

MINUTES FROM FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE WILDLIFE WORKING TEAM MONTHLY MEETING FEBRUARY 21, 2013

Date of meeting: Thursday, February 21, 2013, 10:00 a.m. ó 12:15 p.m.

Location: Conference call and online via GoToMeeting due to snow

Date minutes posted: Friday, March 1, 2013.

Roundtable contact: Gali Beh, c/o Beh Management Consulting, Inc., 637-B South Broadway, #134, Boulder CO 80302, 303-499-1576, gali@behconsulting.com

ATTENDEES

By phone: Rick Truex (US Forest Service), Steve Germaine (US Geological Survey), Casey Cooley (Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife), Lynne Deibel (US Forest Service, ARP), Felix Quesada (US Forest Service, PSICC), Gali Beh (Beh Consulting), Janelle Valladares (US Forest Service, PSICC), Summer Grimes (CSU MS Student).

AGENDA:

1. Introductions Ice breakers, review of the agenda and mileage recording (Gali).

2. Project Outline:

- Still need to develop a Mission Statement for the team. Will do this at a later date.
- Gali reviewed the status of tasks and color coded the flowchart as needed.
 - We are in the process of listing experts for advice ó Doug Kreiger suggested. More names will be added as they come up.
 - Homework was to do research to fill in the gaps on the criteria spreadsheet. The only gap left is Birds A-L that need to be rated on ecological informativeness as well as social and political importance.
 - Today ó review the homework and fill in the matrix (species and criteria) and try to filter the species into a smaller list that fits the most criteria.
 - Next month
 - Begin discussing spatial and temporal scales and appropriate monitoring for specific species. Rick thinks we can begin a very general discussion today.
 - Collect and review existing data and sampling methods on the remaining list of species.
 - Identify monitoring processes already underway.
 - Develop hypothesized population responses.

3. Homework Discussion:

Rick started with a quick recap of the overall conceptual idea and purpose of the Wildlife Working Team.

- Process began last summer ó Rick and Lynne were tasked with the development of a team whose goal is to develop a general multi-step framework to identify a core set of species that can be used for monitoring in the CFLRP footprint. They approached this with no preconceived ideas on limiting the candidate list of species; the list included all invertebrates, vertebrates, etc. The team then designed a 9-12 step

process to break the species down into three main categories: 1) Ecologically Informative 2) Politically Prudent 3) Economically and Socially Important. They hope to find overlap between species in all three groups and further refine the list to a small number of focal species. The group will then determine what species are migrant, resident, etc., and the final list of focal species should help to identify population responses with respect to what is happening in the Front Range landscape. They believe there will be merit in performing analyses on this small list of species to know what (and how) they can be effectively monitored.

- The group is in the process of developing this large species list now.

Rick returned to the PowerPoint and the monthly meeting material:

- Rick - Lynne and I need to keep mandated Forest Service goals in mind and will occasionally bring up concerns that may not be directly relevant to other group members such as:
 - The focal species concept. This is similar in principal to the indicator species framework. Last week, Rick met with about 10 Forest Service (FS) wildlife ecologists along with Barry Noon and a few other experts at CSU to develop implementation guidance for focal species under the new FS planning rule. This was an opportunity for him to hear their take on how to start from a focal species perspective. The discussion was reassuring to Rick, in that it confirmed that the Wildlife Working Team is on the right track, considering that everyone will have somewhat differing Agency requirements and interests.
- Rick ó each person on the team had a different assignment following the last meeting. The goal was to identify whether a species occurs in the CFLR landscape. There was a great response from the homework assignment and everyone used the following guidelines to classify and rank their list of species:
 - Classify species present in the Front Range as 1, 2 or 3 (Ecologically Important, Politically Prudent and Economically/Socially Important)
 - Use a general scheme of ranking within those classifications from 0-3.
 - 0 ó not informative/generalists
 - 1 ó primary consumers
 - 2 ó predators
 - 3 ó very important species or specialists
- Rick ó checked in with the team to see how the process went for them.
 - Lynne ó Reptiles and Amphibians
 - “Ecologically informative” ó within this category, she struggled with assigning “2s” because of the description: “for some predators/primary consumers occupying limited niches but relying on a particular habitat or forage”. Amphibians and Reptiles do rely on a particular habitat, so many of her species received a “2”, but she wanted to know how others handled this, was this “appropriate” and is it what Rick had in mind?
 - Rick ó Right now, we are only trying to capture very general ideas based on previous discussions. He hoped to refine this by

the end of the discussion today. For now, these are very coarse ideas on how to rank 1-3.

- Lynne ó many of her species were ranked as 3 because they fell within the elevation range. (She acknowledged that the team made the agreement that list would be exhaustive for now and anticipates several other amphibians and reptiles falling off of the list.) Once we add other categories and other numbers, the habitat association seems important, but is it important based on what the group is trying to accomplish and the type of work that they are going to be doing? Lynne also thinks it is important to add clarifiers and definitions and pull a glossary together at some point to identify some of the terms that others may not be familiar with (i.e. producers, consumers, primary producers/consumers).
- Steve ó Birds
 - Felt more comfortable with political and socio-economic rankings than ecological. Feels like he needs to go back through the ecologically informative column. He doesn't feel that he ranked the predatory birds properly after listening to Rick's recap and wants to do some error checking after reviewing the definitions; most specifically 2 because he feels that they can easily get lost in the ecologically informative details.
- Janelle ó Intertebrates
 - Butterflies. Rated all as 2 based on the fact that they usually have a very specific host plant along with many available studies about restoration treatments, but she was unsure if they need to be 2 for the purpose of this situation.
 - Rick ó said the email she sent him was clear and he agrees with her logic. He repeated that an immediate goal should be to refine the definitions and categories. Then once the species list is reduced to about 50, we can refine them further.
- Felix -
 - Similar issues as everyone else. It was hard for him to not think ahead to the next steps while going through his species. He would also like to reevaluate his values following Rick's clarifications.
- Casey ó Birds (1/3) and Mammals
 - He tried to clean up the unknowns or information needed species of birds. He stopped short of ranking them ecologically, politically and socially/economically because he doesn't think that three different people should be doing this for the birds. He believes that it may add to the mess and recommends that one person rank them for the sake of consistency.
 - He struggled with ranking species that don't have a lot of information. This would typically mean they rank low ecologically, but does not mean they are not ecologically

important. Also, he wants to be sure that everyone is using the same criteria for ranking importance. He may use one method and rank a species as "low" while another person may choose other criteria and rank them higher. Ex. Steve weighted birds that may draw bird watchers to CO, and Casey did not.

- Rick ó Feels that the group is where we should be at this point (simply getting a start) and it would be wise to discuss additional ways to revisit the lists.
- Casey ó Asked if Steve would be willing to rank all of the birds. Steve agreed and also suggested that they schedule a separate phone call to dig into it further. Lynn suggested that they avoid a phone call because she sees it taking up a lot of time for three people. Instead, let one person handle it and save a group revision for a smaller list of species.
 - Rick ó if Steve is ok handling the birds, go ahead and we will discuss rankings a little more today to help everyone.
- Rick ó He wrapped up this portion of the discussion and reconfirmed that these steps are necessary because they will help to provide justification and rationale for "why" we chose the final list of species. (Scale, measurability, etc.) We should proceed in this initial phase with the suggested revisions knowing that in the long run, we may edit further or we may simply retain the final list with the confidence that appropriate steps were taken.

4. Species List:

- Rick ó He showed the category of culled species and their justifications, based on distribution. Example, American Badger and Bighorn Sheep were cut during the initial screening process because they are not adequately within the CLFRP footprint. (Spreadsheet details: there is a column showing that a species received a ranking between 1 and 3 as well as a column showing the total sum of its rankings.)
- Felix ó highlighted the ranking for the Grey Wolf and the Grizzly Bear and asked: It is not based on occupancy but it is based on habitat and where they *should* be? (He assumed they were simply going through the process and judging based on what should be core.)
 - Rick ó he thought the intent was to indicate whether current distribution overlaps the CFLRP footprint, but he couldn't quite remember. Asked other group members to advise.
 - Casey ó thought it was current distribution overlapping.
 - Lynne ó Agreed, and said that even though we may not have occupancy confirmation, we know the potential habitat does overlap with the footprint. She thinks there would be further rationale down the road for not including them based on political and social concerns.
 - Rick ó suggested eliminating them right now. Everyone agreed.
 - Felix ó indicated "marginal" on a few because he was unsure if they should be included or not due to riparian v. montane area difference.

- Rick ó species who are current habitat specialists (riparian, rocky outcrop, etc.) should be on the list as core because their potential/known/unknown distributions do overlap v. Bighorn Sheep for example, whose usage is on the margins of the footprint. He feels that animals in lower montane areas should be listed as core. Group opinions?
 - Felix ó agrees this is correct for current mammals. Listed Bighorn Sheep as marginal.
 - Casey ó realizes that the majority of sheep are in the alpine area, but we have several populations in the CFLRP core area (Georgetown, Rampary, CLP, etc.). He thinks there is opportunity to open up range for the sheep in the CFLRP. Is the monitoring of sheep populations going to somehow help CFLRP restoration? Sheep may not be core, but he thinks they should be kept on the list for now. Feels it is premature to remove them. (Says he is obligated to ask per his Agency's perspective.)
 - Lynne ó we are learning that sheep are using forested areas more than people thought they would. Currently, there are habitat improvement projects for the sheep. She agrees that they do fall within the CFLRP, but does not know if they are truly going to be/should be monitored but agrees that it is premature to remove them.
- Rick ó He's hearing that we need to create additional rule set logic for the sake of consistency. He will try to add more detail and rationale to grouping methods and we can revisit the list again down the road.
- Casey ó It is difficult with mammals because we have many maps with circles drawn where the species occur, but really when you start looking at the background, there is very little evidence of some of these species. He has a hard time trying to figure out what to do with these species. Range maps don't often overlap and he put "marginal" or "no" for these species.
 - Rick ó if we keep in mind that some of this reference info is inaccurate (i.e. range maps), he feels that those species who belong will persist on the list and those who do not belong will eventually fall off.
- Lynne ó From an amphibian and reptile standpoint, a lot of species fall within the core but they have particular habitat associations. For some of these taxa in particular, the association is primarily water. There is general knowledge that we are not going to be doing any treatment in these riparian areas. So that made her feel like it puts them off of the table and we should just take them off of the list now. Should we also remove some of the reptiles that are under boulders or in rocky areas of ponderosa pines (where we generally do not do treatments) because they will not be very ecologically informative and we will probably not be doing much to influence them through treatment?
 - Casey ó Feels that taking them off is premature due to treatment discussions in his area that suggest the inclusion of riparian areas. Says we should err on the side of being inclusive right now.
 - Rick ó keep in mind that we need to focus on landscape as well as projects. This is why it is important to keep species in mind that we wouldn't normally treat. For example, large-scale fires may result in us

treating unexpected situations. But few species may be carried through to the end.

- Lynne ó agreed, so perhaps we can eventually monitor species who fall off as a group if not separately.
- Felix ó there are core mammal species that may fall out later. His biggest struggle was dealing with edge species. Following the discussion today, he would like to review species.
- Rick ó Next steps
 - Steve should move forward with birds as a whole
 - He feels that we are at step 2.5; finished with step 1 and now thinking about steps 2-3.
 - Will step away from the spreadsheet over the next couple of weeks and think about writing additional text to capture the rationale and try to further define the process so when we do get to step 3, the process will be smoother and more effective. We can then use this to challenge the standing or missed species.
 - Gali ó does Rick envision everyone taking a second look at their lists now or wait until after he is finished with his revision?
 - Rick ó He thinks revisions are great if people are willing, but we should first have a better defined rationale. So he will do this quickly within about a week.
 - Felix ó It sounds like there will be gains in making things more consistent. He feels better about moving forward with high levels of consistency. He thinks a few hours of extra work are worth it.
 - Janelle ó doesn't think she will go over the inverts again. Feels like she found everything relevant for them.
 - Lynne ó will give hers a second look but doesn't know that she can spend much time.
 - Casey ó willing to take another look.
 - Felix ó yes, thinks it is a good idea.
 - Rick ó in particular, birds and mammals sound like they need the most attention/revision due to the size. Inverts should be ok.

5. Break

6. Project Outline Revisions and Next Steps

- Rick will have updated info to everyone by Tues the 26th. He is hoping for feedback from the team by the end of the week (if any). Anyone with feedback should cc the rest of the team so everyone can keep up with the dialogue.
- The team will provide Rick with their revisions by end of day March 1st.
- Rick will finalize by end of day March 5th.
- The team has March 5th ó 12th for species review using the updated guidelines.

- Casey and Jenny are off the hook but both volunteered to do anything else that is needed. (Gali)
 - Felix asked if Casey can handle some of the mammals. Casey agreed and they will determine this split between them.
 - Gali & Jenny offered to take double homework. Anything needed?
 - Rick & suggests mandatory review of his info distributed on the 26th. Gali agreed to pass on to Jenny.

7. March Meeting Agenda:

- Spatial and Temporal scale & frame the discussion and determine an approach.
- Re-cap species ranking and filter.
- Species-appropriate monitoring methods & launch discussion.

The next meeting is March 19th at USFS-RO.

8. End of Meeting Discussion:

Steve left the meeting. Rick, Felix, Lynne, Casey, Gali, Janelle and Summer remained for further discussion about species ranking. Rick re-confirmed the 0-3 ranking: 0 = no/low value for whatever the action is, 3 = high value. He asked for any insight about what might be missing in the ecological ranking. He mentioned that when he first put this together he was primarily thinking in terms of niche considerations, etc., where a critter who eats a critter is more ecologically informative than one who eats a plant and a habitat specialist is more informative than a habitat generalist. He asked for ideas about any other key natural history aspects that we may want to bring into the ecologically informative ranking.

- Lynne & Stated that a species who occupies a niche or particular habitat constitutes a niche. Asked if a species is wider spread and occupies a wider habitat, do you balance it out in the big scheme of the species and its habitat in relation to the CFLR footprint?
 - Rick & where you have a primary consumer but it is narrow in its habitat requirements, it will be more informative than a primary consumer that is all over the place and is numerically and geographically widespread. This is logically a niche vs. a generalist or a specialist. Niches are very specialized and we have only identified a handful of those so far with respect to the CFLR footprint.
- Casey & Asked for the team's thoughts about birds. Some species have year-round range, summer-migrant range, etc. Is there a way to include that verbiage for birds in the revision so we know that a bird that lives here year-round and occupies snags in ponderosa pines is different from a bird that nests here in the summer time and then migrates? Is this informative to the ranking process or are we dealing with this later down the road?

- Rick believes this is for later down the road, but will capture this in the revision and see how everyone feels. He will work on adding more detail to the stepped descriptions in the flowchart to help with this.
- Casey brought up small mammals that have a specific habitat but are primarily food for something else. Should these be a 1 as he assumed? Used the Red-backed Vole as an example.
 - Rick recommends assigning them as a 2 because even though they are food for something else, they do have specific habitat requirements. They are a bit more informative than rodents who are common and serve as a food source but are not tied to a specific habitat. Like a Deer Mouse for example. Generally, a habitat requirement makes the species more important or informative than its use as a food source for another species within the food web.
- Lynne Do we have rationale tracks for species that we have culled from the list? Ex. Boreal Toad ended up with a 5 but it was culled from the list.
 - Rick It was culled on the initial screen because it was not adequately significant in the CFLRP, although it is informative and significant in other areas.
 - Lynne was fine with the decision just wanted to make sure the rationale is documented. Suggests that everyone should make a few quick notes about their rationale for ranking, culling, etc.
- Casey Anything that is a game species received a 2, and anything that is social or economic (bird watching, game species) received a 2?
 - Rick game species, anything within the CFLR starts as a 1 and a really important game species gets a 2 or 3. Watchable wildlife starts at 1 and the same upgrade applies.
 - Lynne what is Casey's take on an unregulated game species?
 - Casey ex. Blue Grouse is a hunted species, but we don't have any info population-wise. The only thing we truly monitor is harvest, but he feels this is a poor proxy. He struggles with this because he feels that this is one species we may underestimate. He doesn't have an answer and points out that just because we shoot it, that doesn't mean we have a lot of info on it.
- Rick will do his best to capture all of this and get a solid update to everyone.

Gali concluded the meeting with RSVPs to the March 8th meeting in Golden.

- Lynne No
- Casey Yes
- Felix No
- Summer Yes
- Janelle No
- Rick No.

The next meeting is Tuesday, March 19, 2013.