

Watershed Wildfire Protection Group Meeting Minutes

31 October 2014; 0900-1500 MDT;

Colorado Parks & Wildlife Administrative Office; Bighorn Room; Denver, CO

Introductions

Meeting Attendance List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Brad Piehl	JW Associates
Brenda Wilmore	US Forest Service; Region 2 Office
Brian Keating	US Forest Service; Region 2 Office
Chuck Dennis	West Range Reclamation
Don Kennedy	Denver Water
Eric Howell	Colorado Springs Utilities
Heidi Huber-Stearns	Colorado State University
Jared Heath	City of Fort Collins Utilities
Jen Kovecses	Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
John Duggan	Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment
Katherine Sever	Colorado State University
Madeleine West	Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources
Matt Schulz	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Mike McHugh	Aurora Water
Noah Koerper (via phone)	US Senator Michael Bennet
Patrick McCusker	Bureau of Reclamation
Rob Addington	Nature Conservancy
Sally Edwards	Xcel Energy
Shawna Crocker	Colorado State Forest Service
Shelley Stanley	City of Northglenn
Susan Matthews	Colorado State Forest Service
Tina Little	Colorado State Forest Service

Total Number of Participants = 22; 18 organizations

Legislative update:

Madeleine West –

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant program – 3rd and final round; 1/3 of money for capacity building. Last round = \$3.7 million to 37 projects in 18 counties. In total 89 projects in 26 counties for \$9.8 million.
- 3rd annual Forest Summit was widely attended; talked about prescribed fire and other collaborative issues.
- Colorado Forest Restoration Institute monitoring projects – only monitoring 1st 2 rounds thru end of 2016.

- Wildfire Matters Review Committee proposed Bill to renew for another \$9.8 million, a change will allow funds to be used for pile burning; not broadcast burning.
- Bill authorizing \$1 million grant over 5 years for public entities to use biomass for their facilities, currently written for DNR to administer but can change to Dept. of Energy or others.
- Bill granting immunity to state employees who conduct prescribed burns in a formal capacity (DNR does not think it's needed for protection).
- Bill allowing Forest Ag lands to qualify for programs the year natural disaster occurs and years thereafter.
- Bill allowing for wildfire mitigation tax reduction change to tax credit.
- DNR's legislative agenda does not include any forestry related issues.

Noah Koerper -

- Not a lot going on for the federal side, circled back to USDA to check on implementation of Farm Bill (Stewardship Authority, Good Neighbor Authority., Insect & Disease w/NEPA streamlining).

Group Updates:

Pat McCusker – Working on MOU with Northern Water, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and US Forest Service to do a Colorado Big Thompson Headwaters Partnership, also developed MOU's with Pike & San Isabel NF, White River NF, SE CO Water Conservation District, and CSFS to do project on the Frying Pan/Arkansas.

Jared Heath – Finished last round of funding with Emergency Watershed Protection, did additional 200 acres of mulching in total 1800 acres of mulching in the Poudre Watershed. Overall, the Poudre Watershed is looking good and mulching has stayed in place. Did some tree felling in major drainages and continue to monitor watershed recovery, supporting the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed (CPRW) now. 1800 acres mulched currently is wood mulch, the 1200 acres originally treated was straw mulch and was redistributed by wind and not effective, and the wood mulch seems to have held up. We are working on entering data in the water sharing network database.

Susan Matthews – Just completed 8 CSFS State Forest Action Plan meetings around the state. The public was very interested and engaged in forest health; education and outreach were very popular topics. We are also currently working on the annual forest health publication.

Chuck Dennis – Chuck gave an informative talk on what he does and the obstacles he has to deal with as a forester with West Range Reclamation. Obstacles can be anything from roads needed for biofuels projects to timber stands not being economically possible to run a timber sale. Another problem they are experiencing is a general lack of trucking availability.

Shelly Stanley – contributing to a CU study looking at water treatability post-wildfire; she will share the results. The city of Golden wants to work with Stanley Lake Cities on sediment ponds in Clear Creek watershed, post-wildfire.

Rob Addington – Involved with the Front Range round table; role with TNC expanding. Working on a burn probability module with TNC, continue to develop a fire module for RX fire.

John Duggan – Not a lot going on, depressed fire season. We are looking at establishing templates for implementing strategic fire breaks around drinking water reservoirs and potential funding sources.

Jonathon Bruno – Majority of Waldo Canyon work done; working on roads around Rampart Range. Upper South Platte watershed has around 2500 piles waiting to be burned, looking to burn all piles this winter.

Mike McHugh – Next funding for work on the Pike & San Isabel NF in the Tennessee creek project goes to city council for approval this Monday night. Reminder that American Water Resources Association (AWRA) national convention will be in Denver around the 16th -19th of Nov. 2015 and there will be a lot of sections on forest health and flooding so get papers or sessions ready and let him know.

Sally Edwards – Emerald Ash Borer big discussion at Xcel Energy right now, trees very dangerous to climb when near high voltage transmission lines. Our crews finished inventory along transmission lines in Colorado; more mortality than expected. MOU with US Forest Service is signed for 4 years, getting work done at Tennessee Creek. Have done some fire protection modeling around their structures in Colorado. We are building a new substation in Silverthorne.

Brad Piehl – Cucharas River Wildfire Watershed Assessment coming to a close. This is one of 16 assessments completed in Colorado to-date; available to view on JW Associates website.

Presentations*

- *“New Mechanisms For Investing In Watershed Health: From The Western US To Colorado” presentation: Heidi Huber-Stearns; Center for Collaborative Conservation, Colorado State University*
- *San Juan-Chama Watershed Partnership presentation: Monique Digiorgio; Executive Director, Chama Peak Land Alliance in partnership with Future West*
- *“Watersheds, Wildfires, & Collaboration” presentation: Jen Kovecses, Executive Director for Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed presentation*

Next Meeting tentatively set for 23 January 2015. We will confirm with group sometime in November with “Save the Date” email.

Possible agenda topics for next meeting – Setbacks, thinning areas, fire breaks around reservoirs.

* Note: Our draft webpage (with archived agendas, minutes, & presentations) is still in press and is currently scheduled to launch along with the newly designed CSFS website in early February 2015. In the meantime, please contact Rich Edwards with CSFS if you would like electronic copies of any of the available presentations.