



**MINUTES FROM FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE Q1-15 QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Date of Meeting:** Friday, February 20, 2015

**Time:** 9:00–3:30pm (Social time at 9:00, Business meeting at 9:30)

**Location:** El Paso Emergency Operations Center, 3755 Mark Dabling Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO 80907

**Date minutes posted:** March 4, 2015

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**Meeting presentation(s):** Available at [http://frontrangeroundtable.org/Meeting\\_Materials.php](http://frontrangeroundtable.org/Meeting_Materials.php)

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mark Martin (USFS) showed the latest Roundtable priorities map. The Roundtable will use this updated map. Glenn Casamassa (USFS) asked how are we going to compile this information in the future, so we can all draw on this? Mark said he will help with this. Jim Schriever (Mason, Bruce & Girard) said he will work with Mark to turn it into a mobile application. Gali discussed in the past housing this in the FTP site. It’s been hard to access. Gali said the great part of having this now is we are kicking off a new team to refresh our recommendations; this data will help that team with the refresh. She congratulated all the people that helped get that together. Judy von Ahlefeldt (Black Forest Conservation Forestry Association) asked if there’s any funding available to have this available at the county level for local groups (digital or hard copies). Mark thinks it could be done. Mike Caggiano (CSU) said should be able to scale down to county level. He also said at the WUI center at CSU is working on a database of every structure on the Front

Range; he would be interested in getting fine scale level of development. Would be helpful for a number of applications.

Annie Oatman Gardner (Office of U.S. Senator Michael Bennet) made an announcement from the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress – updates to the BLM Steward Ship contract (12/19/13). Farm bill included many of those parts; didn't include cancellation/ceiling which is max amount a contract can pay if government cancels a contract. This bill would bring that forward and have that incorporated. Bennet also supports fire borrowing and how we're funding the forest service so they can do the work they're supposed to do without having to worry about their budgets.

Keith Worley (Forest Development LLC) announced their 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop in Woodland Park for Pikes Peak Wildfire Prevention Partners. Speakers include Paige Lewis (TNC) and Jonathan Bruno (CUSP). He will send more information out to the Roundtable. The workshop is 3/27/2015.

Mike Lester (CSFS)– Announced that the Forest Health Report will be released soon. Joint House Senate/Ag committee working next week. They do it annually, and the focus this year is urban community forest.

Glenn Casamasa (USFS) – Elaborated on the cancellation ceiling. When it comes to stewardship contracting, they'd like to get a variance; for them to (the Forests) they had to set aside – when they awarded the long-term stewardship contract, they had to set aside \$½M in an account. That's an impediment; it's upfront money you have to take from your allocation that you have to put in for the ceiling. The second piece is the idea of the fire transfer; the money that goes to fire. Fire suppression costs for the Forest Service, state and counties continues to grow astronomically. In 1993, 17% of the Forest Service's allocation went to suppress fire. Now we're up to over 43% of total budget allocated to fire suppression. In the event that we want to ensure we can deliver on other program facets, we need to shift emphasis from suppression to an overall program areas. If you want to help the Forest Service, change the way we allocate money for fire suppression. Don Kennedy (Denver Water) asked about the 43% for fire suppression; what happened to the budget from the 1990s to 2014? Glenn said the budgets have increased, but buying power is down because of inflation. Throughout the state – this is a big deal. Jonas Feinstein (NRCS) said it's a classic case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Aerial suppression in the WUI makes the cost go up. It needs to become clear.

## **ABOUT THE ROUNDTABLE:**

Gali Beh (Beh Management Consulting) gave the About the Roundtable presentation.

Paige Lewis (TNC) talked about the Recommendations Refresh Team. We have a lot of new data, spatial analysis tools, then we did when we started 10 years ago. Paige and Rob Addington (TNC) are committed to leading that group. There are several smaller groups working on similar efforts going on related, so by late spring they will have a better idea of their work/goals. Once they have refreshed the acres, then they will want to define our action items, and figure out how they can engage other local partners who may not be at the table.

**MASTICATION:** Gali Beh (Beh) gave an introduction about how this topic came up. Brett Wolk (CSU) passed out “Mastication Planning Guidelines for the Colorado Front Range.” This document is what the team has come up with so far. The issue was raised this topic and there have been lots of questions. The team has met several times. At the last Roundtable meeting, we had a panel of experts that discussed the latest science on mastication. The team was tasked with summarizing the current information and science. They got the Mastication Guidelines from the State Forest Service. They asked what needs to be updated? What additional information does the Roundtable want? From the state guidelines, they narrowed down what was useful for what the Roundtable is seeking. They focused more on the planning. People could acknowledge the benefits and drawbacks. They thought it was improtnat to put measurable objectives. They found it important to define what mastication is. The document includes planning guidelines. Jenny Briggs (USGS) asked about sampling strategies. Brett said they didn’t get into this, but some folks including Keith Worley said these types of recommendations would be helpful. Steps include:

1. Determining management goals  
Inventorying the vegetation
2. Scheduling mastication treatments to complement important wildlife nesting, fawning, calving and breeding seasons.
3. Determining resource benefits.
4. Assessing resource objectives and the expected longevity of initial treatment benefits.
5. Consider how specific vegetation will respond following disturbance.

Dennis Will (City of Colorado Springs) said it depends on the slope, it's different on slopes. Brett said the period it is measured is important. Mike Lester said, he knows it's not evenly distributed. If we're giving recommendations to a landowner, it would be helpful. You may need to take several measurements. Gali brought up that in the last recommendation there was something about debris not piling up around trees. Brett answered that if saving trees was an objective, then not piling up around trees should be a step.

Brett said the second half of the paper includes suggested specifications and resource protection. This includes a section Wildfire Hazard Reduction. He pointed out "generally, the more fuel that is masticated and left on the ground, the higher risk for increased surface fire intensity and severity." He said all of this will depend on the individual goal. There are sections on managing debris distribution, managing debris depth, and resource protection. At the end there is a link to the state forest recommendation document. This document helps define goals, a planning document, then if it's determined that mastication can be used to accomplish management goal, then users would be referred to the CSFS Mastication Operations Guidelines document.

Casey Cooley (CPW) asked if they looked at how long the chips are there for? And regarding that rearrangement of fuels, when they break down, etc? Brett said in the fall Chuck Rhodes (CSU) talked about that. What they're finding is the first 5 years it breaks down fairly quickly, then the rest is there for a "long time." With our climate being cold and dry it may stay longer. In general mastication increases decomposition. Still adding to the duff layer. That's something, with fire prevention, in the lower montane, surface fuels and duff has increased and that's harder to get rid of than extra trees. Gali asked if we could add credits on the document of who contributed to these guidelines and have contact information for landowners that they could call. Brett said that should be possible. First we should think about where we are publishing this? Brett asked, if there's a next step? Is this useful? He asked for first impressions first.

Megan Davis (Boulder) said the Community Protection Team would be very interested in this information. They are working with homeowners, community groups, etc.

Jenny Briggs (USGS) asked about doing samples/examples/case studies. Brett showed one from the Southwest Fire Consortium which includes case studies. But Brett's group focused more on the planning aspect. Jenny said could they come up with an example "X Homeowner" did it this way or that way. Peter Brown (RMTRR) asked about the document "Front Range Vegetation and Slash Treatment Intensity and Tradeoffs." He talked about the last meeting discussion with the science. The big difference was fire, and that was what people want to know about. They are

focused on controlling the fuel. You can't say what's always going to happen. Travis Griffin (Jefferson County Sheriff's office) said the fire industry is waiting for this and getting this into a fuel model. He asked when they get FEMOS out in the field, is there a mechanism to activate his team/us to get tools, and how do we quantify some of this to get real information? Brett said there are other organizations working on mastication models. But they haven't been fuel tested. It's hard to get good data on masticated areas. Those are coming, Brett said. Brett said this subteam isn't working on a model. How do we bring these in? Travis said when wildfires occur it's dry, hot climate. When you get out in the field, for a controlled fire, these treatments are supposed to decrease the suppression cost in the long-term. How do we gather that information? Glenn Casamassa (USFS) thanked them for putting this together. He said how we go about distributing and housing it, is something we have to work through. From a larger scale landscape of national forest, there are folks that they work with, communities and landowners, who don't like pile burning because it's rearranging the fuel. What about mastication? It doesn't necessarily reduce the risk, it just redistributes it. Folks end up not doing anything at all. But it's good to have this information – for your consideration. He talked about the Missoula Fire Lab – they had some background modeling on the redistribution of fuels. Chuck said regarding what Travis was talking about, with the State Forest Service, they did a photo series of different forest types, which was a start at gathering that type of information. Electronic copies available. He also said a next step, there are ongoing research needs, some type of monitoring that could contribute information to the researchers. Take before/after photos and measurements at different plots, could contribute to the needs.

Judy wanted to bring it one step further, she's from the Black Forest burn area. One of their operators proposes a "mastication free zone." Discussion on how mastication could be adjusted in a GTR13 Whether it's a small scale or large scale. What about masticating after the fire? She doesn't see anything on that. Masticating trees that are down or trees that are still standing should be considered. Please consider when you are doing a variety of things. She said in the last year in the Black Forest, all the ash is a big deal, should be considered when doing post-fire masticating. Brett addressed the GTR13 and said the new version addresses some of those concepts. He said the new one will have more specific recommendations for Colorado. Brett said that's another use of mastication – post fire for erosion.

Brett addressed Glenn's concern about homeowners going in circles and end up not wanting to do anything, like it's a last resort. He hopes this document will help them determine if it can be useful – make people think about what they're doing. Garrett Stephens (Jefferson Conservation District) asked if this can be considered for different zones. Casey agreed, what do you do right

around your house, vs what can you do if you're a little farther away? In terms of wildlife, as you get further out from your house, those recommendations would be well-received. Brett said the recommendation for Defensible space 1 and 2 is to reduce fuels, so mastication is not really what you want to do there. Travis asked if he can also add fuel breaks. Another topic that came up is monitoring via citizen science. CFRI trying to create an app for citizen science for this. That is a protocol with low investment and needed tools. Brett wanted to address the document on the screen. Make a table that compared everything is a lot of work. Comparing other treatments to mastication with backed up science. It's a long-term next step. Brett and Jonas have been talking about it, doing a literature review. Paige asked if broadcast burning is on the table? He said it's on another version. Gali said the immediate next steps – follow up with Mike on how to spread this around. Chuck, Mike, Garrett, Jonas all participated in this sub-group. He also brought up the state-wide implications. People on the western slope are very interested in this as well. There's an interest in making this statewide. Brett asked if anyone else wants to join the subteam to let him know. The Southern Fires Science Consortium is interested in publishing it.

#### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:**

Mike Lester (CSFS) talked about the Wildfire review forestry bill which is sitting in appropriations. There are also some water bills out there. It was on the calendar this week or next, no money attached to it, but saying fire borrowing is not a technique. Paige added there is a bill regarding a system NCAR has been developing of enhanced wildfire modeling with new weather data into it, that has moved to appropriations. Paige's opinion is it offers some valuable information. The price tag is \$2m for 5 years. There is this potential to talk with elected officials state to fund pre-disaster mitigation. To make sure committees can continue to reduce their risk of wildfire. Pre-disaster mitigation is a priority. Megan has also talked about this with their emergency management division. She saw this technology and it wouldn't add anything to fire and flood modeling. Program wouldn't be made available to local governments. Local government would have to go to a private contractor to get this information.

Glenn brought up the Farm Bill; there's a number of different authorities. A few things have stemmed from the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. Things were good useful tools, what are ways we can advance these and make more permanent and look at challenges. Lumped a suite of things that were signed into law by Obama last year. There was concern about the tenure of the Good Neighbor Authority, now they recognize it's a good thing in Utah and Colorado, can we do this nationwide. It's a valuable tool. From the Forest Service perspective, under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, instead of going through an appeals process, you went through an



objective process. Not as robust to defend your record. We no longer have an appeals process in the Forest Service, now it's an objection process. It's more expedited. They tried to make it more contemporary.

Another broad section is the insect and disease designation. Looked at Colorado for forest condition change – devastating mountain pine beetle and spruce beetle. What can we do to advance restoration efforts? Section 8204 says the Secretary shall designate one landscape to insect treatment program. To be eligible, area has to meet certain criteria (declining forest health). We've had years of increased insect damage. Mortality increase over 15 years. Area where hazardous trees pose threat to public health and safety. Letter went to the governor from Chief of Forest Service to Hickenlooper to see if any areas within the state the Governor wanted to designate. He had 60 days to respond. That was in March 2014. Less than a month later, he responded regarding the Farm Bill that certain areas be designated; many forests including AR, Routt. All of the governors of states with National forests lands, said there forests should be designated. The chief said all in Colorado have this designation. So what do we do with this? It provides more of an expedited approach on environmental analysis. The expectation is we will use these designations and more of an expedited approach in how we look at these large landscapes, to expand the scope and scale of restoration on the national forests. The majority of the Pike and San Isabel and Arapahoe Roosevelt, expectation that we work with collaboratives (CFLRP). We still have to apply with applicable law, i.e. Clean Air, Clean Water, etc. Intention is to expand how we analyze things. If you look at the working group, it sets the stage and tone for that. How can it be adapted? UMC – overall thinking we would like as a working group to propose a prescriptive approach for taking it into the NEPA process. Additional level of authority/discretion to move forward. CFLR approach is more adaptive. Glenn's advocating that with the portfolio of research and information – purpose is to restore landscape and reduce risk – maybe we should think about – a much bigger, broader approach to how we would analyze some levels of prescriptions. Take them through the NEPA process and look at ways to implement these and in the event things change, we adapt and take through process. More of a programmatic view. These are the kinds of things the Forest Service is working at. They're looking at folks with authority to implement activities on the landscape. How we can be more innovative in the NEPA process. What are the risks with expanding scale and scope? Ensure you have confidence in skill mix. How to work with collaboratives, are you adaptable? Can you expand out across a bigger, broader landscape? Call scheduled at end of the month. They have been trying to stand up a proposal on the AR to have something broader. That we can all support, and take through NEPA. Put the focus on implementation rather than the planning. He thinks we have support, level of authority. Gali asked is this the UMC of the AR? Glenn said it would be

the UMC extreme. Opens up opportunities and grants. He's referencing the Adaptive Management document.

Discussion: Peter Brown (RMTRR) pointed out that from a scientific basis, the GTR that many have been using will provide a solid scientific basis... we have some ecological basis for why it varies from place to place. The GTR should be at some point a good reference. Glenn said regarding the AR on the insect and disease, i.e. hazardous tree removal. He made a decision on roads, trails and utility corridors, anywhere you can move and implement. The Black Hills National Forest has taken some of the things we have built on and have built on that. They have prescriptions for the entire Black Hills, they are implementing these prescriptions. They have a resource advisory council that they have to run this through (equivalent of our Roundtable). It's starting to be done across the Western U.S. Paige Lewis said we do have a lot of tools, and information, and a good opportunity for us to do something bigger. She cautions as we approach this, that we do it very deliberately. At UMC they are working on an adaptive management process for the Forest Service to be able to get lessons learned as they continue. In the Black Hills the focus is on insects. On the Front Range, it's much more subjective. There has to be trust. That the Forest Service will continue that dialogue, so that the community input part goes away. Adaptive management on the Front Range is difficult, hard to describe desired conditions just within the team. She also mentioned the spruce beetle and aspen project on the Western Slope, approach to set up a large scale adaptive management process, not a lot of upfront collaboration. It's kind of a mess. Not a lot of trust. She wouldn't want to see us go there, but she likes the idea. Casey Cooley (CPW) likes the idea as well. He asked the Forest Service if community involvement can be a good thing and a bad thing. On a larger scale, you can lose that community involvement (local areas, local watershed). How do you maintain that local interest if you blow it up to a bigger footprint? Glenn said the idea of the place-base it comes down to something like a HOA and the treatments occurring next to their homes. How best do we ensure that our communities are involved in that? What happens if there's an objection? Maybe there's a two-tiered approach. Broad, and then community-based. Gali asked what the timeline is. Glenn said in Grand County they're about to make a decision. They're working in Larimer County. Now it's where do we want to put our next planning focus? How big is this? If we can provide that forum he'd like to be able to start it this summer. And then work through this level of analysis. Use the priorities map as a framework. A team would be needed to start this. Chuck, Jonas, Peter, Paige, Mike (or staff), Casey, Brett (and/or CFRI delegate), Don. Epic Project X. Need to start thinking about this. In person meeting? Time on next Roundtable meeting. Peter asked if this could be part of the Refresh effort or is it separate. Paige said it shouldn't be separate. Mark is leading the team. Glenn added that when we anchor in the CFLR project, we



were aware of a lot of shelf stock. Decisions have been made over the course of time. Decisions were made, and we're implementing decisions. Through monitoring and Roundtable, when do we start to frame out what we're going to do on the ground? This is a way of getting this off the ground. Casey asked if the bigger decisions, be forest specific? Or entire footprint of CFLRP? Glenn said with the one portion of hazard tree removal, they did one level of analysis for each forest, then each forest made their own decision. Jenny Briggs (USGS) is curious about the insect and disease aspect. Is this insect/disease the umbrella under which this work would be done? But prescriptions may be different on different forests? Glenn said they've had prescriptions based on the level of insect and disease activity. Do prescriptions have to be tied to insect and disease? Glenn said no, it's building resiliency within the forested lands that are treated. Judy commented about how prescriptions have changed over time. They've been project based, watershed based, etc. She said remember the keystone and the scale. Mike Lester said they've had 485,000 acres of spruce beetle. Forest health issues are not necessarily adjacent to mortality. It's hard to take a crystal ball and say what's at risk in 5 years. Adjacency isn't the only issue. There are a lot of stands out there that could be at risk of attracting mountain pine beetle or spruce beetle. Gali asked how is this different than UMC? Glenn said they can start off small; he's asking the Roundtable how big of an area do we want to take on? UMC is 67,000 acres. Paige said this is more like the Four Fry Initiative which is 2 million acres. Jonas said they are using GTR 310 and they have their own challenges. Glenn said it's not neat and clean. Jonas said how do we expand the scope of planning? As a Roundtable in supporting the Forest Service with that expansion, what is the feeling of the Roundtable of the inclusiveness in that scope? Not just Forest Service lands, but all lands? Mike Lester responded that the vision with the state Forest Service is to work with other landscapes. If we're going to do the most benefit, we need to work with these other entities. Any forest health issue ignores property bounds. It's in the best interest to work together. Largest percentage is federal land. State owned land is 2%, and private land is ~25%. Paige pointed out that 1.5 million acres of Roundtable priority is private land. Erin Connelly (USFS) mentioned that with her work in Pennsylvania, they were working with private/non-profit land owners. She said this is not exclusive to Colorado or Forest Service land. How can we as a Roundtable move this forward, bigger, deliberately? Judy said it would be beneficial to have the Roundtable make a recommendation by watershed. Brett Wolk (CSU) asked about developing a mechanism to make sure we bring everyone to the table at these meetings. In UMC, etc., different entities say they want to be involved, but they don't show up. How can we commit to delegating staff time to this? Mike responded that it is a challenge. It's not easy with a fee based program. Glenn said you must be present to win. The Roundtable should know that if we didn't have this type of forum and bring up these ideas and think through them, he's advocating this because of this group.

**HOUSEKEEPING:**

Paige said the Executive Team expects to make a decision about a new facilitator in the next couple of weeks.

The Roundtable presented Gali and Terra framed photographs taken from the Ryan Quinlan area where the team visited on a field trip last summer.

Gali ended with a round robin, attendees said something they love, they wish and they wonder.

The meeting adjourned around 3:30 p.m.