



**MINUTES FROM FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE Q3-14 QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Date of meeting:** Friday, September 5, 2014, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

**Location:** Boulder County Parks & Open Space

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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:**

Mike Eckhoff and Tim Reider (CSFS) recently signed a cooperative agreement with the USFS – biomass facilities for projects around the state. They are getting candidates for new projects – looking at need for utilizing the wood, wanted to share with the Roundtable. They passed out information about it.

### **ABOUT THE ROUNDTABLE:**

Gali Beh (Beh Management Consulting) gave the About the Roundtable presentation. Gali asked if someone would give the presentation at the next meeting. Ron Archuleta (USFS, acting for Glenn Casamassa) brought maps showing mitigation 2009-2013. A map needs to be produced combining those maps (pre 2009 and then 2009-2013 including fires in that time). Gali discussed the scorecard; the question #10 went down at the last quarterly meeting. Executive Team discussed this as well; thought we may need to make meetings more discussion based rather than presentation based. Gali discussed changes made this year to the Executive Team; Southern County Commissioner became a permanent seat. Next Roundtable meeting November 14, 2014. Terra Lenihan (Beh Management Consulting) will give the next About the Roundtable.

### **PARTNER UPDATES:**

Jim Webster (Boulder County) gave an update about the Wildfire Partners Update. Cindy Domenico is on the board; there are 32 partners and many county staff. After the Fourmile Canyon Fire they asked what could we do better? Created a report with the answers. Puts responsibility on the homeowner. Program grant of \$980,000; funding from Boulder County – it's a program not a one-time "project." Jim talked mainly about what they are doing with homeowners. They've sent maps with the homeowner's defensible space; reached 8,100 homeowners. They get benefits like a home assessment with a wildfire consultant. They get a customized report. There are also phone advisors; to support follow-through. They get rebates. Key messages include taking personal responsibility, maintenance and understanding risk. There are 500 homeowners enrolled and 430 assessments done to date. Insurance industry is their most active partner. They are motivated. The program is educating the insurance partners. Gali asked if we can get some insurance representatives to the table. Sallie asked if the insurance companies are offering any incentives for homeowners who have the certificate. Allstate is going to partner, but not with financial assistance. Sallie thought there should be pressure from them; some homeowners are being asked to show certificate. The program is modeled after EnergySmart. They are using Salesforce (CRM). Jim and Ryan Ludlow brought an iPad with the app to show attendees. Wildfire Partners is a good complement to CWPPs, Firewise, and other programs. The program can be replicated. Significant county staffing is not a requirement. Sallie asked what is it costing Boulder County? Jim replied it's under Land Use county staff. It's primarily time. Jim said there's a potential for a larger partnership. County administers the program, but it's broader. Cindy Domenico said the advisor piece is a private sector that they work with for the EnergySmart program. Jim coordinates the CWPP and the Wildfire Partners program. They think \$100,000 or less for the staffing.

## **UPPER MONUMENT CREEK PROPOSED ACTION:**

Mike Picard and Sara Mayben (USFS-PSICC) presented the Forest Service's UMC proposed action; getting Roundtable input through the formal scoping process. Mike Picard is the planning leader for the action. They are moving it through NEPA right now. Allan Hahn was the district ranger; but they are searching for a replacement. Mike gave the presentation to the LR team earlier this year. Mike will go through the NEPA process. UMC is considering ~67,000 acres for the treatment area. Showed the features they are addressing – there are landowners, power lines, etc that they need to be very careful of. Their treatment includes part of the Waldo Canyon area. They are currently in the Environmental Analysis phase of NEPA. Rewrote some of the proposal to fit how NEPA wants it. Completed scoping earlier this year. Developed an alternative (not multiple). Under some new rulings they are doing an iterative process. Next they will study effects this fall. Part of effects include beetles and how they are effecting Douglas Fir. Chuck Dennis (West Range Reclamation) asked about comments. Mike said about 90% are positive. Other comments included request that they look at different types of activities, including activities around Palmer Lake. They want something done around the reservoir. A draft EIS will be published next spring for comments, and a final EIS early next fall. Then there will be an objection process. Implementation planned for Spring 2016. They are using adaptive NEPA. Mike explained the adaptive management process. Mike Caggiano (CSU) asked how long the adaptive NEPA process has been used; Mike Picard said it's got a long history in the Forest Service. Mike explained the UMC purpose and needs. The needs statement was created using the collaborative process. He discussed the proposed action, treating about a third of the acres within the 67,000 acres, about 25,000 acres using mechanical and hand thinning. Will try to retain some of the older trees and increase diversity. Mike showed a map of the proposed action area. Paige Lewis (TNC) talked about doing a field trip to see the insect changes. Sara Mayben (USFS) talked about the decrease issue of prescribed fire; said about 20,000 acres of Douglas fir have been affected. Sara explained that there may be some hand treatments in areas where they don't want to risk firefighters with prescribed fires. The Douglas fir is not responding to the recent moisture; they are defoliating. Don Kennedy (Denver Water) asked how much of 25,000 acres are they going to take the biomass out of for mastication? Mike thought 30-50%. They are working on the details of mastication and timber sales. Sara said they may look at helicopter logging around steep inclines around reservoirs they are considering. They would still proceed with ground logging. They would be seeking partner funding and assistance since it would increase cost. Jason Lawhon (TNC) asked about NEPA implementation timing; Mike explained typical NEPA is 10-years, and that's what they are looking at; it may stretch to 15 years but the adaptive NEPA will allow that., and it should set up for future monitoring and activities. Randy

Johnson (Larkspur FPD) asked how much would be prescribed fire? And will there be pre-treatment? Mike said about 50/50 of pre-treatment for first entry and second entry. And that's on only about 20% or 5,000 acres. Sara added where they've done ground-based mechanical they will follow up with pile and broadcast burning. That's about 5,000 acres. Chad Julian asked what kind of comments they got about prescribed fire? Mike said some comments about smoke; most concerned with prescriptions, and how big it would be in one day. Under state rules, they stay within 200-300 per day. Showed information about aspen; aspen is a fire-inhibiting species and it's attractive for people going to see the leaves. Showed dry-mixed conifer thinning diagrams both pre and post-treatment. Sara talked about the groupy-clumpy effect with the variations and the spatial heterogeneity. Mike said the target basal area will vary. They are looking at the EIS approach to give them more flexibility with adaptive NEPA process. EIS will take 1.5 years; hoping to complete by winter 2015; implementation would hopefully occur spring 2016. Project implementation will take a decade. Greg Aplet (TWS) asked about the iterative process; Sara said it came from legislative authority. It's not wholly new but this is one of the pilots.

#### **UPDATE FROM THE WILDLIFE TEAM:**

Casey Cooley (CPW) and Jenny Briggs (USGS) gave an update from the Wildlife team. Early steps began in 2010 with a slow start. The earliest monitoring was with common stand exams to look at wildlife. Got a grant to do a pilot study during this time. In 2012 the Wildlife Working Team was formed. Co-leaders Lynne Deibel (USFS) and Rick Truex (USFS) led the team. Hal Gibbs (retired, USFS) helped get it all started. Jenny explained the strategy that the team went through. They filtered through three categories: ecologically informative, politically prudent, and economically/socially important. She showed the filtering process that started with 300+ species, filtered to species whose range includes the CFLRP. The second filter got down to 64 species using their "scoring" system. The final filter included sampling approaches, life history, stressors, etc. until the list was narrowed to 12 species. Jenny showed the final candidates groups/species: bats, songbirds and woodpeckers, owls and raptors, tree squirrels, and carabid beetles. The group then had to determine which of these could be monitored now, and others that would need a different opportunity for monitoring. Casey described the Tier 1 priority species list. The list includes nine Tier 1 species. Talked about RMBO's Integrated Monitoring of Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) sampling system, a tested approach. The data informs a greater system as well as giving us a local ecological footprint. Casey talked about our accomplishments including the implementation of a contract this year with the USFS using the RMBO. They are sampling 100 sq kilometer grids, obtaining density and occupancy data. He talked about how to collect data for tree squirrels. For pine squirrels they are vocal so they can capture that data. But

they are also doing camera trap surveys in each grid for the other tree squirrels. He showed an example of the camera trap surveys. Showed some of the photos that they've taken; good quality. They are detecting some other species that could be used for other information. Phase 2 is now taking place for this sub-team. Phase 2 will include developing abert's feeding sign survey, making meetings just quarterly and creating a final report. Year two has been funded to continue bird monitoring and trap monitoring. Greg Aplet (TWS) asked what the hypotheses is? Casey explained hopefully we can answer question of occupancy rate staying steady. Jeremy Sueltenfuss (CSU) asked about the other Tier 1 species like Northern Goshawk. That will be similar type of monitoring; the intent is to outreach to partners to start to evaluate Flammulated Owls, bats, and carabid beetles. Rob Addington (TNC) asked about occupancy rate. Casey said it's a % of square kilometer grids being occupied by a species, then that is measured over time. Then they can inform trigger points such as with the iterative NEPA process at UMC. Paige Lewis thanked the team for staying committed to this process. It will help make more comprehensive decisions. Paula Fornwalt (USFS) asked if the team has tried to make any desired trends or are they not trying to impose those types of accounting. Casey explained that that is what hung up the team in their logic of how they are going to monitor and what to monitor.

#### **DOMESTIC SHEEP & GOAT GRAZING:**

Brian Dreher and Janet George (CPW) gave a presentation on domestic goats and sheep and their relation to bighorn sheep. Gave some background. Value and importance of bighorn sheep; they are our state mammal and have high ecological and social importance. Bighorn sheep use a diversity of habitats in Colorado. They use the steep, rugged terrain to escape predators and for viewing. Gave some information about their features and reproduction. Rams make significant movements during breeding season. In Colorado, they were heavily exploited for hunters. The agency started regulating their harvest. Current state-wide estimate is about 6,900 and staying steady. They were once during settlement times vary widely distributed across the U.S. The distribution looks different now, with many fragments. It's the only big game species in Colorado that we've never been able to recover to historic pre-settlement times. Disease is thought to be the main reason. Concern comes from transmitting disease/pathogens between species (from domestic sheep and goats to bighorn sheep) and it's fatal to bighorn. There are no vaccines now. Escaped domestic goats survive in the same areas. Janet talked about a die off that happened. The last two die offs of pneumonia happened more recently. Fifteen years ago was the last one. During that time there was a domestic ram that was associating with the bighorn. Then it spread to other sub-herds. There's about just 100 or so left in this herd (Tarryall and Kenosha Mountains bighorns). She talked about another die off in Silver Bell Mountains of Arizona

where pathogens are passed from goats to bighorn. They recommend “effective separation” between wild sheep and domestic sheep. So they recommend alternatives than domestic sheep and goats for fuels reduction. They also have best management practices. Carol Ekarius (CUSP) asked about their resistance to camelid diseases; neighbors are bringing camels. They don’t believe that the camels spread disease to bighorn.

#### **ECOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORTS FROM THE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION TEAM:**

Rob Addington (TNC) gave an update on LR team reports published this year. He showed the Adaptive Management process – Collaborative Implementation of Forest Landscape Restoration in the Colorado Front Range. Showed the diagram that Greg Aplet showed the Roundtable last year. He shared the Desirable Forest Structures for a Restored Front Range by Yvette Dickinson and the Spatial Heterogeneity sub-team. It identifies undesirable conditions. He showed Monitoring Forest Cover Spatial Patterns with Aerial Imagery: A Tutorial – by Pelz and Dickinson using National Aerial Imagery Program photos for assessing spatial heterogeneity, used for stand-scale assessment. As a companion document, Dickinson and Giles produced Monitoring Landscape –Scale Forest Heterogeneity – both found on the Roundtable webpage under Published Documents. He said there will be reports to come – ecological monitoring report from aerial imagery approach and CSE, as well as the socio-economic monitoring report. Sara asked how soon on the GTR report? We’re still a ways out.

#### **ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS REFRESH:**

Paige Lewis (TNC) and Rob Addington (TNC) discussed the idea of refreshing the Roundtable’s treatment priorities. Rob talked about the original treatment prioritization – 2004-06 distinguished between fire risk mitigation/community protection and restoration objectives; identified overlap. He said that work done 10 years ago is still a great foundation, just needs refinement. There are new tools available like landscape fire models; COWRAP; refined map of WUI; climate change issues and assessments; General Technical Report – putting restoration principles into practice; various decision support programs that are GIS based. Big question is does the Roundtable think this is worthwhile? Form a subgroup? Develop a proposal to show the Roundtable; seek grant opportunities. Don Kennedy asked what do we gain from this? If we get more acres with mixed conifer – what benefit? Does it support more funding? Rob thinks it may give us a better understanding of the landscape patterns. May help us drill down to a finer scale what areas are priority. Sara Mayben brought up what we learned on UMC – is it going to increase the acres we treat but it may help us and make it more effective and help do a better job on the ground. Chuck Dennis (West Range Reclamation) thought that is two different question –

where do we treat? And what is effective? Paige said when doing the CFLR application we would focus on these areas and that's where the funding will go; some of these zones should be considered; right now we're limited because we agree on lower montane ponderosa pine. This could increase the range of what we advocate for treatment. Are we willing to risk some uncertainty and have more robust conversations around that; more experimental? Tom Fry (American Forest Foundation) brought up that he recalled a phrase from 2004-2008 that if everything is a priority than nothing is a priority. He thinks a refresh is valuable but we need to take a really hard look at that; it took 2 years to find agreement on these big "Blobs" and if we reopen that conversation is wary. Cindy Domenico (Boulder County) brought up that she agreed with Paige on the community protection piece and we're missing a huge piece and it makes sense to explore that. Gali Beh asked if we have more density than it does need to be looked at? Greg Aplet said if the question is would we move into the mixed conifer, from a CFLR standpoint there probably is reason – add the CFLRP story to the Roundtable story; we've already crossed that threshold. He agrees also with Tom, of the 1.5 million acres we've barely dented so do we want to expand? He also said there's a huge part that we're missing – the private land forest. Gali reminded this was a 40-year vision; it's been 10 years; we'll find out from Mark Martin's map that we may have a better idea soon. Carol Ekarius said she agrees we're moving upward; there's treatment happening. In existing area if we can continue to refine down, there's the challenging exercise of disappearing acres that can actually be feasibly restored. She asked about private land; Mike Lester (CSFS) said we affect 20,000 acres in Colorado of treatment being done, so that is increasing every year (20 years ago it was just 1000 acres/year). She asked what are we talking about money-wise? Paige said we'd have to look at the different levels of investment. There's a range of scales in which we could approach this. Mike Lester said there's plan/see/check/act process - it's a cycle. Mike said in ten years a lot of science has happened. It makes sense to check what we've done and what we've learned. This is part of that cycle. We need to include the landscape issues in that. Chad Julian said a lot of the fires starting on the upper montane blow to the lower montane and so it needs to be included. Rob said in the first go around there wasn't much fire modeling happening, how fire would behave, so that's another interesting thing in a refresh. Jenny Briggs (USGS) asked after the field trips to some of the CFLR areas is Paige wanting to increase awareness for where treatments happen? Each agency has their priorities. Would we have a more coherent rationale across agencies for where the work is happening? How much can we influence as a Roundtable? Paige said that could be an outcome of this. When we talk to our FS partners, they take Roundtable priorities into consideration, but they are very general. If we could zero in on work happening on non-federal lands, according to the same priorities would be great. Don Kennedy said if it promotes getting more DNR money to do mixed conifer than that's good. He thinks if we're running out of acreage on some of these

areas on the Pike, for Denver Water they are doing more with private lands. If the grants are confined by the support of the Roundtable, then he would support opening up the discussion. In the AR, they have 2 million acres of which 900,000 is private lands. Gali reminded that it's about 50/50 distributed across agencies. Paige said they've had conversation with Missoula Fire Lab, we may get some modeling from them at a low cost. Greg said within CFLRP adaptive management process that asks are we working in the right places? The group voted using their flags. Interested – Casey Cooley, Rob Addington, Greg Aplet, James Schriever, Matt Schulz, Chuck Dennis, Mike McHugh, Megan Davis (will also talk about this with Community Protection team), Tom Fry, Sara Mayben, Chad Julian, Don Kennedy, RC Smith, Mike Lester, Jonathan Bruno.

#### **CONSERVATION EXCHANGE PROJECT:**

Paige Lewis (TNC) and Jen Kovecses (Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed) shared information about the Conservation Exchange Project. The idea started in 2009. Many partners, cities, breweries. A key happening occurred in 2013. Green vs gray Analysis. (green-nature, grey-water treatment etc), did an analysis of the potential cost savings in Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson watersheds. They decided on forest restoration as a key program. TNC and other organizations decided they were interested in exchange for water benefits. Showed the vision and mission they came up with (see presentation). The Exchange is a connector between beneficiaries. A pot of money would be leveraged through combined investment from multiple stakeholders. Funds allocated through a collaborative process with monitoring to make it more robust. Their first Science and monitoring meeting is September 23, and if Roundtable folks are interested they are welcome. If it's successful than it could be replicated throughout the Front Range. TNC and the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed is co-leading this because of their shared vision. Jen gave an overview of her organization which was modeled after CUSP. Jen will be the main person handling the distribution list. Ron Archuleta, Mike Lester, and Casey Cooley are interested.

#### **DISCUSSION ABOUT WILDFIRE MITIGATION TOOLS:**

Carol Ekarius (CUSP) led a discussion about wildfire mitigation tools: are we using all the right tools? Over the past year we have had issues on what we are doing for restoration. Some folks are saying no mastication, etc. We should bring this up at the Roundtable. Do we want to make a policy as a Roundtable? Sara Mayben said a great example is Jeff Underhill (USFS) has always said once we have over a 25-30% slope, we can't log, so mastication etc. is necessary; it's driven a great deal by our slopes. Carol said they were out on a project partly on private land and on



forest service land. She thought it was progress, Jonas Feinstein thought it didn't look good. Carol said it's somewhat philosophical, but when we talk about restoration, do we throw some of those tools out. Gali said in our 2006 report we list three different tools "in the toolbox" which includes mastication. Paula Fornwalt said she could show some of their research. Paula said they're not seeing deep fuel loads. Brett Wolk has been involved in this a lot. He said ecologically they're not bad for restoration. Plants come back the research says. The trees are happy. Not having a huge impact on ecosystem health. The question is fire. People are associating mastication with fuels reduction, this is a misunderstanding. It's fuel rearrangement. Fire behavior is the big unknown. You're actually making fuels more continuous and burn more land. Carol asked do we need to harrow the chips, or pile? Brett said some people are doing that now, mixing the chips into the soil. Brett said that can get some of the understory plants started. There are a lot of variables. Mike said with Hyde Park area they liked the mastication, but that was a bizarre fire. But they hadn't had property loss where mastication had been done. Sallie Clark (El Paso County) said at the Wildfire Review Committee last week, there's a lot of conflicting information about controlled burns, etc. It would help if the Roundtable came up with a recommendation and they can give that to the legislators. Jonathan Bruno (CUSP) said the push for restoration on every acre is not acceptable. Make sure we're approaching this at the right scale. Sometimes it's fire risk/fuels reduction. But it's important that we have the tools and that we have a concise message. Seeing property owners are dropping out of federal programs because of the push for restoration. Can they have other options like just risk reduction? Sara thought there may be a need to look at the research again and what the tools are, and Carol added then we put in the BMP of each of those tools. Greg Aplet thought we should get some of those answers from our monitoring. Mike said in looking at the research, there's not a lot of science, we don't know a lot about the impacts. It's complicated. Landowners want "the answer." Brett said there's starting to be more research. Paula's study that he's worked on will give us some good information. Carol said one of our next recommendations may be doing more research. Megan Davis (Boulder County) said there's still a great deal of education that think mastication is utilization. Carol asked Megan and Cindy Domenico about the Fourmile treatment area. Megan said the mastication may have actually contributed to the intensity of the spread of the fire. Brett said the biggest thing there was the slash piles. He said the distribution of the materials is more important than the depth. It's the continuous fuels thing. He said when it's patchy it seems to be healthier. Brett's trying to start a review in Colorado of the ecological effects. Each option has positive and negative effects. Chuck Dennis said when he worked for the Forest Service they came out with some guidelines. He thinks it would be helpful for the Roundtable to come up with some guidelines. He thinks if we remove mastication out of our tools, it's not good, it's one of our fastest and quickest treatments. Carol thought a chart type of tool could be

useful. Mike thought when Paula and Mike gave us their presentations they were really helpful. Could they replay that presentation? Paige said she worries in the fire risk reduction context, what is the impact on fire behavior. The idea of fuel rearrangement vs fuel reduction – if we're not restoring than that's problematic. What messages are people getting? Jenny Briggs talked about the message landowners are getting. If property owners are against certain tools but are willing to do mastication, i.e., do we as a Roundtable come up with suggestions? Jonathan said private property owners are asking why would I "clear cut" when I get paid from the state to do the minimum; they will do that. Carol said we have moved a long way to more of a groupy/clumpy with less basal areas, so we're doing a good job, if we only recommend the extreme restoration, we're losing landowners. Mike Picard said looking at mastication as an end-all fix isn't right, it's the preparation toward a fix. They did mastication followed with burning, sometimes twice. Reducing fuel loading while opening up canopy, that was a good first step, in subsequent steps. Maybe it's the first step in a multi-stage project site development. Carol said the challenging part is that in Colorado broadcast fire is still not happening. Casey said it's the landowner's choice once they have the options; the problem is more with grant standards and funding which is separate from the science. Do we need to be working more with the grant funders to see where the problem lies? Carol said when the grant funders are federal and state agencies, and there's such inconsistencies, then it is a place for the Roundtable to make recommendations. Brett said in defense of Jonas, there's an attitude of "let's do something." In the Fourmile Canyon report that just doing something isn't helping. Jonas is saying instead of just doing something, let's do it right. Sara said we aren't going to solve this today, primarily it's the landowners decision, but wrapping it into the Roundtable's priorities. It's an evolution; is it appropriate for us to apply the same standard to a private landowner as we do for the forest service? Casey said this is a benefit of the Roundtable, pushing the needle. Chad brought up we have to think about the definition of restoration. If you're just changing structure and density, just be honest about what you're doing. So the definitions should be honest about what you're doing. Sallie said for homeowners they think if they cut down their trees and chip them they think it's better, but they don't understand that they're changing the fuels.

#### **HOUSEKEEPING:**

Carol Ekarius gave a Fundraising update - Front Range contract with Forest Service has been recently signed. Invoices have gone out, a couple counties have not paid yet, but Carol and Cindy will remind them. West Range hasn't paid yet this year. Money goes mainly to Beh Consulting. Sometimes funds go to Washington, etc. Gali's contract will be up at the end of the

year. Executive Team will propose an RFP and hope that Gali would submit; look at other options. Are there changes they want to see?

Gali gave a budget update, \$19,000 to date, annualized would be \$27,000. Under new rates, it would be \$37,000 next year.

Next LR meeting will be October 22. Gali suggested we do a Denver meeting in November.

Megan Davis said the next Community Protection Team meeting is September 25 at the USFS-RO. They will talk about priorities, how we might look at refresh.

Brett Wolk said there's Society of Ecological Restoration conference in March.

Megan said the state summit for collaboratives is happening September 29. There are people from the Roundtable attending.