

St Vrain Forest Health Partnership Meeting- Desired Conditions Workshop #1
12-4-2020
Meeting Minutes

List of Attendees:

- Ben Pfol- Colorado State Forest Service
- Chris O'Brien- Left Hand Fire
- Andrew Slack- Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI)
- Angie Gee- USFS
- Katie Heard- USFS NEPA
- Angie Busby- Cal-Wood land manager
- Monica Bortolini- City of Longmont
- Vanessa McCracken- Boulder Valley & Longmont Conservation Districts
- Dan Wolford- COL, Trout Unlimited (TU), SVLHWCD
- Mike Caggiano- CFRI
- Nancy Commins- Cal-Wood BOD
- Chaska Huayhuaca- CFRI, NOCO Fireshed
- Tim Shafer- Boulder County Parks and Open Space (BOCO POS)
- Barbara Luneau- TU
- Susan Spaulding- BOCO POS
- Pryce Hadley- City of Longmont, Button Rock Preserve
- Dan Torrence - Meeker Park landowner and retired USFS
- Jim Webster- Wildfire Partners Program Coordinator, Boulder County
- Charley Cross - City of Longmont
- Seth Strickland- Jamestown FIRE & Town Rep
- Maya MacHamer- Fourmile Watershed Coalition
- Chad Buser - US Forest Service
- Bill Ellis- Raymond resident and property owner.
- Scott Golden - Boulder County
- Rich Lopez- President Cal-Wood Education Center, Gold Hill FPD Board Chair
- Sean Cronin - St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District
- Chad Julian- Longmont and Boulder Valley Conservation Districts
- Stefan Reinold- Senior Forester -Boulder County Parks and Open Space
- Tom Matthews – ARNF
- David Batts, Lyons Ecology Advisory Board
- Paul Orbuch, USFS DC Office Contractor in Boulder
- Fritz Koch, Cal-Wood/Boulder Rural Fire/Boulder County Cooperators
- Kris Gibson Boulder CO resident Gold Hill Fire volunteer. Involved years ago in the Front Range Roundtable.
- Kevin Zimlinghaus- ARNF BRD TMA/Silviculturist/Invasive Plant PM
- Rafael Salgado- Cal-Wood
- Steve Pischke- Lyons Fire
- Yana Sorokin (Left Hand Watershed Center)

- Jessie Olson (Left Hand Watershed Center)
- Deb Hummel (Left Hand Watershed Center)

Jessie Olson (Left Hand Watershed Center) began the meeting at 9:03am

Introductions:

- USFS newcomers to partnership:
 - James White with the USFS introduced himself to the group. Prescribed fire and fuels specialist at the forest level.
 - Cody Peel with the USFS introduced himself to the group. Forest Fire management officer.
- Jessie introduced the Left Hand Watershed Center's Restore Forest website page as a resource for the partnership and meeting information.

Presentation and Discussions:

1. Calwood Fire Recovery Process Update
 - a. Stefan Reinold (BOCO) provided an update on the Cal-Wood Fire.
 - i. Heil Ranch: Picture Rock trail is partially re-opened. Staff are assessing the rest of Heil for any other areas that could be reopened.
 - ii. Some culverts were melted and need to be replaced.
 - iii. Soil burn severity process is nearly complete
 - iv. Management actions in planning stages
 - b. Angie Gee (USFS) provided an update on Forest Service collaboration with city of Longmont on their efforts to manage and protect water supply.
2. Overview of GTR 375 Desired Conditions Framework (Jonas Feinstein, NRCS)
 - a. Jonas was unable to present. Provided key takeaways of the GTR 375 Desired Conditions document over the phone
 - i. Collaborative process- managers, researchers, specialists. Reviewed by a variety of agencies and organizations.
 - ii. Desired conditions are holistic (e.g. considered wildlife, plants, hydrology, forest ecology, fire, community, etc...) that would have a landscape-scale effect and benefit. Conditions are based on past functionality that may not exactly replicate past form.
 1. Landscape is not pieces (isolated values, goals) of a pie, but a seven-layer cake. All layers are equally important.
 - iii. The framework is bottom up and top-down that understands various aspects including site conditions, climate, geology, etc...
 1. Measurable on-site benchmarks
3. Desired Future Conditions Example 1: Cal-Wood (Ben Pfohl, Colorado State Forest Service)
 - a. Ben Pfohl (CSFS) presented on future conditions for the Cal-Wood Education center property.

- b. Background on Cal-Wood Education Center
 - i. Long-term stewards of the property
 - ii. Initially, forestry was the site's main profit
 - iii. Property was then divided into a education and other
 - iv. Currently on a conservation easement
- c. History of management and landscape
 - i. Management
 - 1. Property recently developed a Forest Management Plan with USFS
 - 2. Active adaptive management and monitoring
 - 3. A variety of forest treatments mainly focused on: structures, infrastructure, trails and roads over the years. Some other examples:
 - a. Dwarf Mistletoe
 - b. Mountain Pine beetle
 - c. Wildlife closures to regenerate aspen stands
 - ii. Landscape
 - 1. Elevation 7,200-8,200 ft.
 - 2. Forest characteristics: ponderosa pine, dry mixed conifer and riparian hardwoods.
- d. Defining future conditions (from Cal-Wood's Forest Management Plan)
 - i. Considerations:
 - 1. Elevation of property
 - 2. Different forest characteristics on the property
 - 3. Key fine-scale features: openings, tree groups, randomly spaces trees, snags and downed wood debris, aspen trees, riparian vegetation
 - ii. Forest planning:
 - 1. Divided property into units with similar conditions to help define desired conditions.
 - a. Described forest characteristics, fine scale features per unit.
 - Example metrics:
 - i. Tree species diameter frequency per acre
 - ii. Basal area
 - b. Based on current conditions of unit, define desired future conditions per unit
 - iii. Defining desired conditions
 - 1. Defined desirable metrics by forest type while considering other components (e.g. wildlife habitat)
 - 2. Recommend actionable prescriptions to reach desired conditions.
- e. Questions/ Comments:
 - i. Mike Caggiano (CFRI) commented that CFRI also defines desired conditions on identified ecosystem services of a forest landscape, rather than just forest stand-scale metrics.
 - 1. Example: forest to survive forest fire

- ii. Chad Julian supported Mike's comment. They've noticed a difference in perspective based on audience. Usually, field experts are more metric-focused and general public or landowners are ecosystem service-focused.

4. Breakout Room Discussion:

CAL-WOOD & LEFT HAND BREAK OUT ROOM:

Attendees: Chad Julian, Maya MacHamer, Ben Pfohl, Rafael Salgado, Angie Gee, Yana Sorkin, Tom Matthews, Seth Strickland, Charley Cross, Fritz, Chris O'Brien, Angie Busby

Goal: Memorialize everyone's goals and visions to define collaborative success. Info will help define future meetings, and make recommendations for success.

- Ecosystem services perspective.
- How do we define desired future conditions?

How to bring more people to the table, outreach? Field trips. Buy in on prescribed fire. Get people to demonstration areas.

How does your opinion of the desired future condition align or not with the presentation?

- Seth: Optimistic about the approach so far in terms of large-scale projects. Challenges with landowners often comes with the mindset of being attached to trees, difficulty understanding the balance of what a forest needs.
 - Stand structures align with vision. In Jamestown- fuel density around homes and individual neighbors need to understand their connection to the larger landscape.
 - Trick is getting the property owners on board. USFS lands/public lands- it would be good to see the same approach on public lands (Gillespie Gulch).
- Chris: Yes- appreciates Ben & Calwood's efforts. Jamestown is in the Lefthand CWPP as an area of interest and Jamestown is welcome to use it.
 - Balance of mountain communities is learning to balance what the forest needs and what the humans need.
- Charley: Not really my field. More on the grant/funding side of things.
 - Does agree that fire risk should be reduced.
- Ben: Do residents in Jamestown understand the dichotomy of what they do around their home and within the community does not necessarily align and that the protection of the community is dependent on both small and large scales?
- Seth: Broad mix of understanding. Generational shift happening in Jamestown. Some understand, some do not- need education and motivating.
 - Trying to harness wildfire momentum to leverage current interest.
 - Recreation- accessing the forest and seeing things on a larger landscape scale while recreating is helpful to understand the forest.
- Yana: What are the desired conditions that the older generations are interested in?
- Seth: People are resistant to change, uncomfortable with uncertainty.

- Same philosophy as fire suppression- put it out. If people understood the benefits they may not be as resistant.
 - How do you deliver the message?
 - Presentations are useful for education.
- Angie Gee: Desired future conditions are the end result- a broader statement of the overall goal of what we are trying to create. Underneath that are more specific metrics to measure success.
 - Broader value-based statements are better for communication.
- Ben: Agree with Angie. How much does the Cohesive Strategy drive this discussion?
 - Three-pronged approach is useful to discuss multiple strategies.
 - NCS could be the larger strategy.
 - How do we find success? What metrics are used? How to we determine this on the landscape scale?
- Yana: Broader goals- ex: what does protecting water supply mean? Next step: Using scientific resources to identify what are the steps needed to reach success?
 - Different scales might exist for different stakeholders?

What are additional goals and priorities (ecosystem priorities)?

- Chad: What is the audience that will use the desired future conditions? Landowners, agencies?
 - How can we develop on paper the desired future conditions to aid those who are developing plan?
 - Long-term debates that could be clarified by desired future conditions. Lots of different treatment types, but they are not all appropriate in the right places or at different scales.
 - How do we clarify these complexities within the desired future conditions?
 - Forest types: practitioners may not know what to do in mixed conifer or other forest types? May be different desired conditions for different forest types?
 - Coexistence- think about other processes like prescribed fire. How do we make sure that desired conditions support different processes.
- Angie Gee: Condition based management- idea is that specific treatments are used for specific conditions on the landscape. Ex: meadows, dense ponderosa etc.
 - This management strategy is a step below the desired future conditions.
 - Specific actions to move forward in support of a desired future condition.
 - Have been thinking about how this resonates with the NEPA process and with the public.
 - Need the public to see that their values are represented in the processes.
 - Also allows us to react quickly to changing situations, people's desires and does not restrict management approaches within the planning documents. Allows flexibility.
 - Allows adaptive management.
- Yana: Helps connect desired future conditions to management actions.
- Chad: Fire response side- how does the forest service view desired conditions as they relate to response?
- Chris: Would love to see the fire stay on the surface where firefighters can get to it. Want to make sure that what we are doing
 - Fire behavior this year has been unprecedented

- If we cannot protect communities how can we make buffers around communities.
- Angie Gee: Time and space: Does treatment allow time and space for firefighters to get into a community to protect it. Are we creating opportunities for firefighters to do direct engagement or indirect? Discussing these themes with communities is important.
- Yana: These are very important desired future conditions. (Angie & Chad's comments).
- Angie: Forsythe community has discovered that often wildlife goals and fire treatment goals are in conflict. How do we deal with this? It is often about balancing or ranking needs.
 - Will need to make trade-offs- coexistence.
- Ben: Are there key species or habitat features that we know we need to be more cognizant of?
 - Before you get to the trade off point are there key things that are not negotiable?
 - Pre-identify these so that we know before we are in the prescription creation state.
- Angie: Preble's- riparian corridors at lower elevations, Big horn sheep- planning area has Big horn habitat.
 - 6000 acre research area is for Big horn and there is a lambing area.
 - Elk migration corridors- do not require as specific treatment requirements because they adapt better.
- Ben: These statements would be really helpful to have. An ecologist could define these statements: describe the range of conditions for species to assist practitioners on the ground in discussions with the public.
 - Engage CPW for assistance.
- Chad: Boulder County Comprehensive Plan has a lot of data sets.
 - Northern Goshawk is another species.
- Yana: Do Calwood folks have other goals or are there gaps in what has been discussed?
- Angie Busby: Resilient management, fire based management....many key words. The area is really large so being flexible and adaptive to allow different areas to tie into desired future conditions.
- Fritz: Sustainable, reasonable, adaptable- these are key concepts.
 - Public access, fire access- balancing act between needs/resource protection.
 - Long-term plans must be adaptable to climate change, property ownership
 - Balancing needs is instrumental
 - Reasonable and affordable is also critical
 - Fire response: Australian model of shelter in place. Should we consider this in relation to fire suppression and evacuations while fire apparatus are trying to get into an area?
- Ben: Future discussions should include a wildlife biologist.

ALLENSPARK BREAKOUT ROOM

Attendees:

- Jessie Olson LHWC, ED, facilitator
- Vanessa: Boulder Valley & Longmont Conservation Districts
- Andrew Slack - Research Assoc CFRI, Adaptive mgmt. in Upper South Platte. Grew up west of Boulder, in Longmont
- Mary Stern – Meeker Park 1978 height of beetle infestation. Began with Allenspark Forestry group have done lots of thinning. Clearing, raking, wildfire Partners, EQIP and CSFS work, Lived

there since 1987. Wants to forget the house, save the forest in fires. Happy to be part of the group.

- David Bell – Parks and Nat Resources City of Longmont, managing Button rock and Ralph Price Reservoir
- Craig Jones – retires State Forest Service retired 2005, forestry consulting, biomass utilization
- Bill Ellis – Live in Raymond, owns 120 acres. In family since 1916, like do their part to create healthy forest. Bring property owner perspective. St. Vrain Creek Coalition board
- Scott Golden – Resource Spec forestry BCPOS –
- Dan Torrence – Family has property at Meeker Park. Retired USFS.
- Kevin Zimlinghaus – Program Manager for Boulder and Clear Creek Ranger Districts
- Reid Armstrong – public affairs Arapahoe and National Forest (Katherine)

Questions: Considering this geography –How does your opinion of desirable future conditions differ or align with the presentation? What additional goals do you have and what are your top priorities? (e.g. protect water supplies, protect homes, improve wildlife habitat, etc).

- Mary: 1978 worked clearing. Beauty of the land is important. Keeping it healthy. Constantly seeing they need to thin more. Save the Trees.
- Andrew: recreation value, incredibly valued across the state for recreation and economy on Peak to Peak Hwy
- Bill: recreation is important, recreation has to be tempered to a certain degree. Recreation has a destructive element to it. ATVs, dust clouds. Recreation should respect the environment. Hikers and fishers os. Sport shooting and mechanized recreation can be problems. Lead concentrations high in some soil samples. Must factor in recreation but in a reasonable way.
- David: Healthy landscapes, objectives change depends on landscapes. Target objectives in certain areas – changes around neighborhoods and homes vs. forested areas. Where landscapes directly impact reservoirs, the objective is protect the reservoir. Forest mgmt. may look different in different area. Mosaic piece -good example of different strategies in different areas. Wildlife mgmt. different from protecting a reservoir.
- Craig: 3 major components – environmental, social, economic – resilience; social -; economic – cost to remove trees, etc. ALL components must be melded together. Not mutually exclusive. Whole landscape is diverse. Not all ponderosa, very diverse.
- Mary: diversity of landowners. Some are extremely interested in forest health. Some who don't have the money to thin. They are surrounded by people who don't manage? How does what they are doing help the whole region's goals?
- Andrew: we value fire adapted communities that have full community support and buy in.
- David: As you look at what you want and how you get there – social and economic piece and cultural piece. People moved to the mountains to be surrounded by trees. Must keep that in mind. People moved to the mountains, not the prairie.
- Jessie: What do people need to feel bought in?
- Craig: Education and outreach is huge – expand this group to more of the community. Talking points and educational tools – understands he sentiments – some landowners want to participate, some don't. Some landowners will come along, others won't.

- Andrew: Upper South Platte – great to see 3 landowners in chat room – landowners are the key to educating their neighbors, fire protection districts and trusted by landowners. Being able to see forest restoration on your neighbor’s property is the best E& O tool.
- Bill: inroads to local communities – right now people are interested in forests resilient to fires and infestations, also like wildlife habitat and then watershed health. Many people are taking action based on what he has seen at the forestry sort yards. Start with fire resilience, inroad to property owners, then show how it benefits other resources.
- Craig: landowner – talk them about thinning, one would, one would not until they can see it on another property. Getting people out showing them good, science-based work is the key to bringing stragglers on board.
- Dan: We need to understand that many landowners that don’t have a lot of land, have an acre or less, they question if what they can do will make a difference. Need to use adjacency of public lands. Example of Meeker Park – National Forest land – did some thinning – provides protection. Look at all opportunities know that not everyone will participate.
- Scott: Prescribed fire thought of landowners?
- Mary: We had a fire ban basically all year so no way private property owners could do it. Afraid doesn’t have expertise. Might be nice to have member of Allenspark Fire Department and they could spread the word to others in the fires department. Will be doing some burning.
- Bill: Gary McGuire is a member of this group. Landowners are perhaps a little leary. Stories of them getting out of control. Is going to take a lot of convincing especially in neighborhoods.
- Andrew: Collaboratives like this will make Rx fire possible. Forest Stewards Guild – develop strong relationships with private landowners. Would landowners be willing to demonstrate success on their property with collaborative all hands approach?
- Jessie: Bill, would you entertain Rx burn?
- Bill: Yes I would, but another 150 residents up here that might not agree with me doing that on my property. Adequate fuels reduction before prescribed fire would help. There are examples of fuels reduction work. Where the fuel reduction work was done on forest service land, looked good, then blew down many trees. Made some tree more vulnerable to blow down. Needs to be considered.
- Kevin: Mechanical thinning have experience blow down from microbursts or sustained winds. Experimenting with working with roundtable as to how dense groups of trees should be – Specifically in regard to pondo – some areas really susceptible. Combination of thinning and fire. Distinct differences in treatments
- Scott: Blow down is an issue, different kinds of stands – trying to thin lodgepole is difficult. Pondo responds differently. Mixed conifer can be more aggressive. OK if some more do come down after treatments. Some deadfall is OK. Rx fire – starting to get a good handle on what is working. Has seen a lot of treatments – huge difference in what remains after fire. Difference is there. Imperative we follow mechanical treatments with fire. Social license is hard. How do we change culture?
- Jessie: Do you have good examples?
- Scott: Yes, Heil. Lots of examples. What do you care about? – Hall Ranch ecological landscape
- Mary: People in this area in Meeker Park – very upset with thinning and leave huge piles of slash to burn eventually plus they spread the branches out, so it doesn’t lessen fire danger. Particularly USFS.

- Jessie: Relationships need rebuilt
- David: Practices need to be used in conjunction. Fuel removal costs are additional. Rearranging of fuels is something we have struggled with. How do we mechanically get it out there? Huge barrier.
- Vanessa: ag producers downstream rely on the product of the watershed.

LYONS BREAKOUT ROOM

Participants: Mike Caggiano, Chad Buser, David Batts, Chaska Huayhuaca, Cody Peel, Kimberly Mihelich, Dan Wolford, Steve, Pischke, Jim Webster, Monica Bortolini, Tim Shafer

- a. Question: How does your opinion of desirable future conditions differ or align with the presentation?
 - i. May or may not align with presentation. Differences in perspective based on where you are on the Lyon's landscape: a management unit perspective approach (similar to presentation) may be appropriate for town/ Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), where specific metrics and actions are needed, while a place like Hall Ranch may focus on ecosystem service benefits.
 1. Zones: WUI (Town of Lyon's), upslope, riparian areas
 - a. Another focus area: water source protection.

- b. Question: What additional goals do you have and what are your top priorities? (e.g. protect water supplies, protect homes, improve wildlife habitat, etc).
 - i. Define "values of risk" and then weigh their importance by management zones.
Values of risk:
 1. Community protection
 - a. During wildland fires with low risk of homes igniting (fire breaks) and quick access.
 - i. Access or quick an efficient evacuations. There were limitations to access certain sub-divisions and neighborhoods during the Calwood fire
 - ii. Fire breaks
 - b. Post-wildfire impacts such as debris flow.
 2. Resilient riparian areas during and after fire.
 3. Water supplies (e.g. Button Rock).
 4. Attention to Apple Valley, where there are limited efforts.
 5. Wildlife priorities are usually secondary to others when it comes to acquiring funding and implementing management actions.
 - a. The confluence in Lyons is critical riparian corridor with high diversity.
 - b. Hall Ranch is an important wildlife corridor.
 - c. How do these fit in priorities and funding? These low elevation areas are often ignored when it comes to focused wildlife management.

- i. Good forest management ties in with good wildlife management.
- ii. Zones of management:
 - 1. Town of Lyons
 - a. Town and surrounding neighborhoods and sub-divisions
 - 2. Upland
 - 3. Riparian
 - 4. Water source areas
- iii. Community engagement along the way
 - 1. E.g. community step-wise guide for management actions

BUTTON ROCK BREAKOUT ROOM

Attendees:

James White
Ken Huson
Stefan Reinold
Susan Spaulding
Pryce Hadley
Peyton Ward
Sean Cronin
Paul Orbuch

How does your opinion differ or align on desired future conditions presentation

Ken Huson – City of Longmont long time work in Button Rock but fear of pushback on active management. Lots of education up front. Tender on landscape at first. Now doing some second cuts. But we still don't cut enough. Basil area still too thick. 30% canopy even too dense. Need to help people think about thinner forests.

We should not underestimate what we need to do. Longmont efforts mostly align with 373 but still thinner in spots is needed.

Stefan – Private landowner history is little bit of cutting at first and learning they need to do more later based on forest response, wildlife, etc.

GTR 373 supports thinner forests but mosaic look over broad landscape. That is desired future condition in his view and it aligns with 373.

Susan Spaulding – likes mosaic approach for wildlife across the landscape. Her view aligns

James White – Disturbance to landscape creates variability such that you cannot bin and create a metric for the landscape as a whole. More aggressive in establishing variability is necessary. Want less intensity fire overall whether prescribed or not.

Stefan – some fuel reduction projects that fall outside the scope of 373 re landscape scale restoration. Strategic fuel breaks for example fall outside 373. Or changes for ESA/habitat. Still addressing ecosystem function somehow even with some alterations to 373.

Additional goals/other factors

Pryce – ecosystem services such as filtration/erosion are key to Button Rock. Prevent catastrophic wildfire and increase costs and inhibit water supply. Also need to protect local community and wildlife and recreation.

Ken – broader landscape level planning needed given this fire season. Look at landscapes now rather than watersheds. Fires are jumping watersheds now. Three fires came toward Button Rock watershed from other watersheds this summer. Multi-watershed impacts likely in the future. Is there an opportunity for fire breaks between watersheds???

Ken – learned from Cameron Peak that you need to burn what you want to save. One treatment can make a difference. Ridge top fuel breaks not full proof. Broadcast fire need to be more widely used.

Stefan – prescribed fire is what made a difference on Cal Wood. Hardest to implement but most needed.

Peyton – (conservation district guy). Working with private landowners to improve soils and water holding rates. Understands connection between landowners east of forests and value of forests. Some leave it up to ditch companies. Have not been introduced to a vehicle to assist. 11 inches of rain does not go far when they need 25 inches for their crops.

Longmont – NEPA document and fitting together management plans so they work with neighboring landowners. Want to be in position to take advantage of resources on their own land and in cooperation with neighbors. Continued outreach to private landowners as well.

Gaps in understanding

- End users understanding of the value of forests. Ag, urban, recreation etc.
- Forest health polled high as a concern in St. Vrain district. There is a connection but need to strengthen it and keep education going always. Healthy watersheds rule! Stay away from details unless necessary.
- Missing on Pinewood Springs residents in this breakout. Need private landowners from nearby projects but also from end users east of the forests.

Prescribed fire with fuel treatments first vs. no treatments. 97% are being done without treatments first. But 50-50 split probably better.

FOLLOW UP LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

5. Follow up discussion
 - a. Angie Gee: Is there a preferred approach for drafting a plan based on these discussions?
 - i. Folks prefer a smaller group drafting something and disseminating for review.
 - ii. Parallel effort to continue outreach and education efforts.
 - b. Chad Julian: Who is the audience of the plan?

- i. Angie Gee: Both planners and communities. Ideally the document is prepared for the NEPA process, but well integrated with community feedback and a broad understanding.
 - ii. Angie/Jessie: The group also plans to develop an illustrative conceptual model to be used as a tool for community outreach and planning efforts. These will be reflective of the NEPA decision.
- c. Mary Stern: Community members are disappointed with current slash piles left on the landscape.
 - i. Angie: This was an example of forest thinning and poor public outreach. Highlights the importance of collaboration and an agreed approach before implementation.
 - ii. Bill Ellis: Should use a management activities at Cal-Wood Education center as an educational opportunity and buy-in for community members.

6. Wrap up/ Next steps

- a. Follow up meeting with smaller focus group before the next larger gathering

Meeting concluded at 11:33am