

Upper San Juan Mixed Conifer Working Group
Meeting 16, April 20, 2012
Pagosa Community Center
Meeting Notes

The sixteenth meeting of the Upper San Juan Mixed Conifer Working Group consisted mostly of a review of the summary report that is in preparation. A meeting of the Education Committee followed it.

Attendees: Bev Warburton, Darlene Marcus, MaryJo Coulehan, J. R. Ford, Bill Trimarco, Dan Wand, Marsha Porter-Norton Sam Burns, Thurman Wilson, Kevin Khung, and Steve Hartvigsen.

Marsha gave a brief background of the project and thanked Darlene Marcus from Congressman Tipton's Office for joining us.

Thurman passed out the current draft of the summary report. Most of the meeting was spent reviewing the report and discussing suggestions. The report seemed close to an acceptable product. Specific comments have been incorporated since the April meeting. A final version of the report will be available before the next meeting, which is scheduled for July 13 from 9:00-12:00.

Darlene suggested that we should develop a brief summary of the project with graphics and that someone from the Working Group should attend an upcoming hearing on forest health. Both were accomplished in the weeks after the meeting. Marsha developed a two-page briefing paper and J. R. attended and spoke at the briefing.

The following graphic from the flip chart notes was used in the briefing paper to show the "Big Picture:"



We will consider the next meeting to be our closeout of Phase I of this project. We will have accomplished the things we said we would in the National Forest Foundation (NFF) grant and will have spent almost all of the grant money by then. Thurman will need to do a brief report for NFF to close out the grant. He may want some input on that report at the July meeting.

Marsha reported that the Education Group met on February 21 and developed the following action items:

Describe the governance of the Education Group.

Draft an Education Plan.

Approach PAWS with a funding strategy.

Look for funds.

Inviting Joe Duda from the Colorado State Forest Service out to become more familiar our efforts was suggested. Having Tony Cheng from the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute visit, perhaps at the same time, was also suggested. We should also continue trying to interact with Senators Udall and Bennet and Congressman Tipton.

It was suggested that for the Working Group to continue to succeed, it probably needs a (paid) coordinator. There seemed to be general agreement with that and that having someone local in the role would be a plus.

We ran out of time so the monitoring topic was pushed back to the next meeting. That will also allow better preparation for it.

Next meeting – July 13 from 9:00 to 12:00 (three hours due to many agenda topics)

Mixed Conifer Education Group Meeting, April 20, Pagosa Community Center

Attending: Bev Warburton, Darlene Marcus, MaryJo Coulehan, J. R. Ford, Bill Trimarco, Dan Wand, Marsha Porter-Norton, Thurman Wilson, Kevin Khung, and Steve Hartvigsen.

Marcie couldn't attend today's meeting due to a conflict in Silverton but provided two draft documents that she had agreed to work on at the last meeting, an education plan and a contact list. People thought that the general direction was good, that they were going in the right direction, and that they were easy to read. A few suggested edits were passed on to Marcie. We should plan the next meeting date around Marcie's availability.

Most of the discussion focused on the idea of working with Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation (PAWS) to try to raise a steady stream of funding for watershed protection and restoration. After Steve is off of the Board, someone should present the idea at a PAWS work session first and ask to work with PAWS staff to develop the idea. That would probably be better than going straight to their Board with a proposal.

The basic idea is that preventative work is cheaper than cleanup from fire damage. The concept has been confirmed in studies after fires such as the Hayman Fire on the Front Range. J. R. heard several related presentations at a Forest Health workshop in Leadville. He is getting materials from the Denver Water Board and others that will be helpful in illustrating this. Steve will work with Mark Roper and Becca Smith on relevant GIS materials.

In these tough economic times, it will take a strong argument that this is a good investment. There was speculation that most work funded this way might need to happen on non-federal land. People are unlikely to support a proposal if they think it is just replacing federal appropriations with local money. It will probably be perceived more favorably as an addition or enhancement as opposed to a replacement.

The current idea is to propose adding an involuntary fee to water bills for source water protection. One dollar a month on 7,000 (this was a guess at the meeting – someone should get the real number) bills for 12 months would result in \$84,000 per year as an example. Most of the funds should go to work on the ground; some could go to overhead and partially funding a coordinator. If implemented, PAWS would probably require a formal group to manage the money. The San Juan RC&D would be a good fit as a fiscal agent. They could then disperse money to groups such as MSI for monitoring or contractors for watershed improvement work.

We should also be exploring other options for funding. One possibility is America's Great Outdoors – they expressed interest in watershed protection and improvement on the Lower Dolores.

We may want to develop a Memorandum of Understanding as we move forward. We should also look for more partners.