



San Juan Headwaters

FOREST HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

October 18th Meeting

Location: Archuleta County Administrative Office (398 Lewis St. Pagosa Springs, CO)

Meeting time: 9:00 am-11:00 am

AGENDA

9:00-9:10 am: Introductions

Ice Breaker: Favorite Halloween Costume

- Alex Handloff: SJHFHP Coord./MSI
- Claire Caldwell: MSI
- Herb Grover: Weminuche Audubon Society
- Abe Proffitt: Partnership Coordinator for the San Juan
- Matt Tuten: USFS Regional Office
- Danielle Leentjes: WEP Coordinator
- Al Pfistor: WEP Vice Chair
- Caleb Stotts: Executive Director of Chama Peak Land Alliance
- Jack Harper: County Manager
- Bob Milford: PATC President
- Bill Trimarco: Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- Adam Tlachac: Pagosa Ranger District
- Wayne Hooper: County Commissioner Candidate (Archuleta, District 1)
- Wayne Sorenson: Pagosa resident
- Laurie Sorenson: Pagosa resident
- John Ranson: County Commissioner Candidate (Archuleta, District 2)
- Adam Hirshberg: Quality Irrigation Solutions (Ignacio)
- Laurel Smerch: Pueblo Community College
- Veronica Medina: Archuleta County

9:10-9:40 am: Presentation by Pagosa Area Recreation Coalition

1. Their work, updates, and the ongoing recreation plan
 - Bob Milford: Pagosa ---- control Council

- Pagosa Area Trails Council
 - Around since 1997
 - Been a group that gets all different user groups together
 - Started clear trails campaign in response to large Engelmann spruce trees killed from beetles; Trees have been falling on trails at alarming rate
 - Successfully cleared 36,922 trees off trails since 2018
 - Got Forest Service involved
 - Filed 520,000 raised about 30,000 cash match to hire trail crews
 - Such high demand for trail crews created issues; went to public to recruit help
 - Filed again in 2022 for 150,000 and was approved
 - Filed a grant to buy equipment for OHV trails 71,000
 - Always had second highest score in grant ratings
 - Trees still falling at alarming rates
 - Cleared 95-100% of trails since 2020
 - Website includes detailed info on the trails for public to use
 - Go to trail heads four times a year to educate the public on trail etiquette, LNT, Etc.
 - Just filed another grant for 196,000 and raised over 100,000 in a cash match
 - People see the need and importance of clearing the trails and they have seen a lot of support in response to their efforts
 - Forest service budget cuts are going to be able to support the trail clearing project as previously able to so there's a push to raise more funds
 - Emphasis on the importance of the project, success they have, and the continued need for the project as trees continue to fall at high rates
- Jackson Mtn project last year went sideways but exemplified the lack of communication in the community on outdoor recreation
 - Don't really have a sustainable community supported recreation claim
 - Started conversations and wanted to get all types of ppl together for meetings
 - Filed grant back in April
 - Cindy Williams introduced bob to regional partnership initiative run by CPW
 - Had meeting with them about grant and opportunity for April 30
 - Were able to get 450000 approved in June to hire facilitator coordinated
 - Hired SC group that are familiar with the area
 - Formed PARK
 - Working for the past few months getting organized

- Organized leadership committee made up of members from PLPOA, Forest Service, Archuleta County, ___ County, Mineral County, Southern Ute Tribe, PATC/User groups, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Now creating PARC task force
 - Invited ~35 ppl to have discussions and come up with a sustainable community supported recreation plan to deal with all different issues and entities
 - Gonna take about a year and will break out into multiple smaller groups
 - Gonna do virtual meetings
 - Next would be to get community support and funding to carry out a sustainable community supported recreation plan
 - Will also have public meetings and lunch surveys later on for feedback
 - Folks selected for task force are representatives from all different areas
- Another thing they want to do is for PARC to continue as an organization and handle outdoor recreation for all entities
 - Dream is to have executive director w representatives for all different entities
- Issues dealing with include:
 - Town of Pagosa looking for grant for more river access
 - Motorized vs not motorized
 - E bikes
 - Snowmobilers and cross country skiers in wolf creek corridor and rio grande
 - East Fork road management
- Stresses need for conversations, collaboration, and consistency of an organization (PARK) to continue conversations and get things done for positive recreation.

2. Q&A and discussion of how SJHFHP values align, support, and overlap.

- Question about whether they have people with forestry/ag backgrounds. Bob continued to explain the variety of stakeholders in the task force
 - Task group chosen by defining 8 different categories and ensuring there are representatives from each categories

- Regional partnership initiative main goal is to provide good outdoor recreation while protecting natural resources and wildlife
 - Want to educate the public with a rise in tourism and population increases
- Discussion about what NEPA is and how it works
 - A common misconception is that it is the most environmentally preferred alternative. In reality, the decision maker does not need to do that and will weigh lots of things to make a final decision.
- Looking for a representative from San Juan Headwaters!
 - Kick off meeting on November 12, 2024
 - Invitation only for PARC task force
 - Will have the website up soon!

9:40-10:10 am: Presentation by Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership

1. Their work, updates, ongoing projects on Yamaguchi Park and Gateway Project
 - Danielle: WEP Coordinator
 - Brief Background
 - Incorporated as a non profit in 23
 - 501C3 in 2024 with purpose of implementing collaborative projects to address water related issues in upper san juan watershed
 - History: WEP formed 6 years ago to investigate environmental and recreational water needs as well as cultural infrastructure needs in upper san juan watershed
 - Come up with Integrative water management plan (IWMP)
 - Multi year process with three phases
 - Master plan for water needs in upper san juan
 - Identified 25 potential projects across the various needs of environmental, recreation, and ag infrastructure
 - Basically guiding document for project implementation but new projects are coming up all of the time
 - Some of the original 25 potential projects have been implemented with the help of the IWMP
 - Currently working on 4 projects from IWMP
 - Most active is the Pagosa Gateway Project
 - Improves two miles of river restoration projects starting at Basin Coop and two miles upstream (ending at day lumber)
 - 18 property owners participating in this
 - ROughly 1.25 M dollar project but unfortunately does not get you as much as you'd think it would
 - At time applied for those grants, they had fiscal sponsors
 - Town of Pagosa springs CCWB (Largest grant)
 - Bureau of reclamation (second largest grant)

- Trout Unlimited (fiscal sponsor)
 - Sub awarded WEP the grants so WEP can be project manager and design contractor can go directly through WEP
 - Also have many community partners, regional partners, and non profits because there was also a 225,000 match WEP had to fulfill
- What is the Pagosa Gateway Project
 - River resiliency in the face of warmer and drier times as well as flooding
 - Very erratic flows year to year
 - What does resiliency look like?
 - Improving overall health and ecology of corridor, improving aquatic habitat, minimizing stream bank hazards, enhance recreation by increase number of days you can navigate the river (based on CSFs)
 - Will accomplish by creating low flow channels, channel shaping, grading, bank stabilization, reestablishing riparian vegetation
 - Status of progress
 - At 60% design
 - Will continue to refine
 - Started public input around Sept 18 on mypagosa.org
 - Nothing huge came out of the public input
 - Did have 30 % design public input back in may when designs were still very conceptual
 - Have started a ton of permitting
 - Have done tons of assessments for EA and NEPA process
 - Shooting for 100% design of march or april of 2025 and for construction to start in fall of 2025 and wrap up bc bureau of reclamation grant ennds at end of 2025, although largest grant is good until 2028
 - Did get permission for planting in 2026
- South Yamaguchi
 - WEP is partnered w Town of Pagosa Spring
 - Town of Pagosa Springs is project manager
 - Open house was this week and showcased 30% conceptual design for feedback

- Basically taking river access road and moving it 1500 ft downstream with addition of new ramp and road
- Also improving aquatic habitat to promote resiliency
- Upgrading irrigation system in Yamaguchi Park
- Supposed to be done by the end of next year
- Also some wetlands restoration in that area
- More info at mypagosa.org
- Future Ag project (nameless)
 - Have seed money from a different reclamation grant
 - Part of this grant was 81,000 to come up with a future project
 - This project comes out of IWMP
 - Primary diversion structures for irrigation ditches
 - Want to collect data, develop a ranking process to rate structures, provide recommendations, and complete up to three conceptual designs for the diversions
 - Then can apply for more grants to get project designs to 100%, shovel ready
 - Can then apply for more grants for more conceptual designs
 - San Juan Conservation District put together a team that surveyed 71 miles of ditches, headgates, etc and identified 8.6 M dollars worth of projects
 - New effort to find a priority and the updated costs for projects
 - Working with Cynthia Percel and hope to have RFP out this fall for ranking work and conceptual
- Always have opportunities to join WEP effort
 - Bucket2E grant specific to addressing drought type issues
 - Found out turn around was very fast and needed a project with conceptals and cost estimates
 - WEP chose Upper San Juan Park Ditch Diversion (Not official name)
 - 2.2 M worth of work
 - Had conceptals and needed updated costs
 - Park ditch diversion is a hot mess with safety risks, waterflow efficiency issues, blocking fish passages
 - Will create fish friendly passages with slope adjustments, replace hazardous materials with stable

- rock and grout, stabilizing and revegetating river banks, self sustaining diversion structure
 - Project also addresses landslide stabilization to secure water delivery for ag and municipal use
 - In stream work around san juan river village to improve flow capacity and fish migration
 - Will have similarities to Pagosa Gateway
 - This will not have public access
 - There will be a void between the river projects
 - 18 projects on this list and its all or nothing
 - Possible Future Collaboration with Pagosa Ranger District on East Fork Road
 - Interested in collaboration to do in stream work and some riparian vegetation and streambank stabilization
 - Been in contact and working with Josh
 - Nothing has been developed but would love to have further conversations
 - Reach out to Danielle for questions or collaboration
 - Purpose of implementing
- Q&A and discussion of how SJHFHP values align, support, and overlap.
 - All on private lands?
 - Yes, and full participation between 18 property owners
 - All property owners are all in and there have been a lot of meetings with landowners to ensure understanding and participation
 - After this section of river is there plan to move further up river?
 - Addressed later in discussion
 - With Fall of 2025 goal, are you working with the contractor?
 - Went through RFP process, this time, last year
 - Hired Fly Water out of fort collins
 - Many interested bidders
 - Chose design builder with primary focus in process based restoration
 - New Access Planned?
 - Needs to be a separate campaign
 - There is movement with new access... Town of Pagosa has filed grant with GOCO to buy 4 acres where the propane property currently is for the purpose of access
 - Why was the area picked?
 - The initial access that was desired did not pan out, which led to the two miles chosen for restoration along with need designated in the IWMP
 - Potential for boat ramps if there was funding?

- Key is to keep up discussions but not out of the question

10:10-10:45 am: Partner Updates

- Bill
 - San Juan Headwaters 5 years ago, NRCS was doing most of private lands forestry work in area
 - Basically they could not service all the people
 - American Forest Foundation worker identified a bunch of ppl not getting help w grants
 - At the time, the coordinator decided to go ahead with FRWRM grant
 - Had list of ppl trying to get money and couldn't get it and
 - Got the grant awarded in 2021
 - “Comedy of errors” and anything that could go wrong went wrong
 - Kicked money over to Bill to manage grant and everyone bailed out of the project
 - Three years later now working on different persons land and had access to a guy ready to do work until the landholder got terminal cancer and property got sold and
 - Started over three or four times, got extension on grant, finally it is complete!
 - 34 acres in Hidden Valley
 - Forest health partner got bid and went in phenomenal equipment (chippers and masticators) that is providing great results
 - Most logs got chipped
 - Oak ground up and regurgitated back into the dirt
 - Led to a couple other projects in the area
 - Wildfire adapted sponsored another project out there for 25 acres
 - Extremely wealthy people that dont care about getting grant money back to their property and are happy with the efforts
- FRWRM grant completed in Hidden Valley
- Additional updates

10:45-11:00 am: SJHFHP updates

- San Juan Water Conservancy District has a streaming of their video “The Value of Snow” on the 18th
 - Will send out official invitation
 - Got some grants for videos and outreach
 - There will be booths
 - Show up for some fun!
- Funding updates (NFF and FRWRM proposals)
 - Just put in for another capacity grant

- Cross SW CO mapping endeavor for better sense of all the things happening
 - Alex will be sharing more if we get it
 - Grant about 25,000
- Finding out next month about the NFF grant

- Call for radio interview participation. [Go to our webpage](#) to hear previous interviews.
- Thinking of additional outreach opportunities over fall
- Tour on Reservoir Hill
 - Tour was a hit
 - Done with touring, unless weather does something strange
- Next month, Josh and Adam will do a presentation on what happened on San Juan National Forest Pagosa Ranger District and what's going to happen next year