



## **FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE MEETING**

**May 22, 2009**

**Hosted at: US Forest Service Regional Office, 740 Simms Street, Golden, CO**  
**Facilitated by: Jeff Kitchens**

### **WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA**

- Jeff Kitchens reviewed the agenda.
- Rick Cables welcomed the group and expressed the importance to keep momentum in our efforts.
- Federal funding is not quite here; however, there is potential for \$40 million.
- The USFS and the CSFS will continue their work to obtain funding.
- Areas of opportunity also include small diameter wood use, such as pellet plants.
- The Roundtable has a water connection and a wildland-urban interface connection.
- Could the FR Roundtable put together a proposal for a portion of these dollars?

### **MONITORING UPDATE – Hal Gibbs**

- During the last Roundtable meeting the group expressed the desire to find out more about what partnership agencies are doing. In light of this request, Hal updated the group on agency monitoring priorities.
- Monitoring priorities include treatment areas in lower montane restoration zones, community fire protection zones (CFPZ), and overlap zones, as well as prescribed fire and stewardship contract areas.
- Monitoring Tasks include: total acres treated, the percentage of priority zones treated, acres treated with prescribed fire, acres treated with stewardship contracts, and the percentage of priority zones planned for treatment. The timeframe for 2004 through 2008 is to be completed by the fall RT meeting with an update each year at spring meetings.
- Hal showed the group a map with examples of planned and treated areas in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District, illustrating restoration zones, CFPZ, and overlap zones.
- Will have data for the 10-county area
- Issues are that different databases are used between units/agencies. Data is comparable within a unit, but not between units. This should be resolved for 2009 and future years. Monitoring of other recommendations include Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) areas since not all prior RT recommendation areas are in CWPPs (second map of Canyon Lakes Ranger District CFPZ and CWPP wildland-urban interface zones was shown).
- The Roundtable may ask how we incorporate the priority treatment areas.
- Hal showed an example with a third map in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District that illustrated the Red Feather planning area ponderosa pine zone/restoration map which incorporated CWPP areas and RT recommendations.
- The Pike National Forest is starting treatments in planned zones.
- The next steps are to complete the 2004-2008 analysis. Hal asked if the Roundtable would like a new workgroup to gather accomplishments for other recommendations.

## MAP LAYERS, SCREENING PROCESS AND PRIORITIES – Tom Fry/Bob Leaverton

- The Core Team tracks the 10 RT recommendations for fuels treatments along the Front Range.
- Bob L. spoke about the May 2006 *Living with Fire: Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests: Findings and Recommendations of the FRFTP Roundtable* document (available at [www.frftp.org/roundtable.htm](http://www.frftp.org/roundtable.htm)). A four-page document that summarizes the Roundtable's recommendations is also available on the website. The report provides the Roundtable's suite of 10 recommendations, or initiatives, to increase progress toward community protection and forest health goals along the Front Range. Within these initiatives lie four "buckets" or means for accomplishing these goals.
- Recommendation 4, part of the initiative to *Reduce the Cost of Forest Treatments*, recommends increasing the appropriate application of prescribed fire and wildland fire use as a management tool. If we can't mechanically treat acres, we need to use prescribed fire, etc. and this will increase smoke
- Recommendation 5, also part of the initiative to *Reduce the Cost of Forest Treatments*, recommends increasing commercial utilization of woody biomass, especially as bioheating fuel for institutional buildings. The roadless issue complicates the matter of hauling wood from some treated areas.
- Recommendation 8, part of the initiative to *Ensure Local Leadership and Planning*, recommends promoting the development of CWPPs for Front Range Communities at risk. There are approximately 100 CWPPs along the Front Range.
- Three questions to ask are: What have we accomplished, what remains undone, and what specific actions need to be taken?
- Tom spoke about setting clear priorities that ensure progress toward common goals. He made reference to Recommendation 9 that states the need to adopt a clear and common framework for prioritizing treatments.
- He asked the group about the need to re-evaluate recommendations. Is it a good idea to go back to the original recommendations and refine them? Are there additional priorities within these priorities?
- The Roundtable's 2006 analysis of Front Range forested acres identified approximately 1.5 million forested acres along the Front Range that require treatment to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfire to communities or to restore forests to historic conditions.
- Tom showed a map of the Roundtable's already identified 1.5 million acres for treatment along the Front Range. He also asked questions of the group about how we could get from the 1.5 million acres to a refined 500,000 acres (a second map):
  - Should an analysis be done that focuses priorities and excludes inaccessible and sensitive areas from the initial 1.5 million acres? Steep slopes and wilderness areas are concerns.
  - Would taking the 1.5 million acres down to 500,000 acres give better focus and collective pursuit toward one recommendation? Is this exercise worth looking at?
  - In order to set clear priorities and ensure progress toward common goals, does a task group make sense, and if so, what is such a group's specific direction and timing?
  - What "filters" should we consider to refine the map?

### **Core Team and Executive Team comments:**

- The Roundtable's focus should be on priority areas instead of the map.
- We would like to hear what the Roundtable group recommends.
- It would be helpful to incorporate more maps and data, such as one with CWPPs, prescribed fire infrastructure, etc. into the analysis.

- Use the 1.5 million-acre map as a framework; use filters as guides. Don't develop maps, instead develop a guide.
- Formulate a more short-term and landscape-focus like the Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative project. Fund more of these types of projects.
- Part of need is to have focused areas to show successes. Maybe focus on WPHRI type and expand on such projects.
- Focus could be reduced to fewer projects, leaving out other important treatment needs.
- Schedule briefings with the governor about CWPPs, acres treated, and achievements.
- One value for focus is that it makes it less daunting. We could have a phased-approach.
- Don't get rid of the 1.5 million and do screening. We need to describe what we're doing outside this room to those along the Front Range, our constituents, and publics to let them know where and how we're doing treatments.
- Tom summarized the refining priorities discussion by saying that we are not clear on current (old) and new map(s) to be developed. There is value to keeping the original 1.5 million acres footprint. Also, there is value to exploring the refinement of acres.

***Roundtable group comments:***

- Don't use the term narrowing down. Utilize an operability map with areas we are unable to treat (i.e., slopes that are too steep). We could indicate prescribed fires.
- Loggers can talk to publics. Look at the ripple effect, for example WPHRI expansion.
- Tom – We need to check ourselves regarding areas to add acres as we would look at areas unaccounted for, such as priorities in beetle infested areas and CWPPs.
- There is tremendous value in a larger map; however, refining shows funders we have committed a lot of time to this effort. This may be a better selling point.
- There is so much opportunity.
- There is danger in singling out treatment areas; great projects could be left behind.
- There may be advantage to taking a number of projects in each county that could show successes.
- Use GIS layers, such as CWPPS, slopes, wilderness areas, etc. as a matrix for treatments.
- Is there a clearinghouse to access these layers? This could offer us more political support.
- Tom discussed the next steps for a recommendations refinement process:
  - Develop a working group
  - Look at refinements or expansion
  - Develop a guide regardless of what we do with the map
  - Reference the 1.5 million acres
  - Less can tie into political capabilities
  - GIS layers help with priorities
  - Come up with a product, maps, refinements, assessments - similar to the watershed assessment.
- We must define the criteria and impacts in the real world.
- Tom reiterated that the discussion started with setting clear priorities and ensuring progress.
  - Does a task group make sense?
  - If so, what is their specific direction and timing?
  - What filters should we consider?
- He also restated the discussion:
  - Need to form a work group
  - Consensus oriented filters for operable map
  - How to incorporate areas not included in the original Roundtable recommendations
  - Have a timeframe in advance of the fall Roundtable meeting

- Refine and give a better recommendation for on-the-ground treatments
- Jeff K. developed a workgroup signup sheet. Anyone interested in participating should contact him.
- Jeff J. suggested the original recommendations list not be shortened since many stakeholders have the 2006 document.
- Brian K suggested that one of the first tasks of the new Roundtable coordinator should be to take a hard look at the 10 recommendations in a discussion with the group. The group should compile the existing and flag what is necessary with consensus.

#### **UPDATE ON COORDINATOR POSITION – Paige Lewis**

- Eleven applicants were narrowed down to five interviewees. All five candidates have natural resource experience and range from contractors to individuals.
- Candidates will meet with the executive team on June 5.
- The plan is to have the coordinator selected by mid-June. The Roundtable Coordinator will report to the Executive Team.
- We have a majority of the funding for the position, yet still need approximately \$10,000.

#### **UPDATE ON LEGISLATION – Jeff Jahnke**

- At this time, we know little about the stimulus, American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA); however, the funds likely will have some hefty criteria.
- Jeff summarized and updated the group on the forestry-related legislation in Colorado.
- In 2008, seven bills passed and a half dozen other periphery bills.
- Following is a summary of the 2009 forestry-related legislation:
- *SB-001- Community Wildfire Protection Plans* - There is no funding attached to the bill. It requires the CSFS to establish guidelines and criteria for counties to consider in preparing Community Wildfire Protection Plans to address wildfires in fire hazard areas within the unincorporated portion of a county. These guidelines and criteria must be developed by November 19, 2009. An already adopted CWPP is grandfathered until the plan is updated. CWPPs are evolving and varied – there are only three broad guidelines in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. SB-001 could standardize CWPPs.
- *SB-013 – Civil Immunity to Persons Engaged in Emergency Response Activities* - The bill enacts the "Marc Mullenix Volunteer Firefighter Protection Act," which provides limited civil immunity for fire departments and other entities that donate surplus firefighting equipment for later use. It provides immunity for volunteer firefighters, their commanders, and the organizations that employ them. Also provided is immunity for incident management teams, in connection with fires and other emergencies. SB-013 offers sizable protection for wildfire fighters.
- *SB-020 – Responsibility for Responding to Wild Land Fires* - The bill creates a systematic and proactive approach to the management of wildland fire incidents in Colorado, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.
- *SB-021 – Incentives for Volunteer Firefighters* - The bill creates a fund in the Division of Fire Safety to provide tuition vouchers to qualified volunteer firefighters who are enrolled in full-time or part-time study, and who agree to serve as volunteer firefighters for four years after completing their education.
- *HB-1199 – Colorado Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities Act of 2009* - The bill increases efforts to address wildfire risk, provides resources to the Colorado State Forest Service to augment its technical outreach capabilities, and provides loans and grants for market-based and forest treatment solutions to reduce wildfire risk. HB-1199 is one of the best pieces of legislation for forest health in Colorado. Funded \$1.9 million, in addition to SB-71 (2008) dollars.

- Recent Federal Legislation:
  - *Federal FLAME Act* (Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement) - The FLAME Act was reintroduced this year. The House passed it with a host of amendments and is in the Senate to weed out amendments that could ruin the bill. It has a supportive coalition. The USFS budget is capped, yet required to build fire suppression on a 10-year average. It is an effort to develop a fund outside the normal funding process.
  - *Waxman-Markley* (H.R. 2454 - American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009) - This is a recent bill sponsored by Democratic Rep. Waxman of California. It includes renewable fuels standards and a woody biomass piece. The bill also is concerned that the woody biomass definition is too restrictive.

#### **UPDATE ON ENGAGING FRONT RANGE OFFICIALS – Paige Lewis/Jeanne Nicholson**

- Jeanne stated that we need to go back to officials to get them to bring money together.
- Paige remarked that the Northern Front Range Mountain Pine Beetle Working Group has started to engage officials in their efforts.
- Suggestion was made to have a fall workshop for elected officials.
- There may be potential for discussion with the Council of Governments.
- Other opportunities are with Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI), mountain districts, and the metro area commissioners.

#### **FINAL PRESENTATION OF THE ECOLOGY WORKING GROUP**

- Jeff Kitchens handed out and presented the final summaries of the Joint Ecology Working Group that included participants from the Front Range Roundtable and the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative (CBBC). The four-page summaries document is available at <http://www.frftp.org/roundtable.htm>. It includes summaries of lodgepole pine ecology, fire behavior in lodgepole pine, including fire and MPB in lodgepole. A glossary of terms also is included in the summaries.
- The working group included the Roundtable and the CBBC because the collaboration incorporated the experience and lessons learned from the CBBC's work with mountain pine beetle and high elevation forest ecosystems, and the Roundtable's experience with forest and fuels management along the Front Range.
- Five key issues were identified as the main focuses for initial work of the group: (1) mountain pine beetle spread from lodgepole pine to ponderosa pine; (2) lodgepole pine ecosystem landscape diversity; (3) fire ecology and fire regimes of lodgepole pine; (4) consensus on the impacts of past management; and (5) the immediate need for knowledge. Lessons Learned from the Joint Ecology Working Group may give the Executive Team and Core Team guidance for future workgroups
- The Ecology Working Group started in 2007 and had questions about the upper montane science,
- The following full reports were developed because of the working group's efforts:
  - *The Status of our Scientific Understanding of Lodgepole Pine and Mountain Pine Beetles - A Focus on Forest Ecology and Fire Behavior* by Merrill Kaufmann (science team leader), Mike Babler (science team co-leader), and others
  - *Will the Mountain Pine Beetle Epidemic Spread from Lodgepole Pine into Ponderosa Pine along the Northern Front Range Counties of Colorado* by Jeff Witcosky
  - The reports are available at <http://www.frftp.org/roundtable.htm>.
- The Ecology Working Group will not meet again, at least until the Roundtable advances with the CBBC in its next steps.

- Jeff K. concluded his presentation by reviewing what it takes for a working group to be successful:
  - Clear, continuous direction
  - Engage both the Front Range and the high country
  - Rotate meeting locations for convenience of Front Range and high country participants
  - Differentiate between social and ecological needs; there are many management issues
  - Manage for what we think is ecologically sound
  - Need clear science
  - Education and outreach is the greatest challenge
  - Develop a communication working group

**PRESENTATION TO THE ECOLOGY WORKING GROUP – Executive Team**

- The Executive Team recognized that the Ecology Working Group had a hefty task and honored the group’s members with a certificate of appreciation for their leadership, accomplishments, and perseverance, as well as their excellent research and reports.

**UPDATE ON WOODLAND PARK HEALTHY FOREST INITIATIVE - Carol Ekarius**

- Carol updated the Roundtable on the Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative (WPHFI).
- Some beetle pockets have been treated.
- The project received a \$25,000 Allard Grant.
- Treatment of more than 700 private acres at the Pike National Forest boundary has been expedited.
- The slash site has been very successful.
- Colorado Springs Utilities estimated usage of 100,000 tons of biomass/year will provide a market for the WPHFI project’s slash.
- The website is [www.wphfi.org](http://www.wphfi.org) and contains a blog and videos. Carol showed a new pine beetle video created by CUSP. It is one of six videos available on the website.
- People in Woodland Park are energetic about helping with the project.

**The next full Roundtable meeting will be held in the fall. Date to be announced.**