

Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)
April 15, 2019, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Nederland Community Center
Meeting Summary –FINAL

Attendance: Paul Alaback, Jonathan Baumhover, Teagen Blakey, Marin Chambers, Mark Foreman, Angie Gee, Kris Hess, Alex Markevich, Dallas Masters, Yvonne Short, Bob Swanson, and Kevin Zimlinghaus

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Dan Myers

ACTION ITEMS

Heather Bergman, Marin Chambers, Angie Gee, and Kevin Zimlinghaus	Develop a 2019 work plan for the MMG, including meeting and field trip dates and deadlines for submitting Avenza points to the USFS.
Angie Gee	Send an electronic version of the US Forest Service (USFS) landscape-scale values and objectives diagram to Peak Facilitation for distribution to the group.
MMG members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send Marin Chambers any input on Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) monitoring priorities near the Forsythe II project area as soon as possible. • Keep stakeholders (Magnolia Forest Group, Design Advisory Team (DAT), Big Springs residents, etc.), informed of the 2019 timeline as it evolves and encourage them to provide input on prescriptions as soon as possible.
Kevin Zimlinghaus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate concerns about the marking of limber pines for cutting in Unit 4 and report back to the group at the next meeting. • Send Marin Chambers the most recent version of the “master list” of Forsythe II treatments for posting to the project website. • Find the maps of units with overlays used in last April’s webinar and send them to Peak Facilitation for distribution to the group.
Peak Facilitation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a summary of MMG discussions of Units 1 and 2 from past meetings and send that document to Kris Hess for distribution to the DAT. • Send Doodle polls to MMG members to schedule upcoming meetings and field trips based on the 2019 work plan.

USFS UPDATES ON DELAYED UNITS

Angie Gee of the USFS provided an update on the units within the Forsythe II project that the agency has decided to delay. Her comments are summarized below.

- In the past year, community members have expressed particular interest and concerns about Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 24, 63, and 107. Key concerns include:
 - The roles of the MMG, DAT, and Nederland Board of Trustees (BOT).
 - The timing of treatments in Units 1 and 2.
 - Language in the design criteria for the project concerning the amount of the units the USFS is permitted to cut in lodgepole pine units (30%) and whether aggregations of other species within those units can be cut in addition to the 30% of the unit’s total basal area.

- Drainage and erosion concerns.
- A preference for treating dense, unhealthy “doghair” lodgepole forest instead of healthy, well-spaced stands.
- Impacts of treatments to wildlife.
- The USFS discussed Units 1 and 2 with Nederland’s Town Administrator and a DAT member. They recommended that the BOT act on the DAT’s original recommendations for those units.
- The USFS planned to discuss the developments surrounding the delayed units and Units 1 and 2 with the MMG months ago, but several meetings have been canceled due to inclement weather and the government shutdown.
- By delaying the units in question, the USFS aims to show the community that it hears their concerns. The meeting cancellations also resulted in several unresolved concerns coupled with passed USFS national contracting deadlines, which strengthened the case for the delay.
- The USFS intends the delay to last for one contract cycle. This would mean that the delayed units would be submitted in February or March of 2020 (meaning they would be treated that summer, at the earliest). However, as the MMG begins its broader, landscape-scale discussion, there is potential for the timing or grouping of units to change.
- The USFS has submitted the remaining units in Phases 1 and 2 for contracting to the agency’s Acquisition Management (AQM) department. A USFS contracting officer and a small business are working to put a package together for the 370-acre Phase 1 treatments. Phase 2’s 50 acres are also in contracting and have been technically spun off as a new project (“Manchester”) because they will be treated mechanically. The USFS expects to award the contracts later this spring with work taking place this summer and fall.

Group Discussion

MMG members discussed the USFS’s update. Their comments are summarized below.

- Several MMG members thanked the USFS for delaying the units.
- A DAT member stated that the DAT was originally formed to represent a broad range of viewpoints on how to treat Units 1 and 2. Not every DAT member agreed with the final recommendations, but the outcome was a reasonable compromise. There are concerns that the USFS will not act upon the DAT’s recommendations because other groups are willing to spend more time advancing their goals for the project.
- The USFS has received recommendations from the DAT and BOT that will inform its decision. The USFS hopes that stakeholders can develop a solution that is acceptable to everyone.
- MMG members reiterated concerns that the planned treatment for Unit 1 violates the project’s Decision Notice.
- The USFS is reviewing questions (sent along with feedback on the Phase 1 draft contract) from group members about priorities from the Decision Notice, including wildlife concerns. A new wildlife biologist will start work on the Boulder Ranger District in mid-May.
- The USFS has the flexibility to reorder some of the units in future phases, although it is required to submit at least some units for contracting next spring.

LANDSCAPE-SCALE VALUES AND DISCUSSION

At the November meeting, MMG members shared their landscape-scale priorities and objectives for the project (a list of which was distributed at this meeting). USFS staff spoke about their own landscape-scale values at this meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- The USFS presented a diagram depicting its landscape-scale values. The diagram included:
 - The four objectives specified in the Decision Notice:

- Restore the severity and intensity of wildfire within the wildland-urban interface (WUI).
 - Restore ponderosa pine/mixed conifer stands, aspen, meadows, and shrublands.
 - Create defensible space and 300-foot buffers between USFS and private lands.
 - Emulate natural disturbance in stands dominated by lodgepole pine.
 - The methods for achieving those objectives:
 - Reducing stand density
 - Prescribed broadcast and pile burns
 - Buffer mitigation
 - Defensible space mitigation
 - Reducing canopy, ladder, and surface fuels
 - Cutting conifers and enhancing meadows, shrublands, and aspen
 - Creating variable stand structure
 - Clear/patch cutting, planting mixed conifers, and thinning regeneration
 - The components of the USFS's multi-use mission:
 - Social
 - Wilderness
 - Fuels
 - Wildlife
 - Hydrology
 - Recreation
 - Invasive weeds
 - Timber
 - Fisheries
 - Botany
 - Heritage
- The overarching goal of the Forsythe II project is to reintroduce fire to the landscape. The USFS broke down the objectives and corresponding treatments into three primary buckets: protecting life and property in the WUI (fuels mitigation treatments occurring regardless of a restoration need), treatments occurring for the purposes of ecological restoration, and authorizing private landowners to treat on USFS lands adjacent to their property for the purposes of protecting their life and property (defensible space).
- The USFS does not necessarily need to achieve all of its goals and priorities in all cases and all places. It views the methods to reach the objectives as tools and does not need to use all of them. The USFS wants to determine which objectives and tools apply on specific pieces of the landscape and tailor their approach.

Group Discussion

Group members discussed the USFS's comments. Their discussion is summarized below.

- Several MMG members stated that they did not object to the reintroduction of fire to the landscape and that they were encouraged to hear the USFS clearly state that this was the project's primary objective.
- Group members stated that the USFS's approach to reintroducing fire to the landscape was not the best or only way to accomplish their goal. They also stated that the four objectives in the Decision Notice were too narrow and excluded social and ecological objectives. The MMG was created to help balance those objectives.
- Group members asked that surface and ladder fuel treatments be prioritized. The USFS stated that its goal was to reduce those fuels.

- There were questions about whether the USFS could designate some units as being suitable for meeting certain goals and work to meet the remaining goals in subsequent units.
- MMG members said they might be able to reach a consensus on mixed conifer and ponderosa units relatively easily because the USFS is focusing on manual treatments to reduce ladder fuels in those units (and so presumably will not treat 40-50% of the basal area of those units as had been previously discussed). The USFS's approach to meeting its goals in lodgepole units may lead to a more nuanced discussion.
- There was some support for focusing on areas where the USFS and MMG can find agreement before focusing on more difficult issues.
- The USFS said that it views the landscape as the entire project area but recognizes that the Decision Notice specifies what it may and may not do within individual units. MMG members suggested that the ecological context and values of the project were applicable beyond the project's boundaries.

Future Process Priorities

- While the USFS will approach treatments on a unit-by-unit basis, the landscape-scale discussion is a reset of the MMG conversation. Process participants have a number of tools to inform this conversation: maps, existing data, in-room meetings, and field trips.
- Group members discussed their preferences for the content and structure of future meetings.
- The major sticking points in the process so far have involved lodgepole patch cuts, the percentage of lodgepole units that is allowed to be cut, and concerns for wildlife habitat. Several MMG members supported maintaining larger, well-spaced lodgepole pines and focusing on treating thick and unhealthy trees in those units.
- Group members suggested spending time discussing overarching issues and values so that priorities are made clear before unit-by-unit discussions, which could expedite the process.
- Several MMG members expressed interest in seeing more pre- and post-treatment monitoring of treatments focused on basal area reduction to better gauge their effectiveness and quantify where fuels are most concerning.
- There was disagreement about how much basal area needed to be removed to reintroduce fire to the landscape.
- There was agreement that it might make sense to wait until the new wildlife biologist starts work to discuss wildlife issues (namely, the impacts of a lack of cover and heterogenous lodgepole stands on wildlife). Group members suggested scheduling field trips centered on wildlife concerns when there is snow on the ground so that it is easier to see animal tracks.
- DAT members requested that DAT and BOT members be consulted on future conversations and invited to field trips concerning Units 1 and 2.
- MMG members expressed interest in seeing maps of the units with overlays for structural stages, migration routes, etc. The USFS showed those maps in the webinar on General Technical Report (GTR) 373 last year and will try to find them again to share with the MMG.

PROJECT TIMELINE DISCUSSION

Group members discussed options for rescheduling upcoming field trips, input deadlines, and meetings. Their comments are summarized below.

- The MMG was asked to reschedule the June and July meetings because of staffing and venue challenges. There were suggestions that at least one of the meetings could be changed to a field trip. Group members said that a field trip should be held on a weekday evening.
- Group members agreed that it is important for the MMG to take field trips to contentious units and expressed interest in seeing units that are far from roads and examples of USFS

prescribed fire treatments. There were suggestions that staff could make a map for a self-guided tour of units closer to roads so that group members can see them on their own schedules. Group members expressed interest in holding a field trip on a weekday evening in June.

- The current deadline for submitting Avenza points for Phases 3 and 4 is May 11. The USFS would prefer that MMG members stick to that deadline. The USFS has planned treatments for units in those phases and needs information soon so that crews can start work as soon as possible. The units have been clustered so that the crews can minimize the length of their impact to trail systems. If units were treated outside of those clusters, crews would spend more time in the same areas.

NEXT STEPS

- Peak Facilitation Group will work with the USFS and CFRI to draft a work plan for 2019.
- Peak Facilitation Group will send a Doodle to schedule a field trip on a weekday evening in June.
- Group members are strongly encouraged to send Marin Chambers any input on monitoring priorities for CFRI plots near the project area as soon as possible.
- Peak Facilitation Group will prepare a summary of past MMG discussions of Units 1 and 2 to share with the DAT and BOT.
- The USFS will look into concerns about limber pines having been improperly marked for removal in Unit 4 and report back to the group.