Watershed Protection in Southwest Colorado

Presenters:
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Thurman Wilson, Mountain Studies Institute Board Member & retired USDA Forest Service Forester
Kent Grant, District Forester, Durango District, Colorado State Forest Service
CSFS Durango District:
Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, & San Juan Counties
Spruce Beetle

Epidemic: San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests

East Fork of the Piedra River, San Juan National Forest

Palisade Meadows, San Juan National Forest
A Sampling of Recent Colorado Wildfires

- Black Forest Fire, El Paso County, 2013
- West Fork Complex, Mineral County, 2013
- Missionary Ridge Fire, La Plata County, 2002
- Hayman Fire, SW of Denver, 2002
- Little Sand Fire, Archuleta & Hinsdale Counties, 2012
EXPLORING THE SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS
TURNING PASSION INTO KNOWLEDGE
Mountain Studies Institute

**Science:** It’s studying environmental issues like airborne mercury & climate change. It’s supporting researchers who come to the San Juans from across North America.

**Outreach & Education:** It’s sharing information and skills in conferences and training workshops. It’s seminars and field trips for locals, visitors & students.

**On-the Ground Projects:** It’s community projects like trails & revitalization. It’s restoration of damaged fen wetlands.

**Collaboration:** It’s innovative partnerships and stakeholder involvement.

www.mountainstudies.org
COMMUNITY DRIVEN INITIATIVES

Testing New Strategies
Internship Programs
Large Scale Restoration

Collaborative Studies
Exploring ecological connections
Long-term Monitoring
San Juan Headwaters
Forest Health Partnership

www.sanjuanheadwaters.org
Our Purpose

To develop science-based, collaborative priorities for the sustainable management of forests, watersheds, water quality, & community resources.
Watershed Assessment Process Overview

- Map water infrastructure
- Describe likelihood of fires occurring
- Describe potential risk to water resources
- Identify high value/high risk focus areas
- Examine potential projects and constraints
- Identify high-priority areas to focus future management actions
Fire Starts on the Pagosa Ranger District
• High Fire Risk = FRCC 3 for any cover type plus spruce-fir or cool-moist mixed-conifer (regardless of FRCC) on slopes greater than 35%

• Moderate Fire Risk = FRCC 3 for any cover type plus spruce-fir or cool-moist mixed-conifer (regardless of FRCC) on slopes less than or equal to 35%
Four Mile Focus Area
Availability for Mechanical Treatment

- High Fire Risk
- Moderate Fire Risk
- Other

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Project 1: Four Mile Area
Project 2: Reservoir Hill

Reservoir Hill Restoration Partnership

Pagosa Springs

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The Town of Pagosa Springs proposes to treat 12 acres of steep mixed conifer forest by hand thinning by Southwest Conservation Corps) and 40 acres of ponderosa pine woodland by Forest Health Company through biofuel removal.

CO-WRAP Wildfire Risk Assessment shows this property as moderate to high fire intensity, wildland urban interface, and 30 foot flame lengths.
How Do We Get This Done?
Work on the Ground
The End Result
Measuring Forest Health
Funding

COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE
Forest Restoration Grant
Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant

FOREST HEALTH COMPANY

NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

PAGOSA AREA WATER SANITATION

SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TOWN OF PAGOSA SPRINGS