West Region Wildfire Council
Meeting Minutes
3/9/17

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
Austin	Tom	Log Hill Fire
Barth	Chris	BLM
Bennett	John	Telluride Fire
Chappell	Randy	BLM
Falk	Lilia	WRWC
Gomez	Jamie	WRWC
Lewis	Brandon	BLM
Lucero	Bobbie	Gunnison County
Mattivi	Junior	Ouray County
Moore	Travis	DFPC
Morrill	Scott	Gunnison County
Pankratz	Sam	CSFS
Pietruska	Brad	BLM
Rist	Jodi	CSFS
Robinson	Corey	USFS
Seddon	Garrett	DFPC
Shelby	Austin	CSFS
Sheppard	Max	Fisher Canyon HOA
Staehle	Alan	Ouray FPD
Stark	Rusty	BLM
Tarantino	Mike	WRWC
Tisdel	Ben	Ouray County

Introductions

Lilia Falk facilitated the meeting and initiated a round of introductions. She then introduced foresters Sam Pankratz and J.T. Shaver from the Colorado State Forest Service Gunnison Field Office who presented on bark beetles within the West Region and bark beetle mitigation programs.

Presentation: "GU Field Office- 2016 Aerial Survey Overview/ Douglas-fir Management" presented by Sam Pankratz and J.T. Shaver, Colorado State Forest Service foresters from the Gunnison Field Office.

Click here to view the presentation.

Assistant Salida District Forester, Sam Pankratz, began the presentation by giving an overview of the aerial survey program that identifies insect and disease agents in Colorado forests. Pankratz explained that the Colorado State Forest Service has been coordinating with the United States Forest Service to conduct forest health surveys from a small fixed wing aircraft since the 1950's. This has resulted in a tremendous historical record of forest pests in the state. Sam then explained how the forest monitoring has progressed through the decades. In the fifties, sixties and seventies forest pests

were identified aerially and inked by hand onto forest maps. By 1994 foresters started wiring in laptops and bringing them on the flights. With the turn of the 21st Century a digital era began and all aerial surveys were being recorded on Hammerheads, Toughbooks and Digital Sketch Mappers. Pankratz ended his overview of the Aerial Survey Programs by explaining the operations of a survey. Typically when a survey is conducted the aircraft is flying at 100 knots (115 MPH) 500 to 2,000 feet above ground level. The plane will grid approximately a 2 mile swath and the observer will survey 25 acres per second, or 3.3 square miles per minute. Over steep terrain the aircraft will circle around topography in a contour pattern. Any forest pest agents that are observed are recorded on a digital sketch mapper. This method of surveying is an effective way to monitor disturbances in the forest across a large scale as the per-acre cost of these surveys comes out to about $0.01.

After explaining how the Colorado State Forest Service was doing forest pest monitoring he identified the specific forest disease agents impacting the forests in the West Region. He identified the three bark beetle species that have resulted in a large amount of mortality within the West Region: Spruce Beetle, Douglas-fir Beetle, and the Fir Engraver Beetle. After explaining the biology of these three bark beetle species he pulled up slides showing mapped forest pest agents and the rise in mortality since 1996. The Spruce Beetle has affected 431,250 acres and the Douglas-fir Beetle affected 94.400 acres of forest in the West Region alone since 1996. Since 2015 the Fir Engraver Beetle has affected 10,200 acres of forest in Ouray County. Pankratz also identified a defoliator, the Spruce Budworm, which has become a growing pest in Western Colorado's forests. Unlike the bark beetles the budworm does not immediately kill a mature tree. It does attack and defoliate the new growth though, and years of defoliation could overstress a tree enough to cause mortality. Just last year, in 2016, almost 20,000 acres of West Region forests were affected by Spruce Budworm.

With the pests affecting the West Region forests identified Pankratz started to explain how the impact of these pests can be mitigated. Because the main disease agent causing mortality in the Gunnison Field Office is the Douglas-fir Beetle, Pankratz highlighted Douglas-fir Beetle mitigation treatments currently being used in the Gunnison Basin. The mitigation methods explained by Pankratz were the MCH Program, Lindgren Funnel Traps, and the Western Bark Beetle Program.

The CSFS Gunnison Field Office has worked with over 150 landowners to apply pheromone packets for the MCH Program. To communicate with each other the Douglas-fir Beetle releases chemicals known as pheromones. When a breeding female bark beetle occupies a Douglas-fir an aggregation pheromone is released that attracts other breeding adults to that host tree. 3-methylcyclohex-2-en-1, or MCH, is an anti-aggregation pheromone released by Douglas-fir Beetles when a host tree is over occupied. The release of the MCH pheromone is to prevent the overcrowding of beetle larvae within the tree and to optimize brood survival. Pankratz explained that the presence of this pheromone in a stand acts essentially as a no-vacancy sign for adult beetles looking for a host. In the 1970's the MCH pheromone was isolated and today the CSFS is using the pheromone for bark beetle mitigation. The MCH packet contains a bubble of the anti-aggregation pheromone. At the end of April the foresters hang MCH packets on healthy Douglas-fir trees to steer away hatching bark beetles. The packets are hung on the bole at six feet and approximately 30 packets are hung per-acre. The pheromone sent from the MCH packets will last throughout the Douglas-fir Beetle breeding season, but as Pankratz noted this is only a band-aid treatment and MCH packets must be applied annually.

The Gunnison Field Office has also deployed Lindgren Funnel Traps in an effort to mitigate the impacts of Douglas-fir Beetles. These funnel traps use aggregation pheromones to attract and trap bark beetles and can be effective at removing tens of thousands of adult beetles per trap. Pankratz cautioned that these traps should be used in stands that are not composed of Douglas-fir as they attract beetles and will lead to an increase in tree mortality if they are deployed in Douglas-fir stands.

Forester J.T. Shaver then started to explain the newest mitigation tactic that the Gunnison Field Office is using, the Western Bark Beetle Program. In 2016 the Gunnison Field Office received grant funding from the CSFS State Office for bark beetle mitigation projects. Because of the large acreage of forest impacted by pests in the Gunnison Basin the funding was prioritized for this region. Shaver explained that the Gunnison Field Office needed to design a program in which they could utilize the new funds. The developed program was a cost share grant intended to prevent and suppress an increase in acres affected by Douglas-fir Beetle. To do this the Western Bark Beetle Funding is being used to

mechanically treat Douglas-fir stands. The mechanical treatments are intended to increase the crown spacing of residual trees and remove large diameter overstory trees. These mechanical treatments will mitigate the spread of Douglas-fir Beetles as large diameter trees are the preferred host and an increased crown spacing reduces the number of available host trees. Using Western Bark Beetle Funding the CSFS Gunnison Field Office completed two projects and have one encumbered project in 2016 with six projects planned for 2017.

J.T. ended the presentation by explaining how the CSFS bark beetle programs can meet multiple objectives, specifically the wildfire mitigation objective of the West Region Wildfire Council. Shaver asked WRWC Mitigation and Education Coordinator, Mike Tarantino, to speak about the benefits of this collaboration. Tarantino explained how the WRWC worked with the CSFS to create defensible space projects within the Blue Mesa Subdivision, an area with a high wildfire risk and an abundance of forest pests in Gunnison County. On site visits intended to educate homeowners about wildfire risk in the Blue Mesa Subdivision, Tarantino and Shaver would inevitably end up talking with homeowners about the health of their forest. When wildfire mitigation projects were designed Shaver and Pankratz had to consider the potential fire behavior as well as the potential for a Douglas-fir Beetle infestation. Wildfire mitigation projects in high mortality Douglas-fir stands had active beetle populations established and dead trees influenced marking. In large diameter Douglas-fir stands it is important to protect regeneration when creating mitigation projects as it is the future of the forest. In high density stands blow down must be considered when marking a fuels reduction project as freshly fallen trees will attract bark beetles. And for all fuels reduction projects the timing of mitigation work is crucial. If trees are being cut when adult beetles are flying to new host trees the stress signals released from the freshly cut trees may attract adult beetles into the stand.

The Colorado State Forest Service is annually monitoring forest pests in Western Colorado through aerial surveys and with multiple methods the Gunnison Field Office is actively mitigating the impacts of these pests. These forest pest mitigation projects will ensure the continued health of the Gunnison Basin forests and can meet multiple objectives including the mitigation of wildfire risk.

Presentation: "2017 Cost Share Program Update" presented by Jamie Gomez and Mike Tarantino, West Region Wildfire Council Mitigation and Education Coordinators

Click here to view presentation

West Region Wildfire Council Mitigation and Education Coordinators, Jamie Gomez and Mike Tarantino, gave a presentation updating the audience about the 2017 Cost Share Program. The coordinators informed the audience that the 2017 program is now available to homeowners and they explained the changes from the 2016 Cost Share Program. They explained how the 2017 application process has changed allowing homeowners to apply for the program before a natural resource professional marks a fuels mitigation project. They explained how a Cost-Share Recipient Experience Survey will be sent with reimbursement payments to obtain homeowner feedback. And they explained how the West Region Wildfire Council will be conducting post project maintenance site visits two years after the completion of a fuels mitigation project to provide project maintenance recommendations. Finally the coordinators explained how they outreach the WRWC programs and track the status of site visits and projects.

Round Robin

Loghill Fire Chief, Tom Austin, explained that he will be working with WRWC to update the parcel level risk assessments completed for the community in 2011.

Telluride Fire Chief, John Bennet, stated that his FPD currently has a Type 1 Engine for sale.

Max Sheppard, the HOA President for Fischer Canyon, expressed his gratification for the Community Chipping Program and Cost-Share Program being available for Fischer Canyon residents in 2016, and hoped that the programs would remain available in 2017.

Alan Stahle, with the Ouray Fire Department, told the audience that metal reflective addressing will be installed on all homes within the Ouray FPD. Stahle also explained that the FPD is hoping to establish an emergency fund that can be released to an IC or Sheriff in the event of an incident.

Rusty Stark, BLM Fire, announced that the BLM is continuing NEPA for prescribed burn projects on the Uncompahgre Plateau.

The BLM FMO, Brandon Lewis, announced that the SW Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist Position has been flown and applications are currently being accepted.

Ouray County Commissioner, Ben Tisdel, announced that he has been appointed to the State Emergency Fire Committee and a Spring Meeting has been scheduled for April 12th. Additionally Tisdel stated that he will be attending a Forest Health Advisory Meeting on April 13th.

Scott Morrill, the Gunnison County Emergency Manager, explained that there has been a change in leadership in the Gunnison County Community Development Office and that this may lead to a revision in Fire and Building Codes. Morrill also explained that the Gunnison County CWPP is currently five years old.

Mike Tarantino, WRWC M&EC, announced his plans to complete a parcel level risk assessment for structures in Taylor Canyon, an area with extreme wildfire risk that for the most part was not identified by the Gunnison County CWPP.

Jamie Gomez, WRWC M&EC, explained that the Ouray Land Use Planning Commission is moving forward. Gomez also announced the current status of the 2017 Community Chipping Program, and explained to the audience that there is some outreach planning started for the Community Wildfire Preparedness Day.

Chris Barth, Fire Mitigation Specialist for the BLM, announced that registration for the COWFC is open and he addressed the conferences Key Note Speakers. Barth also announced his final day working for the BLM in Montrose before he starts his new position working for BLM Montana/Dakotas.

Lilia Falk, Director of the WRWC, explained the City Market Community Rewards Program and asked audience members to register for the program. You can enroll with the West Region Wildfire Council's City Market Community Rewards Program at www.citymarket.com/topic/city-market-communty-rewards, click 'Enroll Now' and search 'West Region Wildfire Council'.