

Watershed Wildfire Protection Group Meeting Minutes

18 November 2016; 0800-1300 MST;

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

Introductions:

Meeting Attendance List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Brad Piehl	JW Associates
Brenda Felmlee (via phone)	US Congressman Scott Tipton's Office
Brian Keating	US Forest Service (USFS) R2 Office
Cassie Mattson	Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)
Christina Burri	Denver Water
Chuck Dennis	West Range Reclamation
Courtney Peterson	CSFS
Hally Strevey	Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
Jared Heath	City of Fort Collins
John Duggan	Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment
Kate Dunlap	City of Boulder
Kristin Garrison	CSFS
Mark Martin	US Forest Service; Arapaho & Roosevelt NF
Mark Shea	Colorado Spring Utilities
Matt Schulz	Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW)
Mike Lester (via phone)	CSFS
Mike McHugh	Aurora Water
Rich Edwards	CSFS
Sarah Synowiec	USFS R2 Office
Shelley Stanley	City of Northglenn
Stephanie Crabtree	City of Golden
Steve Belz	Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team

Total Number of Participants = 22; 16 organizations

Group Discussion:

Passed around and discussed sample "BreWater/WWPG Brewsheds Tour" Colorado beetle-kill pine meeting commemorative coaster. This concept was discussed at the conclusion of the summer WWPG 2-day meeting as a possible vehicle for engaging the BreWater group further and generating more interest. Depending on level of interest from brewers, WWPG could also look at producing a cardboard version of the coaster for possible distribution to interested brewers. CSFS could fund the production of the wooden coasters and possibly the initial sample production of the cardboard coasters. Some alternative funding may have to be researched to produce a sufficient number of coasters for breweries.

Legislative Updates:

- Mike Lester, CSFS State Forester
 - Accomplishment Report; passed out.
Healthy Forest Vibrant Community Act
 - Repealed, ends June 30, currently stands, provides money for our grant program- provides money to support staff with community wildfire protection plans
 - Supports staff working with utilization measures
 - 17% of our budget
 - Added some funding to Wildfire reduction grants that DNR manages, both grants as part of legislation and it should be renewed...
 - Funded by severance proceeds
 - Healthy Resilient Forest
Oil/gas funding Tier 2; Tier 1 gets funded first, what's left goes to Tier 2. As of right now with decline in oil/gas funding-not anticipating anything in Tier 2
Although we have enough funding for next couple of years, it is critical for those programs-Community Wildfire Protection Programs, grants for mitigation, grants for Wildfire reduction
(Important piece up for grabs this next session)
 - Passed HB 16-1255
 - Prevention of taking money from the grant program that we can use with The Good Neighbor Authority-allows us to pay our staff to help the USFS by doing some of their management activities
 - Used to help with Insect spray program In CO Springs/El Paso County area
 - Being used right now in Montrose District -USFS put up a salvage timber sale
 - Point of The Good Neighbor Authority is to leverage the resources for both the USFS and the CSFS to accomplish management and to put our forests in a healthier condition
 - Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC) - 24 member advisory committee-advises CSFS State Office with issues regarding forest health
 - 19 members filled
 - Working with other members that are being appointed; appointees come from governor's office, president of senate, minority leader of the senate, speaker of the house and minority leader of the house
 - Produce a report addressing the importance of forest management for treating healthy forests; therefore healthy water quality - going to go in as an amendment to the State Water Plan
 - Contracted-not original research-it's a compilation of current research; report not study

Question: Healthy Forest Vibrant Community Act expires in June-Is there anything we can do to advocate for extension? Answer: State's Senator has a bill to introduce to renew this. Can't advocate to anyone in legislature, however once the bill is introduced, it would be nice to tell local representative what you support/don't support. The difference between previous and what will be introduced is the addition of Wildfire Risk Reduction Grants. Copy of current bill is available.

- Question: When will the FHAC start meeting? Answer: in Jan/Feb/Mar-waiting for nominations which are due by mid-Dec; working with minority house leader to get rest of nominations in. Their plan is to have the first meeting in the Jan/Feb/Mar time frame. Plan is to have four meetings first year, scheduling to be across the state.
- Brenda Felmlee, Field Representative-Congressman Tipton's office
 - Good Neighbor Authority-congressman has addressed forest health for a while in the form of Healthy Forest management and Wildfire protection Act-HR 695 - several provisions carried forward into 2647, the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which passed the house in July 2015 and was included in Health amendment to the Senate Energy Bill
 - Provisions from HR 695 include:
 - Increased state control over forest management decisions
 - Extended stewardship contracting
 - Expedited procedures for approval of fuels reduction projects
 - Expedited procedures to adjust insect/disease and general forest health deterioration
 - Projects under HR 695 are similar to GNA, which was expanded under the 2014 Appropriations Bill on the 2014 Farm Bill. But those projects are exclusively under the authority of the federal agency HR 695 expands full authority to the states and utilizes expedited procedures provided under the 2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act.
 - Co-sponsor HR167-Wildfire Disaster Funding Act would address fire funding issues by amending the balance budget and emergency deficit control act as currently structured. Wildfire management accounts-funding for wildfires comes out of that account-when exhausted funds may be transferred from the FLAME account. Both accounts are subject to budget caps, so if one is exhausted then supplemental appropriations would be necessary. These may or may not be defined as emergency funds unless accepted from the budget caps. Supplemental appropriations have been necessary 3 times with the establishment of the FLAME Account due to outbreaks of abnormally large and complex and very expensive fires.
 - HR167-currently has 150 co-sponsors in the house and the Senate version; HR235 has 21 co-sponsors
 - 2016 Omnibus Appropriations? Current CR carries funding forward through December 9 which leads us to our next session. Likely to see another CR's carried funding forward to early 2017 and there may be an opportunity to see energy bill come out of conference. If so, it will likely be significantly paired down.
 - Question: Last year, the Midnight Oil Burning, 12th Hour Bill-grand unification of all forest bills in the energy bill, but was rejected at last minute. Is there a chance of having this brought up again at the end of this year with the hope of better results? Answer: Not sure, will double check and send email to Rich Edwards.
 - Question: Any change in fire funding? Answer: Confident the CR will continue till March; will be a big push to the congressman to address healthy forests and watershed health. Energy bill is the big surprise that will come out of that. Nothing really known till after January 20.
 - New Regional Forester, USFS - Brian Ferebee

Group Updates:

- Brad Piehl, JW Associates - as part of High Country Forest Collaborative, we met last month at the Forest Collaboratives Summit in Keystone (annual meeting of forest collaboratives) - dynamic group, around 17 forest collaboratives. Had good participation from the legislative folks; determine how the group gets together on policy advocacy. Water is dominant with World Resources Institute - lessons from the forest water collaboratives and case studies - Colorado is well represented.
- Mark Shea, Colorado Spring Utilities - 5 year MOU with USFS wrapping up end of 2017-working with Brad Piehl to help clarify progress made to make a case for the next 5 years. Chair for the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative-focus to look at watershed health issues throughout entire Arkansas River Basin. Continue to push forward with watershed health issues in the Pike and San Isabel-currently working with USFS for Junkins Fire; working with CWCB and others to tap funding for addition post-fire work to protect Pueblo Reservoir. Just completed a pilot project developing GIS data for critical water infrastructure within the Arkansas Basin.
- Mike McHugh, Aurora Water - currently working on the 12th Convening of Healthy Headwaters Alliance on March 30 and 31; limited attendance of 100. FRRT is looking for a name change. FRRT recently established the Watershed Monitoring Workgroup with the goal to look at data collected across the CFLRP projects to determine benefits to the watersheds. CUSP is starting restoration project (Horse Creek). Colorado Natural Capital Program for US Forest Service is putting together GIS data base.
- Christina Burri, Denver Water - Working with USFS on Forest to Faucet contract. Trying to incorporate forest health and watershed prioritization into Integrated Resources Plan - Brad will be there to talk with plan managers next month. CFRI gave presentation about forest health and role in watershed health. CFRI working on journal article for the Journal of Environmental Management. CUSP-Beaver Ranch Project finished, USPP working on evaluating the scope of the project and what is successful. Source Water Protection Plans-Douglas County is process of signing the MOU with Denver Water. Still working with Jefferson and Teller Counties to get them to sign as well. Buffalo Creek has drafted a Source Water Protection Plan.
- Mark Martin, US Forest Service; ARNF-have treated almost 5500 acres in WUI, 500 acres prescribed burning, 1500 acres pile burns. Funding for CFRL goes away in 2019-anticipating what will happen as far as funding again. Have done mitigation around 60 structures for Excel. Success: Cold Springs Fire burned through 75 acres of treatment unit on National Forest-when it hit treatment unit, it stopped, causing the behavior to change, helping fire fighters in process. CFRI is working on using prescribed burns/treatments to create database for CSU to manage. Mark is filling behind Claire Harper at the regional office until 1 Feb 2017.
- Shelley Stanley, City of Northglenn – Working on county WUI Projects and hoping to complete Water Research Foundation report on water treatability.
- Steve Belz, Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team - 501c3 in place, expanding to include all the counties in San Luis Valley. Currently working on a watershed assessment. Also working on stewardship projects.
- Jared Heath, City of Fort Collins - continuing to work with Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed (CPRW) to wrap up Watershed Resiliency Plan. City Council just passed budget for forest management work.

- Hally Strevey, Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed - Just completed a successful post-fire workshop; Rocky Mountain Research Station will put together science bulletin-summary of the workshop. Received another Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant for \$100K for the Ben Delatour Scout Ranch Elkhorn Creek Project. Lower Poudre River sediment delivery planning to start soon.
- Kate Dunlap, City of Boulder – Developed GIS-based application of critical infrastructure-helpful with Cold Spring Fire. Working on prioritization and wildfire defense plan along with Open Space and Mountain Parks departments and also developing a Wildfire Defense Plan/GIS Application.
- Chuck Dennis, West Range Reclamation & Eagle Valley Clean Energy - Worked with White River National Forest (as part of stewardship contract), in beetle-kill stands getting downfall salvaged which impacts production and safety; slow process. Most efficient method was to have hand crew to drop standing dead trees and use log loaders, as opposed to feller bunchers. Reduced overall production by about 75% (i.e. 4-7 acres/day to 1-1.75 acres/day). Gypsum power plant produces 12-13 MWs per year; running at 105-110% capacity; using 20+ truckloads/day (or 100 Mbf/220 cords).
- John Duggan, CO Dept. of Public Health & Environment, Water Quality Division - Source Water Protection Plan-given out \$1 million in grants (\$5K - \$50K in size). Currently have 225 plans across state, integration into Fed/State agencies as far as implementation. Integration into County and land use-MOU's. BLM going through Eastern Resource Management Plan-releasing their planning effort in a few months to include the South Park Master Leasing Plan. The division is working on critical data water system infrastructure policy; data is held as secure-appreciate support for confidentiality. Integrating infrastructure into Wildland Fire Decision Support System.
- Courtney Peterson, CSFS Wildfire Mitigation Education Coordinator - Forest Health Report to come out in Feb 2017 with a water and wildfire theme. Colorado Wildland Conference in Pueblo, April 19-21-theme is fire adaptive communities. Presentation proposals due today. More in referenced powerpoint presentation on agenda.
- Matt Schultz, CPW - Received funding for RX fires at Mueller (Upper South Platte watershed) and Long Mesa (Dolores watershed) State Parks (SPs) from the DNR grant program. Provided tour to Northern Colorado watershed stakeholder at Lory SP. HB14-1210 has morphed into CPW providing funding for 53 counties to cover wildfire suppression costs.
- Brian Keating, USFS-We have awarded a grant to Coalitions & Collaboratives at end of fiscal year for organization to come up with common location and user-based and friendly data management tool for fuels mitigation. More in presentation minutes below.
- Rich Edwards, CSFS - We had our biennial forestry best management practices monitoring trip in the southern front range of CO. 1 of 5 zones were visited; 6 sites: 2 on federal, 3 on private, and 1 on state-look at 79 different BMP's with a monitoring team of 8 people (fed, local, & state governments and private industry). Last audit in cycle will be in 2018 on western slope. Productive meetings recently with the Federal Timber Purchasers meeting and the Intermountain Forestry Association; Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) discussed. Over 20 states have signed with the GNA Master Agreements to-date; strong start for Colorado - 5 projects started. Insect & disease project near Woodland Park already finished. Other projects include: BLM-Meeker Grand County fuels treatments; fuels treatment project-Steamboat Springs; timber

sale projects, one in Montrose with the GMUG NF involving spruce salvage and one in Rio Grande NF (also spruce salvage) which has a \$10K cap. All benefit/involve CO businesses.

Presentations:

- *CSFS Fire/Fuels Update:* Kristin Garrison, Assistant Division Supervisor-Fire/Fuels; CSFS Forest Management Division
- *Fire Adapted Communities:* Courtney Peterson, Wildfire Mitigation Education Coordinator; CSFS Outreach Division

See PowerPoints on WWPG webpage:

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

- *USFS Fire/Fuels Update:* Brian Keating, Assistant Director Forest & Fire Ecology; USFS, Rocky Mountain Region

Statistics

- FY16 Accomplished (169% of regional target); 1 Oct 2015 – 30 Sep 2016
 - Regional = 158,465 acres total; 94,000 target acres
 - 39,733 ac of prescribed fire
 - 118,732 ac of mechanical treatment (including 7,118 ac of CAFA treatments)
 - Colorado = 55,268 acres total
 - 17,790 ac of fire (95%: Rx fire; 5%: wildfire that accomplished resource management)
 - 37,478 ac of mechanical treatment
 - Also had approximately 35,000 ac of fire use (21,151 ac in Colorado)
 - 5 year history of regional accomplishments approximately 150%
 - \$1.6 M 2016 Community Assistance Funds (CAFA) awarded regionally; ≈ \$458 K went to CO.
- FY17 Planned Prescribed Fire Treatments
 - Regional = 85,893 acres total
 - 61,756 ac broadcast/underburn
 - 24,137 ac piles
 - Colorado = 43,790 acres total
 - 38,128 ac broadcast/underburn
 - 6,462 ac piles

Strategy

- Definition of Wildland Fire (Planned & Unplanned)
 - Planned (prescribed) and unplanned burns fall within the Fuels Management Program

- All fires are important to recognize; unplanned burns are beneficial and counted towards accomplishments
 - Rx fire costs: \$20-400 per acre vs. mechanical treatments: up to \$2 K per acre
- Resource management integration with planning and implementation of projects
 - Increase efficiency and effectiveness
 - Maximize limited resources
 - Ensure complimentary objectives and design features
 - Prioritize treatments and be strategic
- Regional focus on reintroduction of fire into landscape
 - Broadcast vs Pile RX
- Funding opportunities (Joint Chiefs' & Supplemental)
 - Focus on landscapes and multi-jurisdictional
 - Coordinated planning with partners to allow for RX

Successes

- Pargin (6,000 acre) broadcast burn with aerial ignition this fall on the San Juan
 - RX is cheaper (\$150 ac but still 450k for a 6,000 ac project)
- Hunter Creek large broadcast burn near Aspen on the White River NF
- Pingree Hill and pile burning permit success on ARNF
- Re-entry burning with supplemental funds on GMUG
- Vet Corps crew involvement in Rx operations (along with SCC)
- Regional agreement with TNC and DFPC

Challenges

- Resource availability
 - Recent Wildfire events (Beulah and Junkins)
 - Agreements with Cooperators (needed for both sides); Denver Water & CFLRP: partnership investments allow for increased USFS competition between regions.
 - Larger & more complex projects require specialized crews (IHC/Aviation)
- On-going drought conditions and unpredictable weather
- Smoke management issues (i.e. "burn windows")
- USFS travel ceiling limitations
- HR 67 fire funding bill: includes rider that requires state approval of any Rx fire initiation

Opportunities

- Fall burn windows
- Smoke Management
 - New Smoke position (i.e. regional coordinator) and benefits of such
 - Increased monitoring, new equipment, and data collection
- ARNF cooperation with R8 (i.e. southern US) for Rx training/experience/qualifications/outreach
- Non-agency: CO Rx fire council and Front Range partnership advocacy
- Vickie Christiansen taking over Jim Hubbard's position as Deputy Chief, State & Private Forestry in WO

More Group Discussion:

Next and upcoming meeting suggested topics:

From summer meeting:

- Response side of Cohesive Strategy
- Industry tour
- Continued relations with BreWater
- Spring post-fire monitoring results with Brett

New suggestions:

- Water Providers MOUs: Funding (how spent?), Lessons Learned, etc. Aurora, CO Spgs, Denver, N. Water, & Pueblo. Perhaps also engage USFS (Evan Burks, Mark Martin, & Sara Mayben as possible reps)
- Post-fire Response w/ BAER – Cross boundary (Carol Ekarius: change in BAER; Eric Schroeder: BAER lead).