**Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Management Response (SBEADMR) Field Trip**

August 18, 2016

Gunnison Ranger District

**Participants:**

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| John Murphy | USFS |
| Clay Speas | USFS |
| Sam Staley | USFS |
| Drew Stroberg | USFS |
| Matt Vasquez | USFS |
| Pat Medina | USFS |
| Jason Sibold | CSU |
| Mike Battaglia | RMRS |
| Jake Ivan | CPW |
| Jim Worral | USFS |
| Carrie King | Great Old Broads for Wilderness |
| Molly Pitt | IFA |
| Matt Reid | HCCA |
| J Paul Brown | State Representative |
| Chris Miller | PLP |
| Norm Burcher | Montrose Forest Products |
| Craig Grother | San Miguel County and Back Country Hunters and Anglers |
| Stu Krebs | UVA/WCC |
| Barb Krebs | Public |
| Justin Waschbusch  | Montrose County |
| Justin Musser | Montrose County |
| Beth Anderson | USFS |
| Pam King | USFS |
| Ruth Spradling | USFS |
| Pat Owen | USFS |
| Lionel Di Giacomo | Great Old Broads for Wilderness |
| Jim Ramirez | USFS |
| Pam Motley | Uncom/UP |
| Kyle O’neill | CSU Student |
| Katie Fitzsimmons | CSU Student |
| Delaney Paullus | CSU Student |

**Action Items:**

1. ***Install locked gates on all temporary roads (including during treatment operations)*** to keep the public out and prevent these roads from being used for recreation. **The Forest Service will implement this recommendation. Lead Forest Service Representative: Drew Stroberg.**
2. ***Monitor burn pile rehab and report back to stakeholders.*** There is concern among some stakeholders that the large burn piles will cause soil damage. The USFS will monitor the outcome (soil, revegetation, etc). If current methods are deemed inadequate, the USFS will modify practices. The amount of soil adversely affected by compaction, displacement or burning is limited to 15% in a treatment area. This is a trigger for adaptive management in the FEIS and will be followed. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Beth Anderson.**
3. ***Collect spruce seed from various locations around the forest for plantings. Use seed from several sources in re-plantings to establish common garden studies.*** There may be genetic diversity across the forest. The USFS currently has seed from only one location. The USFS may collect seed from other locations prior to treatment. Coordination with the Regional genetics specialist will be required. This topic will be discussed further at the fall annual stakeholder meeting. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Beth Anderson**.
4. ***Conduct a field trip to the proposed Little Cone Timber Sale.*** There is concern that this project does not meet the criteria for a priority project in 2017; the site does not have 100% mortality. While the site does not have high mortality the site still meets requirements under SBEADMR for treatment. Further, Little Cone did come out as a priority treatment area using models developed by CSU and used in the FEIS. The USFS will schedule a site visit with San Miguel County representatives and members of the SBEADMR Working Group to discuss the project. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Niccole Hackman**.
5. ***Develop better communication tools for the general public.*** The group discussed the need to explain the purpose and need of the project in terms that the general public can understand. Molly Pitts suggested that the USFS develop a full color insert for local papers that tells the story of the project. She will send a sample flier developed by the White Mountains Stewardship Project. The Forest Service will discuss with Public Affairs internally to develop a strategy. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Clay Speas and Lee Ann Loupe.**
6. ***Include hare pellet counts in the regen monitoring efforts.*** Mike, Jason and Jake will discuss how to best incorporate wildlife monitoring into the existing monitoring efforts. The Forest Service will consider this suggestion and once details are developed present to the Forest Leadership team for approval. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Clay Speas**
7. ***Reread post-harvest horizontal cover data.*** Post-harvest re-reading of a percent of established plots is a requirement of the Biological Opinion issued by Fish and Wildlife Service. Data collected this summer will be summarized this winter to determine which plots will be re-done once treatment is complete. **Lead Forest Service Representative: Matt Vasquez.**
8. ***More discussion of uneven-aged management in spruce.*** There is concern among some stakeholders that this project is implementing uneven-aged management in spruce. The group discussed the scientific basis for this. There was acknowledgement that while the extent of the beetle infestation is not unprecedented, the scope and scale of this project is a pioneer effort. More dialogue is needed. The current monitoring efforts will help answer some of these questions.

**Discussion:**

Site 1: Willow Mesa Salvage Project

* USFS Presentation on: Project objectives, silvicultural prescriptions; pretreatment checklist: surveys which have been completed and applicable Design Features.
* Group discussion items:
	+ The USFS will try to protect regen during treatment activities. They estimate 25% incidental loss; this will be confirmed through monitoring efforts.

Site 2: Recently harvested site—LaGarita Timber sale

* Science up-date from Jason Sibold, Mike Battaglia and Jake Ivan
* Group discussion items:
	+ The role of science is not to tell managers what to do or to dictate what is “right or wrong”. Science provides information that managers can use to make informed decisions.
	+ The monitoring will last 8-12 years. Stakeholders expressed their appreciation and support of the effort. Although several acknowledged that ecosystem monitoring should last 50 years. This effort will establish baseline data that can be used beyond the life of this project.
	+ Regarding wildlife response to this level of mortality, there are winners, losers and neutral species. Current winners = deer and elk; losers = squirrel; neutral = hare, coyotes, bears. This may change overtime. Current monitoring indicates that lynx are still using areas of high mortality. On the other hand, no lynx have been found in the footprint of the West Fork Fire.
* USFS Presentation on: Post sale activities and protection of advanced regeneration, Management of slash piles in treatment areas, Rehabilitation of burn pits following burning.
* Group discussion items:
	+ Timber receipts will be used to offset some of the costs for replanting and reseeding. Timber receipts will also be used for rock replacement for roads.
	+ Local spruce seed sources will be used for replanting efforts. Native seed will be used for reseeding efforts. There is the opportunity to work with the UP Native Seed Program to provide seed, including pollinator species.
	+ 10% of slash piles will be left on site for wildlife benefit
	+ Piles will be burned in the winter, when there is at least 6” of snow on the ground.

Site 3: Pauline Salvage Project

* USFS Presentation on: Project objectives, silvicultural prescriptions; Pretreatment checklist: surveys which have been completed and applicable, Design Features, Wildlife objectives
* Group discussion items:
	+ The USFS found an osprey nest within the treatment area. The project design features will be modified to protect the osprey including: a no-treatment buffer around the nest and timing restrictions.
	+ Stakeholder question: Will these treatments affect fire behavior on the landscape? USFS response: Yes, they will create areas where fire fighters can work. They will also create the opportunity to allow more wildfires to be managed for resource benefit.