

Four Rivers Resilient Forest Collaborative
Monthly meeting



Date: Thursday, February 16th, 2023

Time: 9:00 – 11:00 am

Location: Public Lands Center and Zoom

Attendance: Anthony Culpepper (Coordinator, Mountain Studies Institute), Julia Ledford (Mountain Studies Institute), Alex Handloff (Mountain Studies Institute), Dana Guinn (Mountain Studies Institute), Dana Guinn (Mountain Studies Institute), Alison Layman (La Plata County, WWPF), John Rader (San Juan Citizens Alliance), Jimbo Buickerood (San Juan Citizens Alliance), Mike Wight (San Juan Mountains Association), Paulette Church (Falls Creek Ranch), Tom Bunter (City of Durango), Nick Olson (National Forest Foundation), Ryan Cox (Colorado State Forest Service), Steve McClung (CPW), Kyle O’Neill (NRCS), John Whitney (Senator Bennet’s office), Lo Williams (SJNF), Eric Herchmer (SJNF), Travis Bruch (SJNF), Nick Glidden (SJNF), Noah Daniels (SJNF), John Erickson (SJNF), Toby Cook (SJNF)

Agenda:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Standing Updates
 - CFRLP
- Website and Logo Review
- Recreation and Other Stakeholder Inclusion
- Priority areas updates

MEETING NOTES

Welcome and introductions

- What direction do you want to see Four Rivers go in the future?
 - Efficiency in planning and alignment
 - Creating additive processes instead of duplicative processes
 - Get new folks involved and try not to be too complicated to keep those people at the table

Standing updates

- CFLRP

- The Projects and Places Committee and Science and Monitoring Committee worked together to develop a set of [desired future conditions](#).
- Developing a tool for evaluating and reviewing projects.
 - Projects originate in the collaborative space, are proposed to the Projects and Places Committee who ultimately recommends some projects to the SJNF.

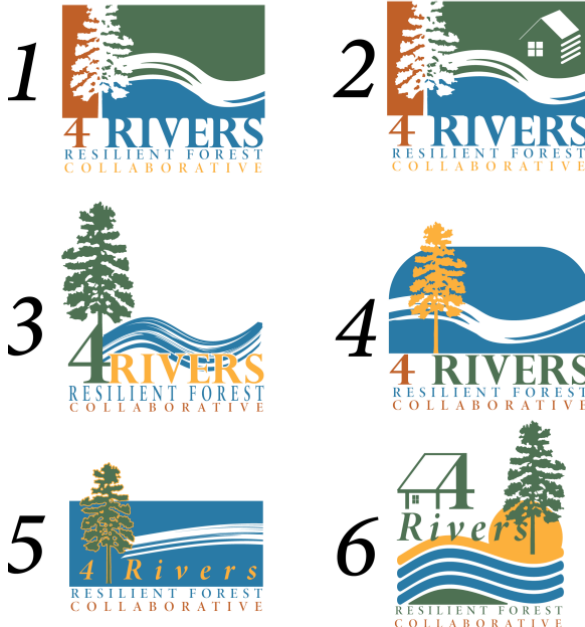


- Hoping to have something ready in March to dovetail with SJNF planning for FY 2024.
 - The process through which projects are vetted will be transparent.
 - The Coordinating Council is working to provide guidance to the Projects and Places Committee, who will develop the tool.
- After this process is refined, Four Rivers will need to be prepared to articulate priorities so they can become projects and SJNF can start planning for them.
 - Prioritization will be an iterative process.
 - RMRI has prioritized PODs across their landscape.
 - SJNF went through the HVRA prioritization process.
 - Each Collaborative has their own set of priorities.
 - The CFLRP is one of many sources of funding for projects, this isn't the only opportunity to get projects on the ground.
- Four Rivers needs to be proactive about public outreach and education so we can recruit and retain engagement and public acceptance. For example, folks need to be prepared for and understand why they are seeing log trucks in town, smoke in the sky from prescribed burns, etc.
- Senator Michael Bennet is co-leading [reauthorization and expansion of the CFLRP](#).
- La Plata County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) update
 - Final draft out for revision, need feedback by February 23rd.
 - 11 organizations will be signing onto the CWPP.
- Junction-Falls Creek Integrated Resource Management EA (J-FIRM)
 - Officially separated the recreation component from the vegetation component of the EA.
 - The recreation component will be called the Northwest Durango Recreation Plan.
 - This will move on a different timeline than J-FIRM.
 - Expanding the polygon beyond J-FIRM to better align with trail systems and HUC-12s.
 - Staying on track with J-FIRM as planned.
 - SJNF is hosting a public open house on March 2nd.
 - Four Rivers will table at the event.

Website and logo review

- Take a look at the [draft website](#).
- [Provide feedback to Alex Handloff](#).

Colors



Recreation and other stakeholder inclusion

- What's already happening in this area?
 - [San Juan Mountains Association](#)
 - Mission: inspire and empower connection to and responsible use of the spectacular public lands of southwest Colorado.
 - Forest Ambassador Program
 - Started in 2021
 - Seasonal crews provide education about Leave No Trace on popular trails in the San Juans.
 - Funding from RMRI, CFLRP
 - Provides visitor information services, preparedness and education at visitor centers across the San Juans.
 - Co-coordinates the Southwest Colorado Trails roundtable with SJNF.
 - Initially convened during Travel Management discussions.
 - The group decided to continue working together after those discussions concluded.
 - Last fall, the Trails Roundtable convened for a meeting where RMRI, CFLRP and other local initiatives were introduced.
 - Potential venue for future engagement with forest health initiatives.
 - Working on several mapping projects related to recreation assets.
 - SJNF is mapping recreation assets on the Columbine ranger district.
 - SJMA and MSI applied for additional funding to create a database of recreation assets across various land management agencies.

- The Animas Headwaters (AHEAD) mapping effort will map areas of ecological concern and potential recreation development for planning efforts in San Juan County.
 - AHEAD will focus on identifying priorities for preservation, restoration and recreation as settlement money comes in from the EPA.
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife [Regional Partnership Initiative](#)
 - The Regional Partnership Initiative advances regional and statewide collaboration to ensure that Colorado's land, water, and wildlife thrive while enhancing equitable access to Colorado's world-class outdoors.
 - Opportunity for Southwest Colorado to receive funding through this initiative and bring together recreation users with ecological and wildlife concerns.
 - Southwest Colorado is one of the only areas in western Colorado that doesn't already have a Regional Partnership. [View the map.](#)
 - Meeting on Friday, March 3rd 1-3 pm at the La Plata County Fairgrounds, La Plata Room
- Is Four Rivers interested in getting involved with/integrating the recreation community?
 - The recreation community doesn't want to come to every Four Rivers meeting, but they still need to be clued into our efforts.
 - Recreation is not explicitly mentioned in the Four Rivers strategic plan, but it is an important component to work on the ground.
 - It is a time-honored challenge of bringing recreationists out of their world and into the bigger ecological picture.
 - It's difficult to get folks engaged in the first place, but it's even harder to keep them engaged.
 - We can't always beg them to come to us, we have to go to them.
 - Getting out on the ground is a good way to build relationships.
 - Recreation is about people's connection to the landscape.
 - People are part of the ecology of this region.
 - Recreation is an important part of our economy and the social fabric of our community.
 - Death by a thousand cuts: critical winter range
 - Look at recreation development across all districts and consider the broader impact.
 - User groups don't understand the competing needs of other resources and the risk of developing their own trails.
 - Need to get all of these groups together in a room so they can better understand each other.
 - Need to be proactive and strategic with recreation development.
 - Historically, we have been reactive (rather than proactive) to the issue of user-created trails.
 - Recreationists have started building their own trails with the expectation that the SJNF will eventually adopt the project. Expect the district to take on the social, political, ecological risk of adopting those user-created trails.

- With the construction of social trails comes expectations from user groups.
 - SJNF is developing a plan to educate user groups about how to effectively initiate a project and invest more in pre-NEPA conversations.
 - SJNF staff needs to be trained to handle uncomfortable conversations with recreation groups.
- User groups aren't seeing each other eye to eye.
 - Four Rivers could be a good forum for those groups to hear and speak to each other.
 - Recreation groups don't seem to understand the differences in land management.
 - We don't want to derail what's happening independently (Trails Roundtable, SJMA's programs, etc.), but create a place for ideas and groups to come together.
 - We will not do restoration successfully without addressing recreation.
 - This isn't at the cost of timber and fuels, it just needs to be part of the picture.
 - The Forest Service has a long history of engaging with recreation groups, usually at the district level.
 - Longer than the history of engagement with forest health groups, watershed clubs, etc.
 - Recreation groups are still talking to the district, but there is a major shift towards input coming from the collaborative space. How can Four Rivers help make that transition within the recreation groups?
- Recreation is one pillar of RMRI's priorities.
 - Has funded SJMA's Forest Ambassador program as part of their outreach efforts.
 - It is still unclear how projects are identified through RMRI and how collaboratives are engaged in that process.
- Southwest Colorado Trails Roundtable
 - Next meeting will be in April and they will discuss the project proposal framework for recreation.
 - Want to have guest speakers, presentations from various groups, exchanging of knowledge.
 - The Roundtable focuses on trails, but other interests and needs aren't represented in this space (campgrounds, day use areas, fishing access, etc).
 - Not a lot of connective thread between groups and/or efforts.
 - How much bandwidth does the recreation community have to engage with various efforts?
 - We can't just go to them and deliver information they don't want to hear or they won't engage.
 - Need to listen to their concerns and desires, be prepared to make compromises.
 - Everyone needs to better understand all of the values across our landscape.

March agenda items

- Discuss the process for prioritizing projects.

- Discuss streamlining of efforts between Four Rivers, the Meta group and Data (the recreation version of Meta).
- Debrief the series of recreation-focused events happening at the beginning of March.
- Discuss how Four Rivers can help with J-FIRM and the Northwest Durango Recreation Plan.
- Provide feedback on the Four Rivers website and logo.