



4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 | 9AM-12PM

MEETING RECORDING

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YkQQbz6Y98kMLPY6nm-3GBz0wT0Ar6g/view?usp=sharing>

Participants: Scot Rogers, Samanth Pastick, Cerissa Hoglander, Anne Mottek, Mary Lou Zimmerman, Christine Mares, Amy Tinderholt, Travis Woolley, Tabi Bolton, Gary Moore, Devon Suarez, Joely Jorges, Nicole KEnna, Gabby Ross, Kevin Dickinson, Will Scott, Jay Smith, Joe Hinz, Evan Nye, Pascal Berlioux, Brad Worsley, Kevin Ordean, Jay Williams, Patrice Horstman, Saskia Versteeg, Josh Eager, Luke Reents, Ethan Aumack, Meliassa Mai, Stephanie Coleman, Lisa Bolton, Taylor Dubay, Patrick Moore, Matt McGrath, Shaula Hedwall, Brian Nowicki, Nicole Branton, David L, Taylor McKinnon

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

Welcome and Agenda Review - Southwest Decision Resources (SDR)

- Please mark your calendars for a biomass work session on April 13th, from 1-4 PM - opportunity to dive deeper into biomass challenges and opportunities to address them.

Approve Jan 28, 2028 Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes - SDR

- Approved.

Review Action Items from January 28, 2026

Action Item	Lead	Status
Share letter of support example to SDR	Saskia V.	DONE
Share presentation slides	Bill/SRP	DONE
All review 4FRI Briefer when posted to Basecamp	All	DONE
Get together to talk DC talking points	All going	DONE
Reach out to Saskia with any further Graphyte questions (sversteeg@graphyte.com)	All	DONE
Post Pri-Opt meeting time to Basecamp	Travis W.	DONE
Cross-discussion with MBMB and CIWG re: future projects and any additional needs to monitor	Andi/Cerissa	DONE

- Reach out to Saskia if you have any questions - mark as complete.
- Pri-opt meeting happened - mark as complete.



- Continued discussion between MPMB and CIWG - mark as complete.

Call to the Public

- None.

4FRI Stakeholder Letter on Biomass - Steering Committee

- Overview - Jay Smith
 - NRWG developed a white paper; several provided information for it. Was sent out on Jan 4th. GFFP also worked on a white paper, which was finalized a week or so ago.
 - There has been discussion on doing a letter for 4FRI SHG - lots of discussion back and forth. Jay/Neil drafted an attempt at a “neutral” paper - worked with many of the Steering Committee to come up with a draft. Once the Steering Committee reviewed it, it posted the updated draft to Basecamp for further comments from the rest of the SHG.
 - Jay received about 5-6 comments on this version. Because there are some disagreements in comments, SDR and Jay pulled together some pieces with the different opinions for further discussion (the letter version for reviewing today)
- Purpose of the letter:
 - As 4FRI has increased implementation, there has been an increase in need for biomass offtake - including brown biomass (non-merchantable) and white biomass (sawmill residual) - there is not enough offtake, there is a demand for biomass offtake, and 4FRI can provide insights on how to address this.
 - Follows up from conversation in previous SHG - opportunity for 4FRI to provide a broader statement and support for diverse biomass
 - This type of statement is supported by the charter - see language in the letter.
 - Our role is not to support a specific industry member, but all sorts of different types of industry - an “all of the above” approach
 - At one point were balanced in a balanced state with biomass offtake, but with an increase last year, when the FS and RFOR increased, it ended up in a situation where the existing industry ramped up and couldn’t handle the biomass offtake
 - RFOR had to move to one shift instead of two, in part because of this challenge.
 - Need to work with all agencies to shift paradigm - we are at a stage now where going for
- Biomass relevant definitions from the Forest Service
 - 1. POL Product Other Than Log is defined as trees [LD-1] [WJFN2] meeting POL utilization specifications and not meeting sawtimber or non-sawtimber utilization standards from cut trees.
 - 2. Biomass is defined as non-bole (activity slash) wood meeting utilization specs, and whole saplings (2–6-inch dbh), as well as any material not meeting other utilization specs. Units should use caution when including material other than whole tree yarded activity slash, as yarding of felled 2-6-inch material impedes harvest productivity during mechanical operations. Similarly, material included as required material should not



conflict with contract specifications in C(T)6.7# Slash Treatment provisions. If removal of this material is not required, it can be removed under a written agreement with the Timber CO or included as timber subject to agreement during contract preparation.

- Do we need to define this in the letter?
 - As a footnote, possibly?
 - In reality, once the log is cut, the FS doesn't typically monitor - it doesn't matter where the product went as long as work is done. It doesn't matter - it's up to the market. Don't get to that level of weeds in the letter.
 - On some forests, the 5-9" is a valuable product (e.g., Lignetics pellet mill)or AZ Log and Timberworks
 - In future efforts - important to be inclusive of all industries, including those that can use a smaller diameter
 - This is important for biomass discussion broadly, but not for this letter specifically
- Comments regarding the acre goals for 4FRI
 - Don't need to change right now - but would like to have this discussion in the future. We are persistently underachieving our goal - we are showing progress, but we look like we are chronically underachieving - not a great look.
 - Can we revisit this as a SC and SHG? is this the message we want to convey? Or convey something more reflective of what we want to.
 - It's also not a good look to keep moving the target, so there are two sides to this.
 - Can keep in the letter for now, discuss framing in future SC and SHG meetings.
- Comments regarding "doubling growth"
 - Scaling restoration - doesn't necessarily equate to one-to-one
 - Different acres, different contract types, all influence the amount of biomass -it depends on what is offered
 - Worth discussing in April at the Biomass Work Session
 - Some feel that doubling is important to include
 - 35,000 acres is not just theoretical, its a reality
 - If we don't indicate how much growth needed, the letter is not impactful
 - We know the landscape, we know the projects we have lined out. If we know that there are differences in landscape and wood products, the thinning type to be applied, we don't have to guess. We can make some educated estimates based on that. We've been assuming, justifiably so, that the projects are looking at are similar to previous history. If that is changing, assume that there are not big changes coming.
 - Looking across the overall NEPA framework - can assume this is a reasonable norm
- Comments regarding referencing the NRWG and GFFP letters
 - Don't say "in alignment with" - delete this paragraph; not all stakeholders fully agree



- Replace recognition with acknowledgment - important to acknowledge that there is a biomass challenge, we need to address it now, and that others are working on the issue
- Those documents are already out there - some don't see a need to highlight/assign parallel, highlight
- GFFP doesn't mention other letters - would be consistent not to; people can make the connections
- The purpose of this letter is to share that we agree with other letters - important to recognize
 - Strong value to be aligned when talking to DC folks to be aligned
- Decision: don't mention the letters explicitly, but recognize that there are others in the same geography working on this
- Comments regarding explicitly stating "30 MW"
 - If state a specific number, it implies that not willing to support any other level of development
 - Generally, organizations are in favor of biomass generation; without Novo Power, we wouldn't be where we are today. Just don't want to create the perception that the SHG excludes any other capacity.
 - The specification of 30 MW could actually come as reassurance for those concerned that don't have a cap on it - by indicating 30, already planting a stake, saying we don't want 500 MW plant
 - Reframe to an "up to additional 30 MW" and indicate preference for the west side
- Next steps
 - SDR clean up the draft, share with Steering Committee for final review and approval
 - Received full consensus on draft/next steps

USFS Updates - Scot Rogers

- The Washington Office visited last week, including the national biomass lead who coordinates the Wood Innovations Grant. Fantastic visit - much greater understanding of story, success, and need for continued investment in AZ.
- Now they have a greater understanding of biomass challenges and a unique opportunity to resolve challenges in 4FRI that others can't
- Letter from Crane to Boren around biomass - in process of responding to that and the ECO letter
- Prescribed fire in the spring season:
 - A-S and Kaibab have ceased.
 - This week, the Coconino is burning, but this will likely be the last.
- Funding
 - Finalizing the Program of Work funding report this Thursday afternoon
 - Have \$3 million locally already, expect 15-18 in the competitive process. Have full list of projects in the guaranteed and extra range - confident that most of that money will come.



DFFM Update - Christine Mares

- Posted to Basecamp.

Industry/Implementer Updates & perspectives - All

- Forest Resource Contractors
 - 1 grinder finishing on Hawk later this week, got another grinder working on A-S on Black Mesa at Orien Sale. 2-3 weeks left to go
 - 28 loads a day of biomass - hopeful to be able to stay working on this side.
 - Big challenge with fuel cost right now - if it gets to be extended will impact operators
- Canyon Creek Logging
 - Hope to get back working on A-S on draw sale in the next 2-3 weeks and hauling logs to Lignetics. Looking at hauling logs to White River Mill - somewhat running now, doing some training.
- Suarez
 - Moved logging operation to Johnson on CC Cragin.
 - Chippin In doing grinding on Clover.
 - Hawk - week left to load out.
- TNC
 - Hawk going well.
 - Will release 2 RFPS next month - S side and N side of Bill Williams Mountain - not huge, but complicated work and very important.
 - One in collaboration with Coconino County Flood District.
- Coconino County Flood District
 - RFPs going forward - Leroux and Bill Williams - took acres that thought would be helicopter, brought it to ground work - glad to stretch dollars.
 - Board approved Leroux East - \$3 million, ground-based steep slope. FS to get RFP out shortly.
 - Have West Side Industry Meeting Friday, 9AM-12PM at Moonshot
 - FS to do some updates on 6-9inch Product other than Log strategy, 5-year program of work
 - ASU Lightworks will be there - plan on doing some polling on industry to see where these issues are - fuel, time out of work, etc. - so ASU can continue to solve some of these - thinking outside the box
 - Fuel prices are crushing - some contractors may have to shutter
- Novo Power
 - If haven't heard, Leeland Baird had a catastrophic accident in the woods - cable broke, crushed half of his skull - reminder of the sacrifice these guys are making
 - Have been reaching out to others to bring in biomass during RFOR's slow period - good to take advantage while biomass numbers are lower



- RFOR
 - Had installed some woodmizer products - not industry standard, made more biomass than needed. Made the difficult to change to a single shift - ran into biomass bottleneck, saturated market, got to a position where needed to reduce
 - RFOR not profitable on single shift. Very happy with agreement on the letter- important to get people in action for the biomass challenge.
 - Working on a different sawmill - it is industry standard.- Can exceed current kiln capacity, ramp time of 60-90 days, and once up to speed, can hit 20,000 acres per year. Lots of room for additional biomass offtakes to come online.
 - Currently in deck management mode - need to hit the brake good and hard in terms of logging, slowing down with expected log start up to pace through summer and ramp into winter again
 - Have the ability to put wood down, hit a peak of 80 loads delivered per day during the past winter. Next year - 85-100 loads is where going to be.

Working Group Updates

- Communication WG - Tayloe Dubay
 - [Updated 4FRI Briefer now available](#)
- Industry/Biomass WG - Brad Worsley
 - No additional.
- Multi-Party Monitoring Board WG - MaryLou Zimmerman
 - Did not meet this past month - do have partners ramping up their data collection efforts for the summer
- Comprehensive Implementation WG - Cerissa Hoglander
 - Lots of planning conversations around riparian restoration work this season - both summer and fall. Can share sites as get developed.
- Prioritization and Optimization WG - Travis Woolley/Brian Nowicki
 - No updates. Will be setting some recurring meetings on the schedule and outline a plan of work.

Contracting overview and potential changes - Scot Rogers, USFS

- See presentation on Basecamp.
- Discussion/Q&A
 - Projections of biomass
 - Related to estimate green tons of biomass - do these projections reflect the change to one shift for RFOR?
 - Not exactly - but split the difference. Need to be mindful that we don't starve industry for biomass during RFOR pause.
 - Perhaps do not need to implement proposals, but in the future.



- Contracts are mostly between 3-5 year long contracts - still need to address in these contracts of this year to allow that flexibility
 - RFOR still expecting 6-7000 acres.
- Looking at FY24/25 in the projections - where did excess material go?
 - That is what is showing up now - no place to take it.
 - And Brad had an exceptional year, built some inventory, so some went there.
- Is there a way to put FY 28/29 to look at onramp?
 - 19,000 acres should be the floor for treatment - ideally, ramping up to 40,000. Scot's guess is that 28, 29, 30 is similar to 19,000 acre treatment mark. Still some uncertainty here, but probably gradual increase
- In the midst of second non-winter, unheard of that operating uninterrupted - definitely exacerbating this.
- Is the bottom "Acres" acres treated by year or awarded by year?
 - Treated.
- From accuracy perspective - Lignetics been at least 18 months - slide that back.
- Is this board feet volume, or biomass volume?
 - Just green tons.
- Does the 17 green tons/acre from the woods account for LMP requirement for leaving 7-10 tons or so of CWD?
 - Yes - 17 is what actually leaves.
 - Good topic for biomass work session to explore these nuances.
- Have you settled that this will only affect future contracts? Currently have operators that got shut down just recently because didn't have place to go with 6-9. Still an issue even with modifications for future contracts.
 - This is one step of many - other efforts more complex, still working on addressing others.
- The proposal of changes
 - Most of the contracts would be 3 years
 - Only focused on traditional timber sales - not IRSC or IRTCs or agreements - those projects generally pulled out as highly sensitive areas
 - Only talking about 2-5 sales on west side of 4FRI
 - Commitment for 1 year - will monitor what is successful/not
 - These contracts selected based on a lot of on the ground engagement, minimizing potential risk increase, using data from QWRA, etc.
 - Still treating 6-9 inch material in woods, focused on forest restoration, just a shift to allow for long-term restoration goals and realities in front of us
 - Shifting risk, shifting timing, but still following NEPA



- Have some operators at end of terms - if they default on these, there are a number of ramifications, if the FS doesn't introduce some flexibilities moving forward and into our past.
- Will mostly still be removing from stump - variety of approaches could use (lop and scatter, whole tree mastication, subject to agreement approach, pile burn, deck material)
- Subject to agreement - would be encouraged to but not required to remove 6-8.9 inch
 - Would follow up with stewardship contract - not most efficient way to treat an acre.
 - This is a temporal question - still remove that material, but not through original contract, but via second entry (similar to TSI approach)
- How is this tracked? How does FS track implementation?
 - Good product to provide to 4FRI SHG - transparency around this and expectation. There will be a lag in knowing what has been treated/not - can provide it as moving forward through.
- Why would anyone want to keep it on stump?
 - Scot thinks that acres will still happen mostly, but offers flexibility.
 - People will take this option instead of decking - need to force that issue, will cost FS way more to reenter and cut.
 - There are really two stages of removal - from stem to deck and to deck to off the forest
 - Even if deck not removed, want it cut and decked - need to make sure removal not confused with cutting
 - Leaving on stump is a non-starter from cost perspective
 - Use of contract provision C3.43# incentivizes removal because purchaser still has to pay costs of cut, skid, deck, treat slash, plus pay for stumpage. Timber subject to agreement doesn't cost anything until/unless agreed. Stewardship acknowledges it as a liability to FS if we make cut, skid, deck and potentially removal service items.
- Pile burn and deck removal - most likely outcome.
 - What this means: still encouraging people to sell what they can, but would be really hard to tell difference about what pile looks like now and what they would look like in the future. Will also have more landings, but not a huge impact.
 - From workload standpoint - they are already going to landing and staging - not a big challenge from that standpoint.
 - Pile burn can hold heat - lots of challenges with piles - we are very cognizant of that fact. Relooking at how to reduce risk.
 - Decks - ideal scenario - starts a fuelwood market in the region or a free fuelwood program.
 - So there's no actual plan to remove the decks?



- As funding allows - knowing that we don't have a lot of funding. Need to prioritize.
- For most part, funding will not be there. Need to be thoughtful about where decks are maximized (e.g., closer to pavement) to encourage organic removal of materials
- Ideally industry would open up to make it profitable to sell.
- If leave the material behind, then paying for timber and not getting compensated?
 - Yes there is a cost always - just don't breach the contract, so you avoid those ramifications.
- Another area for flexibility is needed with utilization standards
 - That is where the trouble on east side. These contracts don't allow you to open more than 3 payment units - if they could help modify the utilization standards, would still allow operators to keep cutting. At least then operators still have income coming in. Would still have larger slash.
- Framework of discussion is extremely limited time - 1-2 years, limited number of acres (about 6,000 acres per year). Important to understand that we are not discussing implementation of 4FRI at large, but short-term limited space exemption to buy us the 2 years necessary to ramp up capacity on biomass.
 - If there is to be a service component coming back, would make better sense on new contract to try as much as possible to integrate as much as possible from the get go - not deal with second mobilization, etc. Build that into contract framework from the get go.
- Alignment with policy?
 - Between two EIS and Forest plans for future of four forests - there are tons of guidelines for slash/biomass, etc. Many forests do have limitations on how many acres can hold how many tons of decking for fire purpose and not letting thinning get too far ahead - not sure how these merge together. Depending on where each of these are located - don't want thinning to get too far ahead of management of biomass.
 - With all that in mind - is there a way to work in coordination with fire shop to understand what are all the requirements, make sure that locations are in places reducing fire risk, etc.
 - Fire/timber shop dialogue is happening at district level - understand where selection made/not
 - IRTCs and IRSCs - identified tradeoff not worth it there.
 - Because of the one-year nature of this, confident that within the Forest Plans and NEPA guidelines. Can provide crosswalk for specific sales and NEPA guidelines - can be very specific on transparency of where, etc.
 - Agree - not necessarily important for one year, but seeing that now will help us plan for future years. Not because worried about this year's deck, but will help beyond this year.



- Part of the concern has to do with how long decks are there for.
- How does this impact catastrophic fire risk reduction?
 - Will this practice affect ability for managed fires?
 - Potential indirect effect. Won't know until the fires come forward.
- What is the potential acreage range would be useful - ongoing updates on this needed.
 - Timeline - contracts in next year or so, but what are the exact contract ranges?
- What do you see as threshold as an end point for this?
 - Dialogue is this is a one year implementation window to build runway.
 - If in a year from now having this conversation, need to talk about what the real future holds.
 - This is intended as short-term response so that the long-term solutions have time to emerge.
- Is this presentation to get feedback to modify? Whether or not move forward? Or is FS
 - Taking feedback, especially if there are tweaks we can make around transparency and process. Are there any redlines?
- Mentioned funding this year - how does funding compare to previous?
 - 2026 very similar to 2025
 - Well off BIL/IRA - at one point hit nearly \$100 million.
 - Will be hard to surpass this year's levels in future years.
 - Can you provide previous years data? Yes.
- What was data source used for capacity of the current industry?
 - Came from report from ASU Lightworks - will make this public; they analyzed existing industry through surveys, interviews, etc.
- Regarding contractual language - DIB and DBH - need to be mindful of this, could allow for cutting 9 inch top.

Additional Q&A outside of Stakeholder Group Meeting (responses from Scot in red)

- 4FRI SHG Role: Did USFS present this deviation proposal intending to ask for formal approval from 4FRI SHG so it can move forward? For feedback? Is it planning to move forward regardless of 4FRI SHG approval? **The intention of the presentation was to provide transparency to the SHG around the next steps from 4FRI around a short-term biomass response. I was looking for any major challenges/concerns from the SHG that the agency could address. I did not hear major concerns but did note a few requests that we are now working on. I am targeting the delivery of these products by the May SHG meeting. They are:**
 - **Provide a letter to the SHG that clearly states the timelines associated with this shift. We are committed to this approach for one year and will re-evaluate in Spring of 2027**
 - **Identify on a map which projects and their associated acres will be impacted by this shift. This product would have clear timelines around projected contract award and contract length**



- Where: On how many acres, and which ones, is this deviation being proposed? How would they be covered by EIS1 and/or the Rim Country EIS? It's important for USFS to specify the extent and specific NEPA compatibility. **I believe this is answered by the second bullet above.**
- How Long: When would this be implemented and for how long would this proposed deviation be in place? When would the 6-9" small tree diameter removal resume, and when would the small diameter trees on the deviation acres be revisited? Can USFS state a clear threshold that would end this deviation from standard practice? It's important for USFS to specify the timeline, including specific starting and ending points, to be accountable for returning to the expected practice of implementation. **The next timber contract (Not and IRSC, IRTC, or partner project) out the door would have the flexible contract language. We are proposing for contracts over the next year to use this language but the length of the contracts will, on average, be around 3 years. The point is flexibility in the event we do not have an offtake market – if one exists we are optimistic the material will be removed over this time. Our expectation is that the flexible language will be used for around 2-5 contracts over the next calendar year. My expectation is that around 10,000 acres will fall into this category in the next 12 months.**
- Effects on Fire Use/Risk: What has an analysis shown about this deviation's potential impacts to forest restoration, beneficial fire reintroduction/use of prescribed burning in 4FRI, and unnaturally severe fire risk reduction goals? If there has not been any analysis, what is needed to complete one prior to any proposal implementation? **Our fire and timber fuels experts have explored this issue and we are confident we are staying within the bounds of the forest plans and NEPA. We've utilized a variety of internal fuels and timber planning products (including the QWRA) to identify the proper locations for this potential risk increase. My expectation is that around 10,000 acres will fall into this category in the next 12 months based on the low number of timber sales planned in the future.**
- Accountability: What additional monitoring and/or tracking will USFS do if this deviation is implemented? What commitments will the USFS put in place to ensure this deviation is temporary and limited? Can USFS provide something in writing with specifics, perhaps a letter to the 4FRI SHG? **We will provide the commitment to revisit this decision in a year to the SHG via the letter noted above.**

Stakeholder Disclosures & Review Action Items

- The case history that ERI was developing - has been published, Tayloe will share link on Basecamp.

Action Item	Lead	Status
Post April 13, 1-4PM Biomass Work Session on Basecamp	SDR	
Share additional contracting questions to Scot/SDR for inclusion in the notes	All	
Post previous 4FRI funding levels to Basecamp	Scot	



Work with the Steering Committee to finalize the 4FRI SHG Biomass Statement	SDR	
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Steering Committee Meetings (second Tuesday of each month)

-2026 1/13/2026, 2/10/2026, 3/10/2026, 4/14/2026, 5/12/2026, 6/9/2026, 7/14/2026, 8/11/2026, 9/8/2026, 10/13/2026, 11/10/2026, December no meeting

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

-2026: 1/28/2026, 3/25/2026, 5/27/2026, 7/22/2026, 9/23/2026, 12/2/2026

	2026 Steering Committee		2026 Stakeholder Group	
	Hot Chair	Cold Chair	Hot Chair	Cold Chair
January	Joel Jurgens	Melanie	Joel Jurgens	Melanie
February	Joel Jurgens	Melanie		
March	Melanie Colavito	Jay Smith	Melanie Colavito	Jay Smith
April	Melanie Colavito	Jay Smith		
May	Jay Smith	Pascal Berlioux	Jay Smith	Pascal Berlioux
June	Jay Smith	Pascal Berlioux		
July	Pascal Berlioux			
August	Pascal Berlioux			
September		Neil Chapman		Neil Chapman
October		Neil Chapman		
November	Neil Chapman			
December	Neil Chapman		Neil Chapman	