

**Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)**  
**July 22, 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**Meeting Summary – FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Chad Buser, Karen Blakemore, Teagen Blakey, Mark Foreman, Angie Gee, Alex Markevich, Paul McCarthy, Susan Wagner, and Kevin Zimlinghaus

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Kevin Zimlinghaus and Chad Buser</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flag the large trees that will be taken out in a sample section of Unit 52 on Saturday, July 25, for MMG participants to review and provide feedback.</li> <li>• Send an email to Samuel Wallace to notify the MMG that the flagging in Unit 52 is complete.</li> </ul>
<b>US Forest Service (USFS) Crews</b>	Flag the areas of aspen treatments in Unit 80 to delineate where in Unit 80 aspen treatment prescriptions will apply.
<b>Kevin Zimlinghaus and Teagen Blakey</b>	Plan the August 8 field trip once the USFS sends their review/response for Units 29, 30, 31, and 61 on August 1.
<b>Angie Gee</b>	Consider the impacts of recreation in Unit 53, and make an open and transparent decision on the Unit 53 prescription in the absence of agreement among the MMG.
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	Send an updated schedule for the upcoming meetings to the MMG.

**PRESCRIPTION EVALUATION DOCUMENT UPDATES**

Meeting participants discussed changes made to the prescription evaluation document. Their comments are summarized below.

- The prescription evaluation document for Units 52, 53, 54, 55, and 80 have been updated with the agreements that field trip participants reached during the July 18 field trip. The only changes made to the prescription evaluation document were the addition of the agreements; the unit descriptions and proposed prescriptions were not changed outside of small formatting edits.
- Some of the boundaries in the community proposed prescriptions for Units 52, 53, 54, and 55 need to be moved to the final decision section in the prescription evaluation document.

**UNIT 52 DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the prescription in Unit 52. Their comments are summarized below.

- The agreements made among the field trip participants during the July 18 field trip included:
  - Taking out larger trees up to a 12-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) to create gaps in the canopy between tree groupings and individual trees in ponderosa pine stands, but not removing all trees up to a 12-inch DBH.
  - Treating conifer trees up to a 12-inch DBH in aspen stands.
  - Focusing the treatments on removing Douglas fir and lodgepole pines in the unit overall.
  - Treating the unit manually and as an old-growth development forest.

- Taking out ladder fuels where they existed.
- Piling activity fuels up to an 8-inch DBH, meaning that boles with an 8 to 12-inch DBH will be left on the ground and bucked.
- Not treating any existing surface fuels.
- During the July 18 field trip, field trip participants reached agreements on the treatment prescriptions. The agreements on the treatment prescriptions do not mean that there is agreement among the field trip participants on the reasoning behind the treatments.
- Community members identified Unit 52 as a particularly special unit because the characteristics of the forest in this Unit make the area look natural. Community members also identified Units 53 and 77 as being particularly important units.
- With the agreement on removing trees up to a 12-inch DBH in ponderosa pine stands, the MMG still has to decide how many trees are going to be removed under that guideline.
- The MMG should decide how many 8- to 12-inch boles are an acceptable amount to be left on the landscape. From a fire perspective, there are not many concerns about leaving 8- to 12-inch DBH boles on the ground, considering that much of the cut material has a DBH of 8-inches or less and will be piled. The number of 8-inch to 12-inch boles being left on the ground should not limit how and which trees are cut.
- During the field trip, there was some confusion about whether the original prescription discussed treating trees up to 14 inches or 12 inches. There were differing perspectives on whether the treatment should remove trees up to a DBH of 12 inches or 14 inches. One perspective was that removing trees with a DBH of 14 inches or less is needed to give the USFS flexibility to create gaps in the canopy and create openings for ponderosa pine regeneration. Another perspective was that cutting trees up to a 14-inch DBH is not acceptable because cutting trees up to a 14-inch DBH would damage the character of the Unit. If the prescription included cutting trees up to a 14-inch DBH, the treatment would not cut every tree up to a 14-inch DBH, only some trees.
- Kevin Zimlinghaus and Chad Buser will flag the large trees that will be taken out in a sample section of Unit 52 on Saturday, July 25, for MMG participants to review and provide feedback. The MMG does not have diverging perspectives on removing the intermediate and smaller trees, so Kevin and Chad only need to flag the larger trees. Once Kevin and Chad have flagged the sample plot, they will send an email to Samuel Wallace to notify the MMG that the flagging is complete for their review and feedback.

### **UNIT 53 DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the prescription in Unit 53. Their comments are summarized below.

- Unit 53 is an aspen unit.
- Following the field trip, some MMG participants went back to the area alongside Magnolia Road and came up with a proposal for the buffer area after identifying the location of the ground juniper. The eastern boundary of the proposed buffer area would be located where the Unit 53 boundary separates from Magnolia Road. On the western side of the buffer area, the treatment would extend into the Unit about 175 feet, and on the eastern side of the buffer area, the treatment would extend into the Unit about 125 feet. Treating conifer trees up to a 12-inch DBH in this buffer area would create fire breaks along the road for firefighting purposes and remove the trees above the ground juniper.
- There is a concentration of conifers on the western corner of Unit 53. It would be beneficial to extend the buffer area to the western boundary of the Unit to incorporate this concentration of conifers into the treatment. On the western side of the Unit, there is a little section where the unit boundary separates from Magnolia Road; in that area between the unit boundary and Magnolia Road, it is not possible to treat. Extending the boundary to the

west is better than extending to the east because the gap between the unit boundary and Magnolia Road is narrower on the west side than on the east side. Extending the buffer area to the western boundary may be a possibility if it helps meet firefighting objectives.

- Outside of the treatment buffer area, there were multiple perspectives during the field trip on what the prescription should be. One perspective was to remove the smaller regenerating conifers up to a DBH of 2 inches. Cutting any larger conifers would affect the character and social values of the stand. Another perspective was to remove the trees up to the DBH limits identified in the Forsythe II Decision Notice (DN) for aspen stands. Another idea proposed during the field trip was to take trees up to a 12-inch DBH around the dispersed campsites. There was no agreement reached during the field trip on how to treat the areas outside of the treatment buffer area in Unit 53.
- The conifers in Unit 53 are large and well-spaced, and they should not be removed. Previous treatments that removed large conifers from aspen stands did not demonstrably help promote the aspen. The aspen prescription identified in the DN should not be applied to this Unit in particular.
- The DBH limits in the DN that direct conifer removal in aspen stands were originally developed for wildlife purposes. Most of the aspen stands on the Forsythe II landscape have conifers in them, and many of these aspen stands with conifer trees are not being treated because they are located in the defensible space zone. Where there is an opportunity to remove conifers in aspen stands, that opportunity should be taken to create a variety of forest types on the landscape. A treatment could target Douglas fir and lodgepole pine trees first and leave some of the ponderosa pine trees on the landscape, but that treatment is less favorable than removing the conifers as specified in the DN.
- A treatment that selectively targets certain tree species is not appropriate for Unit 53. The conifer trees are already widely spaced, and the diversity of tree species helps meet forest health and aesthetic values. A forest with diversity and complexity is healthier than a monoculture of trees in general.
- There are campsites in Unit 53, which elevate the area's social value. The campsites in Unit 53 are some of the few campsites in the area where recreators can drive on the dirt road into the campsite. There are four different campsites in Unit 53, all of which are used regularly for dispersed camping.
- Dispersed campsites present a fire risk. The local fire departments are often having to put out unauthorized fires from dispersed campsites. There also issues of people overstaying and shooting guns in dispersed camping areas. It is likely a small number of people creating a vast majority of the problems.
- The USFS is treating in many of the primary public recreation areas, like Unit 53. People who come to recreate cannot do so on private lands and rely on public areas. Because so many people rely on public lands for their recreation, it is important to maintain the aesthetic and social values of the Unit by retaining the conifer trees on the landscape.
- The camping is additive to the Unit because it allows others to enjoy the aspen and mixed conifer stand. Closing off the campsites is not the answer for agreeing on a prescription.
- Recreation is an important consideration in Unit 53, and the implications of a light and heavy treatment on recreation should be accounted for when designing the prescription for this Unit. Treatments have a complex impact on recreation behaviors. For example, some treatments can open the forest and invite people to go into areas that they should not. If there is something the treatments can do to limit the impact from recreation, that should be a consideration in the treatment design.
- The Winiger Ridge treatment did a good job of balancing treating the Unit but not treating it too much.

- The treatment in Unit 53 should involve piling and burning and not lop and scatter. Due to the nearby campsites, it is better to burn the surface fuels rather than to leave them for campers.
- Angie Gee will consider the impacts of recreation in Unit 53. In the absence of the MMG coming to an agreement on how to treat in Unit 53, she will make an open and transparent decision on how to treat in Unit 53. She will need time to think about the prescription in Unit 53. She will report back to the MMG once she has had more time to think about the prescription in Unit 53.

#### **UNIT 54 AND 55 NORTH-FACING OLD-GROWTH FORESTS DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the prescription in Units 54 and Unit 55 for north-facing old-growth forests. Their comments are summarized below.

- Originally, the forest identified as old-growth retention in the northwest corner in Unit 54 was not going to be treated. However, under the DN, it is possible to treat old-growth retention forests. The northwest corner in Unit 54 will be treated under the agreed-upon specifications. The rest of Unit 54, which was previously identified as old-growth, is not designated in the US Forest Service's (USFS) database and is also available for treatment.
- There will be different treatments for old-growth forests on north-facing aspects and old-growth forests on south-facing aspects. On the July 18 field trip, the field trip participants did not discuss treatments for old-growth forests on south aspects, but they did discuss treatments for north-facing old-growth forests. The agreements they reached on the July 18 field trip applies to north-facing old-growth forests in both Units 54 and 55.
- The following agreements were reached during the July 18 field trip regarding treatment on north-facing old-growth forests in Unit 54:
  - Treat conifer trees, primarily lodgepole pine and Douglas fir, with a DBH of four inches or less, but retain some small clumps of conifers with a DBH under four inches.
  - Treat ladder fuels underneath ponderosa pine trees.
  - Occasionally treat conifer trees up to a 12-inch DBH around ponderosa pine trees to make the ponderosa pines more resilient.
  - Treat the unit manually.
  - Treat the regenerating conifer trees in the small pockets of aspen.
  - Implement surface fuel treatments around piles to help prevent surface fire creep.
- Boundary changes, as identified in the community proposed prescription for Units 54 and 55, have been incorporated into the treatment design.
- Surface fuels are important to the old-growth ecology, so maintaining the existing surface fuels by reducing surface fire creep as fire crews burn piles was something the field trip participants agreed upon. The USFS is determining to what size of surface fuels they will pile.
- Burn piles may scorch some trees, but the goal is to avoid scorching trees to maintain the integrity of the old-growth forest.
- One goal of the proposed prescription is to focus thinning treatments in areas where treatments will be most beneficial. Leaving some clumps of Douglas fir regeneration is an example of how the treatment creates diverse conditions.
- Some old-growth forests in Forsythe II have been identified on geographic information system (GIS) maps but have not been verified. The USFS staff is going to different identified old-growth in Forsythe II to verify they are old-growth forests. Conversely, the USFS can add areas as old-growth forests if they have the appropriate characteristics. The USFS staff uses score sheets to determine whether an area is an old-growth forest. They also use step

transect data to make sure the final treatment decisions are based on the on-the-ground characteristics of a unit.

- The proposed prescription for north-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55 are meant to promote the old-growth characteristics as identified in the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest and Pawnee National Grassland (ARP) Forest Plan.
- Meeting participants agreed that the prescription for north-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55 is in a good place, and they can begin to move forward with the prescription.

#### **UNIT 54, 55, AND 80 SOUTH-FACING OLD-GROWTH FORESTS DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the prescription in Units 54, 55, and 80 for south-facing old-growth forests. Their comments are summarized below.

- During the July 18 field trip, participants did not have time to discuss treatments on south-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55, in part because there is less disagreement about these treatments. The prescription of old-growth forests on south-facing slopes will be the same between Units 54 and 55. The prescription will also apply to south-facing slopes in mixed conifer forests in Unit 80.
- In Units 54 and 55, there are ponderosa pine trees with heavy dwarf mistletoe infestations on south-facing slopes. The prescription should include a manual treatment to remove ponderosa pine trees up to a 14-inch DBH with a heavy mistletoe infestation.
- The treatment should reduce ladder fuels up to a 6-inch DBH, primarily Douglas fir trees.
- There are junipers on south-facing slopes in Units 54 and 55. Juniper is highly flammable but also important for wildlife. The treatment should retain an individual juniper tree or a clump of three or more juniper trees per acre as outlined in the DN.
- In aspen pockets, the treatments should cut conifers up to a 12-inch DBH.
- In the northern section of Units 54 and 55, the terrain is characterized by an open ponderosa pine forest.
- In the southern section of Unit 54, the terrain is characterized by well-spaced ponderosa pines, a rocky and dry slope, and isolated Douglas fir trees located away from the ponderosa pine stands. Because some of the Douglas fir trees are a part of a stand and not in the open ponderosa pine forest, the prescription should account for these conditions, so it does not remove all the Douglas fir trees.
- Douglas fir trees are establishing themselves more frequently on south-facing aspects because of an absence of fire. Douglas fir species are shade tolerant and will reduce the growing space for ponderosa pine trees to establish themselves. In extreme years, Douglas fir will die before ponderosa pine trees. Ponderosa pine trees, on the other hand, are more resilient to dry conditions. To prevent the Douglas fir trees from overwhelming ponderosa pine trees, they should be removed, even if it leads to open meadows.
- There may be an opportunity to plant ponderosa pine trees to facilitate ponderosa pine regeneration in the treated areas.
- All of the treatments in south-facing old-growth forests in Units 54, 55, and 80 will be implemented manually.
- Materials should be piled in these treatments. If there is not enough material to be piled, a lop-and-scatter treatment is appropriate.
- Meeting participants agreed that the prescription for south-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55 is in a good place, and they can begin to move forward with the prescription.

#### **UNIT 80 DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the prescription in Unit 80. Their comments are summarized below.

- During the July 18 field trip, participants discussed the step transect data that the USFS had collected. They also discussed different definitions for firefighting terms, such as “safety zones,” and discussed when certain areas are fire safe.
- The July 18 field trip participants agreed that they would treat the stands with a conifer overstory and understory in the same way as they will treat north-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55.
- The July 18 field trip participants reached an agreement to cut conifer trees up to a 12-inch DBH in aspen stands, except for limber pine. They also reached an agreement to pile the existing and activity fuels in the aspen stands while leaving some for wildlife. The USFS is going to develop a specification related to the size of existing and activity fuels that will be piled by contractors.
- The MMG should discuss incorporating the construction of wildlife piles into contracts instead of rearranging the piles after the contracts are complete at a future meeting.
- For aspen stands, there are concerns that too much of Unit 80 will be characterized as an aspen unit. In Unit 80, there are areas where there are a few aspens interspersed among conifers, and there are areas where aspen is dominant. According to the step transect data, aspen represents approximately 40% of the unit. There was a desire to make sure that the aspen boundaries do not extend much further beyond that 40% mark and for the USFS to delineate clear boundaries around the areas that will be treated under the aspen prescription.
- The USFS crews are going to flag the different areas where aspen treatments will occur to delineate the aspen treatment boundaries.
- From the fire perspective, the treatment should consider including heavier treatments along the road, similar to the aspen prescription.
- In Unit 80, there are ponderosa pine forests on south-facing slopes, some of which have a heavy mistletoe infestation. There should be a manual treatment to take out the ponderosa pine trees. South-facing slopes in Unit 80 will follow a similar prescription as south-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55.
- Meeting participants agreed that the prescription in Unit 80 is in a good place, and they can begin to move forward with the prescription.

#### **UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the upcoming meeting schedule for the MMG. Their comments are summarized below.

- According to the MMG timeline, there were multiple options for the upcoming field trips and Zoom webinar discussion. Meeting participants supported the following schedule for MMG meetings:
  - Units 29, 30, 31, and 61 prescriptions
    - Community prescription proposal - Completed
    - USFS review/response – August 1
    - Field trip discussion – August 8
    - Zoom webinar discussion – August 12
  - Units 23, 24, 74, and the remainder of Units 49 and 73 prescriptions
    - Community prescription proposal – August 12
    - USFS review/response – August 18
    - Field trip discussion – August 22
    - Zoom webinar discussion – August 26

- The Units 23, 24, 74, 49, and 73 discussions will likely focus on Units 23 and 24. Units 49 and 73 include old-growth development forests, which will likely follow a similar prescription to the north-facing and south-facing old-growth forests in Units 54 and 55. Unit 74 has north-facing old-growth forests, so the prescription may differ slightly from the prescriptions on Units 49 and 73.
- The timeline for the community prescription proposal on Units 23, 24, 74, 49, and 73 gives the USFS less than a week to respond to the proposal. Additionally, there would only be three days to plan a field trip once the MMG received the USFS's response to the community prescription proposal.
- The community will submit their written prescription proposal for Units 23 and 24 as soon as possible, but preferably before the August 12 timeline. They should then plan on submitting and discussing the prescription for Units 74, 49, and 73 by August 12. The MMG will discuss the prescription for Units 23, 24, 74, 49, and 73 during the August 12 meeting as scheduled.
- If the field trip requires going to Units 23, 24, 74, 49, and 73, then the field trip participants will need to schedule a six-hour field trip. The field trip will likely need to include Units 23, 24, and 74 at the least.
- In Units 49 and 73, it will be better to complete and surface fuel treatments at the same time they are cutting and making piles.
- There will not be a field trip on August 15. Kevin Zimlinghaus and Teagen Blakey will plan the August 8 field trip once the USFS sends their review/response for Units 29, 30, 31, and 61 on August 1.
- Samuel Wallace will send out the updated schedule to the MMG.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- At a future meeting, the MMG should discuss and clarify old-growth definitions.
- Other topics for future meetings include:
  - Perspectives on the criteria and critical components of a resilient forest at different scales
  - Wildlife pile contract specifications
  - Phase 3 contractor update
  - 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