

## Notes from SBEADMR Working Group Meeting

March 12, 2015

The tenth meeting of the SBEADMR Working Group was held on Thursday, March 12, 2015 in the Pioneer Room at the Montrose County Fairgrounds.

### Item No. 1: Begin Discussion of Alternative Markets for Forest Products.

Phil Seligman, Wood Source Fuels offered to “start a discussion” about alternative markets with the idea that if the group was interested in continuing the topic at a subsequent meeting comprised of a panel of other individuals with alternative market experience. The discussion covered by-product, shipping and other new alternative market opportunities. The overall message is to be planning for future needs to utilize the by-product that will be coming off the Forest in the next 5-10 years. The counties are very interested in Alternative Markets and will be interested to see how they will be addressed in the NEPA process.

### Item No.2: Overview of PLP’s Community Outreach Program for SBEADMR

The general outline for the Community Meeting is to:

1) Previewed the 17-min short movie (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyPsYY7Ghns>) about spruce beetle ecology and what they are seeing on the Rio Grande national forest, as a precursor to what might be expected in the Gunnison National Forest.

2) Each community will arranged for their own community panelist. We would then like the panelists to each take ~10 minutes to talk about their perspective of spruce beetle infestations, aspen decline and management responses. We’ll hear from the agency representatives about a few projects they are proposing or implementing to mitigate the effects of the beetles.

3) We’ll then open it up to questions from the audience. We have developed a list of 5 questions to ask the panelists as well.

- Spruce beetles co-evolved with these forests and have always been a part of the natural disturbance cycles in these forests. How does the current epidemic compare to historic beetle outbreaks?
- Can you talk about the importance of not just **informing** the public about proposed projects or forest plans in relation to forest health (generally) and spruce beetle/aspen decline (specifically), but about **including** them in the decision making process (e.g. the SBEADMR working group and the UP CFLR project).
- It often seems easier to manage to avoid undesirable characteristics in our forests, i.e. even-aged stands that lack diversity. I’m curious how you look to reference conditions to dictate the desired composition of a forest, as well as how you factor in climate projections to inform long-term goals for management of forest health.
- How do large scale epidemics with severe levels of mortality alter the fire regimes in spruce-fir forests? Can you talk about the importance, and difficulties, of reducing catastrophic fire risk while also restoring human-altered fire regimes, the elimination of which partially got us in this mess in the first place?
- Some sort of question about the importance of monitoring pre and post disturbance, treatment, fire, etc. to inform future decisions, considering our knowledge on the ecology of this issue is evolving daily.

Any other thoughts are welcome and we are open to suggestions and assistance. There is some flexibility for each community to tweak it to fit their community needs.

### **Item No 3: West Fork Fire Complex and Spruce-Fir Issues in General**

A teleconference presentation was given by Adam Mendonca, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Rio Grande National Forest. Brief overview the West Fork complex is very similar to what the GUMG is experiencing 500,000 acres experienced mortality in the over story. They have been experiencing this for about 10 years now. The West Fork started on the San Juan in the Spruce Forest with a lightning strike. The fire transition into the lower area near the Town of South Fork which had to be evacuated. Much of the complex was in the Weminuche Wilderness but had burned into surrounding areas in the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests and private land. The fires, particularly the West Fork fire, burned in dead trees killed by the spruce beetle. Due to the intensity of the West Fork fire which for some days was burning in windy conditions no attempt was made to directly attack it. Aggressive, and so far successful, efforts were made to prevent the Windy Pass fire from reaching the ski area. Most personnel were engaged in structure protection efforts to the west of South Fork, on the low terrain near the Rio Grande River to the north of the fires, and at tourist facilities south of Creede. The monsoons really helped put the fire out. Water quality, fish kills were devastating. Ash flow in the Rio Grande River started running but not enough to kill the fish, but it did stress them. Water quality was defiantly an issue post fire. Business were impacted by the fire, visitors quit coming. The fire did impact existing timber sales. Seeing good response from the general wildlife population. Adam offered to host a field trip this coming summer if there was interest.

In response to the West Fork Complex – Wildlife recovery, **RWEACT** a community group was formed to address general concerns regarding public safety and environmental health concerns. The group is made up of local, state and federal partners that will develop an effective, coordinated approach for immediate actions to directly address fire-caused natural hazards resulting in the need for the emergent protection of human life and property and the natural health of the Rio Grande Watersheds and its environment. (BAER) Management Objectives for Burned Area Emergency Response completed a report for the West Fork Complex Fire on the Rio Grande National Forest for more information click on <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/riogrande/alerts-notice/?cid=stelprdb5431473&width=full>

### **Item No 4: Discussion of Draft CEQ Guidelines for Addressing Climate Change in NEPA Projects**

Discussion Draft CEQ Guidelines for addressing Climate Change in NEPA Projects, Tim Stroope GMUG Resource team presentation -click on link for more information [CEQ presentation](#)

Two types of climate change effects:

- Effect of proposed project on climate change
  - GHG emissions and carbon cycling
- Effect of change on proposed project
  - Changes in rainfall and temperature on seed stock selection for reforestation after timber harvest.

SBEADMR - CEQ guidance emphasizes the need to consider GHG emissions and climate change regardless of scale

- No additional weight given to climate change analysis
- Effects will be disclosed in both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis
- Quantitative examples
  - Emissions from burning slash

- Sequestration in forest products
- Vehicle emissions
- Qualitative examples
  - Loss of labile soil carbon
  - Changes in stable soil carbon
  - General effects of increased emissions on climate change

#### Conclusions

- Draft CEQ guidance compliments FS guidance already in place
- A combination of qualitative and quantitative effects analyses will inform the decision maker
- The climate change analysis in the draft EIS is malleable and will likely change with input received during the comment period
- Will update analyses as policy evolves or changes

Less Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere is better.

Reference was made to page 12 of November FS Q&A document for brief description of how Climate Change will be addressed in the DEIS.

Q. How is Climate Change being addressed in this EIS?

A. On 16 January 2009, the Washington Office of the USDA Forest Service released guidance to Forest Service units regarding the incorporation of climate change science into project-level NEPA documents (Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis, USDA 2009), which included the following: 1. Climate change analysis includes the effects of agency action on global climate change and the effects of climate change on a proposed project. 2. The Agency may propose projects to increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems it manages, mitigate climate change effects on those ecosystems, or to sequester carbon. 3. It is not currently feasible to quantify the indirect effects of individual or multiple projects on global climate change; therefore, determining significant effects of those projects or project alternatives on global climate change cannot be made at any scale. 4. Some project proposals may present choices based on quantifiable differences in carbon storage and GHG emissions between alternatives. The potential impact of future fire management and prescribed burning to Green House Gases (GHGs) is being addressed in the EIS. In order to estimate emissions from prescribed burning, two models will be used. Both the Piled Fuels Biomass and Emissions Calculator and FOFEM (First Order Fire Effects Model) estimate National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) criteria pollutants and GHG emissions.

#### Item No. 5: Follow-up Items/Questions from Earlier Meetings

- 1) Draft Language for First Objective under Goal of recovery – Robbie LeValley

Robbie will email out a draft for the group to review.

**Item No. 6: The Group agreed/voted it was a good time to take a break and wait until the DEIS is out.**  
We had consensus...

It was suggested that folks attend the Annual CFLF Meeting April 7th to see how adaptive management and monitoring is being implemented.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM

Thank you to Robbie LeValley for Facilitating in Susan Hansen's absence.

Notes submitted by Chris Miller, PLP Coordinator