

**West Region Wildfire Council
Meeting Minutes
4/9/15**

Meeting Attendance

	Last Name	First	Affiliation
1	Angell	Don	Montrose County
2	Barth	Chris	BLM
3	Beckhardt	Dave	Log Hill Fire
4	Lewis	Brandon	BLM
5	Chappel	Randy	BLM
6	Chavez	Thad	USFS
7	Clapsaol	Will	Ouray Fire
8	David	Hibl	Montrose County Posse
9	Gomez	Jamie	WRWC
10	Hernandez	Rick	Hinsdale County
11	Homstad	Kelly	BLM
12	Isle	Steve	Arrowhead Fire
13	Lippert	Tricia	Aspenridge Insurance
14	Loup	Lee Ann	USFS
15	Marby	Ron	Ouray & San Miguel County
16	Mercer	Larry	Horsefly Fire
17	Mueller	Ted	Norwood Fire
18	Odom	Luke	DFPC
19	Oxford	Ross	NPS
20	Pankratz	Sam	CSFS
21	Petersen	Drew	Colorado OEM
22	Rist	Jodi	CSFS
23	Robison	Corey	USFS
24	Rogers	Kelly	CSFS
25	Shelby	Austin	CSFS
26	Tledje	Bill	Ouray County Plaindealer
27	Wright	Jeff	Delta County
28	Wright	Jeff	Delta County
29	Bennet	John	Telluride Fire
30	Block	Sheridan	Ouray County Plaindealer

Objective/Purpose

The Council gathered to discuss the following:

Introductions

Jamie Gomez facilitated the meeting and initiated a round of introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from March's meeting were approved as written.

Presentation from Todd Gardiner, Thad Chavez and Corey Robinson regarding forest health, wildfire and management options on USFS lands surrounding Ouray

Jamie Gomez started out the presentation by providing some initial background regarding a multi-agency meeting and field trip convened to discuss forest health and wildfire issues in and around the town of Ouray, CO. Jamie explained that the event, which was facilitated by Ouray County and the Town of Ouray, involved presentations from the USFS to discuss and learn about the factors involved with the changes in forest health and tree mortality currently occurring in the forest surrounding Ouray. Jamie then introduced the guest presenters which included Thad Chavez, Core Robinson & Todd Gardiner.

Todd Gardiner, Silviculturist with the USFS, lead a discussion about the area surrounding Ouray by discussing the forest health issues in area. Todd explained that the majority of dead trees in the area are White Fir and that while there has been beetle induced mortality associated with White Fir in this area for a long time, it really didn't reach epidemic proportion until about 2012. Todd explained that while the USFS is currently contemplating future forest management actions in the area, the agency has proactively undertaken a project to thin dead and dying trees in the Ouray Amphitheater Campground. The project has thus far thinned trees on approximately a 20 acre area and has resulted in the removal of hundreds of trees. Speaking to the larger forest health issue, Gardiner emphasized the "synergistic forces" related to [Annosis Root disease](#), drought, [White Fir Engraver Beetle](#), [Douglas-fir Engraver Beetle](#) and [Spruce Budworm](#). Gardiner explained that there is evidence for the fact that the combination of all of these different stresses have a synergistic effect which result in the current status of forest health that we see today. Todd explained that one of the outcomes from the Ouray forest health and wildfire meeting and field trip was a decision to put together a focus group to continue meeting and working on the overall issue.

Sam Pankratz asked what about current composition of the forest and how much regeneration is occurring? Todd explained that there are lots of other tree/shrub species mixed in with the White Fir in and around Ouray including Aspen, Douglas-fir, Ponderosa Pine and Gambel Oak.

Todd went on to explain that the current trajectory of White Fir mortality will likely continue and will probably result in the eventual death of 90% of the White Firs in the area. Todd suggested that any future management scheme will need to consider tilting the species spectrum to increase resiliency of the forest overall. Todd turned over the presentation to Thad Chavez.

Thad Chavez, USFS, lead the discussion by explaining that he would be the ID Team Leader for any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work that is completed associated with any proposed actions on forest service lands. Thad explained that the USFS is considering a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for any proposed actions, which would include scoping on a limited basis. Thad explained that to start this overall process, its critical to define the existing condition utilizing available tools to understand potential fire behavior. Thad pointed out that Randy Chappel has extensive experience with fire behavior and fuels analysis. Chavez went on to describe the [Forest Vegetation Simulator \(FVS\)](#), which is an analytical tool for understanding the growth and succession of a forest over time and in to the future. Thad showed the group an example from the Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico. In the Lincoln example, Thad had high quality existing condition data, but here in Ouray, he

will not have access to the same kind of data. Therefore, it will become necessary to utilize the data that is available, which will include a combination of satellite based data (Landsat). Another tool that will be available is called the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

One of the key questions that will be analyzed is: What are the effects of beetle kill on fire behavior in the Ouray area?

Thad explained that any proposed actions will need to be proposed within the consideration the large proportion over really steep ground (+30%). Of all of the USFS managed acres in this area, only a small portion is on ground that is less than 30% slopes.

To view the updated Ouray Forest Health Map click on or copy and paste the following link:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B73_1AQQokPxUzVNMG9VSFpBeURwU2hDSVVXd0VjRIFsXzAw/view?usp=sharing

Incident Updates

Jeff Wright explained that a 273 acre wildfire occurred in Delta County, primarily occurring in riparian/wetland areas with cottonwood. Wright explained that he contacted Luke Odom (DFPC) early in the process. Olathe Spray Service was utilized to assist with control efforts. In addition, the new DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft was utilized to provide imagery and data to aid in fire management efforts. Jeff was glad that he contacted Luke early in the process. The cause of the fire is officially “unidentified”.

Wildfire Outlook

Chris Barth provided a wildfire outlook and explained that a more detailed version of the outlook would be provided by Tim Mathewson at the next WRWC monthly meeting.

Round Robin Updates

Drew provided details about a variety of classes including 300-400 level classes in Durango, L280 class in Hotchkiss (24-25th), West Region Resource Mobilization Training (5/29), IMT (June 1), G402 Considerations for Elected Officials Class (May 8th). More details and full listing can be found at www.co.train.org.

Luke mentioned the upcoming Certified Burner Class to be held in Durango.

Clay Fowler mentioned that there will be three Type III teams that will be available on two-week rotations. In addition, there are 8 prescribed fires planned on the forest in the near future. Many gates, accessing the forest road system, will be opening soon.

Steve Isle provided information about specific surplus fire fighting equipment, available through Joint Based Lewis McCord and the Defense Logistic Agency and encourage anyone interested in the equipment to contact him directly.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:55 pm.