



Four Rivers Resilient Forest Collaborative
Monthly meeting

Date: Thursday, August 17, 2023

Time: 9:00 – 11:00 am

Location: Public Lands Center and Zoom

Attendance (in person):

1. Anthony Culpepper, *Coordinator, Mountain Studies Institute*
2. Bob Milford, *Pagosa Area Trails Council*
3. Alison Layman, *La Plata County/WWPF*
4. Andy Hawk, *Phoenix Recycling*
5. Mike Wight, *San Juan Mountains Association*
6. Sara Burch, *San Juan Citizens Alliance*
7. John Radar, *San Juan Citizens Alliance*
8. Derek Padilla, *Bureau of Land Management*
9. Eric Herchmer, *San Juan National Forest*
10. Nick Glidden, *San Juan National Forest*
11. Cody Cook, *San Juan National Forest*
12. Toby Daniels, *San Juan National Forest*
13. Dave Neely, *San Juan National Forest*

Attendance (online):

14. Julia Ledford, *Mountain Studies Institute*
15. Alex Handloff, *Mountain Studies Institute*
16. Clyde Church, *La Plata County*
17. Paulette Church, *Falls Creek Ranch*
18. Ryan Cook, *Wildfire Adapted Partnership*
19. Bryce Powell, *Colorado State Forest Service*
20. Ryan Cox, *Colorado State Forest Service*
21. Kyle O'Neill, *NRCS*
22. Pat Seekins, *San Juan National Forest*

- 23. Sheryl Gunn, *San Juan National Forest*
- 24. Jason Lawhon, *San Juan National Forest*

MEETING NOTES

Welcome and introductions

Four Rivers representation on the Coordinating Council

- A representative from each of the three place-based collaboratives serves on the Coordinating Council of the Southwest Colorado CFLRP for one year at a time. This representative does not have to be the Coordinator.
 - Andy Hawk previously represented Four Rivers, but his term lapsed in June and he no longer has capacity to fill this role.
 - Anthony served as backup when Andy couldn't make it to a meeting.
 - Anthony has been serving as the representative in the interim, but the group needs to formally decide who should represent Four Rivers.
- Requirements:
 - Attendance of monthly Coordinating Council meetings.
 - Cannot also be serving in an ex-officio role.
 - You must represent Four Rivers first and foremost (not the organization you are employed by).
- The Planning Team is a newly (as of June 2023) designated group made up of the coordinators of the three-place based collaboratives, the facilitator (Stacy Beagh) of the Southwest Colorado CFLRP, and a representative from the San Juan National Forest.
 - Anthony, as the Coordinator of Four Rivers, is on the Planning Team.
- Since almost everyone in this meeting is already involved in the Coordinating Council as a committee chair or ex-officio member, Anthony will continue to serve as the interim representative until someone else comes forward.
 - If you are interested, please [contact Anthony](#).

Fire updates

- [Dry Lake](#)
 - The Dry Lake Fire started on August 1st by a lightning strike northeast of Bayfield.
 - The area had already been prepped for a prescribed burn by reinforcing the POD (potential operational delineation) boundary northeast of the fire. This POD boundary was already set up to be used as a control feature for the wildfire.
 - The SJNF decided to suppress the fire using indirect tactics, allowing the fire to burn within the unit that was already being prepped for a prescribed burn in the fall. This was a carefully evaluated decision, and it was made because it was the right time, the right place, the right conditions and the right size.
 - With several other fires burning in the area, there were ample resources to support the management of this fire.
 - There was moisture in the forecast.

- Decision-makers felt comfortable that the POD boundary to the northeast of the fire would hold, preventing the loss of values at risk beyond that line.
 - Fire behavior was optimal.
 - A Type 3 Incident Management Team is managing the effort and has carefully evaluated the values at risk and the risk of putting firefighters on the ground beyond the prepped burn units.
 - The biggest value at risk was the Tri-State Powerlines, which is the main power supply for Pagosa Springs.
 - Tri-State has been on site for the duration of the fire.
 - The SJNF was able to prevent any adverse effects with the powerlines.
 - Blacklining (using fire to burn out fuels and create a fire line) operations are continuing.
 - The suppression of this fire has been a success overall and the success can be attributed to previously completed work.
 - Fire behavior and conditions have been comparable to the Beaver Meadows prescribed burn that was done last spring.
 - Beaver Meadows is just down the road from Dry Lake and is the same fuel type.
 - The Dry Lake Fire is helping to meet objectives outlined in the Vallecito-Piedra Prescribed Burn Plan.
 - The fire has been successful in reducing the gambel oak understory.
 - Feedback from the public has been incredibly positive.
 - There tend to be less smoke impacts at this time of year, compared to fall when prescribed burning often happens.
 - This success story needs to be highlighted through Four Rivers and the CFLRP.
- Mosca, [Quartz Ridge](#) and [Bear Creek](#)
 - All three of these fires are being fully suppressed using indirect tactics because of difficult terrain and unsafe conditions.
 - Unlike the Dry Lake Fire, there are no pre-established control lines surrounding these fires.
 - Incident managers have established contingency triggers to control the fires in case they move in certain directions.
 - These fires are slow-moving and are likely to be long-duration events.
 - The SJNF is using these natural events (lightning-caused fires) to protect against huge impacts of future natural events.

SJNF's Commitment to collaborative engagement

- While the SJNF cannot engage in collaborative conversations about the Southwest Colorado CFLRP for the time being, they are committed to continued collaborative work.
- This situation doesn't reflect a lack of commitment to collaboration in Southwest Colorado.

La Plata County/WWPF Updates

- La Plata County/WWPF is working on two grants in the Florida watershed, one of which launched last year and the other started this year.
 - They have already treated 60 acres of private land.

- La Plata County is trying to figure out how to combine the two grants to improve cross-boundary opportunities.
- La Plata County's community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) is almost complete and is just waiting on a few signatures.
 - There is leftover money in the budget which will be used to host a demonstration tour of mitigation in action.
 - The tour will be on September 19th in the Edgemont neighborhood and will highlight work on a county parcel of land, HOA common land, and a BLM parcel.
 - Creating interpretive experiences like this is one of the goals of the CWPP.
 - The tour is open to the public!

SJNF Updates

- Missionary Ridge CE (categorical exclusion)
 - In July, the Four Rivers Collaborative toured an area on Missionary Ridge where the SJNF is considering a CE along the forest boundary.
 - Check out the [tour brief](#) to learn more!
 - This area is within one of 250 priority firesheds declared by the USFS.
 - The emergency fireshed declaration provides more resources for treatment.
 - The SJNF will work collaboratively through Four Rivers to utilize these resources.
 - Toby Daniels is the lead on the CE.
 - National Forest Foundation has been able to provide funding for road improvements after similar forestry projects. If we can secure some funding for Durango Hills (the adjacent subdivision), many concerns would be alleviated from private landowners.
- Creating incentive to reduce the risk of wildfire ignitions from power lines
 - La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) has techniques for reducing the risk of wildfire ignitions including burying lines and using fiber optic cables.
 - Burying lines is extremely cost-prohibitive and installation can have unintended consequences.
 - LPEA is investing time and money into changing their policies about what mitigation they can do.
 - LPEA is looking into fiber optics.
 - SJNF is working with both LPEA and Tri-State on this issue.
 - Tri-State is gaining a lot of momentum for future mitigation and is currently doing mitigation on Ophir Pass.
 - The electric companies can't always share all of their information, but SJNF partners are confident that they are moving in the right direction.
 - Four Rivers should establish relationships with LPEA and Tri-State and encourage them to participate in Four Rivers.
- J-FIRM
 - The analysis will be completed by the end of September.
 - Emergency authorities like the fireshed designation could also apply in this landscape.
 - For example, SJNF could use those resources to cut, pile and burn around the roads in Falls Creek.
- Durango Northwest Trail Plan
 - The project was proposed for RMRI funding to help with facilitation and planning.

- San Juan Mountains Association was awarded a grant from CPW to build capacity to support public engagement in the planning process.

Review and update collaborative priorities

- Each of the three place-based collaboratives, including Four Rivers, has been tasked with presenting a list of priority areas to the Projects and Places Committee of the CFLRP.
 - This list will include big-picture priorities and will consider the geography's unique contribution to the CFLRP.
 - This list will also include areas where partners want to see planning happen, not just where we have NEPA-ready acres.
 - Anthony will present this list to Projects and Places soon, but this will be an ongoing process with maps to come.
- Past/current priority areas
 - Cherry Creek
 - South of 160
 - SWIFT
 - Durango West
 - Bodo/Nighthorse
 - CPW projects
 - Durango northwest landscape
 - CPW projects
 - Durango NW trails plan
 - Durango WUI
 - City of Durango Fuels
 - Junction/Falls Creek
 - J-FIRM
 - Animas Valley
 - Lower Hermosa
 - Rockwood/Electra
 - Upper Hermosa/Purgatory
 - Florida Watershed/CR 240
 - WIIN
 - COSWAP
 - Columbine 40/501 Arc
 - San Juan County
 - AHEAD
 - South Mineral corridor
 - Ignacio WUI
 - Southern Ute priorities
 - Bayfield WUI
 - Vallecito/Grassy
 - Beaver/First Notch/VP
 - VP Prescribed Fire