

Front Range Roundtable Annual Progress Report August 2008



The Front Range Roundtable has kicked its implementation into high gear this year, and the last twelve months have been full of accomplishments. We have made progress in all four categories of our original ten recommendations. Details:

Increase Funding for Treatments

1. Identify new state and local funding sources that can contribute to treatment costs on state and private land
2. Increase forest treatment incentives for private landowners
3. Advocate for additional federal funding for Front Range forest treatments

Progress:

- ✓ The Front Range has received millions of new dollars in federal funds over the last year, a success story that is at least partly due to the strength of the Roundtable collaborative. These funds have traveled through the USFS Regional Office in Lakewood, and some of it has found its way to the Colorado State Forest Service and/or the two National Forests that form the backbone of the Roundtable.
- ✓ Woodland Park, the recipient of the Roundtable's Community Demo Project award, has already attracted approximately \$100,000 to help them treat fuels in their high risk areas. Funding from the Governor's Energy Office, the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, and the Office of Smart Growth will be matched with dollars from national foundations and local organizations.
- ✓ The Roundtable's grant-writing workshop in May was well attended and productive. Attendees, many of whom were county staff, are better equipped to seek funding for forest health work in their community.
- ✓ At the state level, the legislature was notably productive for forest health. Bills that received the Governor's signature include provisions that enhance the forest health revenue stream and provide incentives for action by private landowners, water supply providers and local businesses:
 - HB08-1110 Income Tax Deduction for Wildfire Mitigation Costs
 - HB 1269 Sales and Use Tax Exemptions for Beetle Killed Trees
 - HB 1318 Mitigation of the Effects of the Pine Beetle Infestation
 - SB 39 Training Directors of Fire Protection Districts in the WUI
 - SB 71 Extend the Forest Restoration Pilot Program

- SB 221 Watershed Bonding for Forest Health and Watershed Protection

Reduce the Cost of Treatments

4. Increase the appropriate application of prescribed fire and wildland fire use as a management tool
5. Increase commercial utilization of woody biomass, especially as bioheating fuel for institutional buildings
6. Increase contract sizes and durations through the use of stewardship contracts on federal lands

Progress:

- ✓ The state-level Prescribed Fire Council continues to work toward its goal of increasing the appropriate use of prescribed fire in Colorado. Workgroups in the Council have been actively exploring smoke management issues, capacity barriers, and opportunities for reforming relevant Colorado statutes.
- ✓ Our biomass workshop in March was held at the award-winning Gilpin County Road & Bridge Building. It was a tremendous success, and will breathe life into similar efforts across the Front Range. Participants were treated to a full day of presentations by local experts, a tour of the facility, and an open problem solving workshop.
- ✓ Bio-heating is a key component of the Community Demo Project. The Governor’s Energy Office has pledged \$25,000 toward the study and implementation of bio-heating facilities in the project area; local partnerships will likely match those funds with in kind support.

Ensure Local Leadership and Planning

7. Limit the growth of fire risk in the WUI
8. Promote the development of CWPPs for Front Range communities at risk

Progress:

- ✓ Woodland Park has mobilized its local elected officials, non-profits, water providers, utilities, and community leaders in its effort to help steer the Community Demo Project. Enthusiasm for the project is high, and participants are eager to demonstrate what effective fire planning can entail.
- ✓ The Roundtable planning & zoning workshop in June was a success, and helped counties figure out how to better refine planning regulations to limit growth in the WUI.

- ✓ All of the ten counties within the Roundtable area now have completed CWPPs. Several of these counties also have community-level plans completed or in progress, and implementation of the plans is progressing.

Set Clear Priorities and Ensure Progress Toward Common Goals

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">9. Adopt a clear and common framework for prioritizing treatments10. Convene follow-up Roundtable of forest stakeholders to ensure implementation of current recommendations and address future challenges. |
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Progress:

- ✓ Three Roundtable working groups continue to update our collective grasp of the most current science so that we can keep our priorities current. The arrival of the Mountain Pine Beetle to the Front Range, and a renewed focus on watershed protection, has been especially prominent in our recent discussions. In July, we held an all-day meeting to explore these issues in detail and find out if our initial prioritized landscapes are still scientifically sound. This “Upper Montane meeting” was informative; the next step is for the Roundtable’s watershed working group to develop priority treatment maps that we can overlay with Roundtable priorities to compare results and identify areas of convergence. Early indications suggest that protecting homes and communities remains the top priority and these treatments will effectively address new and emerging priorities.
- ✓ The Northern Front Range Mountain Pine Beetle working group has focused on communications between county, state, and federal agencies and with the public on mountain pine beetle issues. This past year the working group developed a website (www.frftp.org/nfrpinebeetle.htm) and hosted a mountain pine beetle informational meeting to improve communication efforts.
- ✓ During our May 1st meeting, the Roundtable was presented with a Silver Award from the Denver Regional Council of Governments for its work as a “cooperating partner” on Gilpin County’s Road & Bridge building. The award was for Community Outreach and Education as part of the Local Governments Innovation Award program. Gilpin’s Road & Bridge building has become a regional model for its use of local wood products to provide heat & renewable energy.
- ✓ Governor Ritter launched a new state level Forest Health Advisory Council in March. This state-level body has already heard from the Roundtable regarding our work and the two entities will work closely in the future. State level coordination will help to link Front Range collaborative strength with similar efforts on the western slope.