

**Forest Health Advisory Council (FHAC)**  
**September 5, 2018, 9:30 am – 4:00pm**  
**Frisco County Commons, Frisco, CO**  
**Meeting Summary -**

*Attendance:* Carolyn Aspelin, J. Paul Brown, Joe Duda, Carol Ekarius, Brian Ferebee, Neilie Goodwin, Craig Grother, Vaughn Jones, Aaron Kimpel, Lyle Laverty, Jason Lawhon, Doug Lempke, Mike Lester, Mike McHugh, Mark Morgan, Mike Morgan, Mike Preston, Chuck Rhoades, Travis Smith, Ben Tisdell, Kirk Will

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Dan Myers

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Carolyn Aspelin</b>	Send group members a draft of the government immunity bill when it becomes public.
<b>Brian Ferebee and Mike Lester</b>	Bring and present updated spatial data on Colorado State Forest Service and US Forest Service treatments to the next meeting.
<b>Travis Smith</b>	Ask Rebecca Mitchell (Colorado Water Conservation Board) or Amy Moyer (Colorado Department of Natural Resources) for an agenda for CWCB’s next meeting and for a draft of the proposed Water Project Bill.
<b>FHAC Members</b>	Send Heather any potentially relevant videos that your organization or its partners have made along with your assessment of whether creating the video was worth the cost (Note: Brian Ferebee will follow up on the Chuck Lavell PBS special and Mark Morgan will ask Jonas Feinstein about last winter’s Natural Resource Conservation Service video).
<b>Peak Facilitation Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene the “yes if” task group to write a letter to the Colorado Forest Watershed Health Alliance by <b>September 17</b>. (The group includes Carolyn Aspelin, Mike Lester, Mike Preston, and Travis Smith.)</li> <li>• Convene the legislative presentation task group to prepare written points for legislative committee appearances on <b>September 27</b> and <b>October 12</b> (The group includes Mike Lester, Mark Morgan, and Mike McHugh, with potential research and review help from Carol Ekarius.)</li> <li>• Convene the government immunity bill task group to write a letter reviewing the bill. (The group includes Lyle Laverty and Mark Morgan.)</li> <li>• Send the group a link and a tutorial PDF for using the FHAC’s internal website.</li> <li>• Send the group a survey of options for December meeting topics once Heather hears from those who proposed each option.</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Send the group a Doodle poll to select a date for the December meeting (to be held in Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, or Summit County at Peak’s discretion).</li></ul> |
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### **COLORADO FOREST WATERSHED HEALTH ALLIANCE: UPDATE**

Travis Smith provided an update on the Colorado Water Congress (CWC) August 23 “open tent” meeting on watershed health.

- Smith, who also sits on the CWC’s board of directors, was one of a handful of FHAC members who briefed the CWC on their proposal to create a Colorado Forest Watershed Health Alliance (the Alliance). 72 people (including legislators and key government agency officials) attended the discussion.
- The presenters discussed a possible (currently unclear) role for the CWC in forming the Alliance as one of five potential members who have indicated that they want to participate, along with Club 20, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance (CAWA), and the Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA).
- Smith noted that the FHAC did not know all the details about the Alliance’s ultimate purpose, funding mechanism, and role in relation to groups already working on forest health in Colorado. He emphasized that the meeting was more of a listening session than a presentation.
- Tim Quinn of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA) spoke to the CWC group about California’s model of building an alliance with five strong partners and advocating for new funding sources and the implementation of projects with one voice in a way that some groups (particularly government agencies) were unable to do because of political constraints. Attendees said that this would be a useful model for the Alliance to emulate because the FHAC can only advise the State Forester to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly. Forming a smaller group with more flexibility to lobby at the CWC and beyond is important.
- A major theme in attendee comments on the Alliance was that something had to be done to protect forest health beyond the status quo. While attendees were not exactly sure what that “something” was, they wanted to do it with a single voice and to work at a quick pace and on a broad scale.
- Another subject of conversation at the Water Congress meeting centered on the ideal number of organizations to work within the Alliance. Some attendees wanted to keep the “core” of the group to five organizations, which would be responsible for conducting outreach as “hubs” to the “spokes” of partner organizations. Other attendees wanted to add other groups to the core of the Alliance. Some FHAC members said that many of the groups that one could imagine being added to the core of the Alliance were already members of the CWC and so were represented by that organization.
- The California Farm Bureau is a member of that state’s Alliance. Adding the Colorado Farm Bureau would make some sense, but CAWA already represents agricultural interests. The core should be kept small. Each of the five organizations originally proposed as members of the core have ties to most other potential members.

- A legislator who attended the meeting proposed that the Alliance's core members include more environmental groups. Other FHAC members who attended the meeting said that TNC was the representative of those interests and that adding more groups to the core (apart from a group to represent Front Range/statewide interests) would make the group size unmanageable.
- There were concerns about the presence of Club 20 (which advocates for Western Slope interests) in the core group. They said that Front Range organizations would probably vote against the Alliance at the CWC in the future if neither a sixth group representing Front Range interests nor a compromise group like Colorado Counties, Inc. were added to the core of the Alliance. The Alliance needs to find a way to represent the whole state. The urgency of the ecological situation should be motivation enough to change the "Front Range vs. Club 20" mentality.

### ***Group Discussion***

FHAC members discussed the update on the open tent meeting.

- Most of Colorado's forest and headwaters are in Club 20 member counties, which is reason enough to include the organization in the Alliance's core. Advocates from the Colorado, Yampa, and White River Basins could also play a useful role in the Alliance.
- While CAWA and Club 20 (if balanced with Front Range interests) are welcome members of the core, those organizations readily admitted at the meeting that forest health is not their area of expertise. It is important that those organizations educate themselves about the issue for them to effectively advocate for forest health.
- The next step for Alliance is to develop a vision/mission statement for review. The mission statement should specify how information will be vetted and how it will be distributed to partner organizations.
- There should be a role for the Watershed Wildfire Protection Work Group (WWPWG) and the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) to work alongside the Alliance. The WWPWG has been working to leverage money and implement projects for 10 years now. CFRI can provide scientific expertise to support the Alliance's advocacy work. Any policy statement from the Alliance will be more meaningful if groups outside of its core (from counties, cities, academia, etc.) sign on to it.
- The Alliance could serve as the next building block in a statewide system of organizations dedicated to forest health. While there was initial skepticism about the need for yet another forest health group, there was support for the ultimate utility of the Alliance. Its unique function would be as a nonpolitical lobbying voice that is free to speak truth to power without fear of jurisdictional consequences.
- Colorado is fortunate to have local groups doing effective forest health work. Those groups need a body like the Alliance to carry their concerns and experiences to an influential audience (including decision makers in Washington DC). It is equally important that information about the Alliance's advocacy work flows back to the local groups. That is one component of the plan for the Alliance that will need to be further refined.
- It is important to specify what the purpose of the Alliance should be. It is not to develop science, provide information on the issue, or advocate for local interests. It is strictly a high-level group that builds off the work being done by other groups to change policy, law, funding, regulations, etc. The Alliance may not need a formalized structure, but it

needs to examine what is and is not working for other groups working on forest health and work to apply successful strategies statewide. Additionally, some legislators have indicated that they want the Alliance to work on a national policy level, whereas the FHAC is focused exclusively on Colorado.

- Even if the Alliance is created, the FHAC will still have a role to play through work like the messaging document that members brought to the open tent meeting and the policy expertise that group members can offer. A lot of legislators care about what the FHAC has to say, and the FHAC can address individual issues in a more surgical way than that in which Alliance may want to operate. The FHAC can play a critical role in persuading the General Assembly to consider forest health as a funding priority in addition to infrastructure and education.
- It is only a matter of time before a disaster on the scale of northern California's Carr Fire (233,000 acres burned, \$158 million in suppression costs, and \$1.6 billion in personal property damages) occurs in Colorado. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke spoke about the need for active forest management after visiting the California fire sites this summer. An FHAC member was part of a group that wrote the Secretaries a letter about the urgent need for the federal government to reallocate funding to support active forest management. The FHAC needs to articulate significant outcomes and identify strategies to make them a reality.
- Several Front Range water providers (not just Denver Water) are contributing to forest health and working with the US Forest Service (USFS). The providers are effective at using matching funds to treat areas critical to supplying water to the population. The question facing the Alliance is how to bring more resources into the state to add on to the work that the providers and the USFS are funding. The mission statement should reflect that goal.
- Front Range water providers could pass on some of their matching funds beyond Front Range watersheds to help overcome the urban-rural divide in treatment funding. There are no large Western Slope entities with an ability to fund treatments on the same scale as the Front Range water providers. It is still unclear how the private sector will fit in with the work that the Alliance plans to do.
- There are questions surrounding how the Alliance will discuss climate change. Some FHAC members said that they were comfortable identifying climate change as a threat to forest health as long as it is not described as human-caused. The narrative document that FHAC members took to the open tent meeting mentions increased temperatures and droughts without identifying a cause and could serve as a model for the Alliance to use.
- The mission statement should also address the perception among some that recreationists are acting as "free riders" in the forest. People are using Colorado's forest resources without contributing to keep them healthy. A positive exception has been the volunteers and money that Vail Resorts has contributed to the recent USFS treatment at Trail Creek. Similar recreational organizations need to help shift the paradigm of forest health by funding work on a larger scale.
- The FHAC should identify situations where regulations or existing policy impacts the ability of implementers to manage acres. The group could provide feedback to agencies and legal entities that empower people to do more work for less money (e.g., by reducing restrictions on hauling).

- The open tent conversation focused exclusively on pre-fire mitigation. However, the impacts of fire do not stop on the day that the fire is contained; they continue for years. A recent paper by Chuck Rhoades of the USFS showed that there are still impacts on water quality from the 2002 Hayman Fire. These lasting impacts illustrate the need to include questions about post-fire funding and policy in conversations at the CWC and beyond.
- Colorado is not alone in the western United States in facing these forest health issues. There will be competition for funding among states to address these issues. California has a huge bill for fire recovery and Idaho, Montana, Utah, Washington, and Oregon find themselves in circumstances like Colorado's. Colorado needs to make the best case that it can for funding while also recognizing that this is a national issue and should thus be a national funding priority.
- The period immediately after fires as serious as those that Colorado has experienced this summer always creates more public awareness than usual, so this is an opportunity to raise the profile of forest health.
- There is a need for balance between highlighting the urgency of Colorado's forest health problems and the need to avoid scaring people too much. While fears about the impact of this summer's fire on water quality and the risks to powerlines can persuade people to act on the necessary scale, it is important not alienate interest groups (such as environmentalists) who may be alarmed by the tone of calls for expanded forest treatments. It is equally important for any call to action to advocate for scientifically sound treatments.
- A possible model for striking the proper balance between urgency and alarm is the narrative document that FHAC members took to the CWC. That document was firm and underscored the connections between forest health, water, and public safety.
- The FHAC agreed to write a "yes if" letter listing concerns upon which the FHAC's approval of the Alliance is contingent. The letter should advocate for bold action to improve forest health. Travis Smith could carry the letter to the CWC Board, as he sits on both the FHAC and the CWC Board of Directors. The narrative document taken to the CWC will be attached to the letter. It would be helpful to have the letter ready for the CWC's September 26 board meeting. The FHAC members writing the letter will finish the letter by September 17 so that there is a week to edit the document and circulate it to the whole FHAC for comment (although there will not be a lot of time to comment on the draft). After discussion, the FHAC identified six key issues to include in a letter to the CWC Board:
  - The core group of the Alliance should be small, but representative.
  - The core should include the five initially identified organizations, with the possibility of adding a Front Range group and/or a recreation group.
  - The Alliance needs to have a feedback loop with the community and explain the Alliance's purpose to the community (potentially via after-action reports).
  - The Alliance needs to determine whether or how it would respond after a fire.
  - The Alliance needs to determine whether or how it can leverage more money.
  - The ultimate goal of the Alliance is not yet clear.

## **STRATEGIZING FOR FHAC LEGISLATIVE DISCUSSIONS**

FHAC members discussed the group's upcoming appointments with the General Assembly's Water Resources Review Committee (WRRRC) and Wildfire Matters Review Committee (WMRC).

- The State Forester has presented at three WMRC meeting and one WRRRC meeting this year. The FHAC will present from 3:00-3:30 PM at the September 27 WRRRC meeting (the last of this legislative session). The FHAC and the State Forester will also present at some point during the WMRC's October 2 meeting (1:00 PM-5:00 PM).
- The State Forester will not be able to attend the meeting, but the CSFS will provide the FHAC presenters with PowerPoints used for previous testimony (although they do not necessarily reflect what transpired in past committee meetings).
- The FHAC has spoken to both committees before. Travis Smith and Mike Lester had a productive discussion establishing prescribed fire as an important issue with the WMRC last year, although they have not brought prescribed fire up in committee meetings or during official testimony. Smith and Lester used Mark Morgan's past calculations to answer a legislator's question about the total cost of solving Colorado's forest health problem. The committee seemed shocked by the large amount of money. In subsequent testimony before the committee, the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) and Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) supported each other in requesting Tier 2 severance funding (and supplemental money from the General Fund) from the WMRC. The CSFS also requested funding for ten new positions. There have been no bills granting those requests yet.
- The DFPC has effectively communicated the urgency of the forest health problem to the WMRC. They have heard about the problem enough and want to know what they can do to fix it and how to pay for it.
- The strength of the economy meant that a lot of money was available to the General Assembly over the past year, but legislators did not know this until March, when the first tax revenue predictions were issued. The Budget Committee produces more bills than the WRRRC or WMRC because it has special permission to spend funds. The FHAC needs to convince someone on the Budget Committee that if more revenue (say, from a sales tax increase) becomes available to free up funding from transportation issues, it should be spent on forest health.
- There are expectations that the General Fund will be larger next session and some legislators are aware that severance tax funding is highly volatile and will not be enough to address vital forest health work. However, the General Fund may not generate enough extra money to make a significant difference.
- The FHAC needs to get creative about finding other consistent funding sources (General Fund bills are often only for a year or two). For example, outdoors goods generate \$2 billion every year in Colorado and persuading recreational enthusiasts and companies to contribute money to forest health causes could represent an untapped funding source. There were water representatives at this year's Outdoor Retailer Show, but foresters should be present in the future, too. Taxing recreation itself in Colorado would probably mean asking voters to approve a tax increase. Alternatively, one could ask the legislature to match voluntary contributions from the recreation industry with money from the General Fund, Water Projects Bill, etc.

- The FHAC's motorized and nonmotorized recreation representatives (Scott Jones and Cindy Farny, respectively) were absent from today's meeting. It is vital to find out their thoughts on the role of recreation groups in funding forest health initiatives before discussing the matter further.
- If the FHAC could find out what drafts are being proposed for the CWCB's annual Projects Bill, FHAC members could attend the next CWCB meeting and potentially find an audience friendly to the idea of the FHAC continuing to do good work as the legislative committee meetings approach.
- The current goal of the CSFS is to increase the visibility of the agency. Some legislators are not sure what the CSFS is and what it does. CSFS leadership plan to explain the need for more funding to address forest health through grants and additional capacity.
- A legislator is proposing a bill providing limited civil immunity to government personnel conducting prescribed burns. The bill will eventually pass through the WRRRC. It would be helpful if someone from the FHAC could support the bill by explaining the issue of prescribed fire and what resources the state needs to conduct it safely and effectively moving forward. If the bill does not pass the WRRRC, another legislator will propose it as one of their first five individual bills. The CSFS will send FHAC members a draft of the government immunity bill(s) once it becomes public.
- The FHAC needs to know exactly how it or its partners would spend money before it asks the legislature for more.
- Another committee whose work could be relevant to the FHAC is the Alternatives to the Gallagher Amendment Interim Study Committee (Gallagher Committee), which will meet on October 3. The committee is doing important work to stabilize budgets for special districts. If the way the Gallagher Amendment's formula is calculated and implemented does not change, Colorado will face a 15% drop in tax revenue for fire protection districts, special water districts, etc. Bills to remedy this problem are coming soon.
- The FHAC could send an informative letter (with persuasive numbers) to both gubernatorial candidates about the forest health problem and ask them whether they understand the significance of the problem and how engaged they will be in working to solve it. The Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) writes similar letters every election year.
- The group discussed Mark Morgan's economic analysis of the forest health problem. Morgan noted that his analysis is just a snapshot of the cost of countable, treatable acres, not those that are commercially viable. It will also be necessary for the next legislature to establish a budget for a controlled burn authority. Morgan's analysis suggested treating 2% of the relevant acres each year; doing so will mean finding a consistent funding mechanism beyond the annual appropriations bill.

***Group Discussion: Challenges and Opportunities for the CSFS and the USFS***

- The USFS is thinking of ways to engage in high-leverage partnerships with organizations representing downstream (both urban and rural) water users. The USFS will use its longstanding partnerships with water providers to demonstrate its ability to make an impact.

- Instead of merely telling people that there is a forest health crisis, it might be beneficial to explain the situation and allow people to conclude for themselves that there is a crisis.
- The FHAC could discuss the future of wildland-urban interface (WUI) development with groups like the WMRC. 75% of the WUI has not yet been built out, and the USFS can barely afford to treat the portion of the WUI that already is; implementers should treat those undeveloped areas now before they develop.
- A significant portion of fire suppression costs come from protecting infrastructure and a significant portion of mitigation costs come from pretreating it. That means that if even half of the remaining undeveloped WUI in Colorado is built out, it will pose a major challenge for firefighters and those working in forest health. The FHAC needs to discuss this possibility in greater detail and to discuss ways to promote the responsibility of land owners to address their private acres.
- Colorado needs to figure out how it will address WUI challenges as a state while acknowledging that there will never be a statewide building code. One option could be to a statewide WUI policy that counties and other sign agreeing to mitigate fire risk in the WUI (particularly by hardening existing structures).
- Counties that have addressed the challenges posed by WUI development most successfully have avoided health and safety risks to their citizens by reframing land use questions as a ramification of the responsibility of officials to protect their citizens.
- Financing, biomass, and personnel capacity are three of the primary obstacles for the USFS to finding a solution to forest health challenges. Colorado has a lot of low and no-value vegetation that needs to be removed from forests. Identifying a strategy for dealing with that problem is the first step in reaching the necessary scale to address forest health concerns.
- The FHAC has discussed biomass and how to support the timber industry in the past. Some biomass work is happening at a low level, but it needs to be expanded. The stronger that the timber industry becomes, the more acres that can be treated.
- Now that legislators are aware of the problem (thanks to the outreach work of the FHAC and others) and are asking for suggestions for solutions, the FHAC can identify high leverage moves that Colorado implementers can make on a landscape scale. Policy changes are helpful, but the FHAC should also work to identify how partners can help the USFS to overcome those three obstacles.
- For its part, the CSFS has reorganized to do the best that it can with its limited personnel capacity. It needs more personnel to improve upon its current efforts.
- No single funding source should be relied upon to solve Colorado's forest health problems; each will be part of a broader effort.
- Colorado's Water Plan defined a funding gap for water projects over the next few years. A similar gap analysis could be conducted for forest fire suppression and watershed protection costs. Doing so would help to answer the question of how to treat 2% of the relevant acres each year.
- The Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) is working on a project in partnership with California that will provide carbon credits for avoiding wildfires in Colorado. Implementers could sell the difference between carbon emissions from historic fires and those occurring today. The proceeds could fund treatments. CUSP is also examining the possibility of using carbon credit markets to fund the replanting of

forests after fires. The USFS does not have adequate funding to do that right now. Carbon markets could be another vehicle to address these challenges.

- Legislators may consider this to be a federal problem, but that does not mean there is nothing that the State of Colorado can do. When legislators ask what can be done to address the problem and how can those actions be paid for, the FHAC can offer a variety of suggestions; getting forest health projects prioritized in the Water Projects Bill, for example.
- The Good Neighbor Authority agreement between the CSFS and the USFS has increased the capacity of both agencies. That should be held up as a success to the legislative committees.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR MESSAGES TO BRING TO THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES**

Group members provided suggestions for two or three messages/requests to bring to the upcoming committee meetings.

- FHAC members should use these facts to get the attention of the committees: Emergency executive orders for fire have cost Colorado \$40 million this year. Ray Rasker of Headwaters Economics has conducted research showing that fire suppression costs are only 9% of the total. The total cost is borne by local communities in the form of insurance claims, damages, and losses. A pie chart of the true cost of fires would also help illustrate how widely these costs are shared. For example, the USFS only paid 20% of the total cost of the Spring Fire this year. Even fires that burn on a lot of federal land are often not predominantly paid for by the federal government.
- The United States spends \$1 million a minute on fire suppression, so it will be possible to show a high return on investment for the legislature by reducing the costs of fire. The West Region Wildfire Council has numbers on the multiplier relationship between mitigation and suppression that could be used to calculate savings.
- The FHAC can quantify the environmental, economic, and health costs from devastating wildfires and so can specify how much the legislature can expect to save in the long-term by paying for mitigation work now.
- The FHAC is not asking the legislature to solve this problem by itself. Rather, it should aim to show the legislature what its role in a wider funding effort should be. The message should also serve as a statement of intent for finding other funding sources. There will be no silver bullet for funding; this effort will require a wide variety of funding sources.
- The FHAC could ask the legislature to authorize the creation of Colorado's Forest Plan as a follow-up to the Water Plan. The Forest Plan could include "price tags" for addressing forest health challenges. The FHAC could ask (in addition to a funding request) that the legislature provide a concise statement detailing how it will respond to long-term forest health funding needs. The Forest Plan could include a cost gap analysis, suggestions for how to strategically bridge that gap, and a "postfire index" published in a new analysis from the US Geologic Survey (USGS) entitled "Prefire Planning for Postfire Debris Flows."
- The CSFS is required to produce a Forest Action Plan every ten years that focuses on the agency's core areas of operation and the major steps it plans to take. The Action Plan examines that last Plan's assessment of needs and provides ideas for action to meet those needs. The report is a prerequisite for a lot of the federal funding that the

CSFS receives, which is a higher proportion of the agency's budget than what comes from the State.

- The CSFS Forest Action Plan could include most of the items that the FHAC would like to see in Colorado's Forest Plan. It could serve as a place to include items that do not fit in Colorado's Forest Plan. Colorado's Forest Plan could be bolder and more specific than the CSFS report is able to be and whoever wrote it would not need to wait 10 years between reports, as the CSFS is required to do. Legislation creating Colorado's Forest Plan could require the identification of funding sources for the actions that the Plan recommends and the FHAC could provide an expansive list of funding options as part of its recommendation for the creation of the Plan.
- The Central Arizona Water Project or the State of Arizona could establish a permanent fund for forest health or fire treatments to atone for taking water illegally from the Colorado River through controlled releases from Lake Mead. The total to be put in the fund could be calculated by charging Arizona per acre foot of water at Front Range prices.
- The FHAC could ask the legislature to consider the forest health problem as a public health, economic, and social issue. The FHAC could also work with other committees that focus on those areas.
- Insurance companies face \$1.68 billion in payments for the Carr Fire. They should be at the table in fire prevention discussions.
- The FHAC should suggest sales taxes on goods that are not necessities, like bottle water or beer. Those industries could also contribute voluntarily because they depend so heavily on Colorado's water.
- It might be useful to tie forest health to water infrastructure discussions. However, it might be presumptuous for the CSFS to lead that effort (the Governor and water providers are among those who lead water infrastructure policy in Colorado). Any tying of those topics should be in partnership with water interests and should not be perceived as "hijacking" efforts to secure more funding/policy changes for water groups. However, forestry in Colorado is integral to protecting watersheds and Colorado's Water Plan specifies concern about the effects of devastating fires on water infrastructure and storage. Forests and water are closely linked, and the Forest Plan could include a section about water to highlight that fact.
- The nexus of forest health and water should be brought to the CWC's Board of Directors for further discussion.
- If the CSFS is asked to write this report, the legislature should provide money for support staff and outreach.
- The group discussed the tradeoffs between a) taking an entire list of action options to the legislature and asking it how the FHAC can help and b) listing those options but also making a recommendation.
- The DFPC, which recently brought the legislature a five-year plan detailing how it could ramp up its efforts to solve challenges, could serve as a model for the FHAC. Making a flexible, multiyear plan positions the FHAC to return to the legislature next year with additional requests and progress to highlight.
- The State Forester has explained the forest health problem to the legislature three times. It is time to ask specifically for more grant money, personnel, etc.

- The FHAC could send an op-ed to Colorado Politics to ensure that legislators are hearing this message.
- After discussion, the FHAC developed this list of potential requests and recommendations for the benefit of its presenters to the legislative committees:
  1. The legislature should approve development of Colorado’s Forest Plan (with links to the forest addendum to Colorado’s Water Plan and the CSFS Forest Action Plan).
  2. The Plan should include information on the “true cost of fire” and to whom those costs accrue (e.g., the environment and taxpayers).
  3. The Plan should include a cost gap analysis.
  4. The Plan should identify consistent and repeatable funding opportunities.
  5. The Plan should specify that State funding is just one piece of a larger pie (other funders could include the recreation industry or insurers).
  6. The legislature should calculate the financial cost of the water taken from Lake Mead by the Central Arizona Water Project and bill them to set up a forest health treatment fund with the proceeds.
  7. The FHAC recommends reframing forest health challenges as public health, environmental, and economic issues. The FHAC could work with committees that cover those issues.
  8. The FHAC supports reasonable changes to the Gallagher Amendment.
  9. Taxing “voluntary goods” like bottled water and beer could be a long-term funding option.
  10. The message on the need for forest funding and for water funding should be integrated.
  11. The FHAC recommends that the legislature allocate money to the CSFS to develop Colorado’s Forest Plan.
  12. The FHAC recommends that the legislature allocate more money for the CSFS, DFPC, and others to conduct treatments.
- The presenters will:
  1. Outline the issue and note the progress that the FHAC and its partners have made to date.
  2. Estimate the cost of forest health problems (types of costs, who is paying them, savings from mitigation, etc.)
  3. Present a plan to solve the problem, including a request for grant money and more staff for 2019 (to be followed with more requests and recommendations next year)
  4. Ask the legislature for guidance for the FHAC.

### **DEVELOPING A LANDSCAPE APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT**

Aaron Kimple of the Mountain Studies Institute and Jason Lawhon of the USFS discussed the need for a landscape approach to forest management in Colorado.

- No single entity can solve Colorado’s forest health problem; it needs to be solved collectively. That means thinking of the landscape holistically and planning and prioritizing treatments beyond jurisdictional boundaries. For example, there is a need to work on USFS land adjacent to WUI homes in southwest Colorado to properly

protect those homes. The FHAC should consider how to make those sorts of processes more fluid.

- Defining the landscape and threats to it, articulating goals, and deciding who can realize those goals allows implementers to work most effectively. The CSFS and its partners need to define their desired future conditions for the forest.

### ***Group Discussion***

The FHAC discussed Kimple and Lawhon's "landscape approach to management."

- A potential method of implementing a landscape approach to management is to create a state and/or federal "GNA 2.0" policy allowing landowners to treat 300 feet onto agency-owned land or vacant private property. The landowner doing the treatment would pay for it and the District Ranger would notify whoever owns the land being used as a buffer. The notified landowner would have 30 days to secure a categorical exclusion refusing to allow the treatment. Otherwise, it would proceed. This is a potential solution to the challenges posed by the WUI being developed. This option may require an act of Congress.
- The need to bring whoever holds conservation easements into the fold could complicate GNA 2.0 and would require guidance from the state. An alternative is to update wildfire mitigation regulations at the local level, as Ouray County is doing. Nudging landowners to mitigate voluntarily is also crucial.
- Requiring residents to treat their land through local government nuisance law and other local government actions is complicated by the fact that counties across Colorado are in very different stages of their wildfire mitigation efforts.
- Another way to persuade landowners to mitigate is the "tide" of other landowners mitigating; peer pressure and a well-publicized mitigation effort can spur people into action.
- Private landowners need to talk to the CSFS or USFS, secure a GNA, and have the agency conduct a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment before working on agency land. The USFS does not have enough staff to conduct NEPA analyses on all small acreage projects.
- Colorado State University's Warner College of Natural Resources, the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS), the CSFS, and TNC collaborated to determine priority treatment areas for the state. They could not agree on exactly what forest health was, but it is still a starting point. The Front Range Roundtable (FRRT) will be discussing this at their December meeting.
- There was concern that discussing the landscape approach to management indicated that the message was not getting out.
- The USFS and CSFS are assessing risk statewide using the same criteria (which was not the case historically) to align their priorities for treatments. This will be useful on a planning level, but implementation will probably need to be local.
- Another idea could be to use prioritization to generate funding, as is being done in New Mexico. Creating partnerships and associations outside of GNAs as agencies conduct NEPA analyses and identify treatment areas allows for more fluidity in treatments.
- Collaboratives have a crucial role to play in utility forestry. Utilities can work within their 150-foot right-of-way to address threats outside of that right-of-way. Utilities have deep pockets and can work with other agencies to get acres treated.

- WUI management and GNAs are not widely known by the public. The FHAC could write another narrative document about these issues and distribute it to constituents. The document could include case studies and the successes of GNAs, as well as the danger of future WUI development.
- It might be helpful to provide a framework for local groups to replicate the success of GNAs and other agency efforts.
- The CSFS and the USGS will share spatial data on their treatments at the next meeting. That data could be supplemented with key themes and case studies to produce another narrative document after next meeting. The document would help frame the argument for protecting watersheds.
- The CSFS is developing a publicly accessible “forest atlas” showing aerial survey information, risk assessments, maps, etc. This will be ready in a year or so. This and other data are being used by the CSFS and USFS for planning exercises and working to maximize the impact of treatments in critical locations.
- It may be helpful to examine how effective collaborative projects have been in the past as opposed to the work done by individual members of collaboratives. The FRRT is examining the impact of various collaboratives along the Front Range.

### **PROGRESS ON PRESCRIBED FIRE**

The group discussed some brief updates on prescribed fire topics.

- The governmental immunity bill is moving forward in the legislature. Carolyn Aspelin will keep the group up to date.
- The CFPC is building a new website with planning information, future project descriptions and maps, contact lists, and information on the Certified Burner program.
- The New Jersey legislature formally endorsed the use of prescribed fire. If it can happen there, it seems possible that it could happen in Colorado, too.
- The FHAC will receive a copy of the government immunity bill (in the next couple of weeks).
- There may be some opposition to the bill because some believe that the State should not have any more immunity than anyone else and there are still concerns about prescribed fire stemming from the Lower North Fork Fire.
- FHAC members will write a letter to the legislature in support of the bill with three or four key messages.

### **SHOWCASING THE FHAC IN THE 2018 FOREST HEALTH REPORT**

Carolyn Aspelin of the CSFS asked for group suggestions for how best to showcase the FHAC in the 2018 CSFS Forest Health Report.

- Last year’s report mentioned the FHAC. This year, the CSFS wants to include a half page on the FHAC. The report will include a special section on communities and wildfire, so hopefully the FHAC section can tie into that.
- The report could include a comparison of historic and current maps of wildfires, insects and disease, and droughts.
- This is an opportunity to share the FHAC’s views, objectives, and needs with the legislature and the public.

- The FHAC could provide an overview of what it has done, and the report could describe the FHAC's momentum in moving from its Barriers and Opportunities document to its Call to Action document.
- The FHAC section could explain why the forests are unhealthy, where Colorado and the FHAC have made mistakes, and how to correct those mistakes. The section to link to the Preliminary agreements document, in addition to the two listed above.

### **FHAC NARRATIVE FILM DISCUSSION**

Dan Myers of Peak Facilitation summarized a meeting he had with videographer Ryan Ludlow of Natural Focus Digital about the possibility of creating a narrative film for the FHAC. The group then discussed the value of such a film.

- Ludlow estimated that a three to minute film (which he recommended) would cost \$3-4,000 (although that figure is negotiable).
- He suggested shooting a day and a half at the Buffalo Fire site and a day and a half at the 416 Fire site. He could finalize the video in two weeks or less.
- Ludlow would use drones to capture aerial footage of the burn scars and fire breaks and would interview three to four people of the FHAC's choosing. He also offered to help write a video script, although the FHAC could do that as well.
- There may be value in making a video to explain the forest health challenge and fire mitigation successes because people have short attention spans and it could explain what the FHAC does.
- The video would have to be high quality to spread the message that the FHAC wants.
- It would be useful to see similar videos from other forest health groups.
- It is not clear who would or could pay for such a video. The CSFS could fund one, but it would to have a specific purpose (like explaining the true cost of a wildfire).
- FHAC members will speak to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel about a similar video they made last winter and whether it was worth the cost.
- The video could produce a 30 or 60 second cut for use on broadcast media.
- Group members will send Heather videos made by their organizations and partners and ask the makers of those videos if they were worth it.
- The USFS recently made a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series with filmmaker Chuck Leavell. It may be possible to use a clip from that film for FHAC purposes. The series was well received. The USFS will try to determine what the impact of the series was and how many people saw it.
- Filmmaker Bruce Ward is working on fire issues in the Southwest and could be effective working with the FHAC.
- The FHAC would need to decide whether it wants to target a large, unaffiliated audience with its video or create a more targeted message.
- The FHAC will discuss video examples and next steps at the December meeting.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Peak has created an FHAC website. Members can draft or share documents, images, PowerPoint slides, videos, etc. It is easy to use. Dan will send out a link and instruction page on using the website.
- Registration is open for the Colorado Wildland Fire Conference, which will run from September 17 to 19 in Crested Butte.

- The Sustaining Watersheds Conference is October 9 to 11 in Avon. There will be a session on forest fires and watersheds on October 10.
- The FHAC will meet in early December. Agenda items could include:
  - CSFS and USFS prioritization efforts
  - The potential FHAC narrative video and review of other videos
  - An op-ed on forest health challenges for Colorado Politics
  - How to support the timber industry
  - The need for biomass reduction and processing
  - Strategies for dealing with future WUI development
  - Cost gap analysis
  - Concerns about the lack of regeneration in some forests after fires
  - Relevant bills (maybe invite legislators)
  - A presentation on CUSP's and other carbon programs.
  - An update on the Alliance
- Heather will send a survey on topics once she has heard from those who have proposed them.
- Peak will send a Doodle poll to find a date and time for the December meeting (to be held in Glenwood or Summit County).