



# Zuni Mountains Landscape Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

Funded by the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) of the USDA Forest Service.

## Meeting Notes - Project Extension

March 31, 2021

[Zoom](#) meeting

*Objective: Overview of extension application process, rationale for extension, application input from project partners, and letter of commitment.*

## Participants:

Todd Haines, Leonora Pepper, Matt Piccarello, Jay Turner, Jay Williams, Molly Wright, Matthew Allen, Brad Turberville, Gabe Kohler, Yolynda Begay, Eytan Krasilovsky, Jason Eakins, Jeremy Hanlon, Sue Small, Aaron Johnson, Maya Pinon (NM-01), Susan Ostlie, Robbie, Shirley Piquosa, Eddie Baca, Ron Schali, Mary Wallen

## Opening Remarks

District Ranger Yolynda Begay

This has been a challenging, exciting transition. We are at our best as an agency when we show up with our partners. Zuni Mtns Collaborative represents diverse group of stakeholders. Mt. Taylor RD values the good work accomplished through the CFLRP. I am proud to be on this district. This project has a good track record of implementation; 10 years, 20K+ acres. The Puerco Environmental Assessment allows us to continue to do good work, over 25K acres at approximately 1500 acres per year. This CFLRP is a NM success story in shared stewardship. It has been a long effort. I want to ask everyone for their perspective on accomplishments of the Zuni CFLRP. We will be capturing testimonials on how project has impacted you. The Mt. Taylor RD and Cibola NF are committed to this effort.

Acting Forest Supervisor Brad Turberville

I am the Acting Forest Supervisor. I usually reside in Northwestern Wisconsin. We are at our best when everyone shows up and there's community support. This project exhibits all these things. Everybody's all in. State, national organizations, providing local communities with fuel wood, helping industry, creating jobs. I called National CFLRP coordinator, let her know we'd be putting in an extension, expanding project area slightly. She seemed to be on board. I will brief her so she can answer questions on our behalf to the committee.

District Forester Todd Haines

I would like to talk a little bit about CFLRP and state involvement, about how we're complementing the USFS projects. A year and a half ago during MSO shutdown, we identified area on private lands inside CFLRP project area. The CFLRP program is NM specific, and the CFLRP is a nation-wide program. Inside the CFLRP area, we identified 4200 acres of private land with 9 separate landownerships. Two are under contract and agreement with us. Difficult to certify land ownership for legal recognition. We have strategy to get remaining landowners certified. FAWRA funds and capital funds are both used in conjunction. So far funding has gone toward harvesting and mastication. These projects are associate with Non-federal lands funding. Three proposed fire in coming year. Proposal on federal, state lands, and some private lands. Last year we received 4 of top 5 FAWRA grants. The State Forest Action Plan has 10 areas of interest, #1 is Restore forests and watersheds. This is the top

priority for state. Ten areas in state were identified as priority for forest and watershed restoration...one of them is the Zuni Mountains. The state is committed to this project and to shared stewardship in general.

## Updates and Announcements

Eytan Krasilovsky

Alert everyone (esp. Non federal partners): National CFLR Commission has put together a policy letter to go to DC to request full funding for CFLR program (\$80 million). Thanks for those who've signed on; others please read letter and consider signing on. Link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch1mxZ6TNRd\\_RKnO0u8uhxjwMhzNKWKsIzhfNFP8GC7QJaQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch1mxZ6TNRd_RKnO0u8uhxjwMhzNKWKsIzhfNFP8GC7QJaQ/viewform?usp=sf_link).

Matt Piccarello

The Zuni Mountains CFRP, which is within the CFLRP is implementing a prescribed fire. The Guild is working on coordination to get collaborative burn potentially this spring. Opportunities to participate in or observe burn. Please see the blog on the Zuni Mountains Collaborative website for more information.

## Extension Overview

Jay Williams, Cibola National Forest

The Zuni Mountains project is a very large project. It was initiated in 2010, through an agreement with National Wild Turkey Foundation, which was signed in 2012 (Bluewater). Across the Bluewater landscape, the project achieved (acreage) mechanical thinning within CFLR footprint. 8,200 acres have been burned post-harvest. 2,100 acres are ready and waiting for funding. 1,500 being reworked. We're trying to meet the pipeline of acres required in agreement, restoration across the entire landscape. CFLR funding will be necessary to get it done.

CFLR program was initiated in 2010, reauthorized in 2018 with Farm Bill. The program offers a one-time extension for up to 10 years. Our authorization ends in 2023, so we need the extension. Extension approval goes before federal advisory committee. Criteria include strength of ecological approach, likelihood of reducing wildfire risk, collaborative process, and benefits to local economies.

Funding is limited and very competitive. Projects are ranked. Over \$70 million dollars in proposals.

Question: Todd Haines – Does funding come through Agriculture Secretary or Interior Secretary? --> Agriculture.

CFLRP projects in NM and AZ (4FRI, Jemez) were not recommended for extension, but sent back for refinement. If reauthorized, may need to reapply. Rio Chama project was recommended for tier 2 funding in 2022.

Comment: Jeremy Hanlon – We've had to lean heavily on fact that NM has succeeded in getting project work done, better than 4FRI.

2011 original proposal highlights. Only mill still in existence in central NM. Reduced sublimation of snow on tree branches helps moisture be absorbed into soil. [Bullets]

## Accomplishments

- 42% of goal accomplished
- Will continue to exceed road decommissioning targets
- Will need to shift goal of timber higher if extended.

If we're not granted extension, we lose largest guaranteed pot of money for restoration, large investment in our economy.

Part of CFLR extension gives ability to propose expanding project area. 3 options: Timberlake Area, Bread Springs (green, NW, 9000 acres), SE area. We don't want to make this extension proposal too extensive, only going to add 9,060 acres in NW.

Comment: Brad – Takeaway from WO coordinator conversation: FACA committee very critical in the past of extensions requesting large expansions in area.

There are limitations on expansion. They are to be completed in the shortest time practicable, not exceeding 10 years and are not for new objectives in new areas.

### **Socioeconomic impacts**

Eytan Krasilovsky

I would like to share some content from recent census data in the project area. Poverty, public assistance, and education numbers are not where we'd like to see them. The existing conditions are important to understand and provide rationale for the proposal. On the flip side, all the work happening here is having socioeconomic benefit in landscape. There has been a lot of direct labor income, and direct and indirect jobs. Economic analysis of the CFRP program is forthcoming and will provide insight into the CFLRP program as well. Preliminary findings show that on average CFRP grants have 9:1 return on investment in NM. This ratio is higher with wood harvesting, processing, and hauling and may be closer to a 20:1 return on investment. CFLR and CFRP are similar; we can assume similar returns. Will share this report when available.

Monitoring is a big part of this. The old and large tree retention strategy created by the group was adopted by Elaine Corvin, the Cibola Supervisor at the time. The national CFLR program has consolidated monitoring, given more discrete monitoring mission. We'll fit existing monitoring into guidance from WO, continue monitoring in landscape. Legislation requires that monitoring happen beyond project end.

### **Testimonials**

#### **How has the Zuni Mountains CFLR improved forests, wildlife habitat, watersheds, and/or other ecological improvements?**

Eytan Krasilovsky: Scarce water sources are in better condition due to reduced wildfire and post-fire erosion risk.

Ron Schali: Living along side the Zuni Mountains in the Timberlake subdivision I really appreciate the improvements to the forest including wildfire protection and improved habitat for wildlife.

Todd Haines: The CFLR process highlights a diverse group of stakeholders' interest in the landscape and serves to demonstrate interest and need for funding to be directed to this effort.

Sue Small: The Zuni Mountains CFLR has helped native plant species to thrive.

Eytan Krasilovsky: +1 to Sue's comment. Plant diversity is up due to increased good fire on the land releasing the seed bank.

Ron Schali: The Zuni Mountains CFLR has provided much needed job opportunities for the local community.

Susan Ostlie: I have seen major improvements in the openness of the forests in the Bluewater area down to Post Office Flats. There are more grasses and healthier larger trees - they seem to have room to breathe now. The light coming through the restored areas is encouraging, without the ground looking like it is getting fried by too much sun.

Matt Piccarello: The contrast between un-treated and treated forest in the Zuni Mountains is stark. Treated areas are setting the landscape up for greater resilience to disturbance in the future

Jason Eakins: Source water in the project area has increased through the removal of excess trees that use up a large amount of water.

Jay Turner: The restoration work that has been accomplished in the Zuni Mtn CFLR is moving conditions towards a more resilient landscape with enhanced water function, high quality habitat for a variety of species, and an overall improvement to forest health.

Eddie Baca: Prescribed fire has improved conditions for wildlife by opening up the canopy while still leaving groups of trees. This structure provides excellent habitat for both predatory birds and their prey as well as for grazing animals and their predators.

Jason Eakins: Many species of animals (including MSO) prefer larger diameter species. Removing away smaller trees that take up nutrients and water that reduce the growth of other trees.

Gabe Kohler: Chris Guiterman's analysis of forest overstory vegetation showed that the Zuni Mountains CFLR treatments contributed to a reduction of wildfire risk and associated ecological effects.

### **How has the Zuni Mountains CFLR helped local businesses, provided jobs, and provided wood products for the local economy**

Eytan Krasilovsky: The Zuni Mountains CFLR has provided jobs and value-added wood products.

Jason Eakins: Some of the local wood products that are made from the wood coming from the forest are used for home heating wood pellets. These pellets can be bought locally and help local economy. The project has also created a supply of playground chips from woody byproducts.

Susan Ostlie: I've seen the jobs provided for those who work in the mill and for those who do the thinning and controlled burns. These jobs build skills for local workers and are useful to the forest. I see people walking out with bags of wood pellets in ABQ from Costco from Mt. Taylor Millworks. I always point out how the pellets support a useful program on our forests to the buyers of the bags of pellets. They think I'm odd, but seem glad for the info.

Aaron Johnson: The Zuni Mountains CFLR funding has provided the local wood industry with some stability to maintain a mill. The extension will further this stability and allow the businesses to adapt to changing markets.

Ron Schali: The Zuni Mountains CFLR project has been a great at increasing the number of jobs in the area and it is nice to be able to keep my home warm on cold nights with some of the wood pellet fuel that have been produced from the timber that has been removed as well as other products.

Jay Turner: The socio-economic benefits for the Zuni Mtn. CFLR are considerable in creating jobs, training opportunities, locally sourced wood products, and community growth.

Todd Haines: The project has had a positive effect on the local industries by providing higher wage and skilled jobs in an area where these are needed. The wood products such as pellets are in high demand in

the markets not only in the local area but in the region. Pellet shortages were a factor and now that need is being met. That is just one example.

Jason Eakins: Various projects in the future like the FAWRA project help create fuel wood that the local community needs to heat homes. Right now the supply of dead and down fuel wood is much lower than the demand. Funding that helps create either fuelwood directly or through slash on larger cut units helps them heat homes.

### **How has the Zuni Mountains CFLR improved collaboration and how partners work together in the landscape and local area?**

Sue Small: The Zuni Mountains CFLR has provided a cause around which diverse interests can work to accomplish landscape as well as economic improvements.

Eytan Krasilovsky: The 2005 Bluewater CFRP directly led to the successful 2011 CFLR proposal due to strong collaboration. The continued collaboration and strong relationships helped us develop the old and large tree retention strategy together, and supported the MSO injunction pivot to private lands in 19/20.

Jay Turner: It is a dramatic change to see how the forest service has accomplished vegetation management goals. The collaborative element allows for anyone to have a seat at the table. Opportunities to provide their piece of the bigger picture.

Molly Wright: The Zuni Mountains CFLR has brought together groups of folks from different backgrounds with different experiences from different industries and created space to discuss how to improve an area.

Jason Eakins: Through the YCC and other similar groups, younger people have had a chance to experience the outdoor and learn about what we all are doing to improve nature. This learning experience can help them throughout their lifetime and also help in the future as some of them grow into their careers/life.

Susan Ostlie: This project has provided educational opportunities for my group, the RGVBB, that were very meaningful for me and them. I love the field trips, and I really enjoy learning more about the Zuni Mts. I have been living and recreating in this area since the mid 70's, but had no idea how many beautiful places there were in the Western Zuni Mts., especially.

Gabe Kohler: The collaborative process associated with the Zuni Mtns. project has provided a forum for a diverse group of stakeholders to connect. This is a huge investment toward future partnerships and the relationships that are essential to solving all kinds of climate-related problems including catastrophic wildfires.

Gabe Kohler: The Zuni Mtns. collaborative supported communication and coordination that helped businesses adapt to litigation and the halt of harvesting on public land during the MSO injunction.

Ron Schali: As a teacher in a high school taking my students into the Zuni mountains to learn about the restoration project I appreciate the diversity of individuals and entities involved in the project including representatives from the Zuni and Navajo Nations to County state and several branches of the Federal government and all working towards a common goal was inspiring for both myself and my students.

Jay Williams- R3 Office/Cibola NF: Currently, NM state has made the Zuni Mountains one of their top ten priority landscapes. This project is a key example of how the FS can move in step with the State in the Share Stewardship model as part of the NM Forest Action Plan.

Susan Ostlie: The monitoring with the Forest Stewards Guild is always a delight. They are knowledgeable and friendly!

Todd Haines: The partners have additional opportunities to work together and other new partners have come to the table providing for additional ideas and innovations on the landscape

Jason Eakins: During the MSO injunction, state and FS worked together to try and find sources of wood to help supply the mill. This might not have happened (or happened as well) if not for the working relationships that developed through working on this project and similar projects in the landscape. This has also spread to fuel wood working groups too.

Shirley Piqosa: We have not had a CFLR with Zuni Mountains but we (Acoma Pueblo) have worked with Mt. Taylor District on a project and I think it is a good collaboration to bring the two organizations together. Now we are trying to seek additional funding from BIA and the TFPA. We are very appreciative for the collaborations and support.

Eddie Baca: The collaboration helps stakeholders understand the different processes and policy of our cooperators and communicates ways to pull off meaningful work on the ground.

Susan Ostlie: I scheduled a regional Broadwalk in the West Zuni Mts, so other Broadbands could understand what an effective restoration project looked like.

**Are there any lessons learned from the current CFLR we should apply to the extension?**

Molly Wright: What documented successes and processes have been learned along the course of the Zuni Mountains Project? Can we use the process of an After Action Review in Fire?

Eddie Baca: What is the public opinion of the Zuni Mountains Project? I'm sure the locals love the restoration work being done in the Zunis.

Molly Wright: Have there been any solutions developed from common encountered problems or issues?

Jay Turner: Always be looking for ways to improve outreach, look for a variety of funding opportunities so it is not fully dependent on the extension, quality communication.

Eytan Krasilovsky: I learned how important evaluating and adapting are. I appreciate the USFS timber, fuels, and fire staff in being available, transparent, and open to change or trying different approaches.

Gabe Kohler: +1 to Eddie's comment. Can we capture the broader public perception of these type of forest treatments?

Todd Haines: This is one of the top 10 identified landscapes identified in the recently published New Mexico Forest Action Plan. This is receiving much more attention than simply Federal Funding. The State of NM has committed a high amount of funding to augment projects in this critical watershed.

Susan Ostlie: As much community and local involvement through educational field trips is so useful for building on community support for the concept of restoration, especially in the WUI. FSG has done an excellent job of that over the years.

Jason Eakins: Trying to learn the needs of the community as far as fuel wood, recreation activities, etc. and try and steer activities towards those needs. An example is more fuel wood options for locals and the Zuni Mountain Trail project.

Ron Schali: As a teacher here in the local area is there some additional ways that would help with support getting this extension- happy to get high school students involved if that is something that would be helpful.

## Discussion

Jeremy Hanlon – I appreciate the meeting and the opportunity to voice some of what we see from business perspective. After what we went through in 2020 with MSO injunction and Covid, the fact that we're still open is an act of God. The people I've worked with directly are consistently great to work with, intelligent, hard-working. I appreciate you all.

Susan – I did a week-long webinar with University of Oregon. We talked about different kinds of restoration projects. Following Oregon's 2020 wildfires, they discovered the larger the opening around trees, the more catastrophic effects in restored areas. The worst damage was done in Weyerhaeuser areas and clearcut areas. The least damage was in old growth, less damage in restoration treatments with smaller openings.

Jay Turner Natural resources officer for Cibola -- There's a page with logos of cooperators part of this project. It is astounding to look at that and see all the good effort coming from so many different cooperators. If you think there is someone who should be at the table and is not, get them involved, get them in touch with us! I would like to challenge folks to think about this, and also thank you for all the good work you are doing.

Brad – We want every voice possible at the table – academia, nonprofits, different agencies. The more people involved, the greater the good we can accomplish.

Susan – I really like that you had field trips that Great Old Broads for Wilderness could be involved in. I also appreciated the workshop on restoration work, how to measure DBH and crown height. People came from beyond ABQ, from as far as AZ. Wonderful educational opportunity, and the more that happens, the more committed people will be to fire-safing their homes.

