

Watershed Wildfire Protection Group Meeting Minutes

9 May 2014; 0900-1500 MDT;

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

Introductions

Meeting Attendance List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Aaron Ortega	US Forest Service; Pike & San Isabel NF
Brad Piehl	JW Associates
Chuck Dennis	West Range Reclamation
Don Kennedy	Denver Water
Eric Howell	Colorado Springs Utilities
George Bigger	Construks
Jared Heath	City of Fort Collins
Jonas Feinstein	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jonathan Bruno (via phone)	Coalition for the Upper South Platte
Leigh Ann Wolfe	Flying W Ranch
Madeleine West	Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources
Marcus Selig	National Forest Foundation
Mark Martin	US Forest Service; Arapaho & Roosevelt NF
Matt Schulz	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Mike McHugh	Aurora Water
Noah Koerper (via phone)	US Senator Michael Bennet
Rich Edwards	Colorado State Forest Service
Rodger Ortiz	US Geological Survey
Sally Edwards	Xcel Energy
Shelley Stanley	City of Northglenn
Steve Belz	Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team
Steve Sanchez	US Forest Service; Pike & San Isabel NF
Tina Little	Colorado State Forest Service
Trent Hyatt	Clear Creek County

Total Number of Participants = 24; 21 organizations

WWPG Update:

Brad Piehl & Rich Edwards

- Rich has WWPG on agenda for the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments 26 June meeting. They have a water quantity and quality group that deals specifically with water issues. We will be looking for other WWPG members to participate.
- Web page for WWPG transferring web page from JW Associates website to CSFS. See draft web page at the following link: http://csfs.colostate.edu/pages/wwpg_draft.html
- Monday 12 May is the 3rd stakeholder's meeting for the Cucharas River Wildfire Watershed Assessment (WWA) group. This is the 16th WWA in the state of Colorado.
- Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is working on a new agency strategic plan and State Forest Action Plan; it will be updated by spring 2015.

Legislative Update:

Madeleine West - Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)

- Legislative session just ended, it was light for fire and forestry.
- HB14-1009 – Landowners can take an income tax credit for wildfire reduction and D-space, cap is \$2500.00.
- HB14-1210 – Requires state agencies with managed lands and counties to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to work out rules and responsibilities for any actions related to mitigating, suppressing and reclaiming land after wildfire.
- Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program – \$9.8 M appropriated. To date 52 projects and almost 5.8 million dollars spent. Just finished 2nd round of grants and DNR will announce at the end of the month a 3rd round. Department of Local Affairs will help with grant writing. The grants are for formal community groups like a Homeowners Association (HOA). A grant cannot go to an individual homeowner; they must go through their HOA, Firewise group, public and private utilities etc. The WWPG should write a letter to legislature asking for additional funding, Lisa Dale and Madeleine can talk to the group about timing.
- Prescribed Fire regulations – state lifted ban on pile burning except for CSFS. The US Forest Service (USFS) has been pile burning but not using broadcast prescribed burning, although they do have a prescribed fire planned for the fall.
- Monday 19 May, the Governor will host the Annual Wildfire briefing at Centennial Airport.

Noah Koerper - US Senator Michael Bennet

Due to technical difficulties, Noah was cut off from his remote conference call-in presentation. We were subsequently unable to reconnect. We look forward to hearing from him at the next quarterly meeting.

Group Updates:

- Brad Piehl; JW Associates – Working with Cucharas River WWA stakeholder’s group. High Park Fire work delayed because of floods.
- Sally Edwards; Xcel Energy – Fire science paper related to protection of structures coming out. Met with the USFS in Colorado to team with them and do some off right-of-way thinning based on fuel modeling. Memorandum of Understanding signed. Arapahoe Roosevelt National Forest will be first forest worked.
- Jared Heath; City of Ft. Collins – Community Wildfire Protection Plan funding and mulching work through the summer. Source water monitoring program with City of Greeley and Soldier Canyon Water Treatment Plant to monitor source raw water quality. Installing a stream gauge on the Little South Fork of the Poudre to start quantifying nutrients coming off the High Park wildfire burned areas. Continuing to monitor the recovery of our watershed.
- Steve Belz; Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT) – Formed as a group of state, federal and county organizations out of the upper Rio Grande basin after the West Fork wildfire last year. Focus is on public safety and outreach.
- Mike McHugh; City of Aurora – Working on integrated water management plan, developing a source water plan. American Water Resources Association national conference is next fall in Denver, would like to talk about hosting a session on wildfire.
- Leann Wolf; Flying W Ranch – Looking for help with grant application funding. Waldo Canyon fire burned 90% of ranch, 19 of 20 hospitality buildings burned. Trying to restore the watershed and help with safety to communities below the ranch.
- Jonas Feinstein; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Inundated with Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) work. Proposed joint projects with USFS to work on sites that are saw ready. EWP funds meant to be spent immediately; fires are far exceeding ability to mechanically treat.
- Jonathan Bruno; Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) – Still in planning phases for hill slope protection in Rampart Range area. We have \$120,000 to work with this year for hill slope protection work above critical infrastructure. We have a small task order with the USFS to do inlet and outlet protection of culverts. Potentially we will be hiring the Canon City State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crew before the bulk of fire season to have them come out and do some hill slope protection with us. We have a project with the Flying W Ranch tomorrow where they are hosting a fire restoration training project for volunteers; a pilot project. Within Waldo we are starting to get trigger alerts for the amount of rain. Just released a contract at Mueller state Park bids from \$341 to \$1500 per acre, selected \$341/acre. Average price is coming in above \$1500/acre in Woodland Park area. Looking for more contractors to come in and lend a hand. CUSP received DNR Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant of \$1 M. Projects currently in Douglas, Jefferson, Park and Teller counties.
- Rodger Ortiz; US Geological Survey (USGS) – New to group, our role out of Pueblo tied in to Waldo Canyon right now with stream and precipitation gauges. USGS can bring money to table in the cooperative program.

- Mark Martin; USFS, Arapaho & Roosevelt NF – Plans for this year in terms of treatment and fuel reduction. Tools are long-term stewardship, timber sales, and projects supported by Denver Water. Will offer 2500 acres of treatment this year through long-term stewardship contracts, timber sales will be 600 – 1000 acres. Working with Northern Water Conservancy Districts on headwaters of Colo. River as well as Big Thompson. Looking at treatments with Xcel Energy along transmission corridors. Update on fire program; resurfacing tarmac at Jefferson County Airport and air tanker base is at Ft. Collins/Loveland airport now. USFS has a dedicated helicopter now for flood restoration and fire. Flood recovery team currently working on primary access roads. Burn piles on USFS burned 13,000 piles last fall, installed smoke monitoring devices and did not exceed limits. A little prescribed burning in Larimer Co. for next fall.
- Don Kennedy; Denver Water – Looking at BMPs on our watersheds, sediment traps not looking feasible at Cheesman, looking at Strontia Springs Reservoir. Working on source water protection plan for our watershed. Continue with our Forest to Faucets program looking at treating 30,000 acres. Working with CSFS on private lands and looking for partnerships to do work on private lands.
- Chuck Dennis; West Range Reclamation - We have exceeded 100,000 acres of treatments. Have several projects under way. Black Forest work harvesting and mastication working well. Mastication holding well in a small subdivision. 800 acre project at Royal Gorge is finished yesterday. Working in the Ft. Collins area at the Ward Ranch to do some post fire mitigation work.
- Aaron Ortega; USFS, Pike & San Isabel NF – Erin Conley new Forest Supervisor, there will be a new Deputy Supervisor in 2 weeks. Upper Monument Creek initiating NEPA; public meetings will start at end of the month.
- Steve Sanchez; USFS, Pike & San Isabel NF – Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) work; 3rd year \$8 M spent total on project. Long term work efforts starting. Waldo burn scar work; 50 detention basins, 25 miles of stream channel rebuilding, and 100's of acres of slope stabilization. Recovery group continues to meet; \$30 M has been spent with partners on the Waldo burn scar. Continue spending on federal highways from last year's flooding. Continue to look for new opportunities to do more work; biggest issue is access in very steep country.
- Shelley Stanley; City of Northglenn – Our water comes from Clear Creek, the Stanley Lake cities (Northglenn, Westminster, Thornton) would like to partner with other agencies and organizations. The MOU's have to go through 3 city councils, so could take a while.
- Trent Hyatt; Clear Creek County – It is building season right now so D-space permits and tree marking are picking up. Hopeful to receive CSFS grant to help with thinning in county space.
- Matt Schulz – Colorado Parks & Wildlife – Wrapping up 200 acre hand thinning at Lory State Park; several hundred piles ready to burn. New partnership with Division of Fire Prevention Control (DFPC); has a burn plan to burn next winter. Working on several partnerships around the state. Riparian enhancement project at Barr Lake, pulling out Russian olive along drainages. Education day in September; will send out information.

- Eric Howell; Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) - Involved in partnership with USFS; NEPA work along upper Monument Creek. 450 acres on Pikes Peak that West Range is working on through the long term stewardship contract. Working with CUSP on private properties through the DNR monies. CSU now has its' own wildland fire team, partnering up with Teller County to reconcile property lines and what mitigation work has been done. 2 day conference on forest engineering, cabling systems for working steep slopes is something to look at. Timbco self-leveling cab machine also used for steep slopes.
- Rich Edwards; CSFS – 2013 Forest Health Report out now. CSFS just had its annual meeting and discussed a new agency strategic plan and will also have a revised State Forest Action Plan. Submitted CAFA/Stevens Funds applications at the end of March; 13 grants submitted from 9 of our districts totaling \$2.4 M in requests. WUI State Fire Assistance grants coming up also, RFP out soon (probably mid-May). Talk with a local CSFS district to partner. Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) monitoring trip coming up for 2014 focusing on the northern front range; will send out site nomination forms to involved CSFS & USFS districts, Colorado Timber Industry Association, and local Tree Farmers. Looking to nominate 6 different sites; 2 on private, 2 on state, and 2 on federal for the audit team to look at. Focus of BMPs is water quality driven.

**Burned Area Emergency Response & Post-Wildfire Responses for High Park & Waldo Canyon Fires
Panel Presentation:**

- Eric Schroder, USFS-A&RNF:
http://www.jw-associates.org/Resources/BAER%20Process_Wildfire_Watersheds_2014_final.pdf
- Eric Howell, CO Springs Utilities:
<http://www.jw-associates.org/Resources/Waldo%20Canyon%20Post%20Fire%20CSU.pptx>
- Brad Piehl, JW Associates:
<http://www.jw-associates.org/Resources/High%20Park%20Fire.pdf>
- Chuck Dennis, West Range Reclamation:
<http://www.jw-associates.org/Resources/Hat%20Trick.pptx>

Colorado's Water Plan, Basin Roundtables & Watershed Health Basin Plan Working Group Update:

- Chris Sturm, CO Water Conservation Board: Presentation given from online website; not available currently.

WWPG Organizational Role Chart and Group Discussion

- Brad Piehl presented WWPG's current organization makeup and core team. Comments from the group were very positive about our diversity and current organization. The core team members

all agreed that we have the right folks at the table. It was recognized that we are trying to expand to areas beyond the Front Range and some changes of the makeup mix and core group might make sense in the near future. Brad developed a draft organizational role chart below:

<http://www.jw-associates.org/Resources/WWPG%205-9-14%20roles.pdf>

Wrap Up