

**Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)**  
**June 3, 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**Meeting Summary – FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Paul Alaback, Chad Buser, Karen Blakemore, Teagen Blakey, Tania Corvalan, Aurelia DeNasha, Jason Duetsch, Alex Markevich, Marin Chambers, Mark Foreman, Angie Gee, Paul McCarthy, Susan Wagner, Maddie Wilson,

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Angie Gee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the contracts to clarify the marking and treatment procedures in Unit 48 to ensure that they are treated correctly.</li> <li>• Inform the MMG when contractors are starting on specific units so that MMG participants can check to make sure the US Forest Service (USFS) is on site.</li> <li>• Update the MMG on the Boulder Ranger District’s program of work for fiscal year 2020 and 2021 once they are developed.</li> <li>• Bring the feedback from the MMG to the partners developing the memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the USFS and Boulder County partners.</li> <li>• Inform the MMG when there is a finalized version of the MOU and if the Nederland Board of Trustees plans on discussing the MOU.</li> <li>• Send the step transect data to MMG participants once the data has been collected.</li> </ul>
<b>Angie Gee and Teagen Blakey</b>	Discuss some of the recreation concerns outside of the MMG meetings to bring some clarity on those issues.
<b>Teagen Blakey</b>	Confer with non-USFS MMG participants to determine who would like to attend a June 20 field trip.
<b>Teagen Blakey, Marin Chambers, and Aurelia DeNasha</b>	Create an updated map with the location of old-growth forests in Forsythe II.
<b>Marin Chambers</b>	Connect Paul Alaback to Tony Cheng to learn more about the science team that will be associated with the MOU among USFS and Boulder County partners.
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	Send Tania Corvalan the next set of units that MMG participants will be considering in July.

**FORSYTHE II UPDATES**

Meeting participants provided updates on projects related to Forsythe II. Their comments are summarized below.

***US Forest Service (USFS)-Denver Water Agreement***

- The USFS is pursuing a renewal of its agreement with Denver Water. The agreement will be between the Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (ARP),

Pike-San Isabel National Forests and the Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands (PSICC), White River National Forest, and Denver Water.

- The negotiations to renew the agreement have not begun yet. The National Forests are working with the USFS Region 2 Office to determine what those discussions will look like.
- The USFS normally has an annual meeting with Denver Water in June, but it was postponed until fall due to COVID-19. The USFS will bring a proposal to the Denver Water board meeting in the fall to begin the renewal discussions.
- The current agreement with Denver Water expires in fiscal year (FY) 2021. The USFS and Denver Water are discussing how to close out that agreement.
- The USFS has a commitment to treat a certain number of acres, and they are trying to determine where to treat to fulfill that commitment. The USFS will need to treat about 1,000 acres on the east side of the Boulder Ranger District to meet their commitment. The 1,000 acres of treatment do not need to occur inside the Forsythe II boundaries; they only need to occur within the boundaries of Denver Water's zones of concern. There are other National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-approved acres in the Boulder Ranger District; although, not all of the NEPA approved acres are in zones of concern.
- There may be an opportunity to count surface fuel treatment acres and acres from treatments in Phase 5, 6, 7, and 8 of Forsythe II towards this commitment. Acres treated by prescribed fire count towards the acreage commitment in the Denver Water agreement.
- Surface fuel treatments are not mentioned in the Forsythe II Decision Notice (DN) except in limited areas. The DN does not preclude the implementation of surface fuel treatment either. The USFS can incorporate surface fuel treatments into contracts provided that they are feasible and cost-effective (i.e., there is enough area to justify a treatment).
- The DN sets the maximum percent of treatment area in a lodgepole pine unit at 30%. The MMG can discuss whether surface fuel treatments will count towards the 30% maximum on a unit-by-unit basis.
- As the USFS continues to treat acres to satisfy their commitments under the Denver Water agreement, the MMG can have discussions on how Forsythe II treatments can contribute to that commitment if it is helpful to the USFS.

### ***Contracting and USFS Pre-Work Meeting Procedures***

- During previous meetings, MMG participants said they wanted to learn how the USFS conducts pre-work meetings with contractors to identify opportunities to improve the pre-work meeting procedures. These discussions have been on hold because the contract administration procedures have changed due to COVID-19. There are no updates on this topic.
- The Phase 3 manual contract was recently awarded, but the contractor will not be able to start until July or August. The two mechanical contracts for Phases 3 and 4 have not been awarded yet.
- In Unit 48, there are areas where trees are marked orange for "leave" adjacent to areas where trees are marked blue for "take." Stands are either marked for "leave" or "take" based on the heaviness of treatments (trees will be marked for "leave" in stands with heavy treatments and "take" in stands with light treatments.). Having two different types of markings next to each other increases the risk that contractors will cut trees that are not meant to be cut. Angie Gee will review the contracts to clarify the marking and treatment procedures in Unit 48 to ensure that they are treated correctly.
- Snags in a stand where trees are marked for "leaved" would be intentionally marked so that snags are left on the landscape.

- Angie Gee will inform the MMG when contractors are starting on specific units so that MMG participants can check to make sure the USFS is on site.

### ***Stewardship Day Planning***

- The purpose of a Stewardship Day was for MMG participants to rearrange slash piles into loosely scattered piles for the benefit of wildlife. Given the impacts of COVID-19, all USFS Stewardship Days are on hold because the USFS cannot ask people to put themselves in situations of undue risk. The MMG can discuss the logistics for organizing a Stewardship Day when it becomes possible for the USFS to host these types of events.
- The MMG has previously discussed the potential for contractors to construct wildlife piles according to contract specifications, which would make a Stewardship Day unnecessary. The MMG last left that discussion by saying that it is difficult for fire crews to tell the difference between wildlife piles and burn piles while they are burning, so it would not be effective to construct two types of piles. The construction of wildlife piles could potentially be done in a way to make them visually distinguishable from burn piles. There may be some areas where it makes more sense to include wildlife piles into the contracts. The MMG will continue to talk about the topic of incorporating the construction of wildlife piles into the contract before the next contracts are developed.

### ***Volume Targets***

- The USFS uses two primary targets for their treatments: acres and volume.
- Volume has been a USFS target for many years to accomplish the timber-related goals of the agency.
- The USFS can report acres treated by manual and mechanical methods towards the acreage targets, but they can only report volume produced by mechanical treatments towards the volume targets.
- Sawlogs and non-sawlogs are both counted towards timber volume targets. The way to measure the volume of sawlogs and non-sawlogs follows a specific methodology.
- The material coming from forestry treatments along the Front Range are not in high demand because the material is too small. There is also a lack of timber infrastructure in the Front Range, which makes the hauling distances to processing facilities too far to be commercially viable.
- Congress sets both acreage and volume targets at a national level when they appropriate funding to the USFS. The current presidential administration has also increased the targets for both timber volume sold and the number of acres treated for hazardous fuel reduction.
- Once the National Forests receive their volume targets, each National Forest determines how much material each district can contribute to the target. The Boulder Ranger District does not contribute a lot of material to the volume target because many of the trees are not suitable to fulfill volume targets
- The USFS does not need to provide too many details on how volume targets work unless the volume targets will influence the USFS's decision-making in Forsythe II. The USFS should keep the MMG updated if volume targets affect where and how the USFS needs to treat certain areas in Forsythe II. Angie Gee can update the MMG on the Boulder Ranger District's program of work for FY21 and FY22 once they are developed.

### ***USFS, Boulder County, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, Town of Nederland MOU***

- Monte Williams, ARP Forest Supervisor, organized a meeting a year ago with representatives from Boulder County government, city government, conservation districts, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), firefighter associations, fire protection districts, non-

profit watershed coalitions, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), the USFS ARP, and other organizations. The group has been meeting quarterly to discuss reducing fire risk at the landscape-scale and policy level in Boulder County.

- The group is at a point where they are working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to define how the group will continue to work together. The MOU will establish a framework for federal and state agencies to align efforts to respond to ecological, natural resource, and recreational challenges across the forested lands in Colorado. The MOU is still in a draft stage.
- The MOU does not define a process for project-level decision-making (e.g., project selection, treatment methods, etc.). These types of decisions will happen on a case-by-case basis.
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has not had representatives at these meetings, in part because they have had vacancies in critical positions. They will likely become engaged in the future.
- During the MOU discussions, the group recognized that they need to expand the group to include mountain communities (e.g., Allenspark, Ward, Nederland, etc.).
- The MOU appeared on a Nederland Board of Trustees agenda. The notes from the Nederland Board of Trustees meeting did not provide background or explanation of the MOU. The MOU partners are developing their approach as they go, and there may have been a miscommunication that resulted in a draft version of the MOU being sent to the Nederland Board of Trustees. MMG participants should reach out to the Nederland's Parks, Recreation & Open Space Advisory Board (PROSAB) for more information.
- The MOU may include the formation of a science team. The science team should include scientists from a variety of disciplines, including landscape ecology, wildlife biology, hydrology, and fire ecology. CFRI will likely have a role in establishing or supporting the science team. Past science teams that CFRI has helped establish or support have included people from a variety of scientific disciplines and with academic and management backgrounds. Marin Chambers will connect Paul Alaback to Tony Cheng to learn more about the science team.
- The MOU does not include anything about coordinating resources for enforcement. As more people come to the area to recreate, there is an increased risk of humans starting a wildfire. Recreation management and enforcement should be a larger part of the MOU. Angie Gee will bring the feedback from the MMG to the MOU partners.
- Angie Gee will inform the MMG when there is a finalized version of the MOU and if the Nederland Board of Trustees plans on discussing the MOU.

## **COMMUNITY TREATMENT DESIGN OVERVIEW**

Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich gave an overview of the treatment designs for Units 52, 53, 54, 55, 80, 30, and 31. Their comments are summarized below.

- The treatment considerations document that the USFS shared with the MMG included detailed questions about the rules and conditions for treatments (e.g., required 50-foot buffers around waterways). The treatment designs for Units 52, 53, 54, 55, 80, 30, and 31 do not incorporate that level of detail, but they do identify a prescription for each unit as a whole.
- The units were categorized into three areas: the first area includes Units 52 and 53, the second area includes Units 54, 55, and 80, and the third area includes Units 30 and 31.
- Each treatment design has a corresponding topographical map, Google Earth map, and text description. The maps include tracks and points to identify important features on the landscape.

## **UNIT 52 AND 53 TREATMENT DESIGN**

Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich presented on the treatment designs for Units 52 and 53. Their comments are summarized below.

### ***Unit 52***

- Unit 52 was treated during the Winiger Ridge project, which is the reason that much of the Unit is broadly open. The purpose of the Winiger Ridge treatment in Unit 52 was to stimulate ponderosa pine regeneration, space the trees out, and reduce ladder fuels.
- Unit 52 is composed of primarily well-spaced ponderosa pine trees. There is a limited number of Douglas fir trees, with most of them located on the northern boundary of the Unit as the landscape transitions to a north-facing slope. There are also a few lodgepole pine trees.
- There is Douglas fir and ponderosa pine regeneration from the Winiger Ridge project. The height of the regenerating trees ranges from under six-feet tall to approximately 12-feet tall. The 12-feet tall regenerating trees have a two-inch diameter at breast height (DBH).
- There is slash on the ground in Unit 52 but very little. In some areas, more slash may be needed.
- Many wildlife species are moving throughout Unit 52 because it is adjacent to areas with north-facing slopes and an aqueduct.
- During the Winiger Ridge project, the USFS did not treat the northeast corner of the Unit, which is composed of primarily Douglas fir trees (marked on the map). This corner is an important area for wildlife as the landscape transitions from ponderosa pine forests to a denser, north-facing forest. The northeast corner should not be treated.
- There are two rocky outcrops in Unit 52, one on the east side and the other on the west side (marked on the map). These rocky outcrops should not be treated because they provide cover to wildlife and because there are not many regenerating trees on the outcrops.
- There is an area of lodgepole pines on the northern boundary of the Unit (marked on the map). These lodgepole pines are the only lodgepole pine trees in this Unit. These lodgepole pine trees can either be left or removed.
- There is a 30-yard wide fire break on the north part of the Unit that was created during the Winiger Ridge project to protect the area from fires coming up the canyon. Firefighters may be comfortable operating in this fire break during a wildfire because it is so open.
- The proposed prescription for Unit 52 is to cut regenerating trees with a two-inch DBH or less while leaving some larger Douglas fir regeneration to promote generational diversity. This prescription would reduce the Douglas fir regeneration and restore the Unit to its condition when it was first treated during Winiger Ridge. There should also not be treatments in the two rocky outcrops or northeast corner of the Unit. The lodgepole pine stand on the northern boundary of the forest can be left or removed.

### ***Unit 53***

- Unit 53 was treated during the Winiger Ridge project. During the Winiger Ridge treatments, the contractors created a mix of habitats by leaving well-spaced conifers on the landscape that did not block sunlight from reaching the aspen.
- In the section of Unit 53 that is directly adjacent to Unit 52, there are well-spaced conifers with aspen in between. Most of these conifers are larger, with most having a DBH larger than 14 inches.

- Since the Winiger Ridge treatments, trees have begun to regenerate. Ponderosa pines make up most of the tree regeneration. The regenerating conifer trees are about six-feet tall.
- Unit 53 has aesthetic and recreational values. The USFS has a designated campsite in the Unit.
- There is an area on the northern part of Unit 53 (marked on the maps) where there is larger Douglas fir regeneration. Some of these regenerating Douglas firs should be left on the landscape.
- There are two pockets of very dense Douglas firs in Unit 53 (marked on the maps). These pockets should not be treated and should be left intentionally to serve as wildlife retention pockets. These pockets help break up the visual continuity of the landscape. Additionally, there would not be an impact on the ability of aspen to grow if these pockets are not treated because they are separate from the aspen.
- There is a long section on the southern boundary of the Unit (marked on the maps). This section is next to Magnolia Road and is composed of larger conifers, a few aspen trees, and younger conifer trees. This section should not be treated because it serves as a visual and sound barrier from Magnolia Road and creates a sense of privacy for both recreators and animals. Animals, such as bobcats, moose, deer, and mountain lions, have used this section to move from the denser forests in the south to the denser forests in the north.
- Extra treatments are not necessary to make this area good for firefighting. Unit 53 already has good firefighting features: it is open and primarily contains aspen trees, it is next to Magnolia Road, and the conifers are well spaced.
- The proposed treatment for Unit 53 is to remove approximately 95% of the regenerating trees (two-inch DBH or less) and leave the larger trees, even those that have a DBH that is a little less than 14 inches. Some regenerating Douglas firs should be left for generational diversity. The two pockets of dense Douglas firs and the southern section of the Unit should not be treated according to the boundaries on the maps.

### ***Clarifying Questions***

MMG participants asked several clarifying questions about the treatment design for Units 52 and 53. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

*Are there pockets of aspen stands in Unit 52?*

No. There are very few aspen trees in Unit 52.

*Did Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich walk Units 52 and 53 to develop the treatment designs, and if so, how long did it take?*

Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich walked both Units 52 and 53 more than once. Although they did not cover every inch of the units, they are confident they identified the right areas for treatment. Because they were already familiar with the area, it took them about three hours to create the tracks on the map.

*Are the aspen trees in Unit 53 visible on the Google Earth maps?*

Yes, but the aspen groves are darker than expected on the Google Earth maps because the aerial imagery was taken during an early part of the growing season.

*Is it relevant to know the density of the aspen trees in Unit 53 for the treatment design?*

The USFS normally treats aspen units by removing the conifers. They remove conifers because the regenerating conifer trees will eventually shade out the aspen over several decades. The exact

density of the aspen trees in Unit 53 is not relevant because the aspen trees receive plenty of sunlight.

### ***Group Discussion***

MMG participants discussed the treatment design for Units 52 and 53. Their comments are summarized below.

- The treatment design for Unit 52 creates a mosaic of habitats and buffers around dense stands. This design helps make the area suitable for wildlife and firefighting.
- There are advantages to removing regenerating trees when they are young. Treating younger trees results in less slash and debris, and the slash that is produced decomposes faster. There is also less ground disturbance during treatments of younger trees. The biggest disadvantage of treating regenerating trees at a young age is that forest managers will need to come through more frequently (approximately every 20 years) to re-treat any new regenerating trees.
- The number of aspen trees in Unit 53 is beneficial for firefighting. Leaving the pockets of dense conifer trees is an acceptable option for firefighting if they are relatively isolated. If the pockets of dense conifer trees are large, it would be preferential to thin them to reduce fire spotting potential.
- Although the dense conifer pockets in Unit 53 would torch in a fire, the torching would not be impactful because they are surrounded by aspen trees and open terrain.
- There were differing perspectives on whether treating the southern section of Unit 53 would be beneficial for firefighting. One perspective was that Magnolia Road is a key holding point for managing high severity wildfires. A thinning treatment in this area would buy firefighters some extra time while fighting a fire. Due to the designated camping area in Unit 53, there is a higher potential for an escaped campfire to spread towards the road. A treatment alongside the road on the southern section of the Unit could slow down the fire before fire suppression resources could arrive. Another perspective was that because the southern strip of this Unit represents only a small section of the entire Magnolia Road, treating this section would only result in a very small benefit for firefighters. Because the firefighting benefits would be small, the aesthetic and recreational values should be a higher priority.
- There were differing perspectives on whether treating the southern section of Unit 53 would increase the risk of animals getting hit by a vehicle. One perspective was that the southern section of Unit 53, if untreated, may result in wildlife congregating on the road and increasing their risk of getting hit by a vehicle. Thinning this southern section a little bit would create a buffer space to allow wildlife to congregate off the road. Another perspective was that the southern section does not have many aspen trees in them, so animals would likely not be congregating in this area.

### **UNIT 54, 55, AND 80 AREA TREATMENT DESIGN**

Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich presented on the treatment designs for the Unit 54, 55, and 80 area. Their comments are summarized below

- It took about five hours to walk Units 54, 55, and 80 and create the treatment design.
- Unit 54 has a northern and southern division that are joined by a narrow connector. All of Unit 54 is characterized as an old-growth conifer forest.
- The Unit 54, 55, and 80 area has four sections based on differing characteristics and stand conditions (marked on the maps):
  - The first section encompasses Unit 80.

- The second section includes most of the southern division of Unit 54. There is an aspen grove that marks the eastern boundary of this section. There is a small segment on the south side of Unit 80 that is included in this section.
- The third section includes the north part of the northern division of Unit 54 and a small segment on the north side of Unit 55.
- The fourth section includes the south part of the northern division of Unit 54 and the eastern and southern areas of Unit 55.
- The treatment approach for the Unit 54, 55, and 80 area was to create a mosaic of dense and less dense forests to fulfill wildlife and firefighting considerations.

### ***Unit 80***

- Unit 80 is characterized by a north-facing slope and a dense forest. Unit 80 is adjacent to private property.
- During the Winiger Ridge treatment, contractors cut patchcuts in the areas southeast and northeast of Unit 80. There is also a patchcut that creates a fire break on the east side of Unit 80. These patchcuts in and around Unit 80 create opportunities for firefighting.
- The forests of Unit 80 are about 70% Douglas fir, 25% ponderosa pine, and 5% lodgepole pine. There are also some aspen trees interspersed in the forest. There is some conifer regeneration, mostly composed of Douglas fir with some ponderosa pine trees. Most of the conifer regeneration has a DBH of two inches or less.
- There is a rocky ridgeline (marked on the maps) that runs through the southern half of Unit 80. Along the rocky ridgeline, there are almost no aspen or regeneration trees.
- The canopy was opened up in the Winiger Ridge project, and it does not need to be opened up further.
- The proposed prescription for Unit 80 is to not implement treatments along the rocky ridgeline. In the rest of Unit 80, the treatment should include removing any conifer regeneration up to two inches in DBH while leaving some for generational diversity. The proposed prescription also includes a light ladder fuel treatment of conifers with a two-inch to four-inch DBH. There may also be an opportunity for surface fuel management in the eastern part of Unit 80, where there is windthrow as a result of the patchcuts.

### ***Southern Division of Unit 54 and Segment on the South Side of Unit 80***

- The southern division of Unit 54 is characterized by south-facing slopes and dry conditions. The eastern boundary of this section is indicated by an aspen grove.
- The southern division of Unit 54 is open and has a mixture of well-spaced ponderosa pine trees and Douglas firs. There are some junipers in this section as well. The openness of the section makes it a good area for firefighting. As a result, the section does not need a heavy treatment.
- Some of the larger ponderosa pine trees are infected with mistletoe, but the Douglas firs are not infected with mistletoe.
- There are not many regenerating trees as a result of the dryness of the section.
- There is some slash on the ground, but the amount of surface fuels does not seem to present a fire risk. Some of the slash may be beneficial to wildlife.
- The proposed prescription for this section is cut ponderosa pine trees (with a 14-inch DBH or less) with a heavy mistletoe infestation. The juniper trees should be left in this section. The regenerating trees should be left to promote generational diversity.
- For the aspen grove on the eastern boundary of the Unit, the proposed prescription is to remove the conifer regeneration in the grove.

### ***North Part of the Northern Division of Unit 54 and Segment on the North Side of Unit 55***

- The north part of the northern division of Unit 54 and the segment on the north side of Unit 55 are characterized by dense old-growth forests.
- There are some aspen treated interspersed through this section.
- The proposed prescription is to lightly treat ladder fuels and regenerating trees. The treatment could potentially include patches of lightly treated areas and patches of untreated areas. The patches of light treatment could be placed around the aspen to enhance them. Any treatment would need to maintain the old-growth character of this section.

### ***South Part of the Northern Division of Unit 54 and Eastern and Southern Areas of Unit 55***

- The south part of the northern division of Unit 54 and the eastern and southern areas of Unit 55 are characterized by a south-facing slope and an open ponderosa pine forest.
- This section is not as dry as some of the other sections.
- There is some Douglas fir regeneration in this section.
- The proposed prescription for this section is to remove the Douglas fir regeneration and ladder fuels to the extent that it exists. Some ponderosa pine regeneration should be left for generational diversity.

### ***Clarifying Questions***

MMG participants asked several clarifying questions about the treatment design for Unit 54, 55, and 80. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

#### *How many junipers per acre were on the landscape?*

There were two or three large juniper trees, but some may have been on the smaller side. During Forsythe I, some large, isolated juniper trees were cut. Because these juniper trees are isolated and do not pose a fire risk, they should not be cut in Forsythe II.

#### *What are the reasons for treating regenerating trees with a two-inch DBH or less instead of a four-inch DBH or less?*

Most of the regenerating trees have a DBH of two inches or less, including the trees that are regenerating more quickly. The small size of the regenerating trees is because many of the trees that would have had a DBH of three, four, or five inches at this time were removed during the Winiger Ridge project.

### ***Group Discussion***

There were differing perspectives on whether the proposed prescription was enough to fight fires. One perspective was that the proposed prescription of treating regenerating trees with a DBH of two inches or less may not be effective in a high severity fire situation. Although the south-facing slope stands may not carry a crown fire, the stands would not be accessible to create a holding or control line. The amount of reduction in the canopy is not enough for firefighters to effectively hold a fire. Another perspective was that the area is not as dense because of treatments conducted during the Winiger Ridge project. There are two ridges in the area, open forests, and a road, which are all features that are conducive for fighting fires. The USFS fire staff should examine the area on the ground to see its current condition.

### **UNIT 30 AND 31 TREATMENT DESIGN**

Teagen Blakey and Alex Markevich presented on the treatment designs for Units 30 and 31. Their comments are summarized below.

- Units 30 and 31 together are shaped like a lowercase letter “r.” The northwest corner of the “r” is Unit 30, and the rest of the “r” is Unit 31. On the map of Units 30 and 31, five patchcuts are planned and laid out. Three patchcuts are in the upper part of the “r,” and two patchcuts are in the leg of the “r.”
- There are two ephemeral streams (marked on the maps) that run through the three patchcuts in the upper part of the “r.” These ephemeral streams create ravines that have a wetter condition.
- The area in the three patchcuts in upper part of the “r” are denser, have heavier surface fuels, and are generally less healthy. The treatment should include the three patchcuts in the upper part of the “r.” There should be a size reduction of the patchcut in Unit 30 to create a buffer between the patchcut and the ephemeral stream. The northern boundary of the patchcut should be moved southward; the new proposed northern boundary is marked on the maps.
- The area in the two patchcuts in the leg of the “r” are characterized by well-spaced lodgepole pine trees. The area is wet and relatively healthy because the forest is located on a north-facing slope. There is also a stream that runs just north of the two patchcuts. The area of these two patchcuts may serve as a wildlife corridor. The area of the two patchcuts seem to have never been treated, and the maturity of these lodgepole pine trees is unique in the area.
- The two patchcuts in the leg of the “r” were laid out before the recent lodgepole pine discussions during which some MMG participants expressed a preference for placing patchcuts on south-facing slopes. The proposed prescription is to not treat the two patchcuts in the leg of the “r” as laid out. Instead, there should be a patchcut placed in the central part of the leg of the “r” (marked on the maps). This area of the newly proposed patchcut, which is south of the laid out patchcuts, is characterized by an unhealthy stand of lodgepole pine trees, windthrown trees, and surface fuels. The proposed patchcut is also near a ridgetop, which would be beneficial for firefighting. The USFS started marking the proposed area for a patchcut, but they did not finish. In the proposed patchcut, some healthy lodgepole pine regeneration should be left to provide ground cover and create generational diversity.

### ***Group Discussion***

MMG participants discussed the treatment design for Units 30 and 31. Their comments are summarized below.

- The proposed patchcut in the central part of the leg of the “r” is immediately south to one of the already laid out patchcuts. Treating both the proposed patchcut in addition to the already laid out patchcut would help connect two roads (one north of the patchcuts and one south of the patchcuts) for firefighting purposes. There is a concentration of homes to the east and north of Units 30 and 31. These roads represent the only escape routes for those communities in the case of a fire. Both patchcuts would create a firefighting feature and help maintain or improve access for firefighters in the case of a fire.
- In the case of a high severity wildfire, crews would be put into safety zones to create hand lines. There would need to be an open area to support these on-the-ground efforts with aerial retardants. Retardants are used on all areas, including north- and south-facing slopes, during a wildfire. The density of forests on north-facing slopes reduces the effectiveness of aerial retardants because they cannot penetrate the canopy. A patchcut helps firefighting crews use retardants to reinforce on-the-ground efforts.

- The road to the south of the patchcuts is the only exit route for the communities east of Units 30 and 31. The newly proposed patchcut in the central part of the leg of the “r” creates a firefighting feature to protect this escape route.
- The road north of the patchcuts represents a clear and accessible road for escape in a wildfire situation for the community located north of Units 30 and 31. There may be other escape routes for the community north of Units 30 and 31, but the other potential escape routes either go through private property, are not well-marked, or are complicated to use. The other potential escape routes are not viable in the case of wildfire.
- One concern for firefighters is having enough of a buffer alongside the road to let people escape and let fire crews come in. A narrow road would create a bottleneck for residents coming out and fire crews coming in.
- The corridor on the northern road could be widened with a thin patchcut along the road. Creating the buffer space along the road would make it easier to defend and provide space for emergency vehicles to go off the road if necessary. Creating buffer space along the northern road would be a better defense strategy for firefighting than placing a patchcut in the dense forest because the additional buffer space would be effective no matter from what direction a wildfire is coming. There is a stream adjacent to the southern road, so a patchcut along the southern road would not be possible in accordance with the specifications outlined in the DN.
- Connecting the northern and southern roads with patchcuts would create an opportunity for firefighting beyond improving the escape routes.
- The slope in one of the already laid out patchcuts in the leg of the “r” is extremely steep, which may lead to erosion problems if a patchcut is placed there. Residents may not use an egress through the patchcuts because the area is steep. A patchcut may also not be an effective treatment method because the trees are already so well-spaced out.
- There may be more areas outside of the unit boundaries that could be cut that are adjacent to the proposed patchcut.

### **JUNE FIELD TRIP DISCUSSION**

MMG participants discussed the plan for a June field trip on June 20. Their comments are summarized below.

- Given that Governor Polis has extended safer-at-home orders, a June field trip is not going to occur as it has traditionally. It will be possible to have a field trip on a smaller scale, with only a couple of people following proper safety protocols.
- Potential field trip locations include the north division of Unit 54, the patchcuts in Unit 31, and Unit 80.
- The locations of the field trip should focus on the areas with which there are diverging perspectives in the MMG.
- There should be documentation of the field trip for those who are unable to go on the field trip.
- The USFS crew will be completing step transects in some of the discussed units. That data can help inform the proposed prescriptions. Once the USFS receives that data, they can use it to discuss the proposed prescriptions internally. Angie Gee will send the transect data to MMG participants once the data has been collected.
- Teagen Blakey will confer with non-USFS MMG participants to determine who would like to attend a June 20 field trip.

## NEXT STEPS

- The target date for completing the treatment designs for Units 52, 53, 54, 55, 80, 30, and 31 is June 26. Assuming that the MMG and USFS will need to have further discussions about the proposed prescriptions beyond the field trip, the MMG should plan to meet again to discuss these treatment designs in addition to the field trip before the June 26 target date.
- The USFS will need to discuss their timeline for marking crews once Kevin Zimlinghaus returns. Once they have talked through the timeline of the marking crews, the USFS will work with Peak Facilitation to send out Doodle polls to schedule additional conversations in June and July.
- The next meeting topics include design perspectives (restoration and resiliency and prescribed fire as a driver of treatment) and completing the proposed prescriptions for Unit 52, 53, 54, 55, 80, 30, and 31.
- Teagen Blakey and Angie Gee will discuss some of the recreation concerns outside of the MMG meetings to bring some clarity on those issues.
- MMG participants could use assistance from a geographic information system (GIS) expert to create maps to identify old-growth areas in Unit 29. The GIS position at the USFS is currently vacant. Marin Chambers could create the maps if someone provides her the appropriate shapefiles. Aurelia DeNasha may also have the shapefiles and could create a map. Teagen Blakey, Aurelia DeNasha, and Marin Chambers will figure out how to create an updated map with the location of any old-growth forests.
- Samuel Wallace will send Tania Corvalan the next set of units that MMG participants will be considering in July.
- Other topics for future meetings include:
  - Wildlife pile contract specifications
  - Updates on opportunities to join sales administrator to inspect during and after treatments
  - Evaluation of USFS internal procedures related to communications during the pre-work meeting
  - Boulder Ranger District's FY20 and FY21 program of work
  - Ongoing contract discussions between Denver Water and USFS
  - Treatment of existing surface fuels
  - Process for jointly flagging units/flagging aspen units
  - Shared stewardship day for re-shaping piles for wildlife (how, when, and who)
  - Big Springs egress road
  - Elk collaring study
  - Updates to the master list