficient use of funds
 - Hermits Peak might have negative impacts on these conversations, but the Plumtaw fire may give us an opportunity to counter negative narratives about fire and forest management
 - Current conversations regarding the impact of Hermits Peak on prescribed burns in New Mexico indicate that they may change the timing of burns, but not necessarily limit burning

- We need to be careful about how we frame this fire and the surrounding treatments.
 - Treatments may be helpful in controlling fire, but they do not guarantee anything. We cannot promise that treatments will always prevent fire or save homes and/or infrastructure.
 - May be better to frame around the efforts put into the treatments, rather than the “success” of the treatments.
- Fourmile/Dutton Ditch treatments
 - Treatment recognized by firefighters as helpful as it provided management opportunities and created decision space
 - Used for burn out second evening of fire
 - Cannot guarantee any outcome from forest management, but we can take management action based on outcomes we want to prevent or avoid using the best information and tools available that reduce the probability of undesirable outcomes
 - Prioritization
 - Many factors influence fire behavior including fire weather, slope, wind, RH, and fuels condition
 - Tell a story of trying vs. A story of succeeding
 - Avoid overcommitting to an outcome or overattributing an outcome to a specific action
 - Fire is a natural part of forest ecology
 - Is the treatment a good thing? Or should we let fires burn?
 - The purpose of the treatments was to prevent/limit fire and fire impacts in areas of interest
 - We may not always want to stop fire, but we do want to limit fire severity/frequency based on values and assets on the landscape and risk to community
 - A wide range of treatments in this high priority area (private, timber, etc.)
 - Fire may open more conversations with landowners and managers
 - Dutton ditch/Dutton Pipeline is an important water source for two reservoirs (Hatcher Lake and Stevens)
- Next Steps
 - Write something for the SUN, work with the Daily Post, PLPOA to get the word out
 - Communicate and empower by discussing opportunities and options for action
 - Have an evacuation plan
 - Smoke resources
 - Press series about impacts and recovery
 - Quotes from the emergency response team
 - Reach out to Ryan Foster, new director of Emergency Management in Archuleta County
 - Consider ways to reach new community members

Wood Products Business Challenges and Opportunities

- Triangle Custom Milling and Logs; Stateline Firewood and Logging
 - Sort and ship to different mills based on technology and capacity
 - Double handling
 - Waste turned into chip or processed as firewood

- Small diameter tops and slack are waste
 - Primarily cut and sell white fir, ponderosa pine, doug fir. Spruce is moving but checks poorly
- Challenges
 - Small diameter stems are difficult to process/utilize
 - Conflict in eastern Europe has stalled equipment manufacturing and shipping – no new equipment for a long while
 - Can ship some stuff elsewhere, but most mills are specific about diameter, species, etc.
 - Material removal requirements are not always served by the market, making this work uneconomical
 - Gas prices limiting ability to export and move wood more freely
 - Timing of harvest and processing of firewood
 - Treatments on private land can get pushback from nearby neighbors
 - Could help if FS or other agencies could conduct outreach to landowners
 - Negative interactions
 - Hauling
 - Gas prices are a challenge
 - Log distribution of 150–200-mile radius before lose profitability
 - Need to maintain infrastructure like roads and processing facilities so county, state, and town partners are important
 - Zoning
 - Labor and skill shortages
 - Some potential to set up for the long haul – material and market-wise
 - No one to grade lumber in the area
 - Small profit margins are a barrier to entry
 - Federal funding has a lot of strings attached
 - Too big to do it yourself, too small for automated systems
 - Technology
 - Need a kiln
 - Air drying may also be an option in this region, but demand is too steep for the time
 - Treating tube
 - Solar kiln (only 200-300 bdft at a time)
 - One-pass system
 - Milling operation that can process 3-16in logs while using a larger percentage of harvested material
 - Currently the closest one-pass system is in Blanca/Buena Vista
 - Market Challenges
 - Lumber is expensive
 - A small number of big corporations run the market
 - Neiman Forest Products
 - Lumber is being shipped across the country, and shipping is driving the cost of lumber.
 - Local lumber could be a solution to affordable housing, etc.
 - Money leaves the community without local industry. Without thriving local industry, local products aren't purchased for building

- Work processing is a low margin business, it's hard on equipment, and it's challenging to train and keep good employees
 - Lots of risk
 - Need community science to match available resources and community members that are supportive of forest products work
- Opportunities
 - Triangle customs has a new harvester
 - New position at Pagosa HS
 - Could promote the wood product industry and/or other natural resource-related careers to youth.
 - What does SJHFHP bring to the table?
 - Communication about future projects
 - Per acre funding opportunities and landowner match
 - General education and public outreach
 - Advocate for and communicate about diverse types of contracts
 - Support for industry when market dives
 - Pre-planning and maintenance matters
 - Organize a cooperative for purchase and use of a kiln
 - Support a lumber grader for the area
 - Adds to product value

Partner Updates

- SJNF
 - To Stage 1 fire restrictions as of today, Friday, May 20
 - New Forest Supervisor from Washington Office to detail beginning in June
 - Southwest Colorado CFLRP draft governance and next steps
 - Governance structure meeting to be hosted June
- Wood innovation grant to be announced next week
 - Pagosa Forest Products in hopeful
- Weminuche Audubon
 - 2022 monitoring sites established, project begins this weekend
 - May 14 birding and fire ecology field trip a success
- Snowtopography
 - Site visit scheduled with Joel Biederman Tuesday, May 31
 - Seeking additional Funding
- Fuelwood Banks
 - Feasibility study
- MSI
 - New hires
 - Agreement to support SJHFHP being processed
 - 2022 Forest and Fire Learning Series June 6 and 8

Partner Projects and Engagement Opportunities

- Summer tours and activities
- WEP Ranking Report from April 7 Workshop to be distributed
- Comfiest Tonight (5/20)
 - Bill Trimarco has been granted a few minutes of mic time – what should he say to folks while he's in the spotlight?
 - What you can do around your house right now to create defensible space

- Always have a plan, start a conversation with your neighbors
- Situational Awareness
- How to get involved and stay informed