

Forest and Watershed Management Coordinating Group
Meeting Notes
July 20, 2018

Attendance:

Carmen Austin (NMSF-Las Vegas)	Laura McCarthy (TNC)
Caitlin Barbour (CPLA)	Molly Magnuson (NMOSE)
Alan Barton (FWRI),	Chelsea Morganti (NM DHSEM)
Wendy Blackwell (NMDHSEM)	Mark Myers (NMSLO)
George Chavez (NMACD)	Shawn Penman (UNM EDAC)
Doug Cram (NMSU)	Susan Rich (NMSF-FWHO)
Jacob Davidson (NMDGF)	Chris Sanderson (TetraTech)
Cliff Dils (USFS RO – Forestry)	Jesse Shuck (SWCA)
Abe Franklin (NMED)	Ed Singleton (Adelante)
Martha Graham (NM Rural Water Association)	Nick Smokovich (NMSF-Capitan)
Kris Graham Chavez (NRCS)	Cody Stropki (SWCA)
Todd Haines (NMSF-Bernalillo)	Mary Stuever (NMSF-Chama)
Emma Kelly (BoR)	Jim Wanstall (NMDA)
Ken Leiting (NMACD)	Mark Watson (NMDGF)

State Forester's Report – Susan Rich reported for Donald Griego:

- Statewide fire restrictions will likely be rescinded by the State Forester next week pending fire danger levels.
- NM State wildland fire resources will mobilize to assist other western states as requested.
- Replacement for NMSF Watershed Project Coordinator is in the process of being hired.
- NMSF Fire Business Manager position is currently being advertised.
- Lynette Borrego has joined NMSF as the incoming replacement for Administration Bureau Chief Bryon Pippin pending his December retirement.

Susan distributed and reviewed an updated project tracking [spreadsheet](#) and [maps](#) showing the State's ongoing and completed Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) projects.

- 57 projects funded since 2015 (all state sources matched with NMDGF Pittman-Robertson funds)
- \$21.733 million allocated to treat >26,000 target acres
- Of that, \$16,186,745 (appr. 75% total funding) has been expended to treat 24,543 acres to date
- 39 projects completed, 15 ongoing, 3 pending
- Developing additional multi-year projects now for another \$7.873 million from NMDGF and USFS.

Discussion ensued regarding the small number of upcoming projects on the list. Members named other possible sources of funding and match that could be developed. One goal of the CG has always been to increase coordination on upcoming projects, especially on private lands. Members asked Susan to forward a recommendation to the State Forester to create a mechanism that enables partners with funding or other resources to bring those resources to the table and offer input when WRI projects are being prioritized, in order to add to those projects. Other suggestions were to utilize partners' ability to provide funding and technical assistance to get surveys done to increase the number of acres that are fully NEPA-ready.

NM Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (NMWRAP) – Dr. Shawn Penman, from UNM Earth Data Analysis Center gave a presentation on the NMWRAP under construction using FEMA funding through a contract with NMDHSEM. The NMWRAP will be completed September 30 this year and follows the Colorado and Texas WRAP formats. It will have two separate applications – one for general users and an advanced one with login and reporting functionalities for professionals. See [NMWRAP handout](#) for more information.

Members provided the following feedback:

- Regarding using 2017 Burn Probability vs 2014 Wildfire Hazard Potential data - follow up with Tessa Nicolet because she is working on updated statewide WHP layer for NM.
- Abe recommends using HUC 12 watersheds.
- Nick recommends using Insect and Disease data.
- Mary asks about the bosque; scale is too large to pick that up.
- Mark Watson asks about having previous burn severity mapped – individual soil burn severity maps for large fires or Monitoring Trends in Burn Severity or other sources?
- Nick asked if there is a statewide data base for weeds. Jim: no, some done by CWMA's but not consistent.
- Is there a data set available for drinking water? Public water systems are on the NMED website. Drinking Water Bureau may have more information on surface water and ground water systems - Abe will work with Shawn.
- What is the connection between the Opportunity Map and WRAP?

*Send additional feedback to spenman@edac.unm.edu by August 10th or asap

Shawn added that LIDAR data is available for part of the state. The rest will be available in approximately 2 years, thanks to FEMA and NRCS funding.

After Wildfire NM Learning Exchange Workshop - Doug Cram described a Learning Exchange workshop being planned for the week of October 15th on the topic of preparing before a wildfire occurs to improve a community's ability to respond post-fire. The project is funded by grants from Cooperative Extension and US Army Corps of Engineers Silver Jackets. This pilot will focus on Emergency Preparedness Area 3 (Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba counties). The project includes developing curriculum that can then be used in other areas. The goal is to increase community preparedness using a team-based approach, with the teams comprised of those attendees who would be involved in post-fire response in real life. It builds on the Burned Area Learning Network by using a learning exchange process, with participants who have gone through a post-fire situation talking with those that haven't. They will invite people involved in Ute Park Fire recovery. Members recommended offering continuing education credits and inviting representatives from water associations.

Ute Park Fire Damage Assessment and Action Plan - Cody Stropki described the Ute Park Fire and post-fire effects and the damage assessment that SWCA is conducting under contract with NM DHSEM. This is the first time the State has led a BAER-like recovery effort, so it took longer to get started (compared to federal Burned Area Emergency Response) while DHSEM worked through new contracting processes. Cody reported that in many parts of the fire, damage to the ground was not as bad as might be expected based on the soil burn severity map because the running crown fire passed through so quickly. However, the loss of overstory makes the potential for flooding and topsoil loss high with oncoming monsoons. There's potential for major damage to Ute Park, especially those properties in the flood plain. SWCA is coordinating with the NRCS Emergency Watershed Program team and the USACE hydrology/hydraulics team to avoid duplication and build combined capacity. Product will be a report identifying best areas to take actions to protect public safety and critical infrastructure (water sources, highways and roads, drainage, etc.). The document will include recommendations for mitigation measures, cost estimates and possible funding sources. It will be delivered to the state and

county, other partners involved in the recovery, and private landowners. NRCS' report will look at ways to protect Philmont Scout Ranch and other private lands. In the long run it's the community that will have to secure and pool resources and drive the response. They'll need a local champion to step up and lead the effort.

Wendy Blackwell of NMDHSEM added that once the report is produced, it will be up to the community to decide which entity will take which actions. SWCA was contracted to do what a BAER team normally would, plus coordination with other players and facilitating interactions with the public. The contract did *not* include the next step of helping the community through the transition and implementation process - a 'lesson learned'. FMAG funding (requires an executive order) for the Ute Park Fire enabled DHSEM to do emergency procurement for the report because it is tied to protecting public health, life and safety. Wendy noted that SWCA was asked to document the emergency response process the state followed in this case, but cautioned that it's not a given that this process will be followed in the future.

Mary Stuever pointed out that it's difficult to plan ahead for post-fire response because each incident has its own parameters. However, we can prepare by instructing emergency managers about the complexities they'll encounter, what kinds of things they'll possibly face and need to address, mix of funding sources, what they can and cannot do beforehand. Martha Graham suggested using table top exercises for Post Fire Workshop.

Round Robin

Susan Rich – State Forestry has an RFA out for Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) grants; see NMSF website for [announcement and application](#).

Mary Stuever – Public outreach about the Rio Chama San Juan RCPP has been very effective; their recent open house had great attendance. First round of applications are due mid-August.

Cliff Dils – SW Region does not expect a 2019 budget until after January; USFS will be under a continuing resolution, which limits funds to partners. Jim Hubbard's confirmation hearing for USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment is next week, after which they expect a permanent chief will be chosen (Vicki Christiansen is acting). Walter Dunn is retiring September 30, 2018; plans to replace him are moving forward, but not until after January. CFRP will continue with Ali, Laura, Amanda filling in until that position can be filled.

Abe Franklin – The EPA Region 6 "[Our Water, Our Future](#)" Stormwater Conference will be held August 19-23 at Hotel Albuquerque. NMED received 8 applications for 319 subrecipients, will make selections by end of July. \$500,000 was appropriated for River Stewardship Program this year. RFP will be out soon. NMED may use the same process next year, so more funding may become available. The public comment period for [NM Non-Point Source Management Plan](#) will start in September.

Todd Haines – Contractors doing projects on USFS lands are getting back to work as fire restrictions are lifted. Bernalillo District is putting state funds on bosque work, looking at projects in Albuquerque. The District is producing a lot of forest management plans for private landowners.

Chelsea Morganti – The [2018 NM Homeland Security and Emergency Management Conference](#) will be held August 28-31 at Hotel Albuquerque. Chelsea distributed newspaper inserts: "[Wildfire Season in New Mexico](#)"

and “[Watershed Health in New Mexico](#).” New authorization allows the Hazardous Mitigation Grant Program to be used for post-fire recovery in Federal FY2017-2018. Funding is tied to FMAG declarations, with \$1.275 million coming to NM. First priority is for areas affected by the FMAG event – El Cajete, Ute Park, and Soldier Canyon. Second priority are areas downstream and third priority is the rest of the state (see [HMGP handout](#)).

Carmen Austin – Las Vegas District has completed all projects with Santa Fe National Forest and got supplemental funds to add another 40 acres. San Miguel and Mora Counties are updating their CWPPs. Save the date for [NM Wood Industry Summit](#) on November 16-17, 2018. Please share info and [application form](#) with industry and other potential vendors (artists and craftspeople who work with wood).

Alan Barton – FWHI will host a workshop on agroforestry in October in Farmington. Contact Alan if you want to serve on the agroforestry working group.

Mark Watson – NMDGF’s Ecological Planning Division just contracted with Forest Stewards Guild to compile research literature on wildlife and develop guidelines for treatments in different forest and woodland types.

Emma Kelly – BOR will fund two WaterSmart grants in NM: MRGCD will develop a watershed restoration plan through the Isleta reach of the Rio Grande; TNC will work with NAU on developing an Eastern Jemez Watershed Partnership Group.

Kris Graham Chavez – NRCS is completing a damage assessment report for Ute Park. FY15, 16 and 17 RCPPs are underway, working on signatures for 2018 RCPPs, have not gotten dates for FY19 yet. Deadline for 2019 Joint Chiefs applications is October 19th.

Molly Magnuson – OSE is contracting with NASA JPL on a 2-year project using remotely sensed evapotranspiration data to help with water management in NM. OSE has been soliciting ideas for applications for using ET data, like doing comparisons between pre- and post-events. They have a brainstormed list of possible projects. For more information see [handout](#) and [link](#).

Mark Myers – SLO has many different projects going on statewide, including White Peak CFRP (20,000 acre planning area) and planning for Clines Corners project. SLO is looking for partners who are looking for non-federal dollars to match their funding.

Mark also gave an update for Eytan Krasilovsky – six Forest Stewards Guild summer youth crews are wrapping up 9-week projects on Cibola and Santa Fe NF. Fall Youth Corps will have two 8-person crews thin and burn on the Mountainair Ranger District. Rio Grande Water Fund will help fund two new initiatives: building an ‘All Hands All Lands’ Burn Team for northern NM and starting a Forest Mayordomo fuelwood pilot on the Camino Rael District.

Nick Smokovich – Capitan District is working with FSG using an American Forest Foundation grant to do outreach in targeted watersheds, including Lost River Watershed. [North Sacramento Watershed Strategy](#) was completed by NMSF, the Lincoln NF, BLM, Mescalero Apache Tribe, SLO, SWCD, RC&D, local governments and NGOs.

Jacob Davidson – NMDGF is engaged in Ute Park Fire recovery, installing log erosion barriers on the Colin Neblett Wildlife Area. They're discussing the next phase of Pittman-Robertson funding with USFS and BLM.

George Chavez – NMACD received 66 applications for the Range and Forest Health RCPP (35 BLM and 31 USFS permittees, mainly in southern NM). They would like to see more applicants from the northern part of the state.

Ken Leiting - NMACD continues efforts with the acequias RCPP. They're working with NMDGF, NFWA and others doing treatments for mesquite and Texas hornshell mussel along Black and Delaware Rivers in southeastern NM.

Caitlin Barbour – Chama Peak Land Alliance is doing river and watershed work in Navajo and Blanco Basins with support from Rio Grande Water Fund – on track for 500 acres. Planning a TREX in the San Juan NF in early September and another on private land in northeastern part of the state in October. Emily Hohman is regional coordinator for All Hands, All Lands. Plans are underway for the [2019 Rio Chama Congreso](#) on February 23rd at Ghost Ranch.

The next Coordinating Group meeting is Friday, October 19th, 2018.

Meeting time is 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. at the Albuquerque Open Space Visitors Center, 6500 Coors NW in Albuquerque. We'll select dates for our 2019 meeting schedule at that meeting, so bring your calendars.