

## West Region Wildfire Council Meeting Minutes 3/10/16

	Attendee	Attendee	Affiliation
	Last Name	First Name	
	Barth	Chris	BLM
	Beckhardt	Dave	Log Hill Fire
	Bennett	John	Telluride Fire
	Chavez	Thad	USFS
	Cinnamon	Sophia	WRWC
	Falk	Lilia	WRWC
	Gomez	Jamie	WRWC
	McCarthy	Jim	Log Village HOA
	Oxford	Ross	NPS
	Rist	Jodi	CSFS
	Lange	Damon	CSFS
	Shaver	JT	CSFS
	Shelby	Austin	CSFS
	Stahle	Alan	Ouray FPD
	Haefner	Lee	CSFS
			Plaindealer
			Montrose Press

### Introductions

Lilia Falk facilitated the meeting/ webinar and initiated a round of introductions.

### Feature Presentation

#### **“Do spruce beetle outbreaks make forest fires more severe? Field evidence from spruce-fir forests in the San Juan Mountains” Robbie Andrus, PhD candidate at University Colorado Boulder**

Robbie Andrus, PhD candidate at the University of Colorado Boulder presented the research findings from his Masters research project. Andrus began his presentation by providing an overview of Southern Colorado forests and introducing the research question, “How does fire behavior influence fire severity?” The majority of forests affected by spruce beetle outbreaks in SW Colorado are Engelmann Spruce-subalpine fir. Andrus stressed that disturbances are part of natural process including beetle outbreaks and wildfire. These disturbances are important to maintain heterogeneity.

Andrus switched gears to discuss the confusion in the media about fire and beetle kill and the diverse group of stakeholders and interested parties in this issue. He then opened up the floor to ask the land managers in the room why they were interested. Thad Chavez, USFS, asked if beetles increased fire severity or affected fire return interval. According to Andrus, beetle kill does not increase fire severity.

Andrus then detailed his research methods to explore and compare fire severity in relation to beetle severity in previously burned forest areas. A factor that played into Andrus' research was the fact that beetles affect the fuels component in the fire triangle. He then explained the life cycle of the beetle and how it correlates to available fuel within the forest. After a beetle infestation, spruce lose their canopy, which results in a lower available fuel load for fire.

Andrus moved through his statistics and analysis section and then to his findings. He summarized his overall findings in this statement, "From an ecological perspective fire severity was similar in beetle kill and live forests that had previously burned". The vast majority of the research areas, that burned both beetle kill and green trees, exhibited extreme fire behavior. Fire is no more likely to start in beetle kill forests than green forests.

Andrus shifted his presentation to discuss the foremost factors that do influence fire severity including climate, weather, fuel loading, and complex topography. These factors overrode the beetle component when looking at elements that influence fire severity.

Andrus closed his presentation with a discussion of current climate trends and the projection towards larger fires in the sub-alpine forests of Colorado. He revisited the weather, topography, and high fuel loading as stronger influencing factors in fire severity than beetle infestations.

You can view the feature presentation [here](#).

## Round Robin

Thad Chavez, USFS, provided an update on regional details throughout the Forest. Medina is currently acting FMO in Montrose, and Jim Ramirez is detailed in Atlanta. Clay Fowler is on a virtual detail to Washington. Thad is finishing up the Ouray NEPA process and the SPEADMAR internal review.

Damon Lange, CSFS, Salida District received significant funding.

J.T. Shaver, CSFS, discussed several projects in Gunnison County.

Jodi Rist, is looking for ideas for cross-boundary fuel projects in her district.

Austin Shelby, CSFS, introduced new seasonal.

Chris Barth, BLM, discussed his current USFS detail out of the Golden office, he will return to Montrose in May. BLM SW District has filled all fuel positions.

Lilia, WRWC, provided an update on the upcoming strategic planning sessions and introduced the new WRWC Coordinator, Mike Tarantino.

Sophia, WRWC, detailed upcoming projects in Gunnison County and announced retirement.