



MINUTES FROM FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE

Q2-13 QUARTERLY MEETING

Date of meeting: Friday, May 31, 2013, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Location: Boulder County Clerk & Recorder, 1750 33rd Street, Boulder, CO 80301

Date minutes posted: June 20, 2013

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Meeting presentation(s): http://www.frontrangeroundtable.org/Roundtable_Documents.php

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ABOUT THE ROUNDTABLE

Speaker: Gali Beh, Roundtable Facilitator

- The Roundtable has been implementing its mission “to serve as a focal point for diverse stakeholders input into efforts to reduce wildland fire risks and improve forest health through sustained fuels treatment along the Colorado Front Range” since 2006.

PARTNER UPDATES

Speaker - Local Host's Spotlight – Megan Davis, Boulder County Board of County Commissioners

- Five departments work on forest health issues in Boulder.
- Boulder recently completed a treatment at Heil Ranch.
 - The produced biomass will go to Boulder's biomass facilities for thermal systems used to heat the jail and park facilities.
- Boulder is working on defensible space projects around historical buildings.
- Boulder has 2 community sort yards that are free to residents.
- Boulder plans to do a prescribed burn at Heil Valley Ranch in the fall.
- Boulder produced and published a prescribed fire guide.
- Boulder's education and outreach in the wildland-urban interface (WUI):
 - Along with residents' valuation notice, Boulder sent out an individual link to their mountain property that shows an aerial photo of their property and provides more information on additional defensible space work needed.
 - An e-newsletter, community trainings, and one-on-one consultations are also used.
- Boulder updated their WUI building codes to be more robust.
- Boulder sheriff's office put into place a program for slash burning education and safety outreach.

New Roundtable Member: Society of American Foresters

Speaker - Lyle Laverty, The Laverty Group

- The Society of American Foresters represents foresters across the country.
 - The organization promotes science, technology, and education as it relates to forestry.
- June 5, 2013 – hosting a field trip to the Waldo Canyon Fire burn scar

State's new forestry grants program and other activities

Speaker - Lisa Dale, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- Last legislative session
 - Senate Bill 13-269, 'The Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program', passed.

- DNR will release a request for application (RFA) on Monday, June 17.
 - Grant eligibility/criteria:
 - Treatments to be done on state and private lands
 - Municipalities, homeowners associations, utilities, and nonprofits that work with municipalities are eligible
 - 100% match is required
 - Statewide
 - Applicants must identify how biomass will be utilized following treatments
 - 25% of funds can be used for capacity building
 - RFA will be posted on the DNR website
 - Timeline: Applicants have about a month to get their application in and DNR will take about a month to grant the money.
 - 2 years of grant cycles anticipated
- Other bills that passed this legislative session in Colorado:
 - House Bill 1012 reauthorized tax breaks for mitigation work on private property
 - A permanent wildfire matters review committee was created as an interim committee.
 - Senate Bill 083, ‘Colorado Prescribed Burning Act’ defined the role of the Department of Public Safety in prescribed burning, increased certification standards, and defined the State Forest Service’s forest health role in relation to the Department of Public Safety.
 - Colorado House Bill 1225, ‘Homeowner's Insurance Reform Act’, requires insurance companies to extend living expenses after wildfires; requires insurance companies to provide homeowners with more robust documentation; allow homeowners a longer time to report burned properties; and instructs homeowners to consult with insurance companies to see if the homeowner’s insurance covers the cost of rebuilding in a burn area.
- June 17 is the next wildfire insurance task force meeting. The meeting is now open to the public.

Speaker - Karl Kumli – Senator Michael Bennet’s office

- 2013 Farm Bill passed to the House
 - 2 forestry acts are included in the bill:
 - The National Forest, Insect, and Disease Treatment Act is applicable for beetle kill areas.

- The Permanent Stewardship Contracting Act authorizes private-public partnerships for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), making stewardship contracts a permanent fixture in the bill.
- Funding was granted for the Waldo Canyon and High Park Fires through an emergency funding bill last November.

ROUNDTABLE DECISION

Speaker - Greg Aplet, the Wilderness Society

- Approve/refine the Landscape Restoration Team's Proposed Adaptive Management Process
- Background - Congress established funding and guidelines to bring collaboration to landscape-scale restoration projects. Under this program, the Roundtable's Landscape Restoration Team:
 - Submitted a proposal and was awarded funding
 - Developed and implemented the proposal through a collaborative process
 - Produced a multiparty monitoring plan in April 2011, but did not have a process for collaborative implementation in place
 - To address this gap, the group found and tailored an adaptive management model for implementing forest landscape restoration projects.
 - The model moves from the general to the specific and has effectiveness and adaptive monitoring built in.
 - The overarching goal is to sustain the Front Range Montane Ecosystems, with the more specific steps emanating from this goal.
 - With this model, the group now understands where the monitoring plan fits into the overall process.
 - The Landscape Restoration Team is now figuring out what implementation monitoring will look like.
 - The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) monitoring will use this plan/model if approved, and other partners will be encouraged to use it as well.
- Q: Can we modify the boundaries of the 400,000 targeted acres based on monitoring? A: Yes, this can be modified within the goal step; some modification has already happened through discussions as the process was developed.
- General agreement from the Roundtable that adaptive National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes and adaptive prescriptions/projects must be part of the forest landscape restoration process.
- The proposal is APPROVED in its current form.

WORKING TEAM PROGRESS UPDATES

Wildlife Working Team: incorporating Wildlife into the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Monitoring Plan

Speaker - Rick Truex, USFS

- This initiative was born out of conflict
- Goals for the wildlife monitoring plan:
 - Identify primary and secondary species for monitoring that meet CFLRP and Forest Service needs
 - Develop a hypothesized species response for each primary and secondary species
 - Explicitly integrate spatial and temporal scales in species selection and sampling approach
 - Establish range of monitoring options that encompass cost and rigor spectrums as needed
 - Identify field sampling protocols for selected species
 - Describe potential analytical methods
- Framework of considerations for ranking species:
 - Ecologically informative
 - Politically prudent
 - Economically/socially important
- The team developed a 9-step process for identifying species to monitor and will use the list resulting from this process to filter the species into primary species (get a specific plan) and secondary species for monitoring.
- The initial list was 145 species. The team used filtering scores that combined the 3 framework criteria to rank species for monitoring consideration and narrow down the list.
 - A species must have a sum of score greater than or equal to 3 and an ecologically informative score greater than or equal to 1 to stay on the list.
 - The list is now has 64 species.
 - The team is trying to get down to a list of about 10 species.
- Filter process 2 is in progress – the team is now thinking about sampling approaches, available data, stressors for taxonomic groups, etc.
- The team wants to make sure results are robust enough to be reliable for management purposes, so they are further developing the process.
- The focus is primarily on terrestrial species rather than reptile and aquatic species because other groups are already monitoring reptile and aquatic species.
- The team is working on a justification template for tracking the rationale of including or excluding different species.

- Where recommended species are monitored (spatial range) will likely depend on the natural history of the species.
- Q: Can we use the data from this process to say healthy forests (that is, managed forests) mean healthier ecosystems/species? A: We need to be okay with some variability in species populations, but, yes, this process should support this notion to some extent.

Community Protection Team

Speaker - Megan Davis, Boulder County Board of County Commissioners

- This working team has been meeting for about 7 months and is still evolving
- The current focus is on community protection practitioners (those doing mitigation work, community outreach and education, insurance, WUI work, etc.).
 - Currently, there is no one forum where these practitioners can come together to network and share knowledge.
 - The current deliverable being discussed is to have this team's meetings fill this gap and be a forum for discussion and networking among practitioners.
 - 4 counties attended the last meeting, and the meeting was a good discussion forum for what is happening now in different areas.
 - The team's next meeting is in August, and the team plans to meet every other month.

Biomass Utilization Team

Speaker - Mark Martin, USFS & Craig Jones, CDJ Consulting

- The Biomass Utilization (BUSS) Team wants to be a conduit of information for the bigger group.
- This team is still evolving.
- Biomass utilization is still a huge challenge; the industry in Colorado has low capacity.
 - Extraction and transportation are barriers for utilization.
- The team lacked a facilitator last year, so the group did not have many formal meetings (but most members are talking to each other on a day to day basis).
- Legislation: Colorado Forest Biomass Use Work Group produced a report, which is being used as a roadmap for a way forward.
 - Biomass incentives passed through legislation have faced much resistance.
- The team wants to get a face-to-face meeting together with all the BUS members to see how the team should move forward and what the deliverables of this group could be.
- Former roles of the BUSS Team:
 - A previous focus of the team was using biomass for facility heating.

- The team maintained the status of what biomass is being used for through recordkeeping of who is using biomass for heating.
- The team held a talking points workshop to determine what the team agreed on that could be articulated to the larger Roundtable.
- The Roundtable's September strategic planning meeting may need to incorporate a session on BUS.
- Suggested roles of the BUSS team:
 - It could be helpful if the biomass community shared information about what is going on in the industry with the Roundtable. This way, the rest of the group would know what is happening in the industry and could support related legislation, initiatives, etc.
 - The BUSS group could look at how we reduce on-the-ground costs of biomass utilization.

Fundraising/Budgeting

Speaker - Carol Ekarius, Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP)

- A year ago, the Roundtable was way over budget.
- This year, the Roundtable came in under budget in large part because Gali committed less time to the Roundtable.
- As a group, we need to consider whether or not we want to increase Gali's (and Terra's) involvement, which would increase the budget.
 - If so, Terra will take over much of the day-to-day work.
 - \$40,000 could be included in next year's budget for Gali's contract and the Roundtable needs a coordinator to make progress.
 - The Roundtable AGREES to renew Gali and Terra's contract.
- The Roundtable has the Forest Service contract, but has not yet billed them.
- Total expenses to date – \$14,717
 - The Roundtable has taken in more funding than this over the year.
- CUSP is the fiscal host of the Roundtable. CUSP's in-kind donation was over \$3,000 in staff time.
- CUSP will be checking up with people who have not yet paid their invoices and ask if they can contribute.
- The Executive Team is billed to the Forest Service.
- We are meeting our match for the Forest Service funding.
- We would like to build a funding cushion for the Roundtable this year so we can carry some of the money over to next year.
 - We are projected to carry over \$10,000-\$12,000 as a cushion this year.

- Large county contributions are necessary to keep the Roundtable going.
 - The Executive Team can look at how much the Roundtable is asking from the counties because the amounts now are inconsistent among the counties.
 - Suggested that the Roundtable could consider asking other counties to help with funding – Summit, Grand, etc.
- If there were a large grant that would be appropriate for the Roundtable, CUSP would help write it.
- Further brainstorming about possible grants and other sources of fundraising is needed.

STRATEGIC PLANNING ON THREE NEW LONG-TERM INITIATIVES

Prescribed Fire: Summary of recent rule changes and how agencies are moving forward, including in fire management – Rocco Snart, Colorado Department of Public Safety; Mike Babler, The Nature Conservancy; Jay Stalnecker, Boulder County Sheriff’s Office, Paul Langowski, USFS, Rocky Mountain Region

Speaker - Rocco Snart, Colorado Department of Public Safety

- Governor Hickenlooper signed senate Bill 13-083, the ‘Colorado Prescribed Burning Act’, last week.
 - The governor signed an executive order banning all prescribed fire last November after the Lower North Fork Fire.
 - Some pile burning restrictions were rescinded later in the season.
 - Broadcast burning is still not allowed.
 - This bill starts to give us back the opportunity to create rules for prescribed fire.
 - A certified burner program is included, which gives citizens the opportunity to go through a training course and get limited liability insurance if prescribed fire damages their property.
 - The Colorado Department of Public Safety is hiring a new staff member to work on new prescribed burning rules and the certified burner program.
 - The legislation comes into law on December 31, 2013.
 - The State Forest Service’s role is unclear right now.
 - We’re hoping pile burning will go back to the State Forest Service, but they likely will not be able to get back on a broad prescribed fire in the near future.
 - The Department of Public Safety will likely be managing all prescribed fires.
 - Comment: There is great capacity for prescribed fire within the State Forest Service and it would be a shame to lose this capacity.

- The Roundtable Executive Committee could write a letter stating this opinion to send to the Forest Service Leadership.
 - The contracting process is being worked on to make it smoother – currently frustrating for those trying to contract through the state.
- Recommended role of the Roundtable: members can continue to help educate the public on prescribed fire.

Speaker - Jay Stalnecker, Boulder County Sheriff's Office

- Boulder County started looking at prescribed fire programs internally before the Lower North Fork Fire.
 - Boulder created a program in which homeowners can be trained and create burn plans.
 - The county met with over 80 agricultural people that want to be part of the effort so their burns can be certified.
 - During an investigation of state forest programs, it was found none of the counties had a solid plan or program, but the federal model (National Wildfire Coordinating Group [NWCG]) was a good model to use to start working on local models.
 - A Boulder County prescribed fire guide was produced.
 - Through the process, Boulder has found the community in general is supportive of the program and prescribed fire.
 - 6 prescribed fires using the new model were successful.
 - The Roundtable has been very supportive thus far.

Speaker - Mike Babler, The Nature Conservancy

- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) quit burning for the rest of the year following the Lower North Fork Fire after much internal discussion and outreach to partners.
 - The ban only applied to state-owned land and state agencies, not private organizations, so TNC was not bound to the executive order banning prescribed fire.
- Some partners were initially hesitant about using prescribed fire again, but now are supportive of using this tool.
 - TNC lost opportunities to train people on how to use prescribed fire after the Lower North Fork Fire.
- TNC was ready to launch a campaign about the global success of prescribed fire; the campaign launched elsewhere, but TNC lost that opportunity in Colorado.
- TNC has beefed up their standard-operating manual over the past 50 years, so they made very few changes after reviewing the manual following the fire.

- TNC met with many legislators to discuss benefits and risks of prescribed fire and put many position papers together.
- In their burn project planning, TNC decided to significantly increase community outreach for prescribed fires.
- This spring, TNC assisted with 1 fire in the Pike/San Isabel Forest.
- TNC has 10 projects planned for this fall into the next year.
- What happens on the Front Range influences what will happen in the rest of the state, so the Roundtable should approach their thinking with a larger scale impact in mind.
- We need to figure out how to reach the folks along the foothills so they understand prescribed fire better.

Speaker - Paul Langowski, USFS

- Federal agencies have had their own prescribed fire events that caused them to look at their programs since 2000. In 2003, a guide was created and has been updated since.
- Even though the governor's ban did not apply to anyone but the state, federal agencies still shut down their burning. This was also due to poor conditions for prescribed fire.
 - Not being able to burn piles was difficult for relations with partners.
- We are always working towards managing risk as best as possible. We use a risk management framework for prescribed fire to get everyone on the same page about the risks and the programs.
- USFS is mostly moving forward with the prescribed burn program at this point.
- The Missoula Fire Lab did an assessment and found the mountains have less fire than they did historically; a greater portion of lands that need fire are non-federal lands (lands that need fire the most are impacted by development); along the Front Range, 80,000 to 210,000 acres of prescribed fire is needed to maintain vegetation (much more than is currently burned per year). The assessment points to the huge challenges to restore ecosystems.
- Legislation is the first step to improving prescribed fire programs.
 - Federal agencies are exempt from Colorado's new rules, but the rules will affect the USFS by association.
 - It is important for Roundtable members to participate in stakeholder meetings while the rules are being developed.

Discussion

- The North Fork could have happened to anyone because there are risks associated with all fires no matter the number of policies and procedures in place; agencies are working to minimize risks with policies and procedures.

- Connecting policymakers and on-the-ground people is important so that everyone feels we are all working on prescribed fire together.
- How do we generate the culture in Colorado where people understand how important prescribed fire is and demand it?
 - Communicating to the public is difficult.
 - Responses to two main concerns about prescribed fire:
 - Carbon emissions – carbon emissions during a prescribed fire are much lower than during a wildfire.
 - Emotional – Comparing the escaped prescribed fire percentages to other industrial accidents to put the risk in context could be a good communication strategy (escaped prescribed fire incidents approximately equate to airline accidents).
 - We need to work on getting people to understand fire is part of the natural system, because now many people are afraid of it and think of fire as a natural disaster.
 - We need to overcome the outrage factor.
 - Non-fire professionals talking about the benefits of prescribed fire is a good way to educate the public
- Comment: A Colorado Air Pollution Control Division representative recently made a statement that the division would support prescribed fire if:
 - Extensive public notification occurs
 - Air quality monitoring is performed
 - Often very expensive to carry out
 - Poor air quality is minimized
 - Response from Patrick McLaughlin, Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE):
 - Regulation 9 addresses prescribed fire and air quality.
 - As work is done to develop the prescribed fire rules, all stakeholders need to be involved.
 - Political pressure on CDPHE will not help loosen air quality standards for prescribed burning.
- The Roundtable may want to identify a larger area/community that would be receptive to a large prescribed fire. This would offer us a chance to engage with the community on this issue.
- When a controlled burn happens, it would be helpful if elected official were notified of when and where the burn was happening so they can tell their constituents what is going on.
- Possible action items for the Roundtable:

- Members engaging in the rule making process.
- Getting more positive information about prescribed fire out to the public.
- Looking for potential prescribed fire projects.
- Roundtable action items can be discussed in a smaller committee and then further at the executive committee meeting.
- July 1 is the start of the rule making process.

Colorado Roadless Rule Changes

USFS near-term forest treatment plans and Colorado Roadless rule changes so Roundtable can take account into 40-year treatment vision – Jeff Underhill, USFS-PSI; Glenn Casamassa, Mark Martin, & Trey Schille, USFS-AR

Speaker - Colorado Roadless Rule Changes – Trey Schille, USFS-AR

- Colorado’s Roadless rule was finalized last year.
- The Forest Service has been working on the rule for about 4-5 years.
- The rule only applies to Forest Service lands that are undisturbed and over 5,000 acres.
- A nationwide Roadless rule was passed in 2001, but much legal uncertainty surrounded the rule.
- Colorado petitioned the Secretary of Agriculture for a state specific rule that addressed:
 - The ability to treat fuels adjacent to communities
 - Continued coal mining in the North Fork coal mining area.
 - Permitting construction and maintenance of water conveyance structures.
 - Permitting access to transportation and utility lines.
 - Provisions for ski area management.
- There are 4.2 million acres of Roadless areas in Colorado.
- The Forest Service reevaluated the Roadless inventory in Colorado, so we now know the true number of roadless acres.
 - Some forests added roadless acres, but most lost acres.
- The rule identifies Community Protection Zones (CPZ) adjacent to roadless areas. These zones allow:
 - Within 0.5 miles – tree cutting for hazardous fuel reduction; road construction to support hazardous fuel reduction
 - Within 1.5 miles – limited tree cutting if lands are identified by CWPP, and steep slopes, geographic feature that creates a fire break, or condition class 3
 - The rule utilizes language and concepts from the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA).

- Tree cutting to reduce impacts from fire to watersheds is allowed outside of the CPZ except for in the upper tier.
- Road construction and tree cutting are allowed for emergency situations.
- The Colorado rule is now more flexible than the national rule.
 - The Colorado rule had to be as protective if not more than the 2001 rule, so in the Colorado rule, the upper tier (usually more remote and less potential for conflict) is more protected, making the Colorado rule more protective.
- The Forest Service has developed several applications to look at the maps of the roadless areas.

Implementation Update 1010-2014 for the Pike and San Isabel Forest

Speaker — Jeff Underhill, USFS

- CFLRP project areas:
 - Trout West – 2987 acres completed and work is ongoing
 - CE – 304 acres completed and more work planned
 - Catamount – 351 acres completed, and work is ongoing
 - Upper South Platte 2 – work is ongoing
 - Rocky Messenger – Howard – work is ongoing
 - Projects are mainly concentrated west of Woodland Park and in the Pikes Peak Ranger District.
- Denver Water:
 - Work continues in the Strontia Springs Zone of Concern.
 - The Forest Service is using a combination of service work only and mechanized thinning.
 - The Forest Service initiated reforestation in the Buffalo Creek area this year.
 - Some work that started in 2011 is being done in the Antero Zone of Concern.
- Bark Beetle response focuses on 3 key areas:
 - Preventative treatments/mitigation in High Value Areas (developed recreation sites, ski areas)
 - Large to moderate scale sanitation/salvage treatments in spruce dominated cover types per access, terrain, and management prescription
 - Increase fuels reduction treatments in mountain pine beetle impacted/ susceptible lodgepole pine on the Leadville Ranger District
- Other Considerations:
 - Other water partnerships are to begin in FY 14 (CSU, Pueblo, City of Aurora)
 - Waldo Canyon restoration

- We are projected to run out of feasible ground for ground based logging in 10-15 years for current CFLRP/Fuels target vegetation
 - We cannot get to some areas with standard treatments; the only way to get to them is through the use of prescribed fire.
- USFS is looking at second entry treatments in some project areas.
- The intent is for prescribed fire to be a large part of future treatments.

Implementation Update 2010-2014 Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grasslands

Speakers – Glenn Casamassa and Mark Martin, USFS

- For 2013:
 - WUI treatment planned: 2,470 acres
 - Non-WUI treatments planned: 725 acres
- For 2014:
 - WUI treatment planned: 3,307 acres
 - Non-WUI treatments planned: 1,923 acres
- 2013 and 2014 Projects:
 - 2,592 acres of planned thinning in the Boulder/Clear Creek Ranger District
 - 2,230 acres of planned thinning in Sulphur Ranger District
 - The Forest Service is emphasizing roadside hazard projects in 2013 and 2014 in this area because of the pine beetle kill.
 - 1,897 acres of planned thinning in Canyon Lakes Ranger District
 - The Forest Service is emphasizing timber sales and long-term stewardship projects in this area.

WRAP-UP

- Carol Ekarius (CUSP) and Mike McHugh (Aurora Water) are working on field trips.
- The next Roundtable meeting is on September 13, 2013 and may be a fieldtrip.
- The next executive meeting is on July 12 in the morning.