



## Meeting notes for Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Location:** Timber Ridge Clubhouse, Pagosa Springs and Zoom

**Time:** 9:00 – 11:00 am

**Attendance:** Alex Handloff (Mountain Studies Institute), Julia Ledford (Mountain Studies Institute), Melissa May (Mountain Studies Institute), Dana Guinn (Forest Stewards Guild), Matt Ford (Pagosa Forest Products), Bob Milford (Pagosa Area Trails Council), Caleb Stotts (Chama Peak Land Alliance), Bill Trimarco (Wildfire Adapted Partnership), Tim Haarmann (Banded Peak Ranch), Mercedes Siegle-Gaither (Colorado State Forest Service), Estevan Vega (Colorado State Forest Service), Bryce Powell (Colorado State Forest Service), Clyde Church (La Plata County), Veronica Medina (Archuleta County), Adam Tlachac (San Juan National Forest), Josh Peck (San Juan National Forest), Sheryl Gunn (San Juan National Forest), Matt Tuten (Region 2 USFS)

### MEETING NOTES

Welcome and introductions

Partner updates

- Dana Guinn won a Regional Foresters Award!
  - Thanks to Josh Peck for nominating Dana.
- Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)
  - The Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to National Forest Lands (CAFA) grant is currently open.
    - You can find the application [here](#) and the instructions [here](#).
    - Pre-proposals are due to the Durango Field Office on January 10<sup>th</sup>. Final applications are due March 17<sup>th</sup>.
    - CAFA projects have to be completed on USFS-adjacent lands within the next three years.
    - Josh Braun, forester out of the Durango Field Office, is putting together applications and ideas.
    - [Todd Loubsky](#), Southwest Area CSFS Wildfire Resilience Coordinator, is a great resource for CAFA grant-specific questions.
  - Bryce Powell is the new(ish) forester working with Estevan Vega. Bryce has fire experience and will help with CWPPs and CAFA. He started in June.
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP)
  - 2023 accomplishments:
    - 80 site assessments
    - 6 community assessments

- 1 community wildfire protection plan (CWPP)
    - 180 acres of treatment on private lands, mostly within 200 feet of structures
  - WAP is in the process of updating their strategic plan.
- San Juan National Forest (SJNF)
  - The San Juan River Village (SJRJV) requested a presentation on the SJNF's work on Jackson Mountain.
    - The presentation gave an overview of the history of work on Jackson Mountain, ongoing work and planned work.
    - Overall, the SJRV was receptive to the information and supportive of the work on Jackson Mountain.
    - There were questions about impacts on recreation use and types of forest management activities.
    - Headwaters should engage the SJRV HOA on a more regular basis by inviting them to meetings and tours and attending their HOA meetings.
      - The Partnership could host a field tour that is focused on different types of forest management.
      - There is also a need to deepen the understanding of prescribed fire, as this is the next step in restoration activities on Jackson Mountain.
      - CSFS also has increasing capacity to help with outreach and education events.
  - The Durango Herald wrote an article titled [\*Working with 'good fire'\*](#) that talks about the Trail Springs fire and other managed wildfires on the San Juan National Forest last summer.
    - SJNF leadership identified some things in the article that weren't communicated well, and highlighted them as priorities for clear communication in the future.
  - The V Rock land acquisition is nearly complete and a press release will be submitted when it is in the public trust.
    - This is a 160-acre parcel off Buckles Lake Road.
    - Headwaters provided a letter of support for the land acquisition.
    - Structures were removed from the property this fall.
    - The SJNF is working with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation on the project.
  - Price Lakes
    - The SJNF is on the cusp of beginning an experimental, collaborative planning process for Price Lakes.
      - This will involve a team of willing partners and adjacent landowners.
      - The project will look at a relatively small parcel of SJNF-managed land in the context of the larger landscape of private land.
    - This process may involve adjusting POD boundaries that will be used for a vegetation management proposal that will go through the NEPA process.
    - Regardless of what happens with Price Lakes, the Pagosa Ranger District has identified the need to re-examine the location of POD boundaries and reassess how we are thinking about them.
      - When PODs were developed, we thought of them as a response tool, but now we are using them for planning.
    - There are folks that are interested in observing this process from the outside to see how pre-planning processes turn into NEPA.
- Chama Peak Land Alliance (CPLA)

- Awarded funds through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do work on private lands that are adjacent to federal lands.
  - Work will be done this summer.
- Awarded \$3 million through the Bureau of Reclamation.
  - CPLA is still in the initial stages of developing a work plan.
- Both of these grants are focused on forest health and watershed protection in the source watersheds for the San Juan-Chama Project.
- Banded Peak Ranch
  - CSFS, MSI and CPLA are working together on a project at Banded Peak Ranch that will measure the impact of an aggressive forestry treatment on water quality in a stream that is home to a population of Colorado River cutthroat trout.
    - This project is essentially testing the best management practices for forestry work related to water quality.
    - The cut was done last summer.
    - The data hasn't come back yet, but it will be interesting to see the outcome.
  - Banded Peak also has its own snowtopography site, which is comparing snow accumulation and retention across different treatment types, such as mastication and commercial harvest.
  - Carbon markets project
    - Banded Peak is trying to couple carbon projects with existing conservation easements, but it is challenging.
      - The forest management plans say one thing and the easements say another thing. Also, some of the easements were written up to 30 years ago, so the variety of easements have very different language in them.
    - The USFS has created a few programs aimed at getting landowners in underserved communities engaged in private markets for climate resilience (conservation finance).
      - While most of these programs are targeted at small-acreage landowners (which does not apply to Banded Peak), most of Archuleta County is considered underserved.
      - Tim Haarmann should contact Matt Tuten if he is interested in learning more about these programs.
- Jackson Mountain snowtopography site
  - The snowtopography site is up and running and Bob Milford and his cohort at the Outdoor Club will be sampling throughout the winter.
  - We could do a tour to see the snowtopography site this winter, but trampling the snow along the transects is a concern, so we would have to behave ourselves.
  - Headwaters should also get in contact with the San Juan River Village to inform them of the snowtopography site's existence and express the importance of leaving the snow undisturbed.

#### Review Headwaters/MSI work plan and budget

- Work plan
  - The work plan will be updated annually by the Oversight Group and approved by the Partnership.
  - The new work plan was updated to match current practice.
  - The new agreement, including the work plan, can be viewed [HERE](#).

- Budget
  - Headwaters cash
    - Contributions from Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District (PAWSD), Banded Peak Ranch, San Juan Water Conservation District, Alpine Cascade Ranch and others.
    - These are unrestricted funds, which provides flexibility for projects we can support and items we can purchase, and allows the Partnership to continue functioning if the government shuts down or USFS funds are otherwise unavailable.
    - Alex has developed a fundraising calendar which outlines the needs and timelines for requesting money from these donors.
      - Just last night, Alex presented to PAWSD to request a donation for the upcoming year. Because they are building a new water plant, their budget is tighter than usual and they wanted to cut their contribution in half. Matt Ford saved the day by stepping in to provide additional context about the incredible work that Headwaters has and continues to do to prioritize water resources for the community. PAWSD agreed to continue their full \$7,000 donation to Headwaters and they had a very productive conversation. Thanks to PAWSD for their support!
      - Headwaters should also track the County and the Town's budget timeline and get on their schedule to present at least once/year to request funding.
  - The USFS/MSI agreement has \$38,000 remaining until June, when the agreement will renew.
  - The Oversight Group has decided to change the budget calendar to align with the USFS funding cycle, which is June to June.
  - The Partnership approved the budget and work plan.
- Discussion
  - Tri-State is seeking funding through CSFS. This could be a good opportunity to partner with them on private lands or cross-boundary projects.
  - Headwaters should add social and community events to the calendar to attend. They aren't always specific fundraising events, but the outreach is beneficial.
  - The Oversight Group is asking the Partnership for increased engagement in Headwaters meetings and to spread the word about the Partnership.
    - MSI isn't solely responsible for running the show. The relationships that Partners already have in the community are valuable and should be utilized to further our engagement.