

**Forsythe II Multi-Party Monitoring Group (MMG)**  
**March 14, 2018**  
**FINAL Meeting Summary**

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**Attendance**

15 people attended the meeting, including private citizens, US Forest Service (USFS) employees, and Magnolia Forest Group (MFG) members.

**Action Items**

<i>All</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send any requests for questions to be answered or topics to be addressed during the GTR webinar to Heather and Brett.</li> <li>• Send any Avenza process thoughts or suggestions to Marin.</li> </ul>
<i>Kevin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out more information about hydrological objectives for Forsythe II.</li> <li>• Meet with Teagen to continue working on the Roles and Commitments document. Send it to Heather when it is completed.</li> <li>• Bring maps of remaining Phase I units to the next meeting.</li> </ul>
<i>Marin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with Jim and Greg about these data points and work with Peter to identify next steps.</li> </ul>
<i>Heather</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out information about the GTR webinar.</li> <li>• Send out Roles and Commitments document for final edits.</li> <li>• Include a report-out of the DAT/USFS process on the April 16 agenda.</li> </ul>

**Aligning Expectations**

A member of the group noted that the USFS, MFG, and private citizens interested in Forsythe II have been engaged in a dialogue around this project for quite a while. The relationships between these different actors have changed significantly over time and are much more productive and trusting now than they once were, which has fostered an environment for positive progress. While some involved in this process are formal objectors to the USFS process, there is an overarching interest in ensuring that the treatments are implemented in a way that all parties understand, even if they do not agree. Moving forward, it is important to align expectations among the different parties as the process proceeds.

The MMG discussed the different expectations related to this project and the themes from their conversation are outlined below.

- There is an understanding that the USFS may want to implement treatments in a certain way that may not align with the expectations of others in the community or within the MMG.
- The USFS has to meet certain targets, which will direct the treatments that they implement within the project area.
- Some people feel that the USFS should change its prescriptions so that there is less treatment in the areas adjacent or close to Nederland while treating more heavily in areas that do not have as significant a social impact.

- The intent of the USFS Decision Notice (DN) for the Forsythe II project is project-wide, but analysis was conducted at the unit level.
- While there is some “wiggle room” within the units, significant changes cannot be made to the unit prescriptions. For example, the USFS cannot take out 20 percent of trees instead of 50 percent. The USFS still has to meet the goals outlined in the Decision Notice.
- There is enough flexibility within the treatment prescriptions to accommodate new information, especially information coming out of the MMG process.
- The Decision Notice outlines the purpose and need for the treatment, which includes fuels reduction in the wildland urban interface (WUI), ecological restoration, the creation of defensible space, and others. Different treatment types are more effective in meeting these different goals.
- The USFS assesses a treatment’s success in meeting the overarching purpose and need through a variety of objectives, and there may be opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of meeting the purpose and needs. Types of monitoring could include effectiveness, implementation, and ecological monitoring.
- While some people think that the planned treatment will take too many trees, there are other people who think it will not take enough.
- A future webinar will provide MMG participants with more information about how the USFS assesses its success in meeting the purpose and need of a treatment.
- Measuring success for an individual unit based on criteria is much easier than measuring success for an entire project.
- Most treatments use ranges of basal area (BA) as one indicator of meeting implementation objectives.
- There are questions about objectives for hydrology in the Forsythe II units. *Kevin Zimlinghaus will find out more information about hydrological objectives.*
- While there is no way to define how much room there is for flexibility with the treatments, the USFS is committed to their relationship with the MMG and other concerned citizens and will continue to engage and work with the group.

### **Avenza Data for Phase I**

Some MMG participants used Avenza to submit data points for treatment areas included in Phase I of the Forsythe II project. Others submitted comments via geotagged pictures. Some of the data points are not directly within each treatment unit but still adjacent and applicable to the discussion. Staff from the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) prepared a document that summarized the themes of these data points—both overall and by unit. The group discussed the points provided on several Phase 1 units, with MMG members sharing their motivations behind the Avenza points, the USFS staff sharing their preliminary thoughts, and the group discussing the various perspectives. Below are the themes of the comments for each unit.

#### *Unit 40*

- Some parts of this unit have mistletoe, which requires full tree removal to eradicate. This is likely not the path the USFS will pursue. However, prescribed fire will be an effective tool in eliminating mistletoe in the future.

- There is a drainage in this area that goes to Gross Reservoir, so thought must be given to erosion control during treatments.
- There are many rocky knolls in this area and some are captured in the data points. These will be factored into the USFS treatment design.
- There seem to be patches of old growth. However, it is unclear if there is an old growth ecosystem or rather mature trees. Mature trees and old growth forests are not the same thing.
- Since this unit will be treated manually in Phase 1, the diameter cap and operational logistics are not conducive to the removal of large-diameter trees.
- Dense areas around large trees can end up causing mortality when the unit is later burned.
- Juniper in the gullies support wildlife and can cause treatment difficulties due to prescribed fire risks.
- The treatment boundary current goes beyond the ridge as a way to help the USFS apply fire to the area in the future.
- No roads will be created during Phase 1, as it is not logistically feasible as a manual treatment. A planned USFS watershed analysis will provide more information in the future about road system maintenance. There will be no change to evacuation routes during this phase of treatment.
- This treatment has decreased in size since it was initially outlined due to elevation, topography, and rockiness.

#### *Units 5, 6, and 7*

- The number of treated acres in this unit has decreased, but other units will have an increase in the number of trees removed to compensate for this change.
- There is a popular trail in this area, and the lodge pole along the trail act as a snow fence. Without the dense tree coverage, people may not use the trail in the same way.
- The road will be rerouted to access northwest treatment units. There is an interest in ensuring that the future alignment of this road tracks as much as possible with the alignment of recreation trails to minimize disturbance. Realignment may cause the proliferation of social trails.
- This treatment will focus on removing conifers from aspen and meadows to stop conifer succession in the absence of fire.
- Unit 5 has a large wetland area.
- There is lots of visible heterogeneity within Unit 7, and many of the big trees will be left due to design criteria relating to circumference.
- Unit 7 has decreased from nine acres to three acres. Unit 8 has decreased from seven acres to five acres.
- The USFS plans to avoid treatment in areas that are wet and where there are water sources.
- Leaving clumps of large trees is aesthetically pleasing.
- Some aspen trees may be killed in order to cut down larger trees with the purpose of encouraging the growth of more aspen. The USFS consider minimizing impacts to existing aspen in the effort to support growth of future aspen.

### *Units 63 and 107*

- There is significant visible disturbance from illegal camping here, and there are many rocky knolls.
- Creating more openings might make people more likely to damage the forest and create social trails.
- The final layout of this unit depends on the Design Advisory Team's (DAT) feedback. Unit 63 will likely only have 2.5 to three acres of treatment.
- In Unit 107, roughly 30 percent of lodge pole will be cut, and treatment can be moved to protect big trees. However, this is a difference between big trees and old growth trees, as old growth is a term that is specifically defined in the Forest Plan.
- There are criteria to identify old growth, which can be discussed at a later date.
- Treatment in this area could negatively impact wildlife migration corridors; however, there may be less of a concern about the cover reduction if there are alternate routes available. There seem to be a variety of alternate routes available in this area. On the other hand, there is local anecdotal evidence that clear cuts impact wildlife presence.
- Changing the treatment from a north-south orientation to an east-west orientation to better accommodate wildlife could raise questions about the impacts of wind blow-down.

### *General Comments*

There were two data points indicating flammulated owl nests. *Marin Chambers will check in with Jim and Greg about these data points and work with Peter to identify next steps.*

### **Next Steps**

The MMG agreed to the following next step:

- The USFS will consider these notes to see what the best next steps are in terms of rationale for treatment design.
- MMG members should look at the revised timeline that indicated hard deadlines and check points, knowing that everyone must be flexible as this is an iterative process. This timeline will guide future MMG discussions.
- The General Technical Report (GTR) webinar will be held on April 2 from 12 to 2. Heather Bergman will send out information in advance. Any questions that should be answered during the webinar should be sent to Heather in advance.
- Teagen and Kevin will continue to work on the Roles and Commitments document. Heather will send it out for final edits when it is complete.
- The next meeting will be held on April 16. Kevin will bring maps of other units within Phase 1 that were not discussed today.
- Peak Facilitation will send a staff member to take general notes during the DAT/USFS field trip. There will be a report-out of this process at the April 16 meeting.
- All participants should email their thoughts on the Avenza collection and review process to Marin.
- Any suggestions for topics for the GTR webinar should be sent to Brett.