



4FRI Stakeholder Group Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 27, 2016, 9AM-12:00PM

Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office

1824 South Thompson Street, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Teleconference line: (712) 775-7031, code: 439290611#

Attendance: Ethan Aumack, Pascal Berlioux, Steve Best, Debbie Cress, Neil Chapman, Stephanie Coleman, Debra Crisp, Ann De Marco, Matt Fidler, Stephen Flora, Annette Fredette, Randy Fuller, Jessica Gist, Alicyn Gitlin, Danielle Harrison, Wendy Jo Haskins, Dan Kipervaser, Mary Lata, Tom Mackin, Tommie Martin, Joe Miller, Chris Nelson, Mark Nigrelli, Bill Noble, Keith Pajkos, Jerry Payne, Brienne Pettit, Henry Provincio, Michelle Ralston, Bob Rich, Matt Rudig, Katherine Sanchez Meador, Bob Seidler, Greg Smith, Abe Springer, Jana Sterling, Paul Summerfelt, Paul Watson, Laura Jo West, Andrew Whetten, Michelle Williams, Tiffany Woods, Bryan Zebrowski

On the Phone: Sharon Adams, Diane Vosick, Nonie Nez, Audrey Owens, Todd Schulke

9:05 Approve minutes from March 23rd SHG meeting — Summerfelt - Approved

9:10 Review action items from March 23rd SHG meeting — Summerfelt

Action Item	Lead	Status
1. Post (approved) IWG and PWG meeting minutes to BASECAMP	IWG and PWG	Complete
2. Post ECO Supervisors' letter to Chief Tidwell on BASECAMP	Berlioux	Complete
3. Future presentation by AZSF and FS concerning Industry Economics	USFS/AZSF	Future SHG Meeting
4. CWP prepare press release for the Open House	CWG	Complete
5. Post Arizona Highways article on BASECAMP	Sitko	Complete

9:15 Call to the Public – No comments

9:20 USFS Update – 4FRI Board, Coordinators

The FS is excited with how things are moving forward and they are already seeing greater efficiencies. 40,000 acres have been completed with prescribed fire and a total of 33,000 acres, for this fiscal year, will be offered outside of the phase 1 contract. They are still working on the 5 year plan for other restoration work. The monthly restoration updates are available on BASECAMP and on the USFS 4FRI website, the FS will also be releasing monthly briefings that accompany the restoration updates.

Monitoring: spatial analyst of canopy cover using remote sensing is almost done, the songbird surveys have started, vegetation in MSO PACs have been contracted out, MSO occupancy and reproductive surveys are ongoing, they have a sample design that will integrate 4FRI ground plots with forest monitoring ground plots, and they will be working with the Grand Canyon Trust to complete springs surveys.

9:30 Steering Committee Update

- **Facilitation** – Solicitation for facilitation work has been canceled and the group is moving towards self-facilitation.
- **Grazing Recommendation** – Grazing was discussed as a result of the first EIS objections, but the SHG has decided not to proceed with this topic because of the lack of capacity, past difficulties with engaging the livestock community, and assurances from the USFS that this issue is/will be dealt with in future forest level planning efforts.
- **June Field Trip** – A mixed conifer field trip is scheduled for June 8th (tentatively). Annette Fredette will release an agenda once the plans have been finalized.
- **Legal challenge to 4FRI** – Paperwork has been filed by Dr. Dewhurst to move the case forward in the judicial system.

Question (Tom Mackin): Is the move towards self-facilitation consistent with past Stakeholder wishes or expressed needs? Answer: All Stakeholders who participated in the 4FRI Retreat in late 2014 felt Facilitation was needed, and that need would continue for some time.

9:35 Presentation on Draft Proposed Action – USFS

- May Open House

Annette Fredette: The May Open House and today's presentation are intended to provide information on where the FS is in the NEPA Process and where they headed. As of this time, they have reviewed the desired conditions in the forest plans, they are continuing to look at the existing conditions, they are developing the purpose and need, and they have drafted the proposed action.

The purpose and need is a statement that briefly specifies the purpose of and the need for action in the project area. It is what they are responding to with the proposed action as well as any subsequent alternatives to the proposed action. It is determined by comparing existing conditions to desired conditions. Especially those related to forest and ecosystem function and resiliency, relevant research, best available science and the landscape restoration criteria. The purpose: reestablish and restore forest structure and pattern, forest health and vegetation composition and diversity in forest ecosystems. There are multiple needs, all are listed in the PowerPoint available on BASECAMP.

The proposed action is a proposal by the FS to authorize, recommend, or implement an action to meet a specific purpose and need. It includes activities that they feel are needed to move the project area towards the desired conditions.

Randy Fuller: The plan is to mechanically thin trees and/or apply prescribed fire on approximately 970,800 acres within the project area, the large area is 1.238 million acres. They plan to treat 68,600 acres in MSO PACs, 131,000 acres in MSO recovery and nest roost, and 550,000 acres of mechanical treatment in the northern goshawk habitat. They also plan to treat 23,800 acres of grassland for grassland restoration, 250,000 acres intended for thin and burn, and determine reforestation needs on approximately 70,750 acres (represent mostly fire scapes).

The FS is working on describing the existing conditions so that they can do an analysis on it and they are currently focused on highly departed areas. Most of the area, almost 97%, has dense basal areas, dense trees per acre, and high stand density indexes, leading to high risk for insect, disease, and wildfire. All of the vegetation types are listed in the PowerPoint; when looking at the slide with Acres Proposed for Mechanical Treatment, the numbers in parentheses indicated the desired conditions. The data listed shows the need because they demonstrate how far removed the existing conditions are from the desired conditions.

Mary Lata: The default for fire is to burn everything, but for the proposed action they are initially going to analyze the acres for prescribed fire. With mechanical thinning and prescribed fire they hope to keep canopy cover under 10%. Facilitative operations is what was called operational burning in the first EIS, it

could potentially amount to 250,000 acres and will be dependent on the information provided by the ground crews. For the purpose of this analysis they will primarily be focused on fire effects, however, they do need to pay attention to the fire behavior. The acres that are being analyzed for prescribed burning have encountered an interruption in the natural disturbance regime and they want to return to the natural disturbance regime of frequent, low severity fires and work resiliency into the system.

The areas that are being reviewed to determine reforestation needs have encountered stand changes and the vegetation cannot be managed with prescribed fire because they can sprout. They will be working with the districts concerning these stands.

Bill Nobel: The message, conceptually, is to continue with what they have been doing which is to improve habitats, make them sustainable and add resilience to the system. The habitat was more consistent in the first EIS while the habitat in the second EIS is more variable and there is flowing streams. There is a higher frequency of PACs (189) and they want to reduce the risk of large scale, high severity in these PACs. There is about the same number of goshawk PFAs in the second EIS as in the first EIS.

Summary of wildlife habitat acres: The acres of MSO habitat have doubled to 200,000 acres, the first EIS looked at 38 individual species the second EIS has 127. 4 species were in the first EIS, but in the second EIS there 24. There are 25 management indicator species and 27 sensitive species. This EIS provides a tremendous opportunity to stop the trend of species being listed as threatened or endangered and protect grasslands, which are the most threatened ecosystem in the contiguous states.

Chris Nelson: The watershed condition framework, the method that the FS uses to assess the condition of watersheds, indicates that of the 133 watersheds that touch the Rim Country analysis area, only 15% are classified as fully functional. The rest are impaired and 2 are severely out of whack. Within the area they have approximately 4000 miles of streams and over 400 springs and they planning restoration efforts for many of these watersheds. When looking at streams, roads are also an important component because they add to the stream drainage network that can cause peak flows, as a result they plan to relocate, reconstruct, or decommission certain roads that are adversely affecting water quality.

Stephanie Coleman added that all of the treatment types directly impact the fish barring habitat within the second EIS boundary. There are 12 aquatic species and the restoration that is proposed should be incorporated into the proposed action to maintain and/or improve these stream habitats. This is something the FS is working on.

Wrap-up: The FS would like feedback by the May stakeholder group meeting because they would like to start the formal scoping process in June. Three questions were asked of the stakeholder group to help generate feedback: Are there any concerns about specific pieces of the draft proposed action? Is anything missing; what other activities should be considered in the proposed action? Is there anything that needs to be clarified?

Action Item: Send responses to co-chairs before the next SC call or participate in the next Planning Work Group meeting.

Action Item: Have a status update at the May SC call on the responses in advance of the May meeting.

Questions (Diane Vosick): Has climate change been more closely examined in regards to the reforestation efforts? And are the reforest efforts going to be cost effective? These stands are designated as forest and the goal would be to have them return to this structure and in regards to climate change, it will have to be based on site specific analyses. Depending on the difficulties and the cost, they might decide to transition the structure to the structure that is there or they might decide to use multiple treatment types to encourage the stand to return to the forest structure. They just want to have these areas covered under the EIS.

Abe Springer: The quality of the data on streams and springs is not very reliable and streams that could withstand climate change should be identified and prioritized as it will contribute to the overall success of the project. Stephanie Coleman noted that the data on the fish bearing springs is based on fish occupancy that was determined by survey data.

Question (Ethan Aumack): Have these different treatments been layered on a map? The numbers are abstract and a map would improve understanding of the treatments. At this time, the FS only has a map of vegetation and burning treatments, but they are continuing to refine the maps and the narrative.

Question (Pascal Berlioux): Have you determine the percentage of slopes to see if it is even possible to have prescriptions in those areas? First they will determine the vegetation treatment then they determine if the area can be accessed and what they can do because they do not have a filter for slope.

Overall, stakeholders would like more information and more detailed maps, but the PWG will work on providing a recommendation, but only on the information provided.

11:00 4FRI Watershed Monitoring Update – Springer

- 4FRI Paired Watershed Study

The paired watershed study was developed in 2013 and was the result of interest in understanding the hydrological responses to forest restoration projects. The study intended to help inform the first analysis area EIS by assigning causality to forest treatments. Prior studies on existing experimental watersheds showed that a reduction in evapotranspiration, as a result of treatments, could lead to increased runoff and recharge, but they are dependent on a number of factors, the most influential of which is climate.

Two watersheds were to be analyzed in the in the proposed study, with identified controls and differentiation between the treatment types. The following tasks have been implemented: SRP installed event based precipitation instrumentation in the middle sycamore watershed, NAU installed bulk precipitation containers, SRP installed pre-decisional equipment to measure discharge (flowtography), NAU has been piloting a new technique to measure ground water recharge, and vegetation surveys have been completed in the middle sycamore watersheds.

So far only rainfall/runoff relationships have been studied and the need to conduct climate, soil, evapotranspiration, etc. studies are still there. However, but there has been minimal support to install further instrumentation and this should be discussed as the study was designed to inform the second analysis area. Reach out to the Regional and Washington offices.

SRP funded the development of the proposed paired watershed study plan but ultimately did not invest in the implementation of this paired watershed study. Flowtography stream monitoring equipment (and subsequent precipitation gages) installed and operated by SRP in the Middle Sycamore watersheds were incorporated as a part of SRP's own watershed monitoring plan. SRP is putting together a summary of what has been completed in the last three years and will also touch on their future monitoring plans.

Action Item: SRP presentation at future SHG meeting

- Springs Ecosystem Smartphone Monitoring Application

A beta application has been developed that is directly linked to an online springs database. This summer they will be testing the application and training volunteers so that they can conduct pre and post assessments. Training dates are May 21st and June 4th.

Action Item: Post Paired Watershed and Springs Ecosystem Smartphone Monitoring Application presentations to BASECAMP

11:20 Working Group Updates

- **Industry Work Group** – Berlioux

The IWG needs to postpone the Dashboard presentation for a later date.

Action Item: Dashboard Presentation

- **Communications Working Group** – Davidson/Sitko

Email recommendations for next the Newsletter to Sue Sitko.

- **Planning Work Group** – Berlioux

The IWG finalized the economic purpose and need and the economic desired conditions that they have been developing, the document is available on BASECAMP. The group is now focused on how to work with the FS and determine where the economic desired condition can be integrated into the NEPA process and developing a recommendation for the SHG on the proposed action that was presented today. Anyone interested in participating in these conversations is welcome to attend the upcoming PWG meetings.

Diane Vosick noted that NEPA documents are intended to expose environmental impacts, not to focus on the economics of a project. Adding this to a NEPA document could lead to litigation; it might be more appropriate to call it a resolution as opposed to a desired condition. Pascal stated that environmental impacts are not specific to ecology and that it is not uncommon for a forest plan to include a socioeconomic desired condition. The issue could be a matter of language and will be discussed more in depth with the NEPA planner and 4FRI coordinators at the next PWG meeting.

- **MPMB** – Flora

Monitoring efforts were discussed earlier in the meeting, under the FS update. The group has started to discuss watersheds and second EIS monitoring, but this is still the early stage of these conversations.

11:40 Stakeholder Disclosures – All

Joe Miller (Trout Unlimited) – Recently participated in a webinar on steam temperature monitoring and would like to work to have this information presented to the MPMB.

Jerry Payne (AZSF) – PONSSE demonstration has been completed and they are compiling the data. They plan to release a report on the visit in coming months.

11:55 Review Action Items

Action Item	Lead	Status
1. Send responses to co-chairs before the next SC call or participate in the next Planning Work Group meeting	All	Complete
2. Have a status update at the May SC call on the responses in advance of the May meeting	SC	Complete
3. SRP presentation at future SHG meeting	Stephen Flora/ SC	
4. Post Paired Watershed and Springs Ecosystem Smartphone Monitoring Application presentations to BASECAMP	Woods/Springer	
5. Dashboard presentation	IWG	
6. Future presentation by AZSF and FS concerning Industry Economics	USFS/AZSF	Future SHG Meeting