

**Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)
December 16, 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Summary – FINAL**

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Paul Alaback, Chad Buser, Karen Blakemore, Teagen Blakey, Marin Chambers, Aurelia DeNasha, Mark Foreman, Angie Gee, Alex Markevich, Paul McCarthy, Sheila Ranegar, Susan Wagner, and Kevin Zimlinghaus

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Sheila Ranegar	Reach out to Kevin Zimlinghaus to identify the location where there is a high concentration of surface fuels from a Forsythe I treatment and develop a plan for future management.
Teagen Blakey	Send Avenza points for the area where there is a high concentration of surface fuels from a Forsythe I treatment to Kevin Zimlinghaus.
Aurelia DeNasha	Evaluate Phase 3 and 4 contracts to determine whether it is appropriate to burn all the treatment piles in manual units instead of leaving some piles for wildlife.
Kevin Zimlinghaus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share marking guidelines in the future before marking occurs to receive feedback from the MMG. • Forward the marking guides for Units 49 and 73 to the MMG for feedback. • Update the MMG about contract deadlines once he has received more information.
MMG Participants	Consolidate their feedback and comments on the Phase 5 and 6 contracts into one document and send it to Kevin Zimlinghaus by January 3.
Samuel Wallace	Send out a Doodle to schedule a new recurring date for the MMG.

WILDLIFE PILES IN PHASE 5 AND 6 CONTRACTS DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed wildlife piles in the Phase 5 and 6 contracts. Their comments are summarized below.

- There is no mention of wildlife piles in the Phase 5 and 6 contracts because all treatment piles will be burnt. The plan for Phase 5 and 6 treatments is not to have any wildlife piles remaining on the landscape after treatment.
- Based on the smaller spacing in the Phase 5 and 6 units and the surface fuels that will be left based on the agreed-upon treatments, there does not need to be additional wildlife piles for small mammal cover. There will also not be any additional lop-and-scatter in the area beyond the contract specifications for piling.
- The contract specifications for piling in manual units are that any activity fuels with a diameter less than 8 inches and all existing fuels with a diameter less than 5 inches will be piled and burned. Activity fuels with a diameter greater than 8 inches and existing fuels with a diameter greater than 5 inches will be left on the ground. The boles that will be left on the ground following treatment will be sufficient for wildlife.
- There is a significant amount of lop-and-scatter on the ground in a treatment from the Forsythe I project. Community members want to ensure that the treatments in the Phase 5 and 6 contracts do not look like the lop-and-scatter in the Forsythe I treatment. The surface

fuels left on the ground following the Phase 5 and 6 treatments will be the remaining slash from the treatment and will not look like the lop-and-scatter in the Forsythe I treatment.

- Some surface fuels will still be left on the ground following treatment according to the contract specifications. The small amount of spacing in manual treatments makes it difficult to space piles away from trees to prevent live tree scorching.
- To better understand what the landscape may look like after piles are burned, there are several Forsythe I units where the piles were burned several years ago. The majority of those Forsythe I units were manual treatments. To better understand what the landscape may look like before piles are burned, the Forsythe II Phase I units have piles that have not yet been burned. MMG participants can revisit those units to understand better what the landscape will look like after treatment.
- The lop-and-scatter from the Forsythe I treatment was supposed to be burned in a broadcast burn, but the broadcast burn never occurred. The area where there is a large amount of lop-and scatter is about a mile and half down Lazy Z road and up on Winiger Ridge. The surface fuels present a fire hazard, and there should be a plan to address these surface fuels.
- The Forsythe II Decision Notice established buffers around private properties where treatment cannot occur without the private landowner's approval. The area where there is a high concentration of surface fuels from Forsythe I may be in a buffer zone. The US Forest Service (USFS) does not normally approach private landowners about treatment; normally, a neighbor talks to the private landowner about the treatment, or a private landowner approaches the USFS.
- Before the USFS can plan to address the high concentration of surface fuels, they need to determine if the area is in a private property buffer zone. If it is in a buffer zone, the USFS can work with Sheila Ranegar to talk with the private landowner. Sheila Ranegar will reach out to Kevin Zimlinghaus to identify the location of the high concentration of fuels and develop a plan for future management. Teagen Blakey will send Avenza points for the location to Kevin Zimlinghaus. It will be difficult for Kevin Zimlinghaus to evaluate the area in the snow, but he should be able to conduct an assessment in late winter or early spring.
- For manual treatments in Phase 3 and 4, it may be possible to burn all the piles instead of leaving some for wildlife. Aurelia DeNasha will evaluate Phase 3 and 4 contracts to determine whether it is appropriate to burn all the treatment piles in manual units instead of leaving some piles for wildlife.

UNIT 54 AND UNIT 55 NORTH ASPECT TREATMENT DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the Unit 54 and 55 north aspect treatments. Their comments are summarized below.

- The amount of regeneration (trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) less than 4 inches) marked for removal on the north aspects of Unit 54 and 55 was more than expected. The USFS has since removed some of the take markings on the Douglas fir regeneration after MMG participants contacted them about their concerns.
- The rest of the markings in Unit 54 and 55, including markings on south-facing slopes, aligns with the expectations of MMG participants.
- There are two concerns about the take markings in Unit 54 and 55 on north aspects: one is the miscommunication of expectations, and the second is that removing a significant amount of regeneration will affect the multi-story aspect of the old-growth designation.
- When the USFS wrote the marking guides for the prescription, they considered the conversations that MMG participants had in the field about north aspects in Units 54 and 55. The field trip summary said that regeneration acting as ladder fuels around large trees

would be removed to prevent fires from climbing into the overstory. The USFS also referred to the Arapahoe and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (AR) Forest Plan to ensure the treatments did not impact the stands' old-growth designation.

- The patches of regeneration left on the Units' north aspects maintain the multi-story and multi-generational criteria for old-growth forests as defined by the ARP Forest Plan. The regeneration that is retained on the landscape is also located away from large ponderosa pine and Douglas fir trees. Beyond the patches of regeneration that were retained, several small patches and single trees are not marked for taking.
- The number of individual trees left in the units is small and represents a small component of the overall treatment.
- The marking guidelines for the prescription said to retain regeneration in 1/20th to 1/50th of an acre per acre on Unit 54 and 55 north aspects. The marking was originally done to follow these prescription guidelines.
- Retaining 1/20th to 1/50th of an acre of regeneration does not seem like it will meet the multi-story canopy specifications for old-growth according to the ARP Forest Plan. A 50% retention of regeneration seems aggressive but more acceptable than retaining 1/20th to 1/50th of an acre. It makes sense to take out regeneration acting as ladder fuels, but less regeneration should be taken out considering that north-facing slopes are wetter than other directional aspects.
- The north aspects in Unit 54 and 55 should be thought of in the context of the greater landscape. The Unit 54 and 55 stands are in a complex matrix of forest structures. The Unit 54 and 55 north aspect stands are in the wildland-urban interface and near other stands that are not being treated, including buffers around private treatments. They are also closer to roads that can be used for fire suppression purposes.
- Removing some of the understory in Units 54 and 55 helps protect the resiliency of large trees in old-growth stands while maintaining the multi-story canopy criteria of old-growth stands. The north aspects of Unit 54 and 55 represent around seven acres in total. The understory treatment goal is to create a different understory from other old-growth stands on nearby private and Boulder County land. Having less understory in these stands would create a different age class in old-growth forests across the surrounding landscape.
- There are differing perspectives among the MMG on fire danger and WUI treatments that do not need to be revisited. One issue is that a different set of considerations was introduced to the treatment after the MMG discussed and agreed upon an approach. It is normal that different considerations arise after a discussion, but the problem is that the issues were not brought back to the MMG for re-discussion.
- One way to avoid different expectations is for the MMG to see the marking guidelines before the marking crews are painting. The MMG would have to provide feedback quickly once marking guidelines are sent out. The USFS can commit to providing marking guidelines so long as the MMG provides feedback quickly.
- When developing marking guidelines, the USFS needs to condense them into four key points. Too many considerations in the marking guidelines can confuse marking crews. Each member of a marking crew may have a different interpretation of the guidelines as well. Staff members are monitoring marking crews, but they cannot check every tree. The concern with the marking guidelines for Unit 54 and 55 north aspects was not the simplicity of the instructions but the instruction to leave 1/20th to 1/50th of an acre per acre of regeneration.
- The USFS added five more regeneration patches for retention on top of the five or six patches already out there since the MMG brought up their concerns.

- The markings on the north aspects of Units 54 and 55 can be left as is because it will be difficult to change markings at this point. However, these treatments on north aspects should not set a precedent for treatment intensity in Units 77 and 81. The social and aesthetic values in Units 77 and 81 should counterbalance fire considerations.
- The markings for Units 54 and 55 will not be changed because the USFS cannot re-do the markings at this point in the season. The USFS will share marking guidelines in the future with the caveat that feedback will have to be provided promptly. They will also address units on a case-by-case basis, so the treatments on north aspects in Units 54 and 55 will not become the standard for future units.

UNIT 53 DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed Unit 53 treatments. Their comments are summarized below.

- Unit 53 was unusual because the MMG did not agree on an approach for this Unit. USFS Boulder District Ranger Angie Gee decided on the treatment approach for Unit 53.
- There were several concerns with the markings in Unit 53. The first concern is that some ponderosa pine trees close to 12 inches in DBH are marked for removal. These ponderosa pine trees are well-limbed, so they should not be a problem for firefighting and should not be removed. The second concern is that trees are marked for removal around rocky outcrops that should be excluded from treatment per the Forsythe II Decision Notice.
- The USFS has revisited Unit 53 since these concerns were raised. There is a good representation of ponderosa pine along the road with a DBH greater than 12 inches, so there will be some residual ponderosa pine trees after the treatment. Cutting the Douglas fir and ponderosa pine below the diameter limit will effectively create a complimentary holding feature adjacent to the road. Reducing the overstory overall will reduce the risk of a fire transitioning into the canopy as it approaches Magnolia Road. The treatment as is will be effective for managing fire in the area. For these reasons, the USFS supports the treatment identified for Unit 53.
- There are several rocky spots in Unit 53, but none met the definition of a rock outcropping. There may be a difference in perception of what a rock outcropping is.
- The Unit 53 markings are reflective of the treatment boundary lines and approach that Angie Gee decided on.
- There is a disagreement in perspectives on how Unit 53 should be treated, but the treatment markings on Unit 53 are acceptable as is.

UNIT 23 DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the Unit 23 treatments. Their comments are summarized below.

- The treatment map for Unit 23 was sent out with the Phase 5 and 6 contracts. The treatment areas look correct with some slight variations.
- The patchcut in the southwest corner of the Unit (treatment 23a in the contract map) seems to go into the private boundary buffer. The treatment extends into the private boundary buffer because Boulder County is the owner of the land bordering the Unit, and they gave permission to treat into the buffer zone.
- The patchcut in the southwest corner of Unit 23 (treatment 23a) has a straight edge on its southern boundary. The southern boundary should be scalloped. Scalloping is a useful technique in larger patchcuts because the straight boundaries of larger patchcuts are more visually accentuated than the straight boundaries of smaller patchcuts. Unit 23 is one acre in size, so the patchcut in the Unit's southwest corner is small. Due to the size of the patchcut, it is difficult to scallop and would not make a visual difference. There will not be scalloping in treatment 23a due to the size of the patchcut. For future consideration, MMG

participants should look at the scalloping on the larger patchcuts Boulder County implemented on their property adjacent to Unit 23.

- The positioning of the treatments in the contract maps are slightly off, but it may not be an issue because the flagging looked fine to those who monitored the flagging.
- In other patchcuts in Forsythe II, a small amount of material was left on the ground, which helped with moisture retention and weed prevention. The USFS will be following their same practices from previous patchcuts in Forsythe II. Additionally, in patchcuts, activity fuels with a DBH greater than 8 inches will be left on the ground.
- According to the contract for the Unit 23 patchcut, all lodgepole pine trees will be cut regardless of size. Some individual lodgepole pine trees should be left in the patchcut as a seeding source, similar to other patchcuts in the area. When a patchcut is treated mechanically, some lodgepole pine trees are left because the patchcuts are generally larger. For manually treated patchcuts, like those in Unit 23, other conifer trees will be left (e.g., ponderosa pine, Douglas fir), but all lodgepole pine trees will be removed. The other conifer trees will serve as sources of seeds following patchcuts.

UNIT 74 DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the treatments in Unit 74. Their comments are summarized below.

- In Unit 74, there was an area where both the understory and overstory were going to be removed. There was another concern in Unit 74 with the marking of trees on the Unit's east side. Kevin Zimlinghaus and Teagen Blakey met before the meeting and were able to resolve these concerns.
- On the contract map, treatment 74e is marked as an aspen restoration, but the contract language identifies it as a matrix mixed conifer thin. This discrepancy between the contract map and contract language should be addressed.

UNITS 49/73a DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed treatments in Unit 49/73a. Their comments are summarized below.

- In the Phase 5 and 6 contracts, the instructions for Units 29b and 49/73a are not to cut trees with orange paint. There are then additional instructions to not cut blue spruce, Englemann spruce, limber pine, conifers with a DBH greater than 14 inches, conifers on rock outcrops, and snags with a DBH greater than 8 inches. The number of instructions raises concerns that saw crews might accidentally cut down some wrong trees, especially conifers with a DBH greater than 14 inches. The USFS should pay extra attention to saw crews when they begin cutting in Units 29b and 49/73a.
- This fall, the USFS delayed treating in Units 49 and 73 until next year. The USFS ended up having enough capacity to mark Units 49 and 73, but they did not announce the markings to the MMG. As a result, MMG participants have not had the time to review the markings. The USFS apologized for not giving the MMG advance notice about the markings in Units 49 and 73.
- The Unit 49 and 73 marking guides are an example of the USFS attempting to incorporate many treatment considerations into a clear set of directions. The marking guides outline different considerations for all the aspects (i.e., crews marked south-facing aspects differently than west-facing aspects). Crews also marked the areas that transitioned from south-facing to north-facing aspects on the north side of Units 49 and 73 differently than other aspects. There were also instructions on marking mistletoe-infested trees for removal. On the east side of Units 49 and 73, there was an island of mature Douglas fir trees mixed with ponderosa pine trees that was excluded from treatment.

- MMG participants would like to review the markings in Units 49 and 73. The feedback on the markings in Units 49 and 73 would have to come in quickly, and it is not likely MMG participants will be able to get into Units 49 and 73 in time. Instead, Kevin Zimlinghaus will forward the marking guides for Units 49 and 73 to the MMG for feedback. The USFS's ability to make changes in the markings will depend on the feedback they receive from the MMG.
- There were different perspectives among MMG participants in the past about the number of south-facing slopes in Units 49 and 73. Several peaks, saddles, and ridgelines in Units 49 and 73 break the landscape into various directional aspects. The marking guides break down prescriptions by aspect and tree structures that MMG participants can review when they receive the marking guides.
- USFS staff spent a lot of time in Units 49 and 73 to oversee marking. The markings are likely not perfect because crewmembers interpret marking instructions differently, but it is close as it can be given the oversight from USFS staff.
- If there is feedback on the Unit 49 and 73 marking guidelines, the MMG should consider marking more trees in Units 49 and 73 before the contract is implemented.

UNIT 29 DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed treatments in Unit 29. Their comments are summarized below.

- As a whole, Unit 29b is marked appropriately except for a few areas of concern. Some areas in Unit 29 are designated as a regeneration thinning unit, but the tree markings in the area resemble a lodgepole pine patchcut. In particular, the area east of treatment 29d on the contract map looks like it was marked for patchcutting rather than regeneration thinning. This area was originally designated as an aspen aggregation unit but was re-designated as a regeneration thinning unit. There is also an area in the northeast corner of Unit 29 that may have been too heavily marked.
- In these areas of concern, only a couple of lodgepole pine trees are marked with orange leave paint, indicating that many lodgepole pine trees will be removed. The markings in the areas of concern do not align with the expectation that there would be more lodgepole pine trees left on the landscape. The USFS should mark more lodgepole pine trees with orange leave paint in these areas of concern.
- The prescription in these areas of concern was not meant to be a patchcut, but the prescription was meant to focus on removing lodgepole pine to allow Douglas fir and ponderosa pine to seed the area naturally. It is difficult to break the landscape into too many small areas with a unique prescription.
- The concerns about the markings in parts of Unit 29b are not an issue of contract language but physical marking. The contracts indicate that contractors should leave trees with orange paint regardless of what is painted out there, so this concern does not need to be resolved before the contract submission deadline in January. The discussion about orange leave painting in Unit 29b can be addressed between the time the USFS awards the contract and the implementation of the treatment.
- Unit 29b is a large unit, and the USFS should pay extra attention to saw crews in Unit 29b because there are several different instructions for saw crews to consider.

PHASE 5 AND 6 CONTRACT CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about Phase 5 and 6 contracts. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

What is the treatment plan for Unit 48?

The treatment in Unit 48 is a surface fuels treatment. Contractors cut Unit 48 in Phase 1, and contractors will return to treat the surface fuels.

What do the abbreviations CTM and LTM stand for in the contract?

The abbreviations CTM and LTM in the contracts stand for cut tree mark and leave tree mark.

Does the "trees per acre" number refer to the number of trees to be cut in a treatment area or the number of trees to be cut in the whole unit?

The "trees per acre" number in the contracts refers to the number of trees to be cut per acre in a treatment polygon, not the whole unit. These numbers help contractors understand how much saw work they will be doing.

What is the yellow flagging used for during treatments?

The yellow flagging marks the boundary for lodgepole pine patchcuts. Within the yellow flags, contractors will cut all lodgepole pine trees and retain other conifer species.

PHASE 5 AND 6 CONTRACTS NEXT STEPS

Meeting participants discussed the next steps for providing feedback on the Phase 5 and 6 contracts. Their comments are summarized below.

- The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently reorganized its acquisition management department. The acquisition management staff now work for the USDA instead of the USFS, so USFS staff have less control over contract deadlines. The deadline for submitting contracts will be sometime in January, but the USFS does not have exact dates yet. Kevin Zimlinghaus will update the MMG about contract deadlines once he has more information.
- For additional comments on Phase 5 and 6 contracts, MMG participants will consolidate their feedback into one document and send it to Kevin Zimlinghaus by January 3.

MMG 2021 PLAN DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the MMG plan for 2021. Their comments are summarized below.

- The USFS does not have their budget or target requirements for 2021 as they are waiting for budget allocations from Congress. The USFS hopes to have a budget and direction from Congress by early next year.
- As a new presidential administration enters the White House, there will be changes in the USFS administration. Most of the changes will occur at the national level in the near term, but those changes will eventually impact the USFS at the lower level. When there is a presidential administration transition, staff spend the first few months getting the new administration up-to-date and adapting to changes in national directives.
- On a local level, the 2020 fire season was historic and unprecedented, and the USFS is still preoccupied with addressing the aftermath of those fires. The USFS will not be able to execute the program of work they had before the 2020 fire season as they focus on fire recovery in 2021.
- There were no significant injuries during the Calwood and Lefthand Canyon Fire, and all firefighters made it out safely. It was uncertain during the first night of the Calwood Fire whether the public could be evacuated in time because the fire was moving so fast. Fortunately, there were no deaths as a result of the fires.
- USFS staff are conducting Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessments. Based on the assessment's initial results, there will be a good amount of fire recovery work beginning

in the spring. The USFS will not know more specific recommendations for fire recovery until next spring.

- In 2021, fire recovery will be a priority for the USFS. Anything else besides fire recovery will be a secondary priority. The USFS will better understand their capacity to address other priorities once they have more information on the intensity of fire recovery efforts. As of now, the USFS does not know how much capacity they will have to dedicate to Forsythe II.
- With snow on the ground, a limited amount of work can be accomplished in the near term. Community members have spent a lot of time in Unit 77, so they will be ready to discuss Unit 77 when the USFS is ready to engage.
- Manchester, Blue Dot, and Phase 3 contracts will be implemented in 2021. The contractors will implement the Manchester contract in February or March. The Blue Dot contract (50 acres of mechanical treatment) will begin in the spring or summer of 2021 because extra road construction is needed. The timeline for implementing the Phase 3 contract is not known and will depend on contractors' availability. Contractors generally have been working in the fall.
- The USFS should consider the nesting season when scheduling the implementation of contracts. There are cutting restrictions after August 10 for flammulated owl nesting. Aurelia DeNasha and her wildlife crew will be checking for goshawk nests and calling for flammulated owls. If there are no response calls, the contractors can proceed with their work. If there are restrictions, contractors can be diverted to areas without nesting birds, like Clear Creek Ranger District treatments. The acres where there is suitable habitat for flammulated owls will be the last to be treated to accommodate their nesting season.
- The MMG should devote a meeting to discuss the lessons learned from the fire 2020 season in upper montane environments. There should be another meeting for the MMG to learn about the USFS's fire recovery work.
- The research community is very interested in studying the 2020 fires to better understand their ecological and human impacts. The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) is analyzing how the Calwood, East Troublesome, and Cameron Peak Fire interacted with prescribed fire treatments. Marin Chambers will forward opportunities to the MMG to learn more about the 2020 fires as they come up. It may take some time for research to be completed. It can take a year to develop aerial imagery for spatial analyses, and other assessments are complex and require time to process.
- If MMG participants are interested in learning about the fire recovery efforts, the USFS recently launched an incident information system (INCI) webpage. Normally, an INCI webpage is to track ongoing fires, but the USFS is putting fire recovery effort information on the webpage. BEAR analyses will be posted on the webpage as well.
- Boulder County is leading an interagency working group that includes local, state, and federal agencies and local organizations. The working group is sharing data and models to help each other understand potential debris flow and erosion to protect water supplies. Private and county lands are funded through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program for long-term recovery efforts.
- The interagency working group has not brought up concerns about logging and excessive carbon removal in burned areas. There is an interest in the working group in understanding the carbon storage and loss from the fires, but it has not been a primary concern for the working group so far.

NEXT STEPS

- The January 13 MMG meeting was canceled. The next MMG meeting will be in February or March. Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle to schedule a new recurring date for the MMG because some participants can no longer meet on Wednesday nights.
- Topics for future meetings:
 - Orange leave paint markings in Unit 29
 - Lessons from the 2020 fire season in upper montane environments
 - Fire recovery efforts