



Meeting notes for Friday, May 19th, 2023

Location: Pagosa Visitor Center and Zoom

Regular meeting: 9:00 – 11:00 am

Attendance: Alex Handloff (MSI), Julia Ledford (MSI), Jake Kurzweil (MSI), Adam Tlachac (SJNF), Matt Tuten (SJNF), Josh Peck (SJNF), Sheryl Gunn (SJNF), Bob Milford (Pagosa Area Trails Council), Mercedes Siegle-Gaither (CSFS), Estevan Vega (CSFS), Bill Trimarco (WAP), Dana Guinn (Forest Stewards Guild), Herb Grover (Weminuche Audubon Society)

MEETING NOTES

Partner updates

- Pagosa Area Trails Council
 - Gearing up for a the summer season of clearing trees from the trails.
 - So far, it's looking like the tree count is down from previous years.
 - Conducted a crosscut saw training with the USFS, 18 people attended.
 - Also training the Backcountry Horsemen on crosscut saws.
- San Juan National Forest (SJNF)
 - Timber
 - Ongoing work on two projects:
 - Spur
 - This project is a repackaged component of the Pagosa Long Term Stewardship Contract in Turkey Springs.
 - Removal of timber (5"-9" trees and biomass) from 184 acres to reduce fuel loading.
 - Williams Divide (up Piedra Road)
 - This will be a traditional timber sale or Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC), depending on the economics and potential purchasers.
 - This project will not be considered for a service contract because it does have favorable economics.
 - SJNF awarded a mastication contract to a company out of Michigan at the northeast end of Turkey Springs.
 - The project area is roughly 1,000 acres and mastication will begin in late June.
 - SJNF was surprised not to see the usual local purchaser bid on this project.
 - It's not unusual to get bids from so far away, but usually the contract goes to local purchasers if they bid.
 - Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP)

- Booked out two weeks in advance for site assessments and are expecting more requests after the Plumtaw film.
- Working in the PLPOA greenbelts between Martinez and Piedra Road.
 - Mastication along a 20-foot buffer, totaling 30-40 acres.
 - PLPOA recently got the title for these lands and did 12 acres of work as a test last year.
 - Homeowners have been encroaching on the green belt and the HOA will make them move their stuff.
 - Funding from State Fire Assistance (SFA) WUI grant.
 - WAP is the recipient of the grant.
 - Not putting in for additional SFA.
- Lots of interest in the HWY 84 corridor.
- The Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) has been awarded but WAP hasn't seen the paperwork yet.
 - CWDG will provide funding for many of WAP's programs.
 - Timber Ridge HOA has contracts ready to go when the CWDG funding comes through.
 - When CWDG awards were announced and WAP was single award in Colorado, everyone on the Front Range was surprised because they don't know what's going on down here.
 - We should get James White to come visit.
 - James is a Cooperative Fire Specialist with the USFS and manages the CWDG.
- Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) Grant Program
 - Headwaters is administering this grant.
 - The money will be used this summer on one project at the far end of the airport runway, adjacent to Trish and Randall Davis' property.
 - The property owner requested that WAP line up the contractors to do the work.
 - There is about 210 acres of work to be done and about 60 acres of that can be reimbursed at a 60% rate.
- Mapping
 - There is a need for more frequent conversations between land managers centered around a map.
 - A map is used to initiate the conversation, but the actual conversation needs to happen more often.
 - This map might not be available to the public because of sensitive private lands information.
 - Bill Trimarco should check with partners to find out if they are comfortable sharing their accomplishments with other local land managers.
 - The Pagosa Ranger District has several random parcels of land that are adjacent to private lands and these should be included on a map to assist cross-boundary planning.
 - Could the USFS do NEPA for all of these little parcels, or would they each have to be planned separately?
 - SJNF would need to talk to stakeholders that would be highly interested in that NEPA.

- Also need to find a way to share spatial data more frequently.
 - AGOL group
 - ArcPro is a great tool but not all partners have access to it.
 - Could we develop a sub-committee for mapping and cross-boundary alignment?
 - For example, Oak Brush Hills is an area that needs work on both sides of the fence.
 - 35-acre parcels with terrible access if a fire started out there.
 - Partners from WAP, USFS, CSFS and NRCS should be at the table.
 - NRCS is getting \$11 billion but they are afraid to talk about it because they don't have the capacity to do the work.
 - There are opportunities for the USFS to support NRCS with on-the-ground work through the Joint Forestry Team.
 - CSFS has a working relationship with NRCS in Chaffee County and we could use that as a framework in this area.
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - Josh Braun, who was an NRCS forester in Cortez hired through the National Wild Turkey Federation is no longer working for the NRCS.
 - Ian Hopkins, the NRCS forester in Pagosa, is moving to Durango.
 - Pagosa is left with a vacancy again.
 - Kyle O'Neill does work in Pagosa but seems to have limited capacity.
- Weminuche Audubon Society (WAS)
 - Conducting volunteer trainings.
 - Birds are nesting and active!

Partnership updates and announcements

- Southwest Colorado CFLRP
 - Representation on CFLR governance structure
 - The governance structure indicates that each place-based collaborative has one representative that serves on the Coordinating Council.
 - The Coordinating Council is a decision-making body for the CFLRP and a recommendation-making body to the USFS.
 - Dana has been the representative for the last year and her term ends at the end of June.
 - Dana can't serve on the Coordinating Council in her new role at the Forest Stewards Guild.
 - Headwaters needs to choose another representative to serve on the Coordinating Council starting in July.
 - We will have a more in-depth conversation about this at our meeting in June.
 - The annual full stakeholder meeting will be held on June 13th in Durango.
 - The next Coordinating Council meeting will be held just before the stakeholder meeting. The public is welcome to listen in on all Coordinating Council meetings.
 - The three at-large members of the Coordinating Council will be nominated at the stakeholder meeting.

- Reminder to fill out [Collaborative Governance Assessment](#) if you have been involved with the Southwest Colorado CFLRP.
- Prescribed fire
 - About 500 acres burned on Animas City Mountain by the Bureau of Land Management.
 - Vallecito-Piedra in progress on the Columbine Ranger district.
 - It is unlikely that there will be a prescribed fire on the Pagosa Ranger District.
 - Brockover is the primary project but it is too wet.
 - There will likely be a burn on the Dolores Ranger District near Boggy Draw.
- Riff Raff 20th Anniversary tabling event
 - Headwaters will have a table and a matchstick forest activity.
 - 12:00 – 6:00 pm

Plumtaw film premiere debrief

- How did it go?
 - “Homerun.” -Josh Peck
 - 200 people attended, raised a few thousand dollars for the Partnership
 - Emphasize that 200 community members showed up to an event that elected officials didn’t attend.
 - No county commissioners or elected officials from the City or County.
 - An audience question opened the door to talk to the County about broadcast burning on private property.
 - The Plumtaw Fire was an emotional event for many people, which attributed to the success of this premiere.
- Takeaways
 - People have very little understanding of land ownership/management.
 - Could have added a little bit more information about how human ignitions are different than natural ignitions.
 - People are interest in this and they are interested in doing the work.
 - Invites the community to engage with a complex topic.
- How should we continue to share the film?
 - Another showing in Pagosa?
 - Have the Visitor Center play the film, PLPOA show to new homeowners.
 - School teachers want to show it in their classrooms.
 - There is interest in the 2-3-2 landscape and it pairs well with the Midnight Fire film.
 - A reporter from the Colorado Sun is writing an article about the Plumtaw film.
 - Education has to be paired with work on the ground.

2023 field season – potential field trips

- WAS bird monitoring
 - WAS is flexible with timing.
 - The volunteer monitoring season is May 20th – July 9th and they will focus on the Fawn Gulch and Jackson Mountain sites.
 - Consider planning a weekend bird monitoring activity for Headwaters partners.
- Visit CFLRP projects
 - Most projects will be in the pre-implementation phase this summer.
 - Return to the same location for a post-implementation tour.

- Partners want to see prescribed fire.
- Tag along with the MSI monitoring crew for one stop on the tour.
- Valle Seco is a good option.
- West Fork
 - SJNF has prescriptions written and needs to reevaluate them.
 - This would be a good opportunity for the Partnership to get out on the ground with Adam Tlachac to talk about what the previous prescription was, what adjustments need to be made and how it will meet objectives that are collaboratively defined.
 - The roads should be clear by June.
 - Using MCH caps on Douglas fir to protect them from bark beetle.
 - Contact Rusty from Bruce Spruce Ranch.
- East Fork dispersed recreation management plan/corridor management plan
 - Probably not a veg. project, so it's up to the Partnership if we want to dip our toes in other issues (recreation).
- Private lands tour
 - Stop on different lands to look at how prescriptions are being implemented.
 - The FRWRM project would be a good tour stop.
 - Can look at the fence line between the Davis property and this property.
 - Explore different objectives with treatments and see how that plays out on the ground.
- Jackson Mountain
 - Leave this one alone for a little while because Headwaters has done numerous tours in the last year and the community is still sensitive about the EA decision.

Snowtopography site selection

- Context
 - The Headwaters Partnership has been talking about snowtopography for over a year now.
 - There is now capacity and funding to set up a snowtopography site on the Pagosa District.
 - Ideally, the installation will happen between now and the first snowfall.
 - The USFS needs to have a proposal for sites submitted to the SJNF by July.
 - Snowtopography sites are made up of three different transects.
 - Snowtopography is nestled between two major issues in the American West:
 - Declining snowpack.
 - Decrease in moisture, leading to increase in susceptible fuel loading and catastrophic wildfires.
 - There has been interesting research about how moisture is affected by change in forest structure, but there isn't a lot of information at the spatial level.
 - There is a growing snowtopography network in Colorado that is answering questions about how forest structure impacts snow accumulation and retention.
- Site selection
 - Needs to be reasonably accessible in the winter and preferably has cell service.
 - There will be a paid researcher to install and monitor the snowtopography site, but this is also intended to be a citizen science project.
 - Will also install a snow pillow to quantify accumulation.
 - The Partnership and MSI is leaning towards the ASCC sites on Jackson Mountain.
- What types of questions are we trying to answer?

- How does forest type impact accumulation and retention?
- How do various wildfire mitigation strategies impact accumulation and retention?
- Pairs well with the ASCC research on Jackson Mountain.
 - Makes the Jackson Mountain location attractive for future research.
 - The PI on the ASCC project is also interested in snowtography.
 - Could potentially get more resources for snowtography in the future.
- Next steps
 - A small group of Partners will walk around Jackson Mountain to identify potential locations for a snowtography site.
 - Invite Julia Adams from the SJNF.