4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting

Wednesday, September 24, 2025, 9AM-12PM

Arizona Game and Fish Department (3500 S Lake Mary Rd, Flagstaff, AZ 86001)

MEETING RECORDING

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fyuELz4SbgRSMwUgBPlP_m6i4k9Gg1Ow/view?usp=sharing

Participants: Amy Tinderholt, Melanie Colavito, Jay Smith, Tom Mackin, Danika Thiele, Travis Woolley, Nicole Kennan, Joel Jurgens, Nicole Branton, Matt Lane, Joe Hinz, Scot Rogers, Tabi Bolton, Cerissa Hoglander, Amy Waltz, Mike Martinez, Randy Fuller, Lisa Bolton, Elizabeth Johnston, Josh Eager, Brian Nowicki, Brad Worsley, Scott Franz, Christine Mares, Gavin Smith, Greg Smith, Anne Mottek, Gary Moore, Sarah Devenport, Richie Sinkovitz, Will Downing, Samantha Pastick

Facilitation: Carrie Eberly and Jessica Archibald (Southwest Decision Resources)

Welcome and Agenda Review - Southwest Decision Resources (SDR)

Approve July 23, 2025 Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes - SDR

- Approved.

Review Action Items from July 23, 2025

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.	Ongoing
Reach out to Mike Dechter (Michael.Dechter@usda.gov) for one-on-one conversations about the Coconino Grassland Restoration project	All	COMPLETE
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	Ongoing
Post updated 4FRI Briefer to Bascamp for Review	Melanie C.	COMPLETE

- Economic Analysis Report: Complete.
- Industry Data: Ongoing.

- Grassland Restoration Project: Mark as complete - can still reach out when needed.
- Photos for 4FRI Storymap: ongoing.
- MPMB: ongoing.

Call to the Public

- None.

USFS Updates - *Scot Rogers* and Others

- A-S - Josh Miller
    - Heber-Wildhorse objection period is open - will close Oct 14.
- Chief of FS visited last Tuesday on relatively short notice - primary reason for the visit was Public Lands Council. Met with Diablo Trust in the morning.
    - Coconino and Kaibab had a short window to meet with him - ~40 mins on recreation in the Red Rock Ranger District, followed by ~45 minutes on active management in Upper Rio. Did a quick tour of Bellemont Area - Wing West and Wing East - quick car tour, and went to the RFOR mill - the Chief was highly interested in the mill operations.
    - Discussed the need for biomass solutions on the West Side - productive conversation about 4FRI and biomass ahead. Shared a lot about 4FRI support from stakeholders and updates on how important it is to sustain 4FRI for industry, wildfire risk, and the economic and ecological health of the area.
    - There had to be a really narrow focus on sites to visit - chose some representative sites in Coconino, but had a lot of conversation about the broader landscape, focusing on 4FRI and the differences across it. Emphasized the value of the 4FRI scale and the importance of both east-side and west-side operations.
    - Chief also brought a videographer - will have an external video about 4FRI from the FS, highlighting the Forest Service as a success because of our partners and industry support. Likely to be posted a month out.
- Brand-new website for the Forest Service - featuring a new URL and updated information. Link: https://www.fs.usda.gov/r03/natural-resources/forest-management/four-forest-restoration-initiative
- End of Fiscal Year Status
    - Completed around 120,00 acres of fuels treatment this FY. Last year, achieved ~200,000 - this is still a success story given the challenging weather conditions in Northern AZ. A-S was offline due to traditional burn windows - Stage 2 restrictions in the Spring.
    - Why a success: resources were shared across forests to be successful with burns. Coconino hit 40-50,000 acres. Were able to be strategic in using resources for treatment and take advantage of any windows that exist.
    - All forests of 4FRI were prescribed fire top forests across the West

        - Coconino broke the agency record for the number of acres per day, ever - 4,800 acres.
    - For commercial timber - have offered full 6 months. No real major concerns regarding dropoff in 2026 or 2026.
- Funding ahead
    - A lot of uncertainty. However, due to strategic investments in partnerships over the last 2-3 fiscal years, the commercial and fuels programs of work will be funded for 2026 and 2027.
- G to Z: Hopeful this is done soon - 1 month behind. Hoped to post for solicitation in Sept, that will now be Oct. Generally on track for award by end of calendar year.
- Outstanding agreements - all appear to be moving forward. Should be executed shortly.
- Biomass - FS will finalize agreement with ASU Lightworks - doing a lot of work in County and State around biomass and enabling conditions to bring biomass industry to this area.
    - Biomass ceiling: no longer an issue of piling wood, also affecting commercial operations
    - Expecting results from the study in next few months - will have clarity on next steps.
    - Can add this to a future presentation item for the SHG; they will also be doing local engagement with partners on the ground.
- Amy Tinderholt - coming behind Brett Crary
    - Been working with Enterprise, previous Red Rock Ranger District. Prior to this, spent 20 years in the Pacific Northwest. Worked with Deschutes Forest Collaborative - similar work to 4FRI.
    - In the last 2 months, focused on getting head around larger agreements and where we're going (timber sales under Good Neighbor Agreements). How can we move to FS having an integrated program of work with our partners? Exciting to think about - this is where a lot of work will be in next 3 months.
    - Posted a report to Basecamp - looking for some input on the report. How do we make it useful?

DFFM Update - *Christine Mares*

- See update here.
- Total offerings this year: 22,000+ acres
- Community Protection Projects are coming online soon in the Prescott and Payson areas.
- On Basecamp - State Fiscal report. Treated 9900 acres (3000 more than the previous year due to a warm winter and increased capacity)
- GNA program hiring a business manager in the next few months - can share the notice when ready. Please share!

Industry/Implementer Updates & perspectives - *All*

- Campbell Global

- SRP taking some mill residuals and putting them on a demonstration site with ASU - doing some monitoring for dust abatement on solar sites. ~5000 cubic yards.

- Novo Power
  - Historic year - 268 up days - 6.5% more than average, represents almost 2 extra weeks. Output has been up almost 3%.
  - Have moved into perpetual oversupply of biomass in the State. Novo is buying more wood today than ever making more power today than ever. There is an oversupply of biomass, which may put Novo Power into a " bad guy situation" if they have to decide who can/can't bring biomass. Wrestling with how to move forward.
  - One factor to clarify - people think that the Master Stewardship Agreement should help Novo Power pay, but really the increase was minimal. Cost of doing business has risen substantially - that Master Stewardship Agreement was the only way to equalize price with costs for doing business.
  - RFOR could supply an entire biomass plant on its own - huge supply.
  - We may be years out from a new facility being built - many will not survive this gap.
  - Senator Kelly's Office coming out on the 17th - small group will meet to talk through short-term and long-term solutions. There is a lot of energy around this - need to come together and support the most viable ideas together.
    - Mark Kelly wanted this to be a meeting between 7-8 people for brainstorming/productive conversation. Can follow up on this with broader Stakeholder Group.
    - Need to gather our heads together - what does it take. How can we pull together in the same direction?
  - Transportation fuels subsidy - two contractors received $1.7 million; it is stated in the objective and award that they will direct it to the bioelectric producer. They have not called Brad. This is bringing a new market to table with no award, how does this happen? Concerned.
- Coconino County
  - Last $3 million spent was to subsidize biomass removal - trying to partner on that process, knowing that we rely on Novo to keep going.
  - County been working with Anne Mottek - funding coming from Observatory Mesa. Agreement between County and GFFP coming soon.
  - Don't have enough loggers to do the work - part of that is where do you take the material? Don't have industry to increase pace and scale.
- TNC
  - Quite a few projects going - Hoch on Coconino National Forest with FS and County. Going quickly - over 2000 acres all in. Started mid-July. Nearly halfway done with project.
    - Trying to get some loads to Idaho National Laboratory.
    - Suarez delivering now to SW Forest Products, some large loads going to Heber.

        - Hoch Hub Site - can go online and check progress. This is updated every 24 hours.
            - FS and County had access to the backdoor - per-acre plots, basal areas, interspace, etc.
    - Bill Williams Project - lot of progress here on high-priority acres.
    - Will award two projects on the Bill Williams Off-Slope.
    - Starting the first steep slope on Friday - Cat Project, right by towers. Concern regarding infrastructure - trialing something new. Developed new system to move material off slope with slides - more updates coming. Hope to complete the project in 4 days. Not huge, but very complex - 3.8 acres.
    - Deck sale on Kaibab - coming online next calendar year.
- Canyon Creek
    - Both grinders working on SRP Watershed - one on Coconino between Wing East and RFOR projects. Likely to finish on the portion of Wing East later this week or early next.
    - Will move a grinder to work on Juniper on DFFM project at White Mountain Lake. Other grinder will remain on Tonto Pringle Timber Sale.
        - Hope to finish Pringle Sale by end of Oct. Will move logging sites back into A-S after that.
    - Been held back on production with pulp wood - Lignetics full of wood, haven't been able to haul. Have been able to haul all saw logs into White Mountain Lumber - Heber Mill.
    - With the pallet plant full - added to biomass problem. Pulpwood going into slash piles and going to Novo - compounds problems.
    - Many issues facing biomass - have been curtailed all summer due to the overload of material. Bringing materials from the west side is hard - a long drive and long days.
    - Sad to move off this area. Been good to work on west side - hope that can continue in the future.

9:50 Working Group Updates -

- Communication WG - Taylor Dubay
    - None.
- Industry/Biomass WG - Brad Worsley/Tony Flagor
    - None.
- Multi-Party Monitoring Board WG - Jamie Sanderlin/MaryLou Zimmerman/Andi Rogers
    - Weren't able to meet this month - lots of folks participating in the Biennial Conference at NAU.
    - From vegetation monitoring, did get connected with NAU and an agreement set up.
    - TNC signed a new agreement to continue prescribed fire monitoring work - similar to MPMB work.
- Comprehensive Implementation WG - Hannah Griscom

- GCT volunteers worked with the watershed team on Coconino - 11 erosion control structures in Clover Area, which feeds into Clear Creek Wilderness Area
- Friends of Northern AZ Forests (FONAF)
    - Preparing to monitor 150 aspen exclosures. Each has an assigned steward - looking for fence repairs, condition, and disease. Have created a lopping team to remove small conifers encroaching. Have been a lot of Ponderosa Pine regeneration.
    - AZ Wildlife Federation is providing funding assistance to FONAF to get a supercharged weed eater. Hope to expand into some of the wildlife corridors to reduce small ponderosa pine thickets.
    - Removed over 30 tons of wire and t-posts on Coconino and Kaibab. Will beat their record.

- Prioritization and Optimization WG - Amy Waltz/Travis Woolley/Brian Nowicki *(update below)*

10:15 Treatment Prioritization and Optimization: Report and Discussion - *Amy, Travis, and Brian*

- See presentation here.
- Background
    - Started this in 2022: QWRA is one subset of our values - ones that can be spatially represented. This is a common tool utilized in different priority landscapes, forests, and regions. This is just one part of our prioritization and optimization strategy moving forward.
    - All values, along with details, are available in the QWRA report posted to Basecamp.
    - Did a values ranking workshop with the Forest Service and the Stakeholders - there were some differences, but a lot of similarity. Kept these rankings in the report, but ultimately, the Forest Service will be the ultimate decision-makers on the level of importance.
        - Not everyone was represented in the values prioritization - another reason not to make a formal recommendation.
- Results
    - Conditional net value change: assumes that there will be a fire on the landscape
        - Powerful tool for decision-making when fire is present
    - Total expected net value change: supports decision-making based on values and the likelihood of fire at these locations.
    - Report: posted to Basecamp. For each value, a condition and expected net value change analysis was ran.
    - Did include a value that shows the benefit of fire (blue areas on maps) - areas that most benefit from fire. Can tell the story of where and why to use beneficial use of fire.

- As time goes on, should see more positive blue over time. Our work can help expand these blue areas - less risk associated with use of beneficial fire. These analyses can be updated every year.

- Blind Fire Rapid Risk Assessment Use Case
  - Conditional flame lengths in regional assessment were a lot higher than what was actually seen on the ground. Showed more loss or less benefit to value. Will and Richie worked on Rapid Risk Assessment to demonstrate opportunity of the incident to more benefit.
  - Behavior Comparison - observed vs expected
    - Saw lower flame lengths on the ground compared to the simulated. Very low fire intensity.
    - Ran response function for ecological value - saw a lot of beneficial with some neutral.
    - Using the rapid risk assessment - compare the difference. Accentuates how much more beneficial expecting low flame lengths to be compared to 85 percentile condition expected values. Quantified as “risk averted”.
- Q&A
  - Some areas show increase in risk - some of that could be modeling noise between the two maps. Where there is a strong overall pattern, those small areas of difference are likely due to noise.
  - What is the role of this tool in changing the outcome of decisions for fire?
    - QWRA is a tool to use for informing treatment prioritization, etc.
    - The day of the incident will change the impacts (positive or negative) for the values.
  - How does this change decisions on the day of?
    - Used as a tool to determine whether or not to move forward with fire that day - decided to manage for beneficial effects.
    - There is also a communication tool - internally and externally.
    - Can use this tool to change tactics for managing fire, including whether to suppress.
      - This can help inform how not to kick risk down the road. If a lot of risk is averted, it can be communicated why moving forward with the fire is still justified.
    - Always grapple with deferred risk - helps to better articulate the decision-making process.
    - Can also help firing operators understand the values on the landscape to communicate how reducing/changing fire pattern can benefit values (e.g., timber, ecological function, wildlife, etc.)
      - Can be forward-thinking and communicate decisions effectively.
  - Can you overlay past treatment data to further support decision-making?

        - They are inherently built into the vegetation data and will be reflected in probability and flame length.
- Next steps
    - Plans can be rerun once the annual hazard data is updated.
        - The landscape used for fire modeling and deliverables is from end of 2023 - using the Region 3 hazard data. There are some updated hazard data; haven't downloaded yet, but it has been released. Can take all response functions and relative importance information and match with updated hazard data (end of 2024).
        - Can use to update deliverables and make it available on collaborative GIS platforms.
    - How can we share this? How do people want to access it?
- QWRA Uses Discussion
    - What is the FS plan for using this? Learning needs:
        - What is the FS process is and how they plan to integrate?
        - What impact would fire have on industry. Does burn change who will bid on it? Does it have an impact at all?
            - Some like fire before, others do not.
            - Some of this depends on mill - if charcoal products are floating around, may impact mill operations.
                - West Fire - huge consideration that there were timber sales to be awarded. Had to resurvey timber sales. Changes volume, etc.
        - How can this inform program of work/out-year planning?
            - Some WCS landscapes are using this to work on their NEPA.
            - Are there other examples of people using this for Program of Work?
            - Amy working on overlaying this data - how can all these pieces overlay to support program of work planning?
                - Can involve FS and partners, and then talk about how we can become smarter with this.
        - How can we use use this tool to show success over time - for all the values.
        - How can stakeholders support its use as a communication tool?
    - From FS perspective, uses could include:
        - Overlapping QWRA with past and planned projects - it sounds simple, but we do not have a lot of spatial data on the program of work. Priority ahead to figure this out.
        - This tool is a good opportunity for clear communication about where projects align with priorities and where they don't.
        - National group that works on the Risk Slider - a piece of that is how to measure accomplishment and how that informs planning and priorities as well. Focus on

how much risk we have reduced, rather than the number of acres treated (e.g., risk reduction in electrical transmission, etc.).

- National grounding on what we are we're talking about here - but 4FRI is further along and unique, with values driven by stakeholders. Shows alignment between FS and stakeholders.

Sawmill Springs Biomass Presentation - *Joel Jurgens, TNC*

- See presentation here.
- Background:
  - Biomass challenge inhibiting many in this room and outside of this space as well.
  - Different operational approaches to restoration - many projects in AZ go on for years. Every day the project is active, dollars are lost. Getting through projects quickly is key.
  - Not every acre across 4FRI landscape are the same - some are skinny, some are plump.
  - Would it make sense to make offerings that recognize these differences?
- Collapsing silos:
  - How to do it
    - Move material from different types to one type - chipped wood for biomass
    - Combined operations
    - All material removed from site - no pile burning
  - Sawmill Springs - interest in utilizing forest restoration residuals for biopower and biofuel
    - West of Parks - 685 acres - treated all material on that site as grinded material, going to Novo Power.
    - Tested different equipment and operational approaches
    - Utilized goating - single rig moving in and out of site so street rigs could just "drop and hook"
- Challenges:
  - Reliance on single off-take partner - this triggers challenges throughout the entire cycle
  - Distance - the only way could make it work would be the drop and hook
    - On this project: over 300,000 miles driven
- Takeaways:
  - Utilization siting - the closer we can get utilization, smaller waste in fuel for transportation
    - Cost of transport 1.5X great than all other fuel use
  - Positive impacts for FS - one material type, fewer landings and roads, hazardous fuels removed, MUCH shorter harvest completion
    - Less employees time, more profit, more capacity for restoration
  - Partnership
    - Need information to make better decisions, this is a good example. These reports will be out by end of year - will post to Basecamp

- How does it look out there?
    - Lighter touch on the ground - one movement through the forest, no go backs, no piles, no burn scars.
    - Looks like a site that has been recovering for 3-4 years; just completed in January
    - Does the lighter touch change our analysis up front (archaeological surveys, compressed timeframe)? Less disturbance overall.
- Is there an opportunity to work with MPMB on treatment effectiveness monitoring?
    - Yes - did put plots out there, may have 2 pre-measurements.
    - Part of this year's data collection.
- Could we compare to Parks West monitoring?
    - All landed on skid trails

Stakeholder Disclosures & Review Action Items

- County and GFFP - done 4 community wildlife protection community meetings - one in Williams, Blue Ridge, Forest Lakes. Next week - Tusayan. Anne will also start working on some tribal interviews. This is for rural CWPP.

Action Item	Lead	Status
Connect about industry data collection opportunities discussion	Anne M., Pascal B.	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	Ongoing
Provide Amy T. feedback on the report she posted to Basecamp - content, what is approriate for the public	All	Ongoing

12:00 Adjourn

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 (Flagstaff), 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	??