

# Watershed Wildfire Protection Group Meeting Minutes

18 Dec 2015; 0900-1500 MST;

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

## Introductions:

Meeting Attendance List:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Aaron Kimple (via phone)	San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
Betsy Bair (via phone)	US Senator Gardner's Office
Brad Piehl	JW Associates
Brian Meinhart (via phone)	US Congressman Tipton's Office
Chuck Dennis	West Range Reclamation
Diana Allen (via phone)	US Forest Service; Pike & San Isabel NF
Don Kennedy	Denver Water
Eric Skeie	Colorado Water Conservation Board
Fred Rollenhagen	Clear Creek County
Hally Strevey	Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
Jared Heath	City of Fort Collins
John Duggan	DCPHE-Water Quality Division
Jonathan Bruno	Coalition for the Upper South Platte
John Stednick	CSU Warner College of Natural Resources
Kate Dunlap	City of Boulder
Kim Mueller	Colorado State Forest Service
Madeleine West	Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources
Mark Martin	US Forest Service; Arapaho & Roosevelt NF
Mike Battaglia	USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station
Mike Lester	Colorado State Forest Service
Mike McHugh	Aurora Water
Noah Koerper (via phone)	US Senator Bennet's Office
Page Whitesides	Buffalo Creek Water District/North Fork FPD
Rich Edwards	Colorado State Forest Service
Ron Cousineau	Colorado State Forest Service
Sandy White	Huerfano County
Shawna Crocker	Colorado State Forest Service
Shelley Stanley	City of Northglenn
Sheryl Page (via phone)	US Forest Service; Pike & San Isabel NF
Stephanie DiBetitto	Colorado Water Conservation Board
Susan Matthews (via phone)	Colorado State Forest Service

Total Number of Participants = 31; 24 organizations

## General Updates:

- Rich - Chaska Huayhuaca with CSU Center for Collaborative Conservation is interested in checking out the WWPG. They would give us notes and look at our organization from a different perspective and give suggestions as a way of improving. The core team was all thumbs up about it, the group had no opposition to it. Rich will meet with them on January 28 to give a background of WWPG.

## Legislative Updates:

- Brian – Omnibus bill passed the House 2 hours ago. Bills providing supplemental appropriations, for bad wildfire seasons, that aren't subject to various budget constraints. The bill has \$4.2 billion for wildfire funding and \$545 million for hazardous fuels reduction and \$360 million for the timber program.  
Congressman Tipton's Healthy Forest Managements Act (rolled into Resilient Forests Act), HR 2647, passed house in July and the provisions were identifying drought, beetle infestations and general poor forest health and then making them eligible for hazardous fuels treatment (excludes wilderness and national parks areas).
- Noah – Congress is attempting to budget for fires, like the past Flame Act. Senator Bennet is working on something that would be more of a long term fix. The House wants forestry reform along with budgets for fire. The team worked on that but when it went into the Omnibus and didn't come out the same as it went in so they are working on something with some more long term certainty.  
Farm Bill has finalized Good Neighbor agreement that allows cross boundary work between federal and state forest service.
- Betsy – Omnibus has quite a bit in it about wildfire and prevention. The bill will fund fire suppression for USFS and DOI for 10 years. Policy provisions could impact wildfire funding when lands are unusable because of drought. There is a directive that the USFS, National Parks and BLM work with drought stricken regions to provide prompt removal of hazardous trees to reduce the threat of wildfire.
- Madeleine – State legislative update: Sen Roberts bill to fund the Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program to fund local community groups to do proactive mitigation work. The bill would give \$3 million to the program and has passed out of committee.  
Next bill is a proposal to switch wildfire tax reduction to a tax credit, proposed last year but didn't pass, passed out of committee this year.  
Another bill would give the State Forest Service authority in their grant programs to fund broadcast burning, that's part of the WRRG as well and has passed out of committee.  
Last bill would create the auxiliary communication unit within DFPC that would allow them to better communicate during fires and this also has passed out of committee.  
Two resolutions were passed out of the committee that support addressing the issue of fire borrowing and another honoring fallen fire fighters in the state.

Two bills failed out of committee that would set local mitigation levels on new builds and the other was a bill that was held to advance recommendations from DFPC's advisory committee.

### **Group Updates:**

- Don Kennedy – Upper South Platte Partnership working on private lands, \$1.65 million to work with CSFS to focus. Pre and post analysis of the work is being done. CUSP and Jefferson Conservation District both have pilot projects for forest treatments on the landscape to affect fire behavior. Also working on Good Neighbor with USFS to help change fire effects.
- Ron Cousineau – Big Thompson Headwaters Partnership is a pilot project with Northern Water, DOI, BOR, CSFS, BLM, USFS, WAPA and US Parks Service using watershed assessment data to refocus work on the ground to promote healthy forests essentially for Northern Water supply. This has been a great way to re-engage with our federal partners.
- Mark Martin – New forest supervisor Monte Williams is a hydrologist, came from DC. Previously was a district ranger some place back east. New fire management officer Brian Kerchet (sp?) from the black hills. BLM is helping fund projects in Big Thompson watershed. Denver water is closing out the first five year agreement, working on another 5 year partnership. Looking at 3,000 acres of fuel reduction for FY16 with partners, pile burning continues. Projects with Xcel Energy will be administered by us, doing defensible space treatments around structures on right of ways. Working with Excel on broader landscape treatments.
- Erik Skeie – Colorado healthy rivers fund is no more, but there is \$60 million left to use on emergency watershed protection. Working on forming watershed coalitions and forming master plans. WSRA program RFP will be coming out soon with a 25% match.
- Chuck Dennis – West Range Reclamation is being forced off projects due to snow. Working on 350 acres in Black Forest right now hoping on another 300 acres on this project. Eagle Valley Clean Energy is the biomass/wood fired power plant in gypsum. Had a fire in the plant earlier in the year due to equipment design and installation. Plant is back on line now and fully operational. Running into issues with marketing Doug Fir.
- Paige Whitesides – First meeting with the group, would like to understand watershed protection and help with public awareness.
- Shelly Stanley – Stanley Lake cities have donated \$7500.00 to Clear Creek County for the good work they are doing. In 2017 there will be a National Assoc. of Lake Mgmt. Society is coming to Denver so think about if you want to have a session.
- Kate Dunlap – City of Boulder is doing WWPP now, trying to get communication going. USFS land is where their watershed is.
- Shawna Crocker – PLT is working to train teachers and students about environmental education. Changing Fire Ecology Institute to Forest Ecology Institute, would like help with funding and planning.
- Jonathan – New organization called Fire Adaptive Colorado, 501C3 non-profit. Vision and goal is to pull everyone together to learn from each other. Finalizing work plan in February. Beaver

Ranch will be a demo project. 200 acres of broadcast burning in the spring outside the Colorado Springs area. Working on a carbon substitution for biomass burning.

- Mike Lester – Meeting with the Upper South Platte Partnership at the regional office with research folks and it was fascinating how much research is going on.
- Mike McHugh – Carpe Diem West meeting in Eugene, OR last month. Working on a communication guide to unify the message of watershed improvements. Working with a GIS guy to put together a Brewshed map to show microbrewers they are part of a larger system around the state. There are 188 craft brewers in Colorado and they could help get the word out about water quality and watersheds if we included them.
- Kim Mueller – CSFS is legislatively mandated to produce a forest health report annually. 15<sup>th</sup> issue coming out soon, there is a lot of Insect & Disease focus in it. Will survey legislators about report to see if it helps them talk to their constituents about forest health.
- Hally Strevey – Coalition for the Poudre Watershed, working on post fire project planning. Having volunteer days to help get the work done. Working on watershed resiliency planning. Awarded a grant to do fuels reduction at the Boy Scout Ranch.
- Jared Heath – Working on watershed protection efforts, received a \$5,000 matching grant to develop and implement a source water protection plan. Working with the Coalition for the Poudre Watershed to develop a watershed plan. Will be inventorying water quality sites this summer.
- John Duggan – New project with Evergreen metro dist. WARSS assessment on Evergreen Lake to create template examples to compare and contrast sediment loading. Finished source water protection grant with Denver Water. Working on source water protection initiatives to bring an MOU to county commissioners to bring awareness and establish a framework.
- Fred Rollenhagen – Trent Hyatt left Clear Creek County, so Fred will stand in as the group's representative until there is a replacement. Clear Creek County has a \$50,000.00 line item in their budget for wildfire mitigation, approved for 2016.
- Aaron Kimple – San Juan Headwaters did a lot of watershed assessment analysis and prioritized resources, this helped to increased treatments in those areas and has drawn the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Sheryl Page – Community assistance funds for federal forest service land should be about the same level of funding as last year, @ \$1.5 million. State fire assistant grants are at same funding levels as last year and same allocation process.
- Diana Allen – Waiting for funding on the Upper Arkansas Collaborative Group, also put in for Joint Chiefs funding in the Wet Mountains. Also working on CSU agreement in Colo. Spgs.
- Sandy White – Water supply reserve account funding, \$10 million a year is supposed to be available last year we got \$4 million divided between 9 basins. Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative has hired a coordinator and is busy holding meeting and generating interest.
- Rich Edwards – Working on new strategic plan at CSFS, also working on updated version of Forest Action Plan. Good Neighbor Authority master agreement has been signed with USFS, 4<sup>th</sup> state of the 50 to do it.

- Brad Piehl – 3 Upper Cucharas projects done in one year, starting some new projects with them now.

**Presentations:**

See PowerPoints on WWPG web page:

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/forest-management/watershed-management/>

- Front Range Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project: Research Efforts, Historical Reconstruction of Forest Stand Structure, and Associated Fire Behavior: Dr. Mike Battaglia, Research Forester; USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station
- Watershed Research Update: Dr. John Stednick, Professor; Colorado State University Watershed Science Program (note: ppt not available due to confidentiality concerns)