



Meeting notes for Friday, August 18th, 2023

Location: Zoom

Time: 9:00 – 11:00 am

Attendance: Alex Handloff (Coordinator, Mountain Studies Institute), Julia Ledford (Mountain Studies Institute), Bob Milford (Pagosa Area Trails Council), Bill Trimarco (Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Dana Guinn (Forest Stewards Guild), Clyde Church (La Plata County), Kyle O'Neill (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Adam Tlachac (San Juan National Forest)

MEETING NOTES

Welcome and introductions

Updates

- Partner updates
 - Pagosa Area Trails Council (PATC)
 - Volunteers are seeing 40-50% of down trees as usual.
 - PATC has been working with the Pagosa Outdoor Club to clear trees from trails.
 - PATC started clearing the Quartz Creek trails but were interrupted by the fire. There will likely be a lot of down trees in this area for next summer.
 - Expecting to clear a total of around 3,500 trees this year.
 - Timber Ridge is working with Bill Trimarco to do mitigation through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) that they were awarded.
 - Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP)
 - WAP is swamped with work under their recently-awarded CWDG.
 - They will be working on properties from 0.2 acres to 300 acres in size.
 - WAP will probably end up treating a few hundred acres this year, including several hundred properties and up to 60 homes directly protected.
 - Most of the contractors are booked out, so it has been a challenge to get the work done before the snow falls.
 - WAP needs to hire another person to support work in Archuleta County, but they don't have time to train someone before the end of the season.
 - Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation grant (FRWRM)
 - The FRWRM grant is managed by MSI and Bill Trimarco is working on implementing the funds on a private property in the Headwaters landscape.

- The landowner that was previously planning to utilize the funds from this grant has backed out and Bill is trying to find someone else.
 - Bill and MSI can, and probably will, request an extension on the grant, which is set to end in April 2024.
 - 2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership
 - The 2-3-2 hosted a successful meeting and tour in Chama on August 9th.
 - Toured private property and the Humphries Wildlife Management Area.
 - The next meeting will be in January or February and will be focused on monitoring and adaptive management.
 - Some of the monitoring results will be coming from the Headwaters landscape!
 - Dana Guinn was appointed to the Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership (WEP) board.
 - WEP is looking for a new coordinator for the Partnership. If you know someone that might be interested, [contact Dana](#).
 - San Juan National Forest
 - There is a mastication contract up for bid in the Turkey Springs area.
 - The contract includes 184 acres of thinning and fuels reduction.
 - SJNF is trying to get more local operators involved in the BPA (brink of purchase agreement) list.
 - There are currently 28 entities listed on the BPA list for timber.
 - There is also a traditional timber sale at Trail Ridge out for bid right now.
 - Trail Ridge is up the Piedra road before the cutoff to the Weminuche Valley.
 - This contract will include heavy white fir thinning.
 - SJNF is hoping that this work will knock down some of the western spruce budworm impacts that we are seeing in the area.
 - SJNF is trying to keep timber contracts smaller so they can reach a broader bidding pool and manage the costs internally.
 - There is a lack of operators to carry out work on larger contracts.
 - There is a perception that the SJNF has deep pockets because of the CFLRPs and the national attention that this area is getting.
 - The timber industry is a greying workforce.
 - Headwaters should talk about what we can do to promote a growing workforce.
 - Mesa Community College received a state grant for forester training.
 - Southwest Conservation Corps turns out some great sawyers.
 - The USFS should have local hiring authority.
 - SJNF was able to do immediate hires for a few local crew members this season.
 - Trying to get new folks in the door is one thing (considering challenges with recruitment) but thinking about how organizations can change to become more attractive places to work is another.
- Snowtopography
 - A group of Headwaters partners and Jake Kurzweil, a hydrologist with MSI, walked around on Jackson Mountain and selected a location for a snowtopography site.

- The site is within an ASCC control unit.
 - Site installation is scheduled for September 25th-28th, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm.
 - Setting up a snowtopography site is a lot of work! We need volunteers to help dig holes in the ground. If you are interested in helping for some or all of the time, please reach out to [Alex](#).
- Fires
 - Partners are impressed with the communication from the San Juan.
 - The [Bear Creek](#) and [Quartz Ridge](#) fires are under full suppression, but firefighters aren't directly engaging because of dangerous terrain and down trees.
- West Fork decision
 - Headwaters toured the area in June to discuss options for continuing with the current NEPA or expanding the NEPA to leverage work on adjacent private lands.
 - Read the [tour brief](#) to learn more.
 - Adam Tlachac did a field recon and found that the area is rather complex, including multiple small streams, a diversion that goes to Bruce Spruce Ranch and osprey nests.
 - The SJNF would likely need to cross private property to access some stands.
 - The osprey nests and winter recreation impose timing restrictions on any work that would be done.
 - There is also quite a variety of vegetation types along the elevational gradient.
 - Adam is going to pursue a categorical exclusion (CE) for the area outside of the original NEPA.
 - He is very open to feedback in the development of the CE.
 - CEs don't have as much public engagement as an environmental analysis (EA) because they include low-impact activities.
 - The contract will probably have to be several years long because of the timing restrictions.
 - This is a highly visible area and Josh Peck (District Ranger, decision-maker) will take the optics of the treatment into consideration.
- Forest and Fire Learning Series
 - MSI has hosted an annual Forest and Fire Learning series in Durango for many years. The event is designed to educate the broader public about living with fire.
 - This year, MSI has received funding to expand the Forest and Fire Learning Series to communities across southwest Colorado, including Pagosa Springs.
 - Imagining a community event that builds on the momentum of the Plumtaw Film
 - What we want to know:
 - What does the community want to know?
 - What are the gaps in understanding of forest and fire ecology in this community?
 - How do we engage the broader community, not just Headwaters partners, in conversations about fire and forest health?
 - SJNF gets a lot of walk-ins with questions about “trees, bugs and crud.”
 - Folks are asking about forest health and how it plays into broader forest and fire ecology.
 - We want people to understand that disturbance is part of the forest ecology of this area.
 - “Dealing with death”
 - There are a lot of interesting forest pathogen relationships in this forest ecosystem.

Headwaters priority areas for Southwest Colorado CFLRP

- Purpose of this activity
 - The Projects and Places Committee is tasked with making recommendations to the Forest Service for projects to do and/or areas to focus on.
 - The Collaboratives' job is to identify priority projects and share that information with Projects and Places.
 - Alex and Julia will be presenting a list of priority areas/projects to Projects and Places on behalf of Headwaters.
 - But first, we need some context about existing priority areas to get the conversation started.
 - This will be an ongoing conversation.
- Priority areas are in yellow on this [map](#).
 - If you have additional information to contribute, please reach out to [Julia Ledford](#).
 - Are there any priority areas that are missing from this map?
 - Which areas might be considered legacy priority areas?

Priority area		Values	Projects	Priorities
Upper Piedra <i>This might be an area where we have moved the needle and won't be developing new projects.</i>	Poison Park	Recreation Research in the Huerto timber sale, which was designed to mimic disturbance This area is not traditional WUI, but there are important watershed values in Williams Creek and the Piedra. The sustained impact on the timber industry in this area is spreading to the rest of the area.	The Huerto timber sale targets white fir. The Huerto and Pagosa Creek timber sales were prepared together. The Bear Creek Fire is burning to the west of Poison Park, might put a fire line on the ridge. This work followed a prioritization process from Headwaters. These are all completed projects.	Public perception of timber sales (log truck traffic) Sustain industry involvement and engagement in the area Forest resilience
	Sand Bench		Two timber sales: South Sandy, North Fork Work followed a prioritization process	
	Trail Ridge		Timber sale out for contract now Work followed a prioritization process	

	Pagosa Creek			
Plumtaw		Dutton Diversion ditch – critical water source for Pagosa Springs Recreation, hunting	Previous work along the Fourmile Road, prompted by Headwaters. Plumtaw fire film and communications	
Aspen Springs		WUI Landscape connectivity	Mostly private property, WAP is organizing several hundred acres of work in the area.	Cross-boundary potential with SUIT, USFS.
Jackson Mountain (<i>add to map</i>)		Recreation Research (ASCC, snowtopography) WUI	ASCC Snowtopography Jackson Mountain EA	
Mill Creek <i>Rio Chama CFLRP</i>		WUI Recreation Watershed San Juan lineage cutthroat Wood products for local industry	Rito Dos timber sale Road improvements paid for by Rio Chama (Nipple Mtn., Porcupine Rd) Fish barriers	Likely place for a fire to start and spread to the Navajo and Blanco watersheds
Blanco Basin <i>Rio Chama CFLRP</i> *One of the highest priorities for Headwaters		Private property, ranches Recreation Source watershed for San Juan-Chama Project Diversion		Source-watershed protection Cross-boundary opportunities between SJNF and private property Ingress/egress
Kenny Flats <i>Rio Chama CFLRP</i>		Recreation – hunting Wildlife HWY 84 corridor – lots of people moving through here Connectivity nexus: watersheds, communities, fire		Fire starts are a concern – fire transmission into the higher country

	transmission, wildlife migration		
Eightmile <i>Rio Chama CFLRP</i>	WUI Recreation – 4x4 trails		CR 335 ingress/egress concerns
Price Lakes <i>Rio Chama CFLRP</i>			