

## West Region Wildfire Council Meeting Minutes 2/8/17

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
Austin	Tom	Log Hill Fire
Barth	Chris	BLM
Beckhardt	Dave	Log Hill Fire
Bennett	John	Telluride Fire
Chappell	Randy	BLM
Falk	Lilia	WRWC
Gomez	Jamie	WRWC
Lewis	Brandon	BLM
Mattox	Brian	USFS
McLean	Heather	USFS
Megel	Mike	BLM
Morrill	Scott	Gunnison County
Odom	Luke	DFPC
Oxford	Ross	NPS
Robinson	Corey	USFS
Seddon	Garrett	DFPC
Shaver	J.T.	CSFS
Shelby	Austin	CSFS
Stevens	Brian	BLM
Tarantino	Mike	WRWC
Tisdell	Ben	Ouray County

### Introductions

Lilia Falk facilitated the meeting and initiated a round of introductions. She then introduced Brian Mattox, a fuels manager for the Manti-La Sal National Forest out of Monticello, Utah, who presented on his tentative West Paradox Fuels Reduction Project.

**Presentation: “Tentative West Paradox Project” presented by Brian Mattox, fuels manager for the Manti-La Sal National Forest.**

[Click here to view the presentation.](#)

USFS fuels manager Brian Mattox is working to complete a large scale fuels reduction project on the Manti-La Sal National Forest west of Paradox, Colorado. The 5,000 acre treatment area is near Buckeye Reservoir on the Colorado-Utah state line in Montrose County. The area that Mattox has designated for fuels treatments regularly sees fire on the landscape. Mattox estimated that between three and five starts occur here annually and numerous large fires have burned between 1989 and 2012. Recognizing the fire behavior in this region the Manti-La Sal National Forest completed the Buckeye Reservoir and West Buckeye Prescribed Burns, but a large area of this West Paradox Region has not been

treated in decades. Mattox is hoping to tie his purposed treatment boundary into the Buckeye Reservoir Rx to the north and Lion's Creek Fire to the east. The West Paradox project is being designed to treat the fuels between the National Forest Boundary to the west and the Buckeye Creek Drainage. Mattox's goals in designing this project are to provide safe ingress and egress from Buckeye Reservoir, to affect severe fire behavior in the area, and to protect private lands bordering the National Forest.

The entire West Paradox Project Area was heavily logged in the 1970's but since then the majority of the treatment area has seen no management. The resulting fuel type has become a dog-hair thicket of intermediate Ponderosa Pine (4"-8" DBH) with encroaching oak. The dense canopies that exist in the treatment area today present a high fire risk. Additionally the Ponderosa stands in the West Paradox Project Area are too thick for productive growth and they lack the size class of merchantable saw logs. Because there is no merchantable timber in the treatment area, Mattox will not be able to rely on timber sales to meet his prescription. To treat this unit Mattox will need to rely on mastication, hand cutting, prescribed fire, and a feller buncher that the Manti-La Sal recently purchased.

Mattox stated that he wanted to "think of this treatment as a fire would". He explained that the greatest risk of extreme fire behavior would be concentrated in the numerous steep drainages throughout the treatment area. Mattox explained that it would be relatively easy to masticate the fuels at the top of the drainages, but to actually mitigate extreme fire behavior fuels inside the steep drainages need to be mitigated. Even though the mastication machines that Mattox plans to use on this project are wide-tracked they are limited to slopes under 40 degrees. Because of this mastication cannot be used for the entire project. Mattox recognized that a substantial amount of fuels will require hand crews or prescribed fire to mitigate.

At this point Mattox asked the floor to comment on the project, looking for recommendations to treat the project area and obtain funding for the project. Members in the audience from the BLM, NPS and CSFS provided input on the tentative West Paradox Project.

### **Recognition of WRWC Steering Committee Member- Chris Barth**

Chris Barth, the Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist for the BLM in southwestern Colorado, has been a Steering Committee Member for the West Region Wildfire Council since 2009. Barth has been instrumental in taking the West Region Wildfire Council from a talking group to a staffed non-profit that is involved in hundreds of acres of wildfire mitigation annually. In January 2017 Chris accepted a new position as the Lead Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist for the BLM in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Lilia Falk along with the West Region Wildfire Council Steering Committee presented Chris with a WRWC plaque engraved on a chain saw bar and expressed their extreme gratification for his involvement with the Council.

### **Round Robin**

Ben Tisdell informed the group of the status and plans of the Ouray County Wildfire Planning Commission.

Jamie Gomez provided an update on his education and outreach plans to incite wildfire mitigation activities in 2017.

Mike Tarantino spoke about the value of Community Wildfire Risk Assessments, and his plans to complete assessments in Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties.

Randy Chapman explained that BLM operations are currently being affected by a hiring freeze, but he expects BLM funding to move forward soon.

Brandon Lewis explained that a new fuels manager has been hired for the BLM's Uncompahgre Field Office, and he explained that he will be looking to fill Chris Barth's position soon.

J.T. Shaver provided updates on Hinsdale County mitigation projects scheduled to be cut in the Park Creek Subdivision.

Austin Shelby discussed his 80 acre winter logging job currently underway, and he provided an update on the Little Cone Timber Sale explaining that CSFS would be playing a bigger role in the Good Neighbor Authority.

Corey Robinson explained that the USFS is currently working through the hiring freeze and is hiring temporary positions.

Garrett Seddon explained that the Center of Excellence has been working on a data link project. Seddon then added that DFPC's Center of Excellence will be hosting an Unmanned Aerial Systems in Public Safety Summit on March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. The UAS Summit will be held in Nathrop, Colorado and will focus on Best Practices for Operations in Public Safety. Additionally the summit will include demonstrations.

Luke Odom discussed the advancements in the COWIMS application explaining that shapes from COWIMS can be utilized on Google Earth, MMA live video can be accessed, and the whole application is more user friendly. He then explained that a 10 person helicopter crew and an engine crew have been hired out of the Montrose Office. Luke added that all of the West Region AOP meetings have been completed.

Lilia Falk talked about the Colorado Wildland Fire Conference taking place in Pueblo, Colorado from April 19<sup>th</sup> through April 21<sup>st</sup>. Lilia explained that a field trip to the Belluha Fire will kick off the conference, she introduced the conferences Key Note Speakers, and explained that there will be a great line up of presentations.