Multiparty Monitoring Group (MMG)
September 13, 2021, from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm
Virtual Meeting
Summary – FINAL

ATTENDANCE:
Participants: Karen Blakemore, Teagen Blakey, Chad Buser, Marin Chambers, Tania Corvalan, Aurelia DeNasha, Jason Deutsch, Mark Foreman, Angie Gee, Tim Griffin, Alex Markevich, Sheila Ranegar, Susan Wagner, and Kevin Zimlinghaus

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Izzy Sofio

ACTION ITEMS

Teagen Blakey	Coordinate amongst local residents to gauge interest in a prescribed burning information session/townhall-style Zoom meeting.
Kevin Zimlinghaus	Work with someone in the GIS Department to develop an up-to-date Avenza map with implemented projects and contours of planned and finished treatments.
Marin Chambers and Kevin Zimlinghaus	Coordinate to upload the up-to-date Avenza map onto the Forsythe II Multiparty Monitoring website.
Angie Gee	Email the MMG with an update when it is definite that design work for additional units will not occur until next year.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW FIRE MANAGEMENT OFFICER
Angie Gee, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), introduced Tim Griffin, the new Fire Management Officer (FMO), on the Arapahoe and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grasslands (ARP). Tim has more than twenty years of fire-related experience from across the country that he brings to his new position.

BLUE DOT CONTRACT UPDATE
Angie Gee and Kevin Zimlinghaus, USFS, provided updates about the Blue Dot contract. Below are key points from the update.

Overview
- The road to the contract site is ready, and there is a gate set up at the contract site. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) expects that the contractor will arrive and begin preparation for work on Wednesday, September 15. The contract work should go relatively fast, as the area is only 50 acres.
- The USFS will publish a press release shortly to inform the public of the contract work and the associated closures. The reason for the closures is to ensure the safety of the public. Additionally, the USFS does not anticipate that the closures will last for a long time due to the size of the contract.

Clarifying Questions
Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about the Blue Dot contract update. Questions are in italics, and corresponding answers are in plain text.

If the Blue Dot contract is a mechanical project, does the USFS expect slash piles from branches?
There will likely be a landing pile or two. There should not be a lot to pile from thinning, although the lodgepole pine might have some.

Will the USFS Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) be on the site for the first three days of the project?
The COR will visit the project site but will most likely not be at the project site for the first three days due to the standard nature of this project work. This project will be very similar to the Manchester project work. There will be one operator and one cutter to start. Further along in the project, the contractor will bring a skidder to pile on the landings. USFS employees will be present at the project site.

Will someone from the USFS be on-site to confirm that the contractor is cutting properly?
Yes. On Wednesday morning (the day that the USFS expects work to begin), the COR will be on-site to meet the contractor and ensure the contractor lays the temporary skid trails/roads. The COR will be there when the contractor starts cutting the treatment per the contract specs. As the contractor gets going, and when the COR feels the contractor is on track, the COR will leave.

Will the temporary skid trails/roads be as significant as the roads just created nearby?
No. The road they just completed is the main road to get in and out of the site. The skid trails are generally smaller than that road. However, there are more skid trails to provide several avenues to the landing site where the contractor will process the timber.

If this is a mechanical treatment, then why will there be any piles left behind?
The contractor will leave them at the landing sites. Manchester produced more materials that were not merchantable, so there are still other piles there. With Blue Dot, there should not be a lot coming back into the landing because of the smaller size of the contract (45 to 46 acres). It will primarily come from lodgepole pine.

Is this site blue-marked except for the patch cut work?
Blue-marked represents cut, and orange-marked represents leave.

Is this the last implementation work to complete Phases One through Four?
Yes.

Did Phase Five get contracted yet?
The contract was awarded, but the work has not started yet. It is possible that the USFS will get to Phase Five this year, and it is also possible that that will not happen.

PRESCRIBED FIRE PLANNING UPDATE
Chad Buser, USFS, provided information about the work the USFS is planning regarding prescribed fire work for this coming spring in Unit 38 and, potentially, the eastern area of Unit 44. Below are key points from his update.

Overview

- Chad Buser and Aurelia DeNasha, USFS, spent time in Unit 38 to develop an understanding of what and how prescribed fire preparation work needs to occur between now and next spring if there are windows with adequate conditions are available for burning.
- About two years ago, the MMG received a prescribed fire update. Between then and now, the focus of the work has changed slightly. Now, the USFS is focusing on three areas within Unit 38, in which the USFS plans to work westward. The USFS will burn Winiger Gulch sometime later in the future when the opportunity presents itself.
- Altogether, Unit 38 Alpha, Charlie, and Delta sub-areas total 300 acres. If an unforeseen circumstance occurs that inhibits the USFS from burning one of the areas in Unit 38, then the USFS may be able to burn eastern areas of Unit 44.

- The USFS completed work related to these units last year, including limbing and chipping along Winiger Gulch to widen the route so that a fire truck could drive up the road in case it would be needed. The USFS crew working on prep work also reduced the amount of lighter fuel trees along Winiger Gulch. Additionally, the USFS crew cut down any hazard trees, which are trees that could catch on fire and fall, creating risk for injury for those working in the area, like a firefighter. The USFS crew targeted hazard trees from as far as 100 feet from the control line to ensure there are none near the control line. That is something they do for all burn units due to the associated safety concerns, in addition to utilizing the natural features within a unit that can enhance the safety and productivity for prescribed fire work.
- A great deal of Alpha, Charlie, and Delta sub-areas were burned sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s. Therefore, the upcoming burn should provide desirable fire effects on the areas due to the "second entry" because the first entry already raised some of the canopies and cleared some of the surfaces. The areas within the units that have not seen fire before will burn more slowly.

Unit 38 Alpha

- Unit 38 Alpha did not require much prep work. Work began at the top of Gross Reservoir and ran counterclockwise along the road network and along Gross Reservoir. The more southern areas of the section that are along the road and the ridge required hand lines from the road to Gross Reservoir.
- Hand lines are what firefighters generally install to contain fire. Usually, they are 18 to 24 inches wide. Crews remove the vegetation down to the soil to reduce fuels nearby.
- The USFS crew will lop and scatter some of the smaller trees if they are within 30 feet from each side of the control line (handline). Any removed trees will be placed within the burn unit.
- The USFS crew does not want a lot of fuel near the sides of the control lines that they do not intend to burn. If the fuel gets too dense, the crew will either chip it, pile it, or create a "jackpot" of fuels that will not impact the trees.
- There might be a few wildlife piles left in these units that the broadcast burn will most likely consume. The USFS crew may try to burn those piles during the winter if the opportunity presents itself. These piles should not be a concern as they should not be piled near overstory trees.

Unit 38 Charlie

- The snow tends to stay longer within a section of Unit 38 Charlie. Therefore, the burn in that area may need to follow a different timeline and might require more intense prep work due to the fuel density and weather conditions. Last year, the USFS crew burned some piles within the area.
- The north side of Charlie is defined by the east ridgeline. There is generally snow coverage on the north side of the ridge during spring. As the crew goes around Charlie, they will install hand lines along National Forest System Road 359 (NFSR 359). Charlie has a well-defined ridge with minimal vegetation, but other areas may require hand lines due to the density of fuels.
- It appears that the crew will likely burn the unit in two phases. One phase will be the unit above NFSR 359, and the second phase will be the unit below NFSR 359.
- Below NFSR 359, the hand line will continue. There is an old two-track road, more identifiable as a single-track trail, that runs down into Winiger Gulch. The crew will connect the hand line work through those roads and paths. The crew will improve the hand line down that old road, along the main road, and up a slope of scree that is a naturally occurring safety feature.
- There is a social trail that runs up through a campsite and back down to NFSR 359. The crew will need to do work along the social trail to improve the conditions in that area and some additional work along NFSR 359.

Unit 38 Delta

- There is a well-used trail along the top of Unit 38 Delta, which will serve as a main control feature for this unit. It is likely that snow along the northside of Delta will stay throughout spring as well.
- Most of the prep work in Delta will be handline and single-track work that will tie into the work done in the other units. The crew plans to utilize the old two-track road that runs down into Winiger Gulch. Where it is necessary, the crew will create handlines to the top from the remnants of the two-track road.
- The crew plans to limb trees where it is necessary, generally up to 20 or 30 feet from both sides of the control line. If a tree is too small (6.0 inches in diameter or less) to limb, then the crew would more than likely remove that tree and lop and scatter the fuel. Additionally, if the crew finds that a tree cannot withstand limbing, it will most likely get chipped or piled.
- Rocky mountain junipers within or near the control line are considered a threat because they are highly prone to torching. Therefore, if the crew comes across rocky mountain junipers that are just outside of the 20 to 30 feet distance from the control lines, then they will more than likely mitigate that risk as needed. There will more than likely be some areas where rocky mountain junipers will not be burned, which will benefit the wildlife in the area.
- The design criteria states to maintain downed logs that are 10 inches or longer. The circumstances of the season will likely protect a lot of the logs in the area from igniting, which will also benefit wildlife in the area. Due to the seasonality, the crew does not anticipate they will need to protect the downed logs. However, if there is a log that might catch and roll down a hill, creating a potential hazard, then the crew might move a log to mitigate such risks.
- Limbing will only occur as high as a person can safely reach a chainsaw, which is generally six feet from the ground. The crew will disperse any fuel that comes as a result of the limbing.
- Some of the areas within the units fall under various old-growth categories. To protect the old-growth trees, the crew will work to mitigate fire intensity in those areas. Depending on the category of old growth, there are different criteria to meet. For example, the crew might allow fire to naturally prune some of the old-growth trees by scorching some of the lower branches, which will make the trees stronger next time they see fire.
- Lastly, there are cultural resources the crew will protect in some of the areas within these units. One method to protect cultural resources is to cut nearby grass very short to reduce fuel in the area. Another is to cut a handline in an area where the stand is denser.

Unit 44

- This unit has a defined ridge to the north, bisecting where the USFS did work in the meadows of Unit 45. This USFS manually cut Unit 45 on the western side of unit 44. Unit 44 was identified as the entire broadcast burn unit.
- Burn preparation for this unit requires some work along the road, cutting small trees, some limbing, and some piling.
- There are additional piles the USFS needs to burn in the western areas of the unit.
- Unit 44 seems to be the more complex unit. MMG members may be interested in a field trip to Unit 44 due to its more complex nature. However, burning in Unit 44 will likely not occur this spring.

Clarifying Questions

Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about the prescribed fire prep work update. Questions are in italics, and corresponding answers are in plain text.

How are the boundaries marked? Are the markings similar to or different from the markings in the forestry treatment areas?
There is not really any marking along the ground in the prescribed fire units. The USFS does all the prep work with the fire crew, whereas the forest treatments use contractors. The USFS only flags or marks something where it is necessary.

Sometimes there is leftover marking or flagging from treatment work that would be nice to remove. Will this work have any flagging or leftover flagging?
This work uses bright, highly visible colors, like pink or orange. The crew might flag a hazard tree. However, the crew should remove a hazard tree immediately. Mostly, prescribed fire prep work relies on geographical features instead of markings, like ridges. Steep slopes are usually the most challenging to identify, so the crew would probably flag a steep slope and might do some prep work. The USFS Archeologist could go to the area, too, if it is necessary.

Are the hand lines 18 to 24 inches wide?
Yes. The width down to the mineral soil could be up to 24 inches. However, the width can depend on the fuel type. For example, if the fuel is short grass, it might be low. If it is dense juniper, it might be high.

How much time will each unit take to burn?

- The time of a burn depends on the burn window. Winds can change suddenly, so the crew has the flexibility to adjust the size of the burn depending on what the weather permits. If the weather is perfect, then the crew might try to do the entire burn in one day.
- Oftentimes, burn windows are determined by fuel moisture and weather conditions. Ultimately, the USFS will burn slowly in order to get the desired effect. The crew will do what is right for the day's conditions, which are highly variable.
- The area above NFSR 359 within Charlie is relatively south-facing and exposed. However, the area below NSFR 359 in Charlie has more north aspects that hold snow longer. Depending on the conditions, the USFS might have to wait another day or two for snow to melt in that area below Charlie.

Is Unit 38 Alpha in the campground zone?
Yes. Almost all of the campsites are within Alpha.

There are not a lot of trees within these units. The areas have more grasses, correct?
Alpha, Delta, and the northern part of Charlie are mostly grass with a few trees, making these units ideal for prescribed fire work. Unit 44 is denser than Unit 38, which will require some lop and scatter. However, lop and scatter work is not part of the work planned for this stage.

Will lop and scatter from Unit 38 stay within Unit 38?
Yes.

When cheatgrass burns, does it stop or encourage more cheatgrass growth?
The USFS botanist said there is relatively little research about the ways in which cheatgrass reacts to fire in this region and area. Some believe that native species can out-compete cheatgrass after it is burned. However, other information suggests that after burns, cheatgrass can return stronger or that other environmental factors like the timing of dryness and moisture in the soil can impact cheatgrass response.

In which areas are the old-growth trees located? Is it mostly ponderosa pine old growth?
There are various categories of old growth throughout the units. There is old-growth ponderosa pine in Unit 44. However, some of the areas in the northern parts of the units have some Douglas firs. The whole area falls within the description of old growth.

If the weather permits, is there a high likelihood that this work will be done this spring?
At this point, it appears that there is a strong likelihood that the burns will occur in the spring. Spring burn windows provide more opportunity than fall burn windows, which is one advantage of the timing the USFS plans for these burns.

Is it correct that the burn work will be done on Unit 38, not Unit 44, this spring?
Unit 38 Alpha, Charlie, and Delta are prioritized for this coming spring. If there is a burn window for the eastern section of Unit 44, then that could be an option.

Will the USFS burn the piles stacked this summer in the unit closest to Lazy Z during the burns in the spring?

- If the piles were stacked during the mid-summer or any later then, the USFS would wait another season to let the piles cure. There are some piles in Unit 45 from last year. The USFS might burn those.
- Those piles were machine piles. Generally, the USFS lets machine piles sit and cure for one year. Any piles from Phase 3 were piled too late and still need time to cure.

NOTIFYING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT PRESCRIBED FIRE
Meeting participants discussed plans to distribute more information about the prescribed burn work to the local residents and community and the potential for informational field trips or meetings. Below are key points from the discussion.

- It has been some time since the last time USFS conducted prescribed burns in this area. They would like to get the word out to the community, so that community members are aware of what to expect, especially after the 2020 fire season.
- The USFS has considered having a USFS technical specialist working in the community before and during the burn(s) to walk interested community members through the process.
- Those who live in the Lazy Z area will likely be most interested in learning and being notified about burn work and being notified about the burn work because their homes and land are the closest to the units. Additionally, local residents of Pine Glade and County Road 68 will want to notification of this work before it occurs.
- At the bare minimum, the USFS always provides nearby community members and landowners with notification of prescribed fire work via email. It is important to notify individuals nearby with smoke sensitivities. Sometimes the notification makes it into some local media outlets. It is a required criterion of the smoke permit that the USFS is required to notify people nearby within a specific timeline and with a specific frequency. For the prescribed fire work above, the USFS is looking to engage the public via additional opportunities.
- MMG members should feel free to share information about the prescribed fire work planned for this upcoming spring with their neighbors and fellow community members. If there are neighbors or community members with smoke sensitives or other concerns, they should email Chad Buser at chad.buser@usda.gov. If Chad is overwhelmed with emails, Heather Bergman and Izzy Sofio can help by setting up an informational Zoom meeting for community members with questions and concerns. The meeting could be recorded and posted online via a Google Drive for additional distribution and public access. Teagen Blakey will work on gauging interest in an informational Zoom meeting in the meantime.

PHASE 5 CONTRACT DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed information regarding the Phase 5 contract. Below are key points from their updates.

- Some MMG members would like Phase 5 work to occur after July, when bird nesting is complete. If work occurs early in the summer, then it impacts bird nesting season. This is a concern about general bird populations and not a specific bird population.
- Sometimes there are timing constraints on contracts. However, contractors survey the area before work begins. If there were nests found in an area, then work would be postponed. That is typical protocol for raptors.
- Burn windows during the spring do not typically fall during bird nesting season. There might be owl courtship occurring at that time. Regardless, any work is designed to avoid the nesting seasons.

CLOSING THOUGHTS AND REQUESTS

- Kevin Zimlinghaus will work with the USFS GIS Department to get an updated Avenza map that will include completed treatment areas, planned treatment areas, and information about the Phase 5 contract. Kevin and Marin Chambers will work to get the updated Avenza on the website when it is ready. Some MMG members would also like Kevin to update the spreadsheet.
- It could be useful to have the USFS reassess the trail systems near the Boy Scout area sometime during the off-season. The current map is incorrect. USFS staff were aware of that and planned to begin addressing that area and associated mapping.
- The Boy Scout area and nearby trails are both managed by the USFS and by USFS partners, like some local mountain biking groups. Some members of the MMG, specifically Karen Blakemore, would like to be involved in future trail planning efforts in that area. If the USFS would like assistance with collecting input from local community members about the trails in the area, Heather and Izzy are available to help.

NEXT STEPS

- Angie Gee will provide an update when she knows whether there will be any design work for additional units this upcoming spring or if that design work will be pushed back to a later time. When she is sure of this, she will provide the MMG with an update via email.
- Heather Berman and Izzy Sofio will begin looking at a different day of the week for 2022 MMG meetings to ensure that MMG members can attend meetings. MMG members can expect a Doodle poll soon.
- Heather Bergman and Izzy Sofio will distribute a meeting summary.