

MINUTES FROM FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE WILDLIFE WORKING TEAM MONTHLY MEETING DECEMBER 18, 2012

Date of meeting: Tuesday, December 18, 2012, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Location: USFS Regional Office, 740 Simms, Golden, Colorado

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

Meeting presentation:

ATTENDEES

Rick Truex (US Forest Service), Casey Cooley (Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife), Lynne Deibel (US Forest Service, ARP), Felix Quesada (US Forest Service, PSICC), Terra Lenihan (Beh Consulting), Gali Beh (Beh Consulting).

By phone: Claudia Regan (US Forest Service-Region 2), Jenny Briggs (US Geological Survey).

AGENDA:

Introductions Ice breakers and review of the agenda (Gali).

Lynne Deibel (US Forest Service, ARP): Lynne summarized the document: *Desired Forest Vegetation Trends from the Front Range Roundtable CFLR project 2011 Ecological, Social and Economic Monitoring Plan (Table 2, pages 25-29)*, the work of Hal Gibbs (USFS, ARP).

Discussed the topics from the document, including tree density, tree sizes, tree ages, tree species, surface fuels, fire behavior, increasing grass, forbs and shrubs, noxious or invasive plant species.

Lynne Deibel: These things will help guide us. Also shared document: *Summary of References to Wildlife in CFLR Initiative Proposal (Approved August 2010)*. What species would likely use if we achieved these conditions. Highlights from this document included:

- “Habitat improvement goals could be accomplished concurrently with ecological restoration.”
- ...reduces the threat of catastrophic fires; increase forest resilience to fire, insects
 - Fewer trees
 - More ponderosa pines
 - More surface fire, less crown
 - Handout C - we are currently at 200-400 trees/acre; our goal is 40-50 trees per acre. Relate to Basal area. Reference – in our first findings we were at much higher numbers then this is referring to.

Discussed reducing catastrophic conditions. Increase resiliency, watershed protections, communities; sustaining vegetation; protecting fish & wildlife habitat. Not new, but pulled into desired conditions. Will help guide us when talking about species and habitat.

Gali Beh (Beh Consulting): For specific species do we need to include those?

Lynne: Including those as examples; they are specified because they are endangered species. Rick’s information will address that from political, economic and ecological perspectives.

Rick Truex (USFS): This monitoring plan was finished last year. One of challenges was to pin down these desired conditions. We are working toward that. How does that document fit into (what we're doing)? To what extent does this drive our thinking in relation to Hal's report?

Lynne: Hal addressed that his could change based on this team's plan.

Gali: The monitoring plan is a living document and can change. There is an addendum posted that addresses the need to be more accommodating of understory. Hal did a great job of showing what was deleted and added. Addendum overrides past plans. This paper will become an addendum. The process to get this addendum approved is to have the Landscape Restoration team approve it.

Rick: Good to understand. The 1-page plan from Lynne and Rick is good but could change.

Jenny Briggs (US Geological Survey): In her opinion having attended most meetings over last 1-2 years, it's wide open how this group proceeds. There should be some reference to the table that was prepared (preliminary stuff from Landscape Conservation Cooperatives). But it's wide open for the future. That report will shape the Wildlife team's plan. This team has the mission of developing a proper wildlife (plan).

Claudia Regan (US Forest Service-Region 2): Agrees with Jenny. Where the team has arrived as far as vegetation conditions has not been done explicitly with habitat features. The process has been fire and fuels driven of vegetation conditions, with the assumption that if you do good things for fire and fuel you're do good things for wildlife. Some recommendations may be positive for wildlife, but some wouldn't have desired wildlife benefits. We should think about it independently, and then how those things align.

Rick: That was my assumption going in, but we have a nebulous idea of conditions, but just use as a guideline.

Casey Cooley (Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife): Agrees.

Project Outline: Rick - Review/revise team goals, deliverables, scope, and timeline.

Gali - Team's name, goals, deliverables, scope considerations timeline decisions (we can make our own); next focus will be the work. Let's think about the "ideal" first.

1. Team Name

- We have been using Landscape Restoration Team's Wildlife Subteam or Wildlife team. Team wanted to keep it simple.
- Team decided on ***The Wildlife Working Team***.

2. Goals:

- Rick presented his draft of the group's proposed goals and objectives. (See Rick's presentation, page 2).
- Jenny: The plan is very thorough. Likes the approach. Wondered if Rick visualized primary species from the four bullet points presenting a range of monitoring options; flushing them out with the steps below for each one. Or would the team come up with the top – an internal process – and then we all agree on a certain plan?

- Rick: Great question. For primary species, we'd provide a set of monitoring options that articulate the cost/benefits, etc of several options. Then we make a recommendation to invest in that level of the species. We know there's a lot of sticker cost. We don't want to scare away those with purse strings. But we want to give them all the options. You'll probably see that what I have in my mind could be huge and burdensome. Tried to make it tangible. Should consider how much time we should spend.
- Casey: I like that we can point to a process to explain how we made our choices.
- Rick: There's a need for transparency on how we make our choices.
- Gali: It's great, but looks like there are too many goals so looks like work streams and not goals. But we can summarize. Can we have a short goal, then elaborate?
- Rick: I suspect we can condense this down. It's a long list but I think of goals more broadly.
- Lynne: We could combine a few of them to make the list shorter. But when they're broken up piece by piece (like this) it's very clear.
- Casey: I'm thinking since this will go to Landscape Restoration and the Roundtable, we don't want to make it complicated. We could use a mission statement stating why wildlife monitoring is important. Are we taking away from implementation funding? Part of it is to raise the awareness with the Forest Service that monitoring wildlife is a good idea. I want to bring awareness to the Forest Service to bring money to wildlife.
- Lynne: In the context of CFLR and the Roundtable – they want to monitor wildlife use post- and pre-treatment to see if what they're doing is having any beneficial or detrimental effects. It's a little more focused for this particular task. How is that affecting wildlife?
- Casey: Does it potentially drive treatments? Need to look at restoration as part of a bigger puzzle.
- Lynne: A mission statement needs to tie into the CFLR to some degree.
- Gali: Assumption that if it's good for habitat it's good for wildlife?
- Jenny: I would lobby for not leaving a mission statement out of this, as we all take it for granted to do wildlife treatments, to improve wildlife habitat. Rick's perspective is good – that we need to do this. It's important.
- Lynne: For fuel reduction they want to pick up all sticks, all woody debris, and homogenize the forest. That's not always good for wildlife.
- Lynne: We struggle constantly with it. Down woody debris is so important to some wildlife (look at the lynx or the Preble).
- Casey: Restoration looks different for all different groups. If you pick elk and all treatments in regard to elk, it doesn't necessarily look good for a songbird who gets its food from a tree.
- Lynne: That's the difference between restoration and fuel treatments.
- Felix: With fuel treatments, we're not treating all the areas. Some of those habitats are good for wildlife. I like the goals.
- Rick: We should monitor wildlife.
- Gali: Why have we not before?
- Rick: It's costly; there's not as much public demand. Statutes are not clear to monitor populations. I think it's a cultural shift for the agency to start monitoring wildlife.
- Felix: We identify species but not a lot of thought goes into what we're getting out of it.
- Lynne: Where we have been called to task, we look at the easiest way to do it. We pay outside groups to do the thinking for us. It's not perfect.

- Casey: I like the Forest Service needs. CFLR draws people together to look at this. It's critical for us is to monitor and bring that framework to a decision maker.
- Rick: From the Forest Service perspective, collaboration is critical for our success, but we have to balance rules from Congress.
- Casey: That's why I think we need a mission statement. We're coming together collaboratively to say we need to do more for wildlife monitoring.
- Rick: I agree with Felix: we should do it right and more focused.

Why This - Why Now

General discussion about group's mission statement. Gali explained it should be very motivating, like a military mission. Gali asked if anyone wanted to change Rick's deliverables. Casey asked why not focus more time on developing the monitoring plan. There is enough literature, so let the monitoring data and how we analyze it, be our response. Seems academic; it's not a thesis or dissertation; let's do it and report back. Rick explained that something similar was developed by the initial team. He kept language hypothetically. We can drop it, and set up something more robust. Part of the mission is to inform management of the long-term impacts. The sampling can be intimidating. Talked about the timeframe; a June deadline may be tough. Rick explained that with good facilitation and motivation it will work. Jenny brought up the psychological or political parts. We should summarize our knowledge/literature to give other stakeholders that not other species will be breeding. Some are expected to have no detectable change. She suggested perhaps The Nature Conservancy or a recreation group will have information. Casey pointed out that showing five species that respond well to fuels treatment, etc., doesn't paint the whole picture. We know how people use those tables and recommendations. He suggested we pick four four species that will respond well and monitor those. Not sure if that's really informing restoration. Lynne suggested the group look at it historically, over last 100 years.

3. CFLR proposal background: "What restoration is, expected vegetation trends, and wildlife monitoring intentions." (Lynne discussed, for Hal)

Key considerations: Reiterate and discuss key wildlife monitoring considerations (e.g. spatial and temporal scales; ecological, political, and economic considerations; species functional roles; ability to monitor; rigor and cost effectiveness; etc.).

- Rick: We touched on these in Fort Collins last months. Recap (see Rick's slide). Remember some will respond to treatments, but a fair number won't.
- Gali: So are you saying that drought would have more of an impact?
- Rick: Yes. Treating a 22-acre parcel won't have as much an impact as a drought, for instance.
- We don't have simple methodologies. Populations vs. habitat. Population is more costly but there is better data. Also things that happen outside of CFLR could have a greater impact. Also consider hypothesis testing versus observation. Also, "type 2 errors" in wildlife monitoring, statistics. (See Rick's PowerPoint: Recap of Monitoring Challenges).
- Rick: PowerPoint Practical Wildlife Monitoring Groups in three categories (Venn chart):
 1. Economically informative
 2. Politically prudent
 3. Economically/socially important

- Can we get species that belong to all three of these groups? Politically and ecologically informative species would be the most important. It will serve as a good way to start narrowing down a list.
- Next slide – Discussed the 9-Step framework (see Rick’s slide). Discussed how to put species into categories/monitoring groups that meet single or multiple objectives. Discussion of 1-degree and 2-degree species. Species can be in one or more category.
- Gali: How do we bring in cost? Is that another circle (on the diagram)?
- Rick: I would think about that later. But maybe we think about it sooner. After we determine primary and secondary species.
- Lynne: We shouldn’t know until we whittle it down. Do we go with the “Cadillac” version? I feel like we deserve the same considerations that the other groups have been afforded.
- Rick: We could pose the most compelling argument. What does the public (societal) want?
- Gali: Can we use existing social science?
- Lynne: This whole thing is a collaborative effort. We have federal, state, academia. Kathi, Patty and Hannah have worked together and have data from the Woodland Park and Four Mile fires.
- Casey: There is broad research as far as people looking at the Forest Service and wildlife. They are concerned.
- Jenny: We should not second-guess the social, political, science because we have the green light to forge ahead. We should go ahead and lay out the “Cadillac” options and present that. We should have the confidence that it is valuable. We may be surprised by opportunities that arise. A donor could give us a big donation to do wildlife monitoring for 10 years.
- Gali: As long as we lay it out in a modular way. In the report it would be good to include the social science.
- Rick: We have enough internal knowledge – third circle. Scope (see Gali’s presentation – Project Outline).
- Gali: We need to provide an addendum to the CFLR monitoring plan.
- Lynne: There are several reports out there and there is a wildlife monitoring plan (Craig).
- Jenny: (That plan) was a starting point. It was debated whether wildlife should be addressed at all. Winds of change changed several months ago. Not a big consensus there was a wildlife monitoring plan. There were efforts by Craig and others but it was not agreed to. We should consult it but not consider it something we have to refer to.
- Gali: It was best part of the report.
- Casey: We can whittle down that list from all the species in the 2011 CFLR report.
- Gali: Not sure if any were filtered. Lynne will check that.
- Casey: When we talk about lower montane, the abert squirrel is always looked at.
- Jenny: Let’s take a step back and reanalyze it to come up with a new list of species. Some probably are, but I think this group should start over. I wasn’t part of that group and there was not a clear list of steps like Ricks. They were considering political and social factors at different points. It wasn’t as thorough as what Rick and Lynne are proposing to lead us through now. Of course there may be some of the same species.
- Felix: We saw a lot of limitations with the list. We need to start fresh.
- Lynne: I think Landscape Restoration team will just want rationale.
- Rick: Has emailed with Rob Addington and asked him to email him the terminology for vegetation. I’d like to use the same language (as Landscape Restoration), but it may differ. I think at some point it would be good to have Rob at a meeting to hear that language.
- Gali: Rick will edit for language.

High Level Work Plan: Revisit draft workflow, modify as needed.

1. What should the team's work streams be? During meetings vs. between meetings?
2. Discuss "check-ins" with Landscape Restoration team, Roundtable, and others to assure the process is collaborative.

Gali: We are on track for November 2012 stuff. (See Work Plan in the PowerPoint presentation). Successfully summarized from CFLR proposal. We are also on track for scheduling the calendar.

See Work Plan in presentation.

Rick: Perhaps we should discuss the proposed framework approach makes sense and adopt it.

The group discussed when to bring in experts to advise them, and how to strategically do that. The group decided that they need to be strategic about how and when they go about choosing experts. The group decided to define the list of experts at the January meeting, and then choose. They will send out invitations in February, and engage the experts in March. Gali asked if anyone need to do research? Rick explained that the role of experts will be more advisory. Our expertise here is good place to start.

Some of the experts that initially came up include Steve Germaine (he went through a similar process in New Mexico, and did a similar study in Arizona with bluebirds). Also Richard Reynolds, Claudia Regan, Jonas Feinstein and Paula Fornwalt. Discussed bringing in an aquatics expert, perhaps Kirk Faust of CSU (he as worked on the Front Range restoring lower montane aquatic areas). However, Rick's not sure if we include aquatics; we don't have the expertise at the table. Brian Linkhart could speak to flammulated, and bird monitoring. George Jones from the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WYNDD), which is CNHP's counterpart in Wyoming. Rob Shorr or Jeremy Siemers from CHHP are options to interview. Rick brought up that we have a standing agreement with CNHP to do our fieldwork with them. Mike Welker would be good to ask about fish. He is an advisor to this group. Other fish experts may be Denny Bohan (USFS), Kenny Kaymire, Doug Krieger, Dr. K. D. Faush.

The group discussed the possibility of doing a literature review at this time. Rick suggested that a literature review should be broad – let's not spin our wheels too much until we get a good list.

The group discussed creating a draft list of lower montane, Front Range species before engaging experts or doing a literature review. Casey has a list of some species from their wildlife action plan, The Nature Conservancy, and Southern Rockies. There's a lot of overlap in species in there. He will send it out to the group as a starting point. Then the group can add/change from there. Master list will get filtered through the three groups (Rick's Venn chart). There was some discussion as to some species occurring in both upper and lower montane forests, and NEPA regulations. Felix brought up that NEPA will be changing in the future. Also, Rick pointed out that they will need to align with the CFLR's proposal written for the lower montane. Casey suggested the group be wide open as a starting point. The group divided the taxonomically up:

- Amphibians and reptiles: Lynne
- Birds: Casey
- Mammals: Jenny
- Fisheries: Janelle (Lynne will let Janelle know. Casey will also talk to their fisheries guy about what should on an upper montane list).

- Fish: Sara Mayben(possibly low impact)
- Invertebrates: Felix (no pollinators on the list now)

In January Lynne will ask Craig, Tanya, Ken, Janelle, our old team leaders, what their methodology was, and to attend January meeting. At that meeting we'll define our list of experts and decide when to bring them in.

Rick will start the spreadsheet and send it out to the group before the next meeting. In January the group can add 2-sentence descriptions (rationale), then put them into our three categories. Maybe more realistic to do it this way before we do a lot of literature review. Gali suggested that we get the previous group's list as part of our record, to get sources.

Jenny: Has anyone talked to Craig or Leslie about their possible involvement? Lynne doesn't think they can because of workloads. Jenny wondered if Sara Mayben and Claudia Regan were interested in talking to supervisors.

Proposed Framework – Part 3

Rick: Fill in literature gaps later, and in February, create a more complete table with spatial and temporal scales. The group would take a first pass and filter down into the three categories, and volunteer to research a few. In February, people report on their research.

Gali: Review new research and complete the matrix of species and criteria, and filter at the February meeting to a smaller list (see February work plan). How does the group address spatial and temporal species? Rick explained there are consistent ways to evaluate species, working through the process.

Casey: Do we want to put in the existing data if we know of monitoring that's already occurring? For instance, the forest is monitoring abert squirrels already. Does that factor into our cuts? Are we "cutting" too early? Is this a fourth step? He suggested that when the group filters into the three categories, we ask if anyone knows of existing monitoring going on that will help inform the cut.

Rick: It would come after, but there is a tendency for Forest Service to shy away from monitoring mammals because they are expensive. I think if this is supposed to be 15-year monitoring then we may choose a mammal that we can do then add it in 3 years. Good point though – the spreadsheet will help us track this. He liked the idea of asking who's already monitoring species.

Lynne: What about the level of monitoring, i.e., a biologist in the district may monitor, but even with MIS it may be sporadic or random, and sampling may not take up in the same areas.

Gali: Some of those gaps may occur before we know and before we cut. Then what about the sampling methods? Hypothesize population response?

Rick: It's really to prevent us from ending up with only species that respond positively. We need some that don't respond or respond negatively.

Gali: How does the group get there?

Jenny: It makes more sense to review data as Step 4. Look at data with increases, decreases, or stable trends. We shouldn't get bogged down in this step.

Rick's: At first pass we create the list on our own, without looking at all the data. That level of detail and literature mining come later. At each of these stages that we have a cut, there is opportunity for healthy debate.

Gali: The group does the collection and review of existing sampling in March. Then we vote on those species. Step 5 would be to identify potential stressors.

Jenny: Did Rick say it should be the other way around?

Rick: That could be ambitious. Stressors could be simple migration patters. In March or February we identify finite stressors of what we could use for Front Range; stressors that would confound the CFLRPs.

Gali: What if the group identified stressors in March? Step 6 would be to synthesize all of the above. Does that happen in a meeting? Have we done everything needed to do that?

Rick: It would be in April. I think if this holds, although it's a living plan. April opportunity to take stock, see if our work is making sense. I don't think we can plan that much detail that far out.

Casey: Going back to the "Cadillac" model, is there a need to take this process back to the Forest Service?

Lynne: Hal is a core member of this team and he would be a reasonable check in. He will let us know if he is not aligned with something we are planning.

Casey: I like the organic nature of the process, but worried that if Forest Service supervisors are not accepting of this, then we've failed. Worried they won't embrace it.

Rick: Claudia and I agree and believe that we need to brief them collectively on this.

Felix: I can communicate with Sara. It should be easy to sell this to the Forest Service, as it can tie in right into their revision plan.

Jenny: Last time it was a different process, they just wanted to give the stakeholders a list, but it was not sanctioned like this. Thinks they are open and will give a thumb's up.

Rick: The group will have their different levels of options (Cadillac, etc). We are confronting them with all the information we have.

Wildlife Working Team's Monthly Work Plan & Budget Considerations

Gali summarized the Wildlife Working Team's month-by-month plan. She asked if we do another cut in April? Consensus was yes.

Lynne: The timeline is good, but suggested the group be open to how this is going to ebb and flow. We can make changes, as we don't want everyone to always be behind.

Rick: It's reasonable right now. Let's leave them as approximations. Schedules will always be busy. Let's minimize our work outside of meetings, and be very effective in the meetings.

Casey: When we start making cuts, we will cut out a lot of the work.

Jenny: It will take another cycle before we can put this into action.

Gali: Should we aim for March 2014 so there is two months before recommendations?

Rick: Fall 2013 or January 2014. Other components of Landscape Restoration; we could use a little extra help. This is thoughtful and reasonable but may exceed our capacity.

Gali: Tony Cheng just offered \$5000 for Landscape Restoration/Wildlife. Tony want's that to keep being funded (was funded by NFF). Nice show of support from CFRI. I feel this is a great plan and exceeded my expectations.

Lynne: In respect to the donation, I think that it would be critical for this group to keep Terra as a note taker to capture all of this, so we can be more engaged.

Gali: There are no note takers at Landscape Restoration meetings. The spreadsheet will capture the record, although that does not always show who says what.

Jenny: There is not as much content in those meetings. Presentations can be distributed.

Lynne: I propose we try to keep that.

Jenny: Also consider the power of graduate student assistants. Suggest 10 hours a week to grad students from CSU. Not necessarily crew members. I did a ton of that stuff as a grad student.

Rick: Content and practicality is really useful for grad students. This would be a fantastic grad student focus. Seems like it could be very valuable, but what about timing?

Jenny: It may be too late for this Spring.

Gali: Would Fall 2013 be too late to engage a grad student?

Jenny: It doesn't match up for calendar for natural resource students.

Casey: Colorado College students. Or, maybe the Colorado state chapter of the Wildlife Society. Wildlife Societies chapter on a campus may be motivated to do this. Not a seminar structure.

Rick: Let's keep all these ideas on the table.

Team Roles and Capacities: Team skills assessment and initial assignments.

1. What skills and experiences do team members bring to this effort?
2. How much time can each team member bring to this effort?
3. Who should take the lead on which work streams?
4. Who else should be included in this project as team members, advisors, or interviewees?

Gali: Let's see whose skill sets match with tasks. I'd like to hear what capacities team members can offer to this team: 1-2 day/month?

Gali: I can bring to this team project management and facilitation. No research, synthesizing data, or interviews. I can post to website, provide communications, orchestrating tasks, etc.

Rick: Help move the thinking forward, especially with broad scale monitoring. I can help team meet goals. I like math, and I know how to think about it. Design parts. My schedule – not a huge amount outside of meetings until we get down to crunch time. Can offer 1 ½ days/month.

Felix: I will do whatever I can. Can offer 2 days/month. Can offer perspective from district and local level. Accustomed to doing a lot with little resources.

Jenny: I'd like to attend all the meetings. Can offer the perspective of past history with the group. Can help with grants; research design and experimental design. Can serve as a liaison to university partners. I can contribute to literature reviews, and represent the research capacity of the team. 2 days/month and switching to a core team member.

Terra: Website updates, contact list, meeting minutes; room logistics.

Casey: Can commit to 2-3 days/month. I will be useful wherever. I have monitoring and treatment experience. I can be a liaison with research staff, and can conduct interviews.

Lynne: Co-lead with Rick, can offer 2-4 days/month. We've been tasked with this. Doesn't have the research background, but can offer more days to do the writing, literature.

Gali: We have 17 person days total. That's a good capacity.

Rick: Let's keep our February 2014 deadline. There was a consensus. Casey thought the deadline gives us something to actually do. There will be an end product. Rick said we need someone with aquatics expertise after we do the first cuts. With our schedule and last two meetings a lot has happened. It will be hard to get new people on. I think we have a rule that we don't unless there's a big reason.

Jenny: We should ask Sara and Claudia for someone from USFWS, it's important for Landscape Restoration. New member Dianne Strohm may be able to participate in this team. We should discuss a role for Leslie Ellwood or Craig and if they can't participate then invite someone like Diane.

Casey: Craig and Leslie are ecological; Diane is more in the field as well as Brian. Those military bases are now natural resource personnel.

Felix: They do extensive monitoring on their land.

Lynne will check in with Sara and Claudia. Did they talk to Susan Linner?

Jenny: Controversy around wildlife monitoring led past leaders to step down.

Casey: We should talk to Craig and Leslie.

Lynne: Leslie did want to participate but her workload was too much.

Jenny: Will ask them if they want to participate.

Lynne: From Roundtable and Landscape Restoration part this is a collaborative effort.

Gali: Should I do a general invitation to the Roundtable? There is a county woman on the Roundtable. Call for participation?

Rick: I think we have a good critical mass.

Lynne: If we identify gaps then we will reach out.

Next steps

Plan Team Calendar: Meetings will be third Tuesday of the month, typically. But January 22nd is different. Next meeting will be 1/22 from 10-3 but 3:30 okay.

February 12 may be a problem for Rick. February 21?

Check-ins

Team discussed bringing their plan/process to the Landscape Restoration group and/or the Roundtable. Casey said he will present the plan to the Landscape Restoration meeting on 1/9/13. Gali suggested checking in with them on 4/10/13. Rick can be there to present for a short period. Then Wildlife can invite supervisors to the April meeting.