



4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting

Wednesday, July 24, 2024, 9AM-12PM

Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office

1824 S Thompson St, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

MEETING RECORDING

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dVwqE8Td0FwSN7gkbVqzB7LCvQgHcWkT/view?usp=sharing>

Participants: Brett Crary, Melanie Colavito, Brett Crary, Liam, TJ Paskach, Scot Rogers, Devon Suarez, Taylor McKinnon, Shaula Hedwall, Joel Jurgens, Travis Woolley, Tracy Bazelman, Brad Worsley, John Richardson, MaryLou Zimmerman, Patrice Horstman, Anne Mottek, Greg Smith, Eli Jensen, Jay Smith, Tom Mackin, Amy Waltz, Cerissa Hoglander, Sarah Devenport, Kevin Ordean, Lisa Bolton, Nicole Kennan, Ernie Estacio, Hannah Griscom, Brandon McKenney

9:05 Welcome and Agenda Review - Southwest Decision Resources (SDR)

9:15 Approve March 27, 2024 and May 22, 2024 Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes - SDR

- Approved.

9:16 Review Action Items from March 27, 2024

Action Item	Lead	Status
Discuss additional Industry meeting	Jay S., Joel J., James, Pascal B.	Ongoing
Coordinate meeting between Industry and FS 4FRI team	Industry Group, 4FRI Team	Ongoing
Post bioeconomy rating press release to Basecamp	Jay S.	Ongoing
Coordinate future report out to SHG about recent efforts with the region for Pri-Opt	Pri-Opt WG	DONE
Coordinate with Melanie, Travis, Scot, Brandon about future internship funding/opportunities brainstorming	Eli J.	DONE
Contact John if you have any questions about the DFFM RFP opening Jan 31	All	DONE
Post updates to Basecamp about G to Z IRCS as available	Scot R.	DONE

Contact SDR if you are interested in participating in 4FRI Steering Committee and/or hot/cold chair	All	DONE
Aquatic/watershed restoration monthly updates	Brett, Mary Lou, Scot	DONE
Email SDR will additional ideas for SHG meetings	All	DONE
Provide formal response to CIWG letter	Scot R.	DONE

- Industry meeting: still ongoing.
- Industry and 4FRI team: still ongoing.
- Bioeconomy: Jay will post soon.
- Pri-opt: Will update during Working Group updates.
- Internship/funding: Done. Nothing has come of that.

9:18 Call to the Public

- None.

9:20 Update: Recent conversations on Tribal Engagement - Cerissa Hoglander/Anne Mottek/Jay Smith

- Background: Why this update
 - 4FRI Stakeholder Charter states that the SHG would ideally include a Tribal representative but also respects Tribes as sovereign nations, recognizes that Tribes are not "stakeholders," and acknowledges that there are many Tribes with many connections to the 4FRI landscape, so Tribal interests and priorities are not monolithic, and one representative would not speak for all Tribes.
 - 4FRI stakeholders acknowledge the current and historic lack of Tribal voices in the collaborative process and a general lack of understanding across 4FRI about various Tribal interests or priorities that may be related to 4FRI and broader forest/watershed health.
 - 4FRI stakeholders also recognize that Tribal engagement is not a checkbox and is different from USFS-required consultations, but rather rooted in relationship building, deepening the respect of land and people, and forwarding shared goals of healthy, resilient forests and watersheds.
- Subgroup information gathering steps taken in 2024 (i.e., What we've done)
 - Met with Coconino NF Tribal liaison to understand USFS relationships and communications (government-to-government).
 - Met with Mary Huffman/Indigenous Peoples Burning Network/TNC about engagement recommendations from other forests (importance of relationships and respect of capacity, time, sovereignty and understanding their priorities).

- Gathered contact info for Tribal liaisons on other 4FRI forests (but not yet engaged).
- Outcomes of 2024 information gathering (i.e., What we've learned)
 - This subgroup as-is does not have capacity or foundation to build and foster Tribal relationships on behalf of 4FRI or the USFS, but acknowledges more effort is needed and would like to support other listening and learning where appropriate, and cohesive and respectful communications and relationships.
 - Some 4FRI Stakeholders may already have opportunities for gaining awareness of various Tribal interests and priorities or engaging Tribal voices through 4FRI or other work.
 - USFS has its own Tribal communications and relationships through its Tribal liaisons and government-to-government processes, which could also support in building awareness of various Tribal interests and priorities related to 4FRI and broader forest/watershed health.
 - Subgroup began an outline for a 4FRI-specific article to be included within the Coconino NF quarterly mailing to the Tribes, but learned that some aspects of 4FRI-related updates were already being included, and that such an article would just be one-way, generalized communication, rather than listening and hearing from specific Tribal voices
- Next steps (i.e., What we request/recommend)
 - We acknowledge the ongoing lack of representation and Tribal voices in 4FRI and encourage more listening and learning where appropriate through existing respectful relationships and appropriate communications in the near term.
 - When USFS hosts listening sessions or meetings with Tribal representatives - consider whether it's appropriate to include 4FRI or forest restoration more broadly as a topic.
 - Build awareness through existing or potential SHG members' relationships and communications with the Tribes, and share information with 4FRI SHG when appropriate.
 - Request USFS help facilitate that awareness building through asking USFS 4FRI staff to engage with forest-level Tribal liaisons.
- For future discussion:
 - If any stakeholders have dialogue with Tribal members, can bring that back to the SHG.
 - Could add this as a standing update for those that have had conversations.
- Note: White Mountain Apache are regular attendings of NRWG and their mill, very involved with NRWG.

9:27 USFS Updates - Scot Rogers and Aaron Mayville

- More than 146,000 total acres treated. That number will go up - with mechanical, reporting systems being updated, and managed wildfires (delays in reporting). An overall substantial increase from FY 22 and 23.
 - Mechanical/prescribed burn:
 - This time last year: 61,828 acres
 - Today: 110, 000 acres (change of 48,000 acres - more than Flagstaff size!)

- Managed wildfire:
 - Big part of the program of work: another ~34, 000 acres.
 - Aaron M.: We are purposely tracking numbers with that split out even though it counts towards same target. In this region, managed fire is a big part of what we do; it is the goal. That is different than most places in the country where the goal is the same, but they cannot do it. We split it out to show that we are meeting all targets even without the managed fire aspect. When we include the managed fire aspect, we are going above and beyond.
- On track to offer a historical high - 37,000 acres offered. Majority through partner offerings (GNA, partnership agreements, etc) representing 35% of work across four forests. A lot of those acres will come online in fourth quarter. Do have some acres coming online in Q1.
- Two companies (RFOR and Lignetic) are going from small to large business, which means that a certain percentage of timber sales needs to be set aside for small business.
 - We expected that first sale would go no bid and then to pool, but saw a couple of bidders and that has been awarded. Indicates healthy industry.
 - Directly affects traditional timber sales and IRTCs starting in FY25.
 - Is it a good or bad thing?
 - Kevin's perspective: Not good or bad, just different. Challenge is a 20% carve-out for small businesses which limits acres. If there are no bidders, can go to larger group but slows pace. There are ongoing conversations about what this means/if it is a done deal. The grey area is understanding if it matters that small businesses sell biomass/logs to RFOR or other big businesses.
 - Devon thought that on set aside sales, can send up to 30% of saw logs to those mills but unlimited for non-saw logs.
 - With 20% carve out - is that of sales or offerings?
 - FS thinks it is 20% of volume. That 20% calculation is different across forests within 4FRI, and it will also change over years based on internal metrics. Trying to work through this with RO and WO. We know it is out of local control, and we will work through how it impacts offerings.
- Moving forward on priority acres - e.g., Wings East. Lots of movement of treatment in the woods. Appreciate the focus on movement and improving landscape.
- G to Z Service Contracts:
 - New type of service agreement (4-5 across agency). Includes implementation and preparation work (timber marking, layout, boundary marking, etc.).
 - Working to offer two sales (about 10,000 acres of project acres) south of Camp Navajo, south of Bellemont.
 - Challenge is funding. Had some good conversations with Washington Office about this. Contract likely to go out for pre-solicitation (60 days through end of FY) with opportunity for solicitation and award for FY 25 Q1.
- RE Budget and Staffing

- Budget and staffing - uncertainty is the word. We are preparing for budget austerity period - unsure to what degree or what it looks like. Once election is over, things should go a little back to normal.
- Across 4FRI landscape, looking at consistent offerings as much as we can.
 - We could offer more acres than any forest in the country if we wanted. Instead, purposefully trying to offer a more consistent schedule over time.
 - We're holding some offers for FY 24 into the FY 25 Q1. Thanks to industry folks for rolling with slight shift .
- This is affecting our staffing - FS as agency underwent a hiring assessment. Very small number of hiring actions.
 - Logjam should break through relatively soon. Coconino and Tonto had District Ranger positions caught up in this. Chris Johansen's position is also caught.
 - Inflation, cost of living adjustment, retention, etc., have led to a shortfall in salary budget.
- Timeline of when it went into place and when done for hiring assessment?
 - Started in April, meant to be 30-day assessment. Have heard that it will break next week, but it will likely be a few more weeks for some key positions.

9:55 DFFM Update - John Richardson

- See updates [here](#).
- Fully funded for FY25 - will continue to build and offer projects.
- Big win was the wildfire provision that had a lapsing provision for funds not used going back to general fund. Now we are three-year lapsing, so we can put funding out for longer periods without impacting next year's budget.
- Are GNA/stewardship contracts under the same small business consideration?
 - FS: Only affects our 6Ts for now and IRTCs starting Oct 1. Does not affect IRSCs or any of our partnership agreements.
- Brad W.: Most suppliers are incapable of serious biomass removal. Hard to get capital - see some suboptimal buying. Can there be support for proper purchasing, leasing equipment, etc. for small businesses? Would like DFFM to consider how they could help in that arena.

10:03 Industry/Implementer Updates - All

- Novo Power: Excited that we have gotten adjustments to contracts effective June 1. In October, down for about a month to do an 8-year annual check on turbine. Big challenge is meeting SRP watershed obligation - need 25 to 30 loads a day to come off the watershed. Missing about 10-12 loads. If those acres aren't met, the penalty is heavy, making it not worth running. The wood is available, but getting industry to do it is a big challenge, especially with equipment challenges.
- Ironwood Forestry: Pumhouse going well - almost done with scanning, about to start marking. About 2000 acres of every tree with high-resolution LiDAR scan. Project was featured on the front page of Forestry Source. In August, Paul Smith College sending team of professors and students. Planning field day - save the date: August 23.

- Coconino County: Trying to get agreements with TNC completed. \$2 million towards Hawk and Little Wing to remove biomass. County pitching money in for that. Finally got \$100,000 to NFF for dead tree clean up near the Tunnel Fire.
- SRP: Meeting with some different forests and asking about survey needs with recent budget cuts and how to help accelerate project implementation. Submitted proposals to AGFD requesting funding for surveys. Their budget may not allow it, but they may consider it if additional funds become available throughout the year.
- RFOR: Lot more updates coming next meeting. Tracking towards end of building and commissioning.
- Suarez: Finished operations at Coco Pino (720 acres), about two weeks from finishing operations at Baker GNA. Canyon Creek coming behind to do grinding. Will wrap up in about a month or so.
- TNC: We have started roadwork on Sawmill Springs Biomass Project, starting in-woods operations soon. Working closely with County, Kaibab, and Coconino on several agreements now with Hawk Little Wing project. Submitting agreements in the next day or two and starting operations this fall.

10:05 Working Group Updates - All

- Communication WG - Tayloe Dubay, updates from Melanie Colavito
 - We have been discussing how SHG should engage in sharing successes about 4FRI. Small group met last week. Reviewed need for communicating success, audience of communication (especially at congressional level for funding, contracting, etc.). Also talked about preliminary sideboards for this communication - 7 metrics:
 - Acres treated (enhanced ways to further communication)
 - Health of the collaborative - robust and engaged
 - Effects of acres treated - science communication
 - Comprehensive restoration - streams, etc.
 - Community values - how engage with local communities
 - Agency perspective - historic timber coming out of 4FRI
 - Monitoring of implementation
 - What will be the vehicle for this storytelling? TBD. Each metric may have a different vehicle.
 - The next steps are to determine what we already have and fill in the gaps. Communications WG has lots of materials generated.
 - If anyone wants to join in, plan to meet again in early August. In Sept would like to more formally vet these metrics with the SHG.
- Industry/Biomass WG - Brad Worsley/Tony Flagor
 - None.
- Multi-Party Monitoring Board WG - Cerissa Hoglander and MaryLou Zimmerman
 - Been working with Andi R. of SDR to do some facilitation and what that looks like. Andi has been talking with various folks on the MPMB to understand needs. One need is adaptive management and what that looks like moving forward.
- Comprehensive Implementation WG - Hannah Griscom, Cerissa Hoglander

- Hosted site visit to T6 Spring. Successful restoration story - willow regeneration, leopard frogs coming back.
- Held field visit to Houston Draw and Buck Spring.
 - At Buck Spring: AZ Elk Society will put in pipe and rail enclosure to reduce elk pressure. GCT volunteers will help address headcutting and erosion. Last year's efforts are working - riparian vegetation filling back in, meandering for water flows, less erosion.
 - At Houston Draw: AZ Elk Society leading erosion control work
- Exploring future potential sites on Coconino - Weimer, Scott, Ritter, and others.
- Completed current planning stages and implementation at Hoxworth - 2-year process. Some harvesting occurred, roads reopened and closed. Meadow damage was minimized with logworm fencing.
- Prioritization and Optimization WG - Brian Nowicki/Taylor McKinnon/Travis Woolley/Amy Waltz
 - Looking to update the SHG more robustly in September.
 - Great help from Region 3 fire analyst who is doing the QWRA. Small group working on crosswalking existing SHG values and QWRA values.
 - On Aug. 8, will bring full Working Group back together to catch them up, review the values that have been brought up, and discuss new values to engage.
 - For the FS, there is a technical aspect of QWRA that is important for internal fire planners to understand, so when we talk about planning projects, we can talk about what is being represented in the model. That timeline is moving forward.
 - Important that the internal FS process is moving forward at the same time as bringing the SHG along.
 - Reached out to Andi R. and Carrie E. to help with the values discussion; Carrie has been helping.

10:25 BREAK

10:35 Bluestone Renewables Presentation - TJ Paskach (Bluestone Renewables)

- Bluestone Renewables is planning large biomass project - working on clean hydrogen and clean methanol. **See powerpoint for more information.**
- Project status updates included:
 - Still looking for a suitable project site - evaluating now
 - Seeking investment for development
 - Completed detailed technology risk matrix - risk perceived higher than might be, but results well received
 - Awarded \$300,000 Wood Innovations grant from FS
 - Considering Sustainable Aviation Fuel production as an option
- Next steps for the project include:
 - Negotiating wood innovation grant contract with FS
 - Finalize site selection/get site control (this will help with investments)
 - Secure feedstock under long-term contract (non-commercial)

- Get development funding in place ASAP
- Q&A:
 - On the feedstock side, are pine needles acceptable?
 - Think so - want to do testing on that. Part of early project funding is to test things like this. Needles are high energy content but can produce a lot of tars. Need to test them. Probably some percentage is fine.

11:57 Leroux Fuels Management - Jessica Richardson and Linda Babcock (Flagstaff Ranger District)

- Background:
 - The comment period on this project has been closed, but there was an interest from SHG to hear an update. The interest is to relate this to subsequent discussion on communication needs regarding relevant projects to 4FRI.
 - Aaron's perspective: This project is within the 4FRI Footprint, but it wasn't analyzed in the first NEPA rounds. Have been talking about this project with many partners, but not the formal SHG. Neil posted a formal scoping notice/announcement on Basecamp. I specifically wanted this to happen today to make sure to utilize this group. Do you feel we are under/over-communicating relevant to things like this? How do we best utilize this group?
 - From what SDR has heard, posting to Basecamp felt a little too little too late. It was also posted by Neil but may have needed to be posted by FS.
- See [presentation](#) for more details. Overall status of the project:
 - Completed 30-day scoping process (ended June). Sent press release and announcements via Facebook, etc.
 - Received 25 responses which are being reviewed. Now working on response.
 - Some comments focused on old-growth strategy - now working on integrating this strategy and old and large tree retention strategies into this project. Though these strategies do not address all of the ecosystems/species included in these projects.
 - Timeline ahead
 - Comment period in October 2024.
 - Objection Period - May 2025 (135-day fish and wildlife period)
 - Objection Resolution period in July 2025 (45-day process)
- Q&A/Discussion:
 - Amy's perspective: There is a huge zone of agreement across Ponderosa Pine and less across different ecosystem types and fire regimes. Ecologically wet mixed conifer is really different.
 - Old growth amendment is working through the system - will it impact this?
 - Anything existing and signed NEPA will not be impacted. Leroux will be a project that it will apply to. Just got software to see what it is showing us. We've been told that the amendment is about identifying where it exists and less about specific actions to achieve.

- There is a huge component on surveying where they exist. This group's work was really helpful - most forests are not that far along. Everyone in agency right now is in the grey area - interesting that this will be revising all Forest Plans agency-wide.
 - In the slide that talked about temporary roads and reopening of decommissioned, there was a bullet of 5 miles being closed. Are they closed just for project or permanently closed?
 - Closed permanently after the project. They would go into deep storage.

11:25 Discussion: Communication about Non-4FRI EIS Projects within 4FRI Footprint

- There may have been a missed opportunity for more advance conversation with the SHG about the Leroux project
 - Lesson learned for the FS - haven't done much NEPA since 4FRI and Rim Country EIS
 - Cerissa's thoughts:
 - For other projects are related to forest restoration, within 4FRI, etc. would appreciate that the SHG be given opportunities to contribute well in advance if possible (even before scoping)
 - Regardless of where treatment is, the broader public and even stakeholders perceive projects are within 4FRI. Need to understand the positive and negative effects of what 4FRI looks like to the public.
 - There have been decades of conversation to build support around 4FRI - projects that don't follow the same sideboards of 4FRI while being part of 4FRI should be discussed.
 - Encourage that projects within 4FRI take on all or some trappings of 4FRI where possible - particularly the large and old tree retention. To see a similar project not adopt the same language to commit to retaining those trees - don't understand why
 - Additional SHG perspectives:
 - Coconino presented to GFFP, and there were lengthy discussions. Had good discussions at that meeting.
 - The Wildfire Crisis Strategy made communication hard. Previous to WCS, it was pretty distinctive; WCS broadened further. Not engaging everyone through the vehicle of SHG is a disservice to getting positive buy-in. There was successes of 4FRI moving through two EIS without litigation, but this one could present the potential for litigation. Need to get partners to navigate that early and keep them there. Will allow for urgency and getting this project done.
 - This shift - restoration was not a purpose and need of the Leroux project, that is the difference due to WCS. That provides more latitude. Need to be clear about intent (restoration vs fire risk)
 - For FWPP, ecological restoration was kept out specifically because ecological restoration muddies the waters.

- Conversations about this project happened in other venues but not at the formal SHG. Each stakeholder can bring the communications you receive into the SHG and flag communication needs for the SHG
- Communication between FWPP/GFFP/4FRI - There was a separate group working on FWPP. What was the communication dynamic between FWPP and 4FRI?
 - Believe that updates were provided at SHG meetings. At the time, more of the communications was through GFFP rather than 4FRI, but there was enough overlap with Paul that there were more updates, wasn't as much of a problem.
- Working in additional forest types (outside Ponderosa Pine)
 - Exciting to work in different forest types. That is a heavy lift, and Amy's question is: who is in for that? What is the capacity for that? Interesting to think about things in different systems. For the Pri-Opt work, other areas' effects will also impact treatment effectiveness.
 - Seeing many high-leverage partners put resources towards treatment - that is a prioritization in and of itself and another variable for Pri-Opt. There is some rich SHG discussion to better understand that - it can also inform communications and opportunities for SHG to support/inform.
 - Eight years ago, Leroux wasn't on anyone's radar. Now money/research is available, and it is a priority.
 - For Rim Country- focused on dry conifer for zone of agreement.
 - This project was really a priority for fire - that is what is really important
- Potential future discussion/communication needs
 - On the ASNFs, now working on Round Valley Firescape. The Rim Country analysis ends halfway through forest. In the Apache, there are 1.2 million acres that aren't covered. Happy to do a briefing. This is very WCS-focused, overlaps the previous NEPA project there. Certainly for the Apache side of the forest, will have a lot more of these projects.
 - Steering Committee can help provide context.
 - CBD would be very interested.

11:50 4FRI Stakeholder Group and Steering Committee Facilitation Budget

- SDR has now completed ~1 year of facilitation services and has prepared a draft budget for another year of facilitation services. The facilitation budget for the upcoming year is relatively similar to the previous year. If all organizations contributed at the same level they did last year, there would be a gap of ~\$3,000.
 - At the Steering Committee level, acknowledged that this would be a good opportunity to provide feedback for improvement for facilitation. You can email Pascal B., Jay S., or Cerissa H with any input.
- SDR will post the proposed budget, scope of work, and timeline to Basecamp for SHG review and feedback.
 - Based on feedback and budget contributions, SC can discuss any gaps/ if changes are needed.

11:55 Stakeholder Disclosures & Review Action Items

- None.

11: 56 Action Items

Action Item	Lead	Status
Discuss additional Industry meeting	Jay S., Joel J., James, Pascal B.	Ongoing
Coordinate meeting between Industry and FS 4FRI team	Industry Group, 4FRI Team	Ongoing
Post bioeconomy rating press release to Basecamp	Jay S.	Ongoing
Post shared funding, budget, and timeline to Basecamp	SDR	DONE
Contact Melanie if you would like to join the small group discussion on communication 4FRI success	All	DONE
Share feedback on facilitation services (opportunities for improvement, etc.) with Jay S., Pascal B., and/or Cerissa H.	All	DONE

12:00 Adjourn

Steering Committee Meetings (second Tuesday of each month)

- **2024:** 1/9/2024, 2/13/2024, 3/12/2024, 4/9/2024, 5/14/2024, 6/1/2024, 7/9/2024, 8/13/2024, 9/10/2024, 10/8/2024, 11/12/2024, December no meeting

Stakeholder Group Meetings (fourth Wednesday of the month, except November)

-**2024:** 1/24/2024, 3/27/2024, 5/22/2024, 7/24/2024, 9/25/2024, 11/20/2024 (fourth Wednesday, every other month)

	2024 Steering Committee		2024 Stakeholder Group	
	Hot Chair	Cold Chair	Hot Chair	Cold Chair
January	Neil Chapman	Pascal Berlioux	Neil Chapman	Pascal Berlioux
February	Neil Chapman	Pascal Berlioux		
March	Neil Chapman	Pascal Berlioux	Neil Chapman	Pascal Berlioux
April	Pascal Berlioux	Melanie Colavito		
May	Pascal Berlioux	Melanie Colavito	Pascal Berlioux	Melanie Colavito
June	Pascal Berlioux	Melanie Colavito		
July	Melanie Colavito	Joel Jurgens	Melanie Colavito	Joel Jurgens
August	Melanie Colavito	Joel Jurgens		
September	Melanie Colavito	Joel Jurgens	Melanie Colavito	Joel Jurgens
October	Joel Jurgens			

November	Joel Jurgens		Joel Jurgens	
December	Joel Jurgens			