



4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting

Wednesday, June 28th, 2017 9am-12:25pm

Arizona Game & Fish Region 1 Office (Pinetop)

2878 E. White Mountain Blvd., Pinetop, AZ 85935

Teleconference line: (712) 775-7031, code: 439290611#

9:00 Introductions

Attendance: Melanie Colavito, Allison Jourden, Brad Worsley, Pascal Berlioux, Steve Best, Adam Cooley, Henry Provencio, Sue Sitko, Travis Bruner, Steve Reidhead, Diane Vosick, Buchanan Davis, Michele Ralston, Heather Provencio, Mike Kirby, Bob Vahle, Alan Reidhead, Steven Flora, Andrew Vaulkmer, Randy Fuller, Steve Best, Wendy Jo Haskins, Stephanie Coleman, Nancy Walls, Dick Fleishman, Annette Fredette, Scott Russell, Mary Lata, Patrick Moore, Paul Summerfelt, Mark Nigrelli

Phone: Joe Miller, Nate Rees, Steve Rosenstock, Bob Seigler, Neil Chapman, Aaron Green, Travis Woolley, Jim Parks

9:05 Approve minutes from the May 24th SHG meeting — Travis Bruner
Berlioux - Typos

9:10 Review action items from the May 24th SHG meeting — Travis Bruner

Action Item	Lead	Status
1. Post 2 nd DMT Field Trip Logistics on Basecamp	Berlioux	Complete
2. Coordinate strategic plan meeting on June 19th	Pettit	Complete
3.		

9:15 Call to the Public – None

9:20 CFLR Funding Update – Buchanan Davis

As a reminder, the President's budget that comes out serves as a suggestion to congress. When the President's budget was released, many noticed that the CFLRP money had been stripped. Senator Flake's office acknowledges this and found that the money hadn't been stripped but will actually be coming from other pots. DC has assured them that funding for 4FRI will remain. Ultimately, congress has the authority to make the budget and pass it.

Senator Flake recently wrote a letter in support of Vision 17 that many of the SHs are involved with and his office plans to continue to help this success in any way possible.

Regarding nominations, there is an under-secretary position in the department of agriculture that's open and one of the current contenders is Erica Rhodes, a name senator Flake put forth, so his office is hoping her nomination moves forward.

Senator Flake's office has made themselves available to the administration to help in any way they're needed and the administration has taken them up on that and continues to work with Senator Flake's office concerning natural resources. They do not know where the administration is going. Senator Flake is working on a western-wide forest bill to try and combine priorities that have been put forth in multiple other bills that were developed. The bill will be addressing fire-borrowing. This bill contains some NEPA streamlining measures as well as some stewardship contracting reform. The bill contains FS manual re-writing objectives. There should be a 20-year stewardship authority in the bill.

9:35 Draft Alternatives, Mechanical Treatments & Aquatics Toolboxes Presentation & Discussion – 4FRI Planning Team – Annette Fredette, Mary Lata, Patrick Moore, Stephanie Coleman

Draft Alternatives -

Fredette - Within the NEPA process, they've reviewed the scoping comments, delineated significant issues and have considered what other alternatives are needed to respond to those issues, held public workshops on the alternatives to get some public feedback and input on the preliminary alternatives. The team is currently completing the development of the modified proposed action and alternative 3. The team is starting the effects analysis on the three current alternatives. The FS is hoping to get the draft EIS out by the end of this calendar year.

They received a lot of good feedback from the workshops and from that feedback are now identifying stream, riparian, and meadow restoration activities for each alternative, making sure they have mitigation measures and design features in place. They're analyzing effects from potential in-woods processing sites and are looking at other measures to facilitate successful implementation. They're adding a focus on the brush component of stands. They're including trail repair in the riparian area restoration treatments. Alternative 3 will be focusing on WUI treatments and the highest resources values.

The FS provides a document stating the alternatives they've decided to move forward with: they include the No Action Alternative, Alternative 2 and Alternative 3.

Lata – In Alternative 2 they're proposing prescribed fire anywhere and everywhere, with some exceptions based on wildlife needs and so on. In alternative 3 prescribed fire would be used much more specifically. Wherever they're prescribing fire treatments and thinning, they're opening it up to district implementation to determine if they would prefer just doing prescribed fire only, if they believe this will get them to desired conditions, as it could avoid costly mechanical thinning processes.

Moore – During the DMT field trips, they noticed an interest in doing some research in the role and the interaction between some of these restoration treatments and DMT from a restoration standpoint. This could play a large role in alternative two but potentially less in alternative three. They're currently developing a process to look at the interaction between DMT and restoration treatments and are coming up with a list of research questions to guide the process of using the toolbox.

Mechanical Toolbox –

The flexible toolbox was designed because the FS doesn't have complete information on all of the acres within project area. Instead of designing treatments and assigning treatments to acres, they're assigning treatments to a set of stand conditions. They're treating conditions to get desired outcomes. Silviculturists on the ground while working on these stands can reconsider proposed treatments and they have the opportunity to adjust stand boundaries, so that treatments are more appropriately and specifically applied.

The Decision Matrix will help to identify particular treatments for particular stands. After a stand is assigned a treatment, there are other project design features that might be applied to specific kinds of stands. The criteria for this matrix is percentage of stand density, site productivity, stand structure, dominant size class, and mistletoe infection. An uneven aged stand structure is desired.

Rim country is different from the first EIS in that it encompasses a lot of aquatic resources. The statements on this in the proposed action were very broad and for a good reason. There are 411 known springs in the Rim Country area and over 10x that amount that are unknown. There are many different types of aquatic resources and Coleman provides a list (see the 4FRI Rim Country Project Alternatives Presentation). These systems contain a lot of diversity and are very important as they provide for water storage and water transfer. They support the largest amounts of aquatic and riparian species. There are fish, amphibians, mollusks, birds and many other species that make use of riparian areas. This diversity birthed the need for an Aquatics Flexible Toolbox. Most of the data on these riparian areas are either very fragmented or very outdated. Within the southwest there are categories of common impairment affecting these areas and from that they can develop restoration treatments that can address these specific issues. One of the themes that came out of the Water Resources field trip was an agreement that these riparian and water resources are very important. A decision guide or matrix would be useful as a means to prioritize treatments. The flexible toolbox that was given out at the field trip has been heavily revisited and revised. For this toolbox to work, existing conditions on the ground will have to be defined and constraints to possible restoration activities must be defined for each area requiring restoration. Once that's sorted out, the toolbox will define which tools could be used to address each aquatics issue.

Berlioux – Even though the first EIS has a successful track record, 4FRI is still under the microscope and should be anticipating objection. Pascal's concern is that Alternative #3 is probably going to be viewed as an alternative that's not very different from alternative 2 – the alternatives lack desired variety. Right now Alt 3 comes across as an implementation variable to alternative 2. He believes the implementation of alternative 2 on the low range and the implementation of alternative 3 at the high end are basically the same thing. Pascal suggests that we're not being as robust as possible in providing a wide-range of alternatives.

Pascal's surprised that the DMT issue has become such a point of focus in the alternatives even though it was virtually ignored in the 1st EIS. Why has it become such a large issue and a driver for alternatives when compared to the first EIS?

The drive behind including DMT in the alternatives is due to the fact that it wasn't addressed heavily in the first EIS and that there is more of it in the Rim Country area. It is designed for intermediate treatments to have a DMT emphasis. DMT is serving as a directing item.

Concerning the flexible toolbox, Pascal doesn't really see how, with the lack of data that's often discussed, the flexible toolbox will be successful in making the effects analysis and the cumulative effects analysis.

Vosick - Diane echoes the DMT comments from Pascal. Diane wants to clarify that the retention of old-growth trees policies that have been established as a stakeholder group are still in place for the 2nd EIS. Diane comments that the FS should have more data on the lands in the first EIS considering the availability of LiDAR and its ability to characterize the landscape. Diane's disappointed in the dropping of former Alt. 3 as she believes it was best alternative designed to address climate change.

Russell – The agreements around the retention of old trees are still in place and will remain in place. Regarding over-story removal, their expectation is that they will continue to honor the old tree retention strategies that were in the first EIS. Alternative 3 has been dropped and the former Alternative 4 is now alternative 3.

Nigrelli – LiDAR data isn't currently available everywhere. They're currently in discussions on how LiDAR data can be better utilized. The FS is concerned that exploring these new data sources could slow them down when they're trying to get as much done as possible, which is why they've decided to stick with using imputed data.

Provencio is wondering if a companion document to the toolboxes that will be used by the practitioners during implementation that will demonstrate the use and effectiveness of the matrix should be developed.

Pascal suggests that we consider how monitoring can evaluate how successful the flexible toolbox will be. Real-time monitoring and adaptive management will be beneficial in that if it occurs during the first 1-2 years of using the flexible toolbox, it can inform the years of use that follow.

10:20 Break

10:55 USFS Update

Strategic Plan Update: Since the Planning meeting, Travis and Brienne have taken the comments gathered and have started compiling them into a cohesive document. They're hoping to have a draft document to distribute to SHs in the next couple of weeks.

TNC Stewardship Agreements – They're going to be ready to sign the first couple of agreements soon. The intent around these stewardship agreements is to look at how they both prepare and implement restoration in terms of efficiencies on the governmental side and how they can facilitate industry's ability to implement the work on the ground. The clover SPA and the Chimney Springs SPA's will be the first to be signed this year.

Regarding the potential RFI and RFP, they've completed a draft RFI to gather information to make the RFP successful. The draft RFI has been circulated for internal review and Scott's

received back his first round of comments on that. They're working with the Washington office to gain support for moving forward on that path.

Fleishman – Operations Update: There is a lot of activity going on – ten different sales. They're working on a DXP implementation plan as a step-by-step process. This plan has a component in it to help inform industry.

Worsley – Would like a clearer timeline on the RFI/RFP issue. The RFP needs to be issued when conditions are right and the window of opportunity is small. Scott Russell doesn't have an answer on what that schedule will look like.

Worsley – He was camping near Vernon and noticed that the area had been thinned and then burned and the burn killed trees that the thinning didn't remove and this seems wasteful. Mary Lata suggests the problem was likely communication. Provencio says that studies have been done around Flagstaff around 30 years ago that trees were experiencing about 20% mortality post-burn.

11:25 Working Group Updates – All

- Planning WG (10 min) – Pascal Berlioux

The PWG is done with their scheduled field trip activities. The DMT field trip and the water resources field trip were both successful. The Water Resources FT attracted nearly 50 attendees. The next PWG meeting is scheduled to take place next week and they plan to tackle the discussion on the treatments of SPLYT which has been quantified by the FS. This meeting is taking place on July 5th at the Coconino SO. Pascal congratulates Game and Fish, TU, and Stephanie Coleman for the success of the aquatics field trip.

- Industry WG (10 min) – Brad Worsley

This is the busiest time of year for the members of the IWG. They continue to push towards a solution to the biomass issue. They're not currently meeting regularly but are meeting on an as-needed basis. Brad states that solving the biomass issue is the clearest path to resolution on ecological restoration.

- Communications WG (10 min) – Sue Sitko

The CWG distributes a draft version of the newsletter today (6/28) and the final version will be distributed at the July SHG meeting. If anyone has any comments or suggestions for the draft, they're asked to deliver these comments to Sue Sitko. Sue plans to work with Amy Waltz and the FS to develop an article on the Dwarf Mistletoe topic. The CWG met in June and are working on an outreach product that will help harvesters and county supervisors that interact with the public to answer their questions regarding forest restoration and treatments. The CWG is hoping to have a draft of this project for the SHG by the July meeting.

Berlioux - Up until now, the function of the CWG has been fairly reactive, wherein they've reacted to communication issues that arose. Recently they've transformed the group into a more productive group that is developing solutions to problems before they occur.

- MPMB WG (10 min) – Steve Flora

They've reviewed their final budget and have resolved the funding issues they had encountered. The group is working to get signatures on their final projects. The 4FRI monitoring story map

project won't be occurring this year as it wasn't signed in time. The MPMB is developing ways to better communicate their monitoring successes, projects, and activities. The MPMB is considering contacting and working with the CWG in order to better communicate their successes and activities. Pre-treatment surveys are being done after the completion of ground plot work in chimney springs. The group is working on developing questions in the area of water for the Rim Country EIS. They're also working on identifying projects for next FY.

- Comprehensive Implementation WG (10 min) – Travis Bruner

Their pilot project (T-Six Spring) is on schedule and should be hitting the ground in early fall. Natural Channel Design finished the study and design of that project and AZGF is heading up the organization of that project and there may be some opportunities for SH participation in this project. The group hopes to look at 4-5 other potential spring restoration sites at their next meeting to help them prioritize which ones will hit the ground next summer.

After the May meeting, Tom Mackin organized a volunteer project for Stakeholders and there wasn't much of a turn out. Bruner asks for ideas to make these volunteer opportunities more attractive and well-attended by stakeholders.

12:15 Stakeholder Disclosures – All

Sue Sitko – Introduces Michael Kirby who has contracted with the Nature Conservancy.

Michael Kirby – He's worked 25 years with Intel and sees this as an opportunity to experience matters and learn about forestry. His experience is in process and cost efficiencies.

Vosick – In the ERI FY17 work plan, they plan to do a deep-dive into the FS handbook manual and the policies that militate against efficiencies, post-NEPA to implementation, and working with the Forest Service, identify those things that will need changed to improve the approval process and increase efficiencies.

Vosick – NAU has approved a position with the ERI to look at innovation in forest operations and R&D and utilizations. This is borne from conversations with Camp Navajo and some work W.W. Covington has been doing.

Vosick – Suggests celebrating the largest EIS that's ever been done on mechanical thinning. IF you want to be on the Party Working Group, email Diane.

12:20 Review Action Items

Action Item	Lead	Status
1.		
2. Contact Diane if anyone would like to participate in the Party Working Group	Diane Vosick	
3.		

4.		
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12:25 Adjourn

07/26/17 SHG meeting information:

Wednesday, July 26th, 2017, 9am-TBD
Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office
1824 South Thompson Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Teleconference line: (712) 775-7031, code: 439290611#

Future Agenda Items:

- 1. Industry Economics around Restoration USFS & AZSFe
- 2. Strategic Planning Meeting Update/ Overview/ Next Steps
- 3. SHG Volunteer Participation Discussion

Reconnaissance

