



## 4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting

Wednesday, May 28, 2025, 9AM-12PM

Arizona Game and Fish Department - 2878 E. White Mountain Blvd, Pinetop, AZ 85935

### MEETING RECORDING

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t1uhDolLMf5AF1gKj2nh6p\\_EEp2xg9w\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t1uhDolLMf5AF1gKj2nh6p_EEp2xg9w_/view?usp=sharing)

**Participants:** Joel Jurgens, Nicole Kennan, Travis Woolley, Mark Nabel, Greg Smith, Brad Worsley, Elizabeth Johnston, Rob Lever, Pascal Berlioux, Lynn Krigbaum, Anne Mottek, Cerissa Hoglander, Christine Mares, Jay Smith, Joe Hinz, Lisa Bolton, Tabi Bolton, Sarah Davenport, Neil Chapman, Aaron Mayville, Mariessa Fowler, MaryLou Zimmerman, Michael Martinez, John Richardson, Gary Moore, Amber Dorsch, Jake Dahlin, Cody Meyers, Darlene Cook, John Williams, Jon Day, Kyle Byers, Matt McGrath, Samantha Pastick, Stephanie Coleman, Randy Fuller, Jessie Outzs, Hank Smith

**Facilitation:** Andi Rogers and Jessica Archibald (*Southwest Decision Resources*)

### Meeting Summary

#### Approve March 26, 2025 Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes - SDR

- Approved.

#### Review Action Items from March 26, 2025

Action Item	Lead	Status
Review 4FRI Economic Analysis report and identify what's missing for future discussion	All	Ongoing
Reach out to Mike Dechter (Michael.Dechter@usda.gov) for one-on-one conversations about the Coconino Grassland Restoration project	All	Ongoing
Send high-quality photos to MaryLou Z for the 4FRI storymap	All	Ongoing
Post Walker Hill Demo data to Basecamp	Joel, Travis	Complete

- Economic Analysis
  - Need more discussion on data collection with data operators - could be useful to discuss during the NRWG.
  - What kind of data?



- Data such as volume, employment, number of jobs, etc. Asking loggers to look back. If we were to do study again next year, would that make it easier for them?
  - Heard that it was difficult to look back for reporting - could track when implementing, preferred by loggers.
- Anne and Pascal will follow up.
- Grasslands Restoration Project
  - On hold due to changing administration priorities - can still contact Mike.
- 4FRI Storymap -no photos received, please send them.
- Walkerhill Demo Update - complete.

### **Call to the Public**

- None.

### **USFS Updates** - *Scot Rogers*

- Budget
  - Do have annual appropriations, a lot of high-level DC changes being made.
  - Do not have local funds from annual operation. Hope to have resolved by next month. It's challenging to plan this late in the fiscal year, but we're making alternative plans.
- Staffing
  - 5,000 ppl in FS outside of primary fire have taken the Deferred Resignation Program - 25% of the workforce. Some may not take the resignation - have a cool-off period, but will be substantial.
  - No formal reorganization plan is in place, as an ongoing lawsuit regarding the RIF is pending resolution.
  - Ongoing effort to noncompetitively directly reassign Washington and Regional office employees to critical vacancies - 4FRI and the forests are recipients of those individuals, in the middle of that process.
  - Some positions are being filled in minerals, lands, and other priorities - a sign of the administration's priorities ahead.
- Apache-Sitgreaves
  - Rob is retiring.
  - Greer Fire - had up to 50 MPH wind with fire - almost every square inch of the burn area had been treated before with prescribed, logging, hand thinning, and/or mastication.
  - Working on a fuel treatment effectiveness report on that - good lesson. Need to always say to tell our story, this is fuels treatments tested; could have been much different story without treatments. While town was evacuated, we didn't lose a structure outside of where it started. A real testament to the treatments and the folks who got after it.
- Coconino



- During Greer - were managing wildfire, blind fire, for multiple purposes, 6800 acres or so, really successful event, good treatment.
  - Were able to do managed fire during same windy conditions - big success.
  - Drew some national attention - the Chief and others looking at this.
  - That is the goal - treatment ahead of time, so can take advantage of those opportunities.
- On the Blind Fire - Richie Sinkovitz was able to use QWRA model and build a really cool product that showed for the Blind Fire the array of values, improvement on the ground, and helped tell a more specific story of those acres and good work done there. Thanks to this group for your efforts there - one of the first times putting QWRA to work in practice.
  - They used the 4FRI SHG QWRA, which had been published 2 weeks before; will share more in depth with that working group, maybe will have a story for next WG meeting. To see those visually - what could have happened vs the day of was really helpful to run through the model.
- Last week, had a very robust spring for prescribed - almost 30,000 acres on Coconino.
  - Capped off last week on Mint prescribed fire - 4800 acres in a single shift - largest single day of prescribed broadcast burning on Coconino.
  - Lots of amazing work to be able to do that! Capped off a big season. Thank you!
  - Region broke down some numbers: of all units in the western US - 4800 acres exceeds over half of those units' annual output, most don't even do that in a year.
- Q&A
  - Saw a news release about national firefighting being combined into one agency - any updates on that?
    - There was talk of that happening - been assured nothing happen during fire season this year; not sure if decided, but yes, it is being talked about.
    - If all combined, we would need a personnel and support structure; however, this becomes more complex if it involves different agencies.
    - Many unanswered questions. They would have to work fast if they want to have it in place next year, assuming they decide to go that route.
    - Historically, this issue arises every 20-30 years and has not progressed in the past. FS represents about 70% of the federal workforce - others include BLM, NPS, USFWS, etc.
      - 25% of the non-primary fire workforce is leaving - outside of that, 60% of them are firefighters. What that means for prescribed burns and managing rec sites is a large conversation.
  - Heard that we are moving back to wildfire suppression?
    - Did get a Chief's letter of intent at the beginning of the season. Didn't exactly say that - there is still a window for prescribed fire, etc. However, that window is



smaller than what it used to be. There is absolutely a push in the direction - full suppress, initial attack. There are forces in the agency pushing back on that, though.

- More specific to moment - the agency is gearing up for a pretty active fire season across West. Higher fire danger across the western US. Also looking at deferred resignation, early retirement numbers, and ability to fill incident command teams like we have in the past. Seeing more aggressive initial attack language.
- Not setting us back 40-50 years, but there is a shift in that direction. That is why we want to highlight success of Blind Fire, etc.
- Tone doesn't preclude us from doing this, but now is not a time to manage on the margins. Want to be extra sure about treatments right now.

#### **DFFM Update - Christine Mares**

- See updates [here](#).

#### **Industry/Implementer Updates - All**

- Novo Power - running well; in 5 months, we've had only 1 down day. We will achieve full MW output. The work done last fall has helped tremendously. We have never had a stretch as good as this in our history.
  - Challenge with inventory - but still gaining in inventory. Dropped in winter, opened up a little.
  - Haven't had risk of fire until this point but a challenge to figure out what to do with the amount of biomass been building over time - been restricting dropoff.
  - Supply continues to exceed, people are begging to bring material; may have to lower price.
    - Is the cap on material driven by a size constraint?
      - Essentially, set up the yard like a donut, then backfill into the gap.
      - Have room to take in another 10-15 days of inventory, though worry about time of aging. Right now cash constraint- a lot of money tied up in inventory.
    - DFFM is working on looking into providing a proposal for transportation assistance grant to move biomass off active projects.
      - Novo can't participate in this - if people can get that, able to improve margin or get a margin.
- Canyon Creek
  - Some projects in Rodeo Chedeski footprint.
  - Running out of places to put wood - Keeping everyone busy, but it's a real challenge with everyone being full of wood. Unusual, usually starved for wood.



- Looked at transportation grants, but for our company, because contracts are stewardship, don't qualify for that. Shame that they excluded folks from that type of project. Only one that could look at - straight timber projects that might work on that.
  - Those projects would probably be completed before we received the funding. We would not be able to take advantage of them. Is this something that can be looked at in the future?
    - The decision would come from a Washington Office level likely - can keep having this conversation.
- Tristar lost a feller buncher in the fire. Don't have capital to rebuild fleet. Been a stalwart in this industry - not sure what will happen. Concerning.
- TNC
  - Have a project called Hawk on Coconino - implementing in cooperation with Coconino and Coconino Flood Control District
  - Last month released an RFP - received 5 bids.
  - This week in the contracting phase - look to have multiple contractors with work starting July 1.
  - Also, have Bill Williams off slope - will release RFP on that in next month, primarily work on South and West side of Bill Williams footprint.
  - Executed Bill Williams steep slope project.
  - 3 projects running consecutively - busy summer.
- Coconino County
  - National Association of Counties - had a meeting in South Dakota. Scheduled some tours of other sawmills to see what other people are doing with Ponderosa Pine
    - One place is diamond cutting 1-inch boards, drying it, and selling as lumber. Have a pellet mill attached to get rid of residuals.
    - Timberworks - they are a post and pole operation with a pellet mill - low-grade pellets for oil fields for absorption. MDF plant right next door - buys portion of chips.
    - RFOR lumber up there - also a lumber broker up there.
  - Had a panel at the meeting, which included some commissioners from utilities. We had a discussion about energy in the west, specifically geothermal energy, and the fact that all the counties in the west have some biomass issues. Commissioners from utilities are generally reluctant to raise utility prices, but they are not looking at the big picture. Forest health is a concern that resonates across all states, but they are hesitant to change because of the potential impact on rates.
- Eastern Counties
  - Would like to express gratitude to Rob and the team for all the work done on containing the Greer fire. Counties involved on that. Fantastic collaborative experience with A-S - appreciate it!



- Mexican Wolf issue - not forest restoration, but it is forest-related. Seeing the expansion of Mexican Wolf experimental population - 206 wolf confirmed count. Expanding outside of reintroduction areas. Getting a lot of commotion in counties, likely to expand to Coconino.
- Yesterday, the US Supreme Court denied review of an emergency stay regarding the copper mine resolution project; this was the last legal barrier to proceed with the land exchange. FS has already announced that they will reissue the FEIS for the Resolution Copper projects; we expect some social activity on that. The San Carlos Apache Tribe has a significant issue regarding the Oak Flat religious sites. It appears that they will lose it.
- Industry has been having meetings around the new Executive Order on Timber Production
  - There was a secretarial memo and a follow-up from Chris French around what that looks like for Forest regarding increasing output. Indicated they wanted a 25% increase nationwide - clear focus and orientation around concept of return on investment for timber sales.
  - What that means in Region 3: very challenging framework to compete in. The type of work we do doesn't necessarily compete well in that space. How revenues are generated and receipts are accounted for internally becomes complicated and byzantine.
  - For R3 - we are at the bottom of that conversation right now. Still early, still unclear. No budgetary piece discussed. Hard shift from where we were with the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
  - Our ability to increase supply with NEPA completed, social license, etc. - 25% increase from our 2024 - would be 37,000 -40,000 acres (within numbers)
    - Have space to do that, industry capacity on the west side at least; how those dynamics come together, yet TBD.
    - No expectation that the increase would be seen or felt uniformly across regions.
    - How show up in that space yet TBD - big part of internal convo, will drive where we are at FY26.
    - 4FRI board - laser focused on maintaining vital industry - what is the absolute floor, etc.
  - Other big part of this: NEPA
    - Other regions and places have less NEPA coverage and a different litigious environment than we do here.
    - A lot of conversation about what that looks like - developing new CEs, using existing. Conversations around changes to ESA, streamlining NEPA, etc.
    - Don't foresee any changes for 4FRI - don't hear any convo about revisiting existing NEPA. A lot of conversation likely won't impact locally - if you have concerns, please contact Scot.



- For ESA - there is a convo around changing definition of harm, treatment within habitat, etc. no changes at this point for survey protocols, etc. At the national level, likely this will end up in the courts.

### **Working Group Updates - All**

- Communication WG - Taylor Dubai
  - None.
- Industry/Biomass WG - Brad Worsley/Tony Flagor
  - None.
- Multi-Party Monitoring Board WG - Jamie Sanderlin/MaryLou Zimmerman/Andi Rogers
  - Working towards a presentation for July SHG meeting - Travis working on vegetation, Jamie working on songbird data. Moving forward, we aim to connect existing datasets, synthesize the information, and address the adaptive management question within the process.
  - Ask from FS - look at FY25 proposed budget items for in-the-field project requests. Asked to prioritize line items in case of reduced budgets - in midst of process now; sent a poll out to the larger group to prioritize existing budget.
  - Transitions from MPMB - Cerissa stepped back to seek a successor who can provide a point of contact and expertise on streams and water subgroup projects. Is anyone in SHG interested? Please contact MaryLou.
  - Stephen Flora for SRP - stepped back for summer, Hannah Buchanan stepping in.
- Comprehensive Implementation WG - Hannah Griscom/Cerissa Hoglander
  - See later agenda item.
- Prioritization and Optimization WG - Amy Waltz/Travis Woolley/Brian Nowicki
  - Made a lot of progress - got final results delivered from analysis, meeting tomorrow to go through that
  - Really looking forward to showing the group the results in July - developing communications and next steps about how to use that info as a SHG and for the FS/
  - Not done, but done with the analysis part - a lot of work to pull that together!

### **Walker Hill Demo Analysis (TNC) - Travis Woolley and Mark Nabel**

- See [presentation](#) for takeaways.
- How much does the annual acquisition of Lidar Data cost?
  - 50 cents an acre, which doesn't need to be done every year.

### **CIWG Updates and Spotlight Projects - Cerissa Hoglander**

- See recording for more information - slides to be posted on Basecamp.
- Where is CIWG getting funding from?
  - Many places - truly collaborative. Some from IRA/BIL, rock from Houston draw came from local sources, etc.



- Friends of Northern Arizona Forests, AZ Elk Society, and Grand Canyon Trust bring volunteers and funding.
- FS brings funding to hire contractors sometimes.
- T-6 springs - AGFD brought capacity.
- Collaborative investment in labor, funding, etc.
- Hope for a new 5-6 year grant for a possible funder to cover rock delivery - also volunteer trip implementation costs.
- Overlap in CIWG and MPMB?
  - Just to monitoring results of CIWG restoration efforts - site monitoring, veg transects, change in wetland extent.
- Come volunteer!

**Stakeholder Disclosures & Review Action Items**

- Notice that with Pinetop meetings - less than 25% attendance in-person for meetings, disruptive to collaborative as a whole, want to bring more interaction to the collaborative. Suggest to keep meetings in Flagstaff instead.

Action Item	Lead	Status
Review 4FRI Economic Analysis report and identify what's missing for future discussion. Send Anne M. input.	All	Ongoing
Connect about industry data collection opportunities discussion	Anne M., Pascal B.	
Reach out to Mike Dechter (Michael.Dechter@usda.gov) for one-on-one conversations about the Coconino Grassland Restoration project	All	Ongoing
Send high-quality photos to MaryLou Z for the 4FRI storymap	All	Ongoing
Contact MaryLou Z. if you want to join Multi-Party Monitoring Board - looking for more capacity.	All	

**Steering Committee Meetings (second Tuesday of each month)**

-2025 1/14/2025, 2/11/2025, 3/11/2025, 4/8/2025, 5/13/2025, 6/10/2025, 7/8/2025, 8/12/2025, 9/9/2025, 10/14/2025, 11/11/2025, December no meeting

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

-2025: 1/22/2025 (Flagstaff), 3/26/2025 (Flagstaff) 5/28/2025 (Pinetop), 7/23/2025 (Flagstaff), 9/24/2025 (Pinetop), 12/3/2025 (Flagstaff)



	2025 Steering Committee		2025 Stakeholder Group	
	Hot Chair	Cold Chair	Hot Chair	Cold Chair
January	Joel Jurgens	Jay Smith	Joel Jurgens	Jay Smith
February	Joel Jurgens	Jay Smith		
March	Jay Smith	Melanie C	Jay Smith	Melanie C
April	Jay Smith	Melanie C		
May	Jay Smith	Melanie C	Jay Smith	Melanie C
June	Melanie C	Pascal B		
July	Melanie C	Pascal B	Melanie C	Pascal B
August	Melanie C	Pascal B		
September	Pascal B	Joel J	Pascal B	Joel J
October	Pascal B	Joel J		
November	Pascal B	Joel J		
December	Joel J	??	Joel J	??