



Four Rivers Regular Meeting

Date: June 16th, 2022

Time: 9:00-11:00 AM

Location: In person at Mountain Studies Institute (679 E. 2nd Street, Unit 9) and virtual via Zoom

Agenda:

- Welcome, meeting agreement, and outcomes (5 minutes)
- Introductions (5 minutes)
- Fire updates
- Partner updates (20 minutes)
- Junction Creek EA update and tour concept
- Presentation of Flagstaff Watershed Protection Program
 - This is an example of cross-boundary implementation by the City of Flagstaff and the Coconino NF
- Group discussion – cross-boundary implementation
 - We have made great progress in cross-boundary planning. How do we now advance actual cross-boundary implementation? What opportunities do we have? What barriers do we have?

In attendance: Anthony Culpepper (MSI), Julia Ledford (MSI), Laura Hanna (MSI), Aaron Kimple (MSI), Alison Layman (La Plata County), Brooklyn Pitsch (RMAP Intern, USFS), Steve McClung (CPW), Paulette Church (Falls Creek Ranch), Jimbo Buickerood (SJCA), Gary Shroeder (volunteer tree planting), Steve Monroe (resident), Tim Leishman (SJNF), Kyle O'Neill (NRCS), Andy Hawk (Timber Age Systems), Molly Pitts (Colorado Timber Industry Association, Intermountain Forest Association), Danny Margoles (DWRF), Jacob Dahlin (Coconino National Forest)

Notes:

Welcome, meeting agreement, and outcomes

- New conference table at MSI office from Timber Age Systems
 - Wood from Falls Creek Ranch

Fire updates

- Stage 2 Fire Restrictions on the San Juan
 - These restrictions are likely to remain for a while
 - 9 counties across the forest are all on the same page
 - Think about and evaluate communication with the public and tourists about fire restrictions
 - Do we have sufficient signage?
 - Although we aren't there yet, Stage 3 Fire Restrictions are the next step if our fuels continue to dry out.
 - Our fuel conditions have been a few weeks behind New Mexico and Arizona, who are already in Stage 3.
 - SJNF is feeling the pressure because New Mexico and Arizona visitors are coming here since their forests are already closed.
- We are on high alert this weekend because lightning is likely
- Gas stations and grocery stores are still selling bundled firewood
 - This represents a gap in communication between fire conditions and public communication.
 - How can we close this gap?
 - Staple signs to firewood bundles with current fire restrictions
 - Post signage at gas stations and grocery stores where firewood is sold
 - Stop selling firewood all together during fire restrictions
- The threat of the Perin's Peak Fire has diminished. Fire crews have been pulled out and the area has returned to its seasonal wildlife closure.
- The Plumtaw Fire was held at the Four Mile Road, where the Headwaters Partnership and SJNF have done treatments in the past.

Partner updates

- Southwest Colorado CFLRP:
 - CFLRPs (Rio Chama and Southwest Colorado) are coming together and funds are moving through the system
 - Southwest Colorado CFLRP Rollout: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022 at the La Plata County Fairgrounds
 - 12:30-4:30 PM in the Main Exhibition Hall

- Goals:
 - Present governance structure for the Southwest Colorado CFLRP
 - Begin setting up the committee structure for the CFLRP
 - SJNF will provide updates on projects they have planned for the first several years
 - Begin developing a work plan – the clock is ticking!
 - Keep in mind that the governance plan can be altered as necessary. It is best to speak up now before we get the whole thing moving.
 - We need to keep the community involved throughout the process, and they should be involved from the get-go. **If there are folks that should be part of this process and aren't already, direct them to the governance committee to get them involved.**
- La Plata County
 - State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) Team to do work in La Plata County this summer
 - The crews will be doing roadside mitigation work along county roads
 - Fire restrictions also restrict equipment use for fire mitigation
 - Spark arresting device required on chainsaws
 - Must have a fire extinguisher nearby
 - Must have a round-ended shovel
 - The agreement needs to be updated to abide with the standards of the fire restrictions. Stage 3 would halt mitigation.
 - The County should be hearing back about their COSWAP grant proposals in the next few weeks. We are hopeful for good news!
 - RMRI has made this area very attractive for COSWAP.
 - The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is stretching the capacity of our local governments (counties, cities, fire departments), especially in small, rural counties.
 - Although there are a lot of opportunities to apply for federal grants because of the IIJA, the funding usually needs to come through local government. They are then responsible for fronting the cost and invoicing to the federal government. There are several issues with this:
 - It takes a long time for the county to be reimbursed
 - Puts the county in a vulnerable position because their credit can be perceived negatively
 - Tremendous amount of paperwork
 - Local governments are hesitant to take on FEMA and other federal grants that would bring good work to the area. This is especially problematic in small, rural counties.
 - There are some solutions to this roadblock:

- Talk to our senators and representatives
 - Reduce the amount of reporting required from the county
 - The federal government could turn money around faster
- USFS
 - 90-day review on prescribed fire from the United States Forest Service
 - It seems like this truly is a review and that the USFS may just be reconsidering burn windows.
- San Juan National Forest
 - Started inventory for the Grassy Mountain Shared Stewardship project
 - \$1 million to treat 470 acres around the Forest Lakes Subdivision
 - This is the first major cross-boundary project on the Columbine (at least recently)
 - Hoping to have the RFP out in October
 - Junction Creek EA
 - Had to submit a roadless proposal for the EA planning document
 - A decision should be made in the next few weeks, but we shouldn't have any trouble getting it approved.
 - SJNF wants to do a variety of treatments in the roadless area to improve resiliency.
 - The Columbine doesn't currently have a District Ranger or a NEPA specialist, so don't expect things to move too fast.
 - We will likely have a decision by next year.
 - The Columbine and Flagstaff Ranger Districts put in a proposal to WO for grant funding for the Wood for Life Program
 - Build capacity with Conservation Corps, introduce Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps to the area
 - Would bring \$4 million for the Columbine
 - Discussions are happening across collaboratives about potential sort yard(s) for San Juan National Forest
 - Mighty Arrow Foundation has suggested we **put forward a proposal for a feasibility study**
 - Looking geographically across the SJNF
 - Things to consider:
 - Haul distances
 - Location of priority acres
 - Who manages the sort yard?
 - **Other groups have done feasibility studies on sort yards, so we should look at these before creating our own.**
- Mountain Studies Institute

- MSI will be monitoring in the Lone Pine area of the Dolores District at the end of June
- The last monitoring in the area was in 2020
- NRCS
 - NRCS just signed two forestry contracts
 - One is near the Plumtaw Fire, and the other is near Chimney Rock, just off the highway
 - Mexican Spotted Owl could be moving from threatened to the endangered species list, which would affect forest treatments
- Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative
 - Expanding conversations about snowtography
 - Recently debriefed Salter EA, very healthy discussions for the collaborative
 - Collaboratives should be sharing lessons learned with each other. This is a good example.
- Timber Age Systems
 - Timber Age received wood innovation grant
 - \$117,000
 - Technical in nature
 - Training 2 timber age folks to work with timber products industry
 - Seeking engineering standard certification for cross-laminated timber
 - Helps increase wood utilization

Junction Creek EA update and tour concept

- The tour will focus on two areas of the landscape: the Colorado Trail corridor and Hidden Valley
 - Last tour in October 2021
 - There are conversations to be had about water and recreation resources and values in the area
 - Thoughts about Hidden Valley area:
 - Wetlands management and values
 - Liz's thoughts about re-routing trails around cultural resources
 - Think through messaging along trails to convey information to trail users
 - Talk about wetlands/springs downstream of reservoir
- Look at Forest Service boundaries (Paulette knows of places we could look at)
- Reach out to trail user groups and encourage their participation in the tour
 - Trail groups
 - SJMA's Forest Ambassadors or other staff
- Logistics
 - Half-day tour on meeting date
 - Picnic lunch by the lake at Falls Creek Ranch

- Tentatively Friday, July 22nd
- Brooklyn and Anthony will work together to plan the tour
- After the initial plans come together, we will reach out to recreation groups and communities to invite them

Presentation of Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (Jacob Dahlin, Flagstaff Ranger District on the Coconino National Forest)

- Born out of the Schultz Fire in 2010
 - 15,000 acres burned on the east side of Flagstaff
 - Monsoons were very destructive that year
 - Millions of dollars of damage done
 - Impacts from yearly monsoons still occur because of the fire
- In late 2022, the USFS and City of Flagstaff entered into a Master Partnership Agreement that allows the transfer of funds in between the partners and authorizes the City to perform work on FS lands for 10 years
 - NEPA completed in 2015
 - Phase 1 completed in 2018
 - Phase II still in progress
 - Phase III to begin in FY23
 - Mechanized
 - It is estimated that USFS has added over \$5 million in match funding towards the \$10 million in city funding. A total of \$15 million has been put into the project
 - Flagstaff voted to increase their taxes, which is how the City provided this funding
 - People in Flagstaff understand what is going on – recent fires have increased community support for projects like this
 - Also added cost to water bill to help fund
 - The Midway Project SPA was signed in the summer of 2019
 - New MPA signed in May 2022 with \$3.5 million IJA earmark
 - \$1.5 million funding for City to complete Heritage surveys
- Map
 - Phase I Elden Base Timber Sale – 643 acres
 - Helicopter – 60% slope and great – 586 acres
 - Steep slope (shovel logging) - 35-60% slope – 492 acres
 - Dry Lake Hills ground-based logging – 613 acres
 - Shultz Tank Timber Sale – 466 acres
 - The Midway Project - \$700K in funding to complete slash relocation, processing 2500 cords of firewood from a log deck, various road construction work and installing 8 gates

- Move slash to a burned area to prevent pile burns from lying dormant and then flaring up in dry conditions
 - Hundreds of acres of hand thinning
 - More fires and are we running out of acres? Wood for life!
 - A Department of Defense, Resources and Environmental Protection Initiative grants have been submitted by a multi-party cadre between Coconino County, City of Flagstaff, National Forest Foundation, USFS, and Northern Arizona University which involved various treatments in the upper lake mary watershed that directly impacts FWPP.
 - 3 fires have broken out in the FWPP footprint in the last 3 years
 - The partnerships that have grown between the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, NAU, Greater Flagstaff Forest Protection Project, NFF, Department of Forest and Fire Management for the State of Arizona, Ecological Restoration Institute, Dept of Fish and Wildlife, AZ Fish and Game, many different tribal partners, Wood for Life and Coconino National Forest couldn't have been done without the following:
 - Patience and respect
 - Common goals
 - Listening and understanding all visions
 - Creativity
 - Selfless teamwork

Group discussion and questions for Jacob

- How do you generate public support for projects like this?
 - During implementation, when the whole area was closed, Coconino NF would host a weekly coffee hour where people could come and ask questions
 - Give ownership to the people
 - After implementation, they started an initiative to encourage groups to come up with ideas for new trails and to start imagining other opportunities for the area that looked much different than before.
 - It may hurt for a little while, but conditions are improving in general. There will be new options when the process is over
- What have been the main barriers to success that you have experienced over the past few years?
 - Slash -- trying to figure out how to not light it on fire
- What has been the involvement from Coconino County and NAU?
 - Coconino County has been very supportive when they can be
 - Only allowed to provide funding for slopes over 30%
 - Related to flood mitigation regulations
 - NAU and ERI have been great
 - Have helped National Forest get to Washington

- OHIO: Only handle it once
 - Your waste is going to eat you
 - Critical for sort yards (especially with gas prices)
- Work with the County and City to combine acres on a single contract
 - Will reduce cost/acre
 - Will learn a lot from Grassy Mountain, but we need to add stakeholders to these projects in the future
- Maintain the industry you have and then grow it
 - Be strategic since costs have increased and ordering equipment/replacement parts can take months
 - Better off with a diversity of businesses
 - For example, we have biomass solutions in Pagosa and Mancos
- Sharing equipment and expertise other than dollars

Action items:

- Reach out to individuals that should be part of the Southwest Colorado CFLRP conversations and include them in the rollout meeting on June 22nd.
- Feasibility study for sort yard(s) on the San Juan National Forest
 - Review other sort yard feasibility studies
- Anthony and Brooklyn will be working together to plan the July tour at Junction Creek (tentatively Friday, July 22nd).
 - Invite recreation groups