

Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable Meeting October 9, 2008

Hosted at: Bureau of Land Management, Lakewood, CO
Facilitated by: John Bustos

Attendees: Jeff Kitchens, Randy Frank, Wade Yates, Gary Severson, Eric Howell, Mike McHugh, Brad Phiel, Howard Hallman, Jessica Clement, Susan Ford, Glenn Casamassa, Cheri Bashor, Liz Lile, Bob Sturtevant, Carl Spaulding, Nate Williamson, Carol Ekarius, Paige Lewis, Jenny Briggs, Jeff Witcosky, Tom Fry, Hal Gibbs, Don Kennedy, Leslie Ellwood, Merrill Kaufmann, Brian Kent, Jeff Jahnke, Dave Hessel, Edward Spence, Elise Harrington, Chuck Dennis, Ryan Ludlow, Scott Golden, Jeanne Nicholson

Introductions

Overview of Roundtable's Structure and Purpose: Tom Fry

After the Hayman Fire, it was obvious that the forest had "dodged a bullet" and more efforts for fuels reduction were (and still remain) necessary as it is only a matter of time before another fire occurs. It would be best to complete the treatments before another big fire but there are 1.5 million acres that need attention and treatments to maintain forest health. Therefore completion of the treatments is impossible. With that in mind the Roundtable formed an Ecology and Economic group who, along with a private contractor, worked to create a report of feasible intentions and how these intentions might be fulfilled. In 2006, the report was released. It included ten initiatives to accelerate progress toward community protection and forest health. There has been progress on some of the recommendations, but there is a need to revisit these initiatives and evaluate if they are still valid for several reasons:

1. Due to changes in group membership. Approximately 50% of the current members were included in the initial group of invited members.
2. Developments that have occurred since the report was published. These include:
 - a. Continued forest health decline
 - b. Expansion of the bark beetle epidemic
 - c. Watershed wildfire protection efforts in the Front Range

The new mission should include plans and intentions for the Roundtable and be of a 12-18 month scope. This includes discussion of the new coordinator position and the overall priorities of the group.

Members asked if risk reduction and restoration are still applicable, main focus. It was agreed that they are. Also, the partnership discussed whether working groups or task groups are fulfilling the needs and expectations of the Roundtable. Several individuals offered information concerning the Core Team, Executive Team and Steering Group structure within the Roundtable. The agreed upon description of the Core Team emphasized the voluntary involvement during the beginning stages of the Roundtable. This team conducts monthly conference calls every first Thursday at 1:00 p.m. They discuss meeting agendas and the current status of the group. The Executive team includes one US and one State Forest Representative as well as a member from the Research Station and the Park Service. The Steering Group was also created to lend a hand to the executive team when the need arose. This group was intended to help solve main issues that need further direction or investigation.

Strawperson Small Group Activity:

Three main questions of concern...

1. Is the RT still valuable? Why or why not?
2. If yes, what should we be concerned with next?
3. What are the expectations of the group and its members? How do we formalize them?

Group responses:

It was generally agreed upon that the Roundtable is still a valuable entity due to its ability to create a venue to bring together stakeholders and cooperators alike. The Roundtable combines science and collaboration to come to decisions with the best-interest of the forest, its' stakeholders and its' cooperators.

The main areas of concentration should be prioritizing the other nine initiatives of the original report, configuring the coordinator position and its means of funding, and reorganizing the Roundtable including the subgroups and workgroups that could be utilized to review the individual initiatives. This would enable the Roundtable to have more input into where funds are going and how the cooperators impact the group's direction. In general, it seemed members were hoping to combine and overlap projects. In addition, a need for action and implementing as opposed to data sharing is a common belief among members. The expectations of the members should be elevated in order to reach goals in a more effective manner. Also, it was mentioned there should be an increase in the amount of updates provided by the work and task groups of the Roundtable. Appropriating the Roundtable as a clearinghouse will decrease the informality and uncertainty felt amongst members of the group. This will serve as a way to clarify and understand the efforts of the cooperators.

A charter for the Roundtable was requested of the Executive Team and should be available by Thanksgiving.

Watershed Protection Group Presentation: Dave Hessel, Chuck Dennis, Brad Phiel, Mike McHugh

Within the Watershed wildfire protection group are three subgroups that are organized to accomplish certain tasks as described in the handout White Paper. These subgroups have been working over the past year and have provided updates to the main watershed work group as well at each of the Roundtable meetings over the past year.

Mike McHugh spoke on behalf of the Communication Sub-Work Group. He explained they are looking at the current program for water providers. On February 11, 2009, the Watershed Protection Group is scheduled to present information on its progress in the recent past and near future. This will be delivered to the Front Range water providers and stakeholders.

Chuck Dennis spoke on behalf of the Critical Community Wildfire Watershed Protection Plans (CWP)² Sub Working Group which includes members from the Nature Conservancy, State and US Forest Services, and water providers. This group has developed the (CWP)² concept which works with watershed information and data along with any existing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for developing protection and fuels treatment locations and priorities as part of the critical watershed protection plan. Current CWPPs were generally created without incorporating watershed concerns or using the watershed methodology. This new method may help shape and impact CWPPs for particular areas.

Grant funding has been made available for 2008/09 by CSFS to develop (CWP)² on two areas and to implement management treatments. Due to the length of time in developing the model (CWP)²s, the CSFS has asked that proposals from water providers to protect watershed infrastructure through vegetative treatments of forested areas on private lands be submitted by November 17, 2008. Treatment grants will be a maximum of \$50,000. A committee of CSFS, TNC and water providers will review and select the projects to be funded.

On November 11, 2008 proposals are due to water providers related to the forest, requesting to protect the high priority watersheds with the water providers' help. On October 21, 2008, the finalized technical approach is to be completed and will detail the constraints of the treatments.

A presentation was made by Brad Phiel of the Data Refinement Sub-Group on a draft methodology describing a technical approach to prioritizing sixth level watersheds within larger fifth level watersheds. The draft model presented is open for comments and the objective is to have it finalized by

the end of November. The details of this presentation are not included in the notes due to their length. For more information contact Brad Phiel, Dave Hessel, or Deb Martin

The assessment to establish priorities in a fifth watershed should be rapid estimating no more than 120 days to complete with an estimated cost of \$50,000. This assessment process requires involvement of interested water providers and stakeholders in the fifth level watershed. The CWP2 or the project treatment planning in highest prioritized sixth level watersheds would follow the assessment process.

Please refer to the October 9, 2008, draft White Paper of the Watershed group's "Protecting Front Range Forest Watersheds from High-Severity Wildfires" as it details the status of the group as well as its prospective actions.

Ecology Working Group: Jeff Kitchens, Jenny Briggs

This group has been working to create useful, clear cut data for organizations and research ventures to reference. Jeff Kitchens explained the strive for more cohesive, explanatory documents that will accurately depict the fuels management work that has occurred so far as well as what will be required in the future. Three working reports were distributed and the group is seeking all feedback that individuals with relevant expertise from the Roundtable can provide to enhance them. Then, Jenny Briggs explained the efforts the group is taking to understand more about Mountain Pine Beetles with their current and future effects on the forest. There are four questions involved in these new efforts.

- 1) Are the pine beetles headed for the Front Range?
- 2) Do previous restoration treatments create conditions conducive to beetle attack?
- 3) What will remain of the forest?
- 4) How do we stay ahead of the beetles?

The studies the group wishes to conduct are those requiring monitoring to identify the problem areas. In order to retrieve this data and answer these questions, a four-person field crew would be required at \$70,000 per season. There will be a presentation to the stakeholders of this group on February 15, 2009 explaining the status and progress.

Decision: A letter of support from Roundtable to encourage the support and funding of the Joint Fire Fighter Science Program will be provided. It was suggested that the Ecology Group develop a template of the letter to propose to Roundtable for comment and fine-tuning. The Roundtable fully supports the Ecology Working Group and its efforts. Jeff Kitchens mentioned

a need to weigh site specific treatments and alternative projects. The Roundtable must decide which will gain more fiscal support: data collection or implementation?

Financial Data:

Jeanne Nicholson posed a question to the group to determine whether or not it would be helpful to investigate if federal, state and stakeholder's funds are appropriately distributed amongst the counties. Glenn explained the use of funds, broken down by forest, that have been allocated in past fiscal years. Chuck Dennis also explained that the CO State Forest Service allocates funds only to projects that are in CWPPs/(CWP)²s . The group decided that this is an item that should be added to the forecast and objectives for the next year or two.

Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative:

Carol Ekarius provided an update of the Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative. She details the successes of the recent past for the group. She explained that the Government Energy Office and Colorado Springs Electric are participating in discussions with the initiative for woody biomass work within the area. Based upon the work plan, the designing process will be effective through 2010. A \$60,000 grant was given for a map program and a MOU was created to detail the work plan and allow private acres to be treated. The beetle populations in the area are now a concern and will impact the size of this initiative.

Long-Term Stewardship Contract:

Glenn Casamassa delivered an abbreviated explanation of what is included within Long-Term Stewardship Contracts. He also discussed the general procedures and comparisons to other regions. Because of the terrain on the Pike San-Isabelle and Arapaho-Roosevelt, the limitations are much greater relative to other forests. More products are being produced on the Pike to begin with to make up for implementation costs. Monitoring is included within the contract and it seems to be effective because it unites and benefits different groups. There may be a bit more work required but once it is operating, it provides an opportunity to maintain and/or restore forest health.