

**Forest Health Advisory Council**  
**April 13, 2017**  
*Colorado Mountain College – Breckenridge, CO*  
*Meeting Summary – Final*

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**Attendance**

Carolyn Aspelin	Aaron Kimple	Rick Seymour
Norm Birtcher	Lyle Laverty	Travis Smith
J. Paul Brown	Jason Lawhon	Tom Spezze
Carol Ekarius	Doug Lempke	Ben Tisdell
Dan Gibbs	Mike Lester	
John Hall	Mark Morgan	
Scott Jones	Chuck Rhoades	

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman, and Katie Waller

**Action Items**

<b>Heather</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out a poll for the June meeting date.</li> <li>• Send out meeting summary and draft protocols.</li> <li>• Circulate contact information for FHAC members.</li> <li>• Draft a list of agreements based on the interview feedback and send to Mike and then the rest of the FHAC.</li> <li>• Work with CSFS to send a letter to the legislature summarizing each meeting in approximately one page.</li> </ul>
<b>Mike</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the USFS Regional Forester to join as an ex officio member.</li> <li>• Check into the regulations requiring public notice of the meeting dates.</li> <li>• Create a CSFS page for the FHAC to notice meetings and post meeting materials.</li> <li>• Post final meeting summary on the CSFS website.</li> <li>• Review the list of agreements drafted by Heather and make any necessary edits.</li> </ul>

**Goals for the Forest Health Advisory Council**

The Forest Health Advisory Council (FHAC) was created in order for its members to advise the Colorado State Forester regarding matters of forest health across the State. The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) has about 105 employees across the state overseeing the health of 7 million forested acres owned by the State and private landowners, as well as working with communities to best prepare for all types of forest conditions and implications. Colorado's forests are not healthy. Out of the 24 million forested acres in Colorado across all ownership types, five million acres have experienced significant levels of native species mortality due to insects. Additionally, wildfire seasons are lasting longer, and fires are burning more intensely.

The Council members discussed some of their goals for participating in the FHAC and their main concerns regarding the health of Colorado's forests. Below are the highlights of these discussions.

*Current Forest Conditions*

- Stands are much heavier than they should be due to long-term fire suppression.
- The warming climate has exacerbated the impacts of the pine beetle.
- Dead trees hinder recreation opportunities by blocking trails and roads.

- The unhealthy status of Colorado's forests is visible to everyone, which offers an opportune time to educate the public about the importance of forest management.
- Improper motorized vehicle recreation puts great stress on the forest and harms its health.

#### *Fire on the Forest*

- Fire does not burn through the forests in the way it once did.
- Due to lack of fire, there is limited age-class diversity.
- Roughly 2 million people live in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) in Colorado, so it is more challenging to use prescribed fire as a management tool than it has been in the past.
- Fuel loading must be decreased in areas with significant beetle kill, so that any future fire does not wipe out all the seedlings.
- All actions must lead toward preparing Colorado's landscape for fire, both prescribed fire and wildfire.

#### *Organizational Constraints*

- The US Forest Service (USFS) owns much of the forested land in Colorado, but they have many restrictions that prohibit them from actively managing forests in an efficient manner. This Council should work to overcome some of those burdensome permitting issues that hold up work.
- Some of the management agencies cannot ask for certain power or resources, and the FHAC can advocate on their behalf.

#### *Cross-boundary Management*

- All land must be actively managed regardless of its ownership.
- To work across boundaries, there needs to be a common language that bridges ownerships.
- The quality of health of the forests must be balanced across the entire state, not just within one specific ownership type.
- Private landowners own a significant portion of Colorado's forests, and their needs and involvement must be considered.
- Not all boundaries line up to each other, such as watershed boundaries, so extra steps must be taken to ensure all decision makers are considering the larger picture.

#### *Statewide Momentum*

- This Council needs to carry the message to all elected officials that forest health is a priority for all.
- This Council needs to be one that requires decision makers to take action rather than just talk.
- All FHAC work should focus on getting work done on the ground.
- It is important that people are motivated to take action outside of catastrophic fire events.

#### *FHAC Member Expertise*

- This Council has such a variety of perspectives and expertise that it will have more political sway to encourage action than any one individual member could have alone.
- Some ideas discussed here may not be comfortable for everyone, but it is necessary to look into unconventional and innovative solutions. This Council can recommend ideas that others may not be able to pursue due to political constraints.
- Advocacy coming from this Council will likely be well received because members are well respected by decision makers.

### *Policy Changes*

- This Council should work to develop policies for recommendation to the Colorado State Forester and the Colorado State Legislature and identify possible tools to improve the health of Colorado's forests.
- This Council should advise the Colorado State Forester and the Colorado State Legislature about new laws that need to be created or existing legislation that should be revised or removed because they are damaging.
- Looking at policy at a broad scale is imperative to ensure that the recommended changes are as impactful as possible.
- The practice of fire borrowing is harmful, as it takes away money that should be used for fighting fires or other forms of active management.
- Some grants are more useful and impactful than others, and this Council should see which are working best.
- This Council should assess if the Good Neighbor Authority is working and advocate for it to be used broadly, rather than just in limited circumstances.
- This Council should be sure to identify where there is alignment with other groups, such as the Western Governors' Association.
- This Council should look to recommend loosening some regulations or legislation that prohibits management agencies from being able to take the necessary actions to improve forest health.
- Litigation has caused many treatments to slow down significantly so that nothing gets done.
- Having local control is great, but there are some instances where it would be useful to have some sort of State enforcement mechanism, such as with building codes.
- Consolidating fire protection districts could be useful.
- The Wildfire Matters Committee sunsets soon, and this Council should make sure that it does not go away.

### *Management Tools*

- The timber industry in Colorado is not as robust as it used to be. The Council should consider ways in which the State effectively work with private industry to help improve the health of Colorado's forests.
- Grazing is an important management tool, particularly in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), where animals can be used to control some of the grasses that act as fuel in the case of fire.
- Trees that are dead due to the pine beetle infestation need to be thinned, in part to create more suitable wildlife habitat.
- Long-term stewardship contracts are not necessary for timber industry health, but rather are needed for a consistent timber program.
- More agencies need the ability to use prescribed fire as a management tool.
- Forest Health Improvement Districts have some barriers to their set-up but should be used more often.

### *Indicating Success*

- There must be indicators of success for the FHAC to ensure that the Council is actively accomplishing its goals.
- The FHAC will not be a success if its actions reflect the lowest common denominator.
- All members must have the same understanding of what defines a healthy forest and what actions are needed to achieve it.

- The USFS Regional Forester and representation from a water entity, a university, and the Colorado Department of Fire Prevention and Control (CDFPC) are missing from the FHAC.
- Science needs to be driving all the decisions that this Council makes, and not all decisions require 30 years of data to be accurate.
- It is unwise to discuss forest health without linking it to watershed health. Forest health and watershed health should use the same language, perhaps the language that has been normed by the passage of the Colorado Water Plan.
- This Council needs to plan for transitional periods in regards to staffing so that it does not dissolve like its previous iteration as agency staff move to other positions and entities.
- This Council needs to be proactive in its work and not reactive to crises so that things move forward sustainably and consistently.

#### *Lessons Learned from the Governor's Forest Health Advisory Committee*

- The previous iteration of this group, the Governor's Forest Health Advisory Committee, had high-level participants chairing its meetings and legislators from both major political parties.
- It was created in response to an increase in wildfire in Colorado when members of the community were starting to ask about forest health issues.
- The previous group successfully lobbied for the USFS Region 2 to see increased funding, as well as for the passage of many bills at the state level.
- The Committee was not disbanded for not hitting certain metrics of success, but rather because of personnel changes.
- Some decision makers felt that they were not receiving enough or the right information to justify the Committee. The new Council should ensure that all members and decision makers have aligned expectations.
- Members of the Legislature are looking for direction about what to do next regarding improving forest health. This Council needs to make sure it is delivering that message.

#### **Summary of Member Interviews**

Heather Bergman, the facilitator of the FHAC, interviewed each member before the first meeting. She prepared a document that summarizes their answers to the following questions, which is attached to this summary. The interviews addressed the following questions:

- What are the biggest issues or challenges facing forest health in Colorado?
- What is going well here or elsewhere that could be maintained, expanded, or replicated?
- What should the FHAC accomplish?
- What is one policy change that should be implemented to improve forest health in Colorado?

#### **Work of the Forest Health Advisory Council**

The Forest Health Advisory Council discussed what work it should do going forward and how that should be accomplished. Below are the highlights of this conversation.

#### *Process Options*

- The Council could choose to organize around certain issues, such as policy, funding, advocacy, and initial quick changes.
- The Council could also organize around topics based on the level of engagement necessary to reach success, such as short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions. This will help ensure that there is quick progress evident to all members and decision makers.

- The Council must begin by defining the problem as well as the solution before diving into action.
- The Council should work on one issue at a time and start with member education, then move to action broken down by different levels (federal, state, and local) before moving on to a new topic.
- Success must be defined, and then issues should be sorted by significance.

#### *Policy*

- The previous Committee had legislators as members, so they were able to introduce bills very quickly.
- This Council may need to advocate at the federal level, as the bills coming out of Congress are really what is shaping the local situation.
- Members of this Council have an ability to advocate for certain changes that agencies cannot pursue themselves, such as an end to fire borrowing and an increase in the use of prescribed fire. Action at the federal level will produce the most effective results.
- The Council must be sure to identify solutions that do not cost a lot of money, as the legislature does not have extra money that has not yet been allocated.
- It is important to work with Colorado's national forests as they go through their plan revision process as this will encourage long-term planning for solutions.
- Removing restrictions can be beneficial in the short term, but in the long-term, more money must be allocated to achieve better results.
- Policy initiatives that align with current political will should be encouraged, as those are more likely to be successful.

#### *Creating and Sustaining Urgency*

- Defining the problem is the most important place to start, as it creates the necessary urgency and momentum for all future work.
- It is necessary to provide information to decision makers so they understand that this problem requires consistent and quick action that must be prioritized along with issues such as crumbling infrastructure.
- Aligning forest health with watershed health and the Colorado Water Plan will help make the issue more prominent and better reflect the issues associated with forest health.
- Social, economic, and resource impacts must be defined so that people understand the importance of forest health.

#### *Education and Outreach*

- Education and outreach are what creates the social license for the Legislature and FHAC members to do any work related to forest health.
- Educating elected officials is imperative, especially since they turn over regularly.
- The Council needs to engage land managers at all levels and across different agencies.

#### *Guiding Principles*

- There needs to be a set of guiding principles that clearly outlines the problems FHAC is addressing, so that messaging is clear and consistent.
- One of the guiding principles should be that the solutions do not cost a lot of money.
- The guiding principles should be a list of problems to which all FHAC members agree.
- Defining what everyone agrees with will make it easier to isolate the more contentious issues later in the process.

### ***Agreement on Process Approach***

After considering the above points, the FHAC agreed that Heather Bergman will draft a list of FHAC agreements based on the interview summary. She will then give it to Mike Lester for his review, and then send it out to all FHAC members. FHAC members should then provide any additions, revisions, or deletions. This document will help prioritize the FHAC work plan in future meetings. The FHAC also agreed to the following process for doing work going forward on a topic-by-topic basis:

- Define the problem.
- Define success.
- Do a gap analysis and identify barriers at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Identify the best tools for moving forward.
- Create recommendations for federal, state, and local action that looks at any low hanging fruit and uses consistent messaging.
- Revisit this process for topics over time so that the information remains relevant.

### **Collaborative Group Protocols**

The Council discussed the protocols, policies, and procedures that will guide their work together for the future. Below are the highlights of this conversation; agreements are noted in **bold**.

#### *Name*

- The charter legislation calls this group the Forest Health Advisory Council.
- The name would be more accurate if it were to reference watersheds.
- **This Group will be called the Forest Health Advisory Council and will use the tagline, "Healthy forests, healthy watersheds" whenever appropriate.**

#### *Purpose*

- The purpose of this group is to improve the health of Colorado's forest by advising the Colorado State Forester, as well as to provide information to and advise legislators.
- The FHAC should also communicate regularly with legislators, so they understand the progress.
- **The purpose of the FHAC is to advise and empower the State Forester to improve the health of Colorado's forests and watersheds. The FHAC recognizes that it has no official authority, but instead has significant influence in advising, informing, and advocating at the federal, state, and local levels. The facilitator will write a short summary of its work after every meeting that will be sent to all legislators to show all progress that has occurred.**

#### *Members*

- Some potentially important perspectives are missing from the FHAC, such as Denver Water, the Colorado River District, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Colorado Department of Fire Prevention and Control (CDFPC).
- **The members of the FHAC have been defined by the legislation that created the Council. Any additional people may attend meetings as ex officio members, but the US Forest Service will be the only permanently invited participant. No alternates are allowed. All members who wish to terminate their membership must do so themselves and may not be asked to leave. Mike Lester will reach out to the Regional Forester for Region 2 to invite him or his high-level designee to participate in meetings in an ex officio manner.**

### *Representation*

- There may be cases where members are speaking on their own behalf, and other times when they are speaking on behalf of their agency or organization.
- Speaking on behalf of one's organization can often require prior approval from a board or supervisor before a meeting.
- Members were appointed, not their organizations. Members are intended to represent interest areas rather than organizations.
- It is often easier for members to speak freely if they are speaking on their own behalf, rather than on behalf of the organization. However, their agency representation is often a large part of what has shaped their own perspective.
- **Members will be representing themselves as individuals in group discussions unless indicated otherwise. When public decisions are made, the question of representation and participation in the decision point will be discussed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that all members are comfortable with whether/how their participation in a decision is portrayed.**

### *Subcommittees*

- It can be advantageous to have all discussions as full group discussions so that no perspective is missing.
- Working in subcommittees can be more efficient than working in a whole group at times.
- **The Council can create subcommittees if they are needed or desired. Any participant who is not a member of the FHAC must be explicitly invited to participate by the rest of the Council. Subcommittees must follow the same decision-making protocol as the full FHAC.**

### *Decision Making*

- Consensus-building is a process, and making a decision by consensus is not the same as making a unanimous decision. Consensus allows for the chance to get all members behind a decision by requiring that the whole group work to craft a meaningful agreement that can accommodate the many perspectives in the group.
- Voting can be efficient, but it can also leave some people feeling disenfranchised.
- Consensus-based recommendations are often taken very seriously by decision makers, as they reflect broad agreement.
- Consensus is a great goal, but there should be a voting back-up should the conversation get sticky.
- In the case of voting, documenting the minority opinion can be very powerful. However, a consensus document can also accurately reflect all perspectives in a discussion.
- Consensus works for the FHAC because this group has no decision-making authority.
- **The decisions of the FHAC are recommendations only. Decisions will be made using consensus. Majoritarian voting will be used if consensus cannot be reached. There is no minimum number of members who must be present to make a decision. If consensus cannot be reached, the number of Council members supporting and opposing a specific proposal or recommendation will be noted in the meeting summary, along with the associated reasons for both supporting and opposing perspectives. Should any decision come down to voting, it must be passed by a two-thirds majority of members in attendance. FHAC members will inform the facilitator if they feel it is necessary to have a vote.**
- **Preliminary decisions will be made at the end of a meeting and brought up for final approval at the beginning of the subsequent meeting to allow FHAC members to**

**consult with their constituencies prior to making a final agreement. Past decision points can be revisited if half of those present plus one agree to do so. No proxies will be allowed in decisions if a member cannot be present.**

#### *Agency Roles*

- **Mike Lester, Colorado State Forester, is a full member of the FHAC. No other CSFS employees are members of the FHAC.**

#### *Public Meetings*

- Public funds are being used to organize these meetings, therefore meetings are not closed to the public.
- It would be in the spirit of the legislation to have these meetings publicly noticed, but not highly publicized.
- Having private meetings will not reflect well on the members and their subsequent decisions.
- **All FHAC meetings are public and will be noticed on the CSFS website. The agenda will be posted on the website in advance of meetings. There is no minimum timeframe for when a meeting should be announced, but more time is better and a week will be the goal. CSFS is responsible for ensuring that all meetings are properly noticed.**

#### *Public Participation*

- Members of the public should be allowed to speak, but not participate in meetings.
- **The facilitator will provide a public participation sign-in sheet at the beginning of each meeting to determine how many people want to speak. Ten minutes of public comment will be allowed at each meeting; this time will be divided up between the number of people who want to speak. All names of those speaking, along with highlights of their comments, will be included in the meeting summary.**

#### *Documentation*

- Abbreviated summaries are useful, but more detail can be helpful when referring to past decisions.
- **Peak Facilitation will provide a detailed meeting summary for each FHAC meeting. All meeting summaries will be sent to the FHAC for edits before they are finalized. Final meeting summaries will be posted on the CSFS FHAC website.**

#### *Meetings*

- The meeting schedule may need to be more variable in the beginning of the process as the Council gets up and running.
- The FHAC should meet at least quarterly, if not more often.
- It would be a good idea to organize the meeting schedule around the legislative session. That means that the FHAC should have something ready to present to legislators in September of 2017.
- **The FHAC will set a regular meeting schedule at a future meeting. While the FHAC is getting up and running, members will meet for all-day meetings in June, August, and September of 2017 to prepare for the next legislative session. These meetings will be held along the I-70 corridor to accommodate the most participants. Call-in participation will not be allowed unless there are extenuating weather circumstances and the entire meeting must be held as a conference call.**

### *Media Interactions*

- It will be important to engage with the media at some point to pass along the message of forest health.
- Conversation with the media should be general and about the process rather than specific conversations.
- **Members of the FHAC are allowed to speak to the media but should only speak for themselves and never about the perspectives of others or the FHAC as a whole. The facilitator will never speak to the media. All members should do their best to keep others informed about their conversations to ensure there are no surprises.**

### *Interactions with Other Entities*

- Some major partners will have to be informed about what the FHAC is doing.
- FHAC members want to be able to work with their constituents without violating any protocols.
- **It is acceptable for the State Forester to brief major partners about the FHAC's general work. Otherwise, members of the FHAC are allowed to speak to other entities and decision makers about the work of the FHAC, but should only speak on their own behalf. No member should ever represent the perspectives or opinions of another FHAC member or the FHAC as a whole. All members should do their best to keep others informed about their conversations to ensure there are no surprises.**

### **Next Steps**

The FHAC will discuss the following items at the next meeting in June:

- Review the draft list of agreements.
- Prioritize topics for group analysis and discussion.
- Create a work plan.
- Draft general talking points.