



Zuni Mountains Collaborative – Reconnection Meeting

Executive Summary

On the morning of June 29th, 2022, representatives from the U.S. Forest Service – Cibola National Forest, Forest Stewards Guild, and other Collaborative partners gathered in the Cibola County Community Room in Grants, NM to reconnect in-person, revisit the Collaborative's accomplishments over the past 10+ years, and discuss priorities for ongoing and future land stewardship in the Zuni Mountains landscape.

The global COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a federal land forest thinning injunction and other roadblocks over the past few years, has slowed the momentum of treatments and cooperative organizing. Nevertheless, these challenges encouraged the Collaborative to find creative ways to keep local businesses supplied with forest-derived materials, revise their ecological monitoring to better protect sensitive species, accomplish work on acres under private and non-federal jurisdiction, and focus their collective energy on projects such as recreational trails construction and wetlands restoration. Some of the momentum that was lost, such as working with local tribal chapters to develop WUI fuels reduction plans, may take longer to pick back up.

As always, there is a lot happening in the Zuni Mountains landscape. Our Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CLFRP) proposal extension was funded for the next 10 years, the Forest is receiving funding for restoration work from the 2021 Infrastructure and Jobs Act, the Cibola 5-year Forest Plan is on the verge of being signed, and partners are leveraging funding from other sources. Ongoing work includes new trails being built in the Quartz Hill and McKenzie Ridge areas, fens and other unique aquatic features being restored and protected, ancestral crews returning to restoring woodlands, State Forestry enabling restoration and resiliency treatments across many different land ownerships, and the Forest Service significantly increasing their personnel numbers and, therefore, their capacity.

The group spent the last part of the day discussing what the future holds for the Collaborative. The Guild and Forest Service discussed the potential for adjusting the CLFRP boundary and the need for updating monitoring efforts to align with new federal standards. We then considered Collaborative priorities for the Zuni Mountains landscape over the next decade. Meeting attendees voiced their desire for long-term monitoring to feed into adaptive management while increasing our focus on aquatic habitats and plants with significance to tribes, in addition to better understanding socioeconomic impacts to underserved communities. They also expressed the need to bring new partners into the Collaborative and increase the involvement of local communities and tribal chapters while improving the provisioning of fuelwood to communities. Finally, they discussed the natural and cultural values of the landscape and the need to work across boundaries and across fences. Above all, they agreed that this Collaborative is one they are all proud to be a part of and excited to continue contributing to. We ended the day with a discussion on climate change, shifting environmental conditions, and what these mean for our ability to be successful moving forward. While this is an ongoing conversation, we can be sure that we will have to adjust to a “new normal”.

Thank you to those who were able to attend; and to all, we look forward to the next 10 years.

Zuni Mountains Collaborative – Reconnection Meeting

June 29th, 2022

Meeting Minutes

9:30 – 10:30am

Recapping the past 2+ years

Welcome and introductions

Flash presentations – partners

Attendees

IN PERSON

Yolynda Begay (Forest Service, Mt. Taylor District Ranger)
Jason Eakins (Forest Service, Timber Management Assistant and Sale/Agreement Administrator)
Consuelo Lemaire (Forest Service, Wildlife Biologist)
Les Gaines (Mt. Taylor Zuni Mountains Collaborative)
Eddie Baca (Forest Service, Fire Management Officer, Division 32)
Mike Henio (Ramah Navajo Chapter)
Gloria Skeet (Baahaali Navajo Chapter, Manager)
Lee Regan (Native Plant Society, ABQ chapter)
Clay Benton (New Mexico Forestry Division)
Virginia Seiser (Great Old Broads for Wilderness, ABQ Broadband)
Brant Hayenga (Resident)
Dan Coyle (Resident)
Mateo Pomilia (Forest Stewards Guild, Southwest Program Manager)
Rachel Bean (Forest Stewards Guild, Southwest Program Coordinator)
Eytan Krasilovsky (Forest Stewards Guild, Deputy Director)

ONLINE

Aaron Johnson (Forest Service, Forester)
Shawn Martin (Forest Service, Cibola National Forest, Silviculturist)
Jay Williams (Forest Service, CFRP Program Manager)
Chad Baumler (US Fish & Wildlife Service, Fish and Wildlife Biologist)
Dan Taylor (Bat Conservation International, Senior Restoration Specialist)
Matt Piccarello (The Nature Conservancy, Forest and Watershed Health Manager)

Welcome

Rachel Bean (Forest Stewards Guild): *Opening remarks.*

Eytan Krasilovsky (Forest Stewards Guild): *Recalls slow or shutdowns due to pandemic, Mexican spotted owl (MSO) injunction, government shutdown.* Typically meetings are held in person once to twice a year. A CFLRP extension proposal was submitted and funded. The 2020 New Mexico Forest Action Plan was published which was also a watershed moment.

Additionally, the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act has been signed into law. These are important for jobs and for work to continue.

Yolynda Begay (Forest Service – Mt. Taylor District Ranger) *Welcomes those present. Introduces herself as District Ranger.* Covid has had an impact in terms of the way we have worked. Because of the Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) injunction, there was a pause during which they couldn't cut a tree without an inspection. The Forest Service has used this time as an opportunity to review how we monitor MSO habitat and figure out how to do better as a district. The Lobo Canyon trail decision was made with the Cibola Trail Alliance which will add trails for the local community to enjoy. The agreement has been signed and first construction session is this Thursday (6/30). Good work is happening in the Quartz Hill area. The trail construction and design are well thought out in terms of limiting erosion and implementing sustainable trail features. This trail is nearly complete with an extension of the trail near Gallup. The Forest Service (FS) is excited to support the local economy, making timber available through the local mill. There are many things attached to the project footprint, including fuelwood, volunteerism, trails, and more. There is so much within this project area. The Forest Service has a project outlook lined up for the next five years so stay tuned. The Timber Lake project is coming up, in partnership with the state, as this area was identified as a priority landscape through the Shared Stewardship Agreement. *She appreciates the Guild for hosting this meeting and acknowledges the amount of work that still must happen. She is open and teachable and looking forward to dialogue. Thanks all for coming.*

Objectives

Mateo (Forest Stewards Guild): The Collaborative formed in 2005 in association with a Collaborative Forest Restoration Program. This mission has since expanded. The current purpose of the Zuni Mountains Collaborative is to provide recommendations for actions concerning the use and management of lands and waters within the Zuni Mountain Landscape.

The title of this meeting is **Reconnecting and Looking Forward**. The specific objectives of today's meeting are as follows:

- Get a start on consolidating multi party monitoring efforts into a monitoring plan. Lots of monitoring has occurred and continues to occur in the Zuni Mtns., what we are aiming for is a coordinated monitoring effort that both satisfies standardized criteria now required for CFLRP projects and considers the unique characteristics of the landscape and the values of the Collaborative.
- Start the climate change and fire conversation. We all know this to be a complex issue but it's a critical one given our task to help restore a fire-dependent landscape.
- Establish Collaborative priorities moving forward. In breakout sessions, we will deal with topics such as monitoring, boundaries/jurisdictions, and existing and new opportunities for collaboration and funding.

Ground Rules for today's meeting (Mateo)

Introductions & Ice breaker

Jason Eakins: is proud of the thinning.

Yolynda Begay: is proud of the number of people involved.

Consuelo Lemaire: favorite place is Agua Remora.

Aaron: has been in this landscape since 2006, has found it neat to see the collaborative grow.

Shawn Martin: has been involved since 2014. Is proud of the extension.

Jay Turner: is proud of the results on the ground.

Eddie Baca: favorite place is at this meeting.

Eytan Krasilovsky is proud that the extension proposal got funded.

Rachel Bean: favorite place is anywhere spent monitoring and getting her truck stuck in the mud.

Mateo Pomilia: has nothing to be proud of yet but is excited to be a part of restoring this ancient landscape.

Gloria Skeet: has been attending meetings ever since McKinley County did a wildlife protection plan.

Les Gaines: is proud to be a part of his community.

Mike Henio: is glad to still be a part of this group and hopes to keep working.

Lee Regan: main concern is the protection of special habitats, especially those related to water. Lee is the Native Plant Society's field trip coordinator and is interested in getting more people out on the land. His proudest moment is climbing Mt. Sedgwick. His favorite places are Little Water Canyon and Oso Ridge.

Clay Benton: has been involved for three years. Is proudest of the creativity of this group.

Virginia Seizer: is proud of the Broads and their presence in the Collaborative.

Brant Hayenga: has been involved for six years. Is proudest of the revision of the cutting guidelines as it relates to old growth.

Dan Coyle: has lived near Paxton Springs since '76. Has a strong interest in how the Zunis are treated and paying attention to climate change. Interested in thinning the plantations surrounding his housing tract that were planted in the 1980s.

Chad Baumler: has been to Agua Remora quite a bit.

Dan Taylor: is proud of the work at Shush Ken Fen. Proud of the FS for their participation in this Collaborative. FS staff has been great to work with.

Matt Piccarello: has been in the Zunis since 2012. The thing he is most proud of is the stacked accomplishments- thinning to monitoring to prescribed fire to relationships.

"Flash" presentations

Clay Benton: there have been a lot of successful projects through the CFLRP, e.g., the survival of Mt. Taylor mill. NMFD is funding archaeological surveys at W. Puerco and Timber Lake, on the order of several thousand acres. They have enabled fuelwood treatments on ~650 acres of private land and have secured ~\$500,000 to continue doing work over the next five years through private stewardship (including Cottonwood Gulch), Forest Health Initiative (FHI), and making grants available to the Cibola and Lava Conservation Districts. In the southern Zuni there are lots of new stewardship plans. The district typically facilitates 4-5 Forest Health Initiatives / year (EMNRD-Forestry Division administers these with the Guild as the fiscal agent because State Forestry can't put federal funds outside of State and Private program funding onto private property – anti-donation clause). There are additional funding opportunities that EMNRD will apply for. Now online is the **Shared stewardship portal** (<https://nmssp.org/#/>), a spatial all-lands coordination tool.

Les Gaines: Recreation Economy for Rural Communities was able to secure \$99,999 (with labor match) to fund trails work and large equipment purchases, which he is excited about. Echoes what Yolynda said about Quartz Hill, the trails are well done with few rocks and wonderful riding. There is a 6-mile loop that is not completed, they are trying to get the recreational economy project off the ground, linking to the square via the golf course area. [Yolynda] This is community-based work with an Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (<https://ancestrallands.org>) crew out of Acoma supporting the trail construction - Mt. Taylor is a traditional cultural sacred site. [Les] The riding won't be difficult. The construction techniques will be slightly different as there are three key access points including Coal Mine CG and Lobo Canyon CG, with a loop opportunity. The trail could be all season, rideable into December. They have gotten a couple hundred yards of trail built, once fully constructed there will be 22 miles. It may take a couple of years to get done. Volunteers are welcome every Thursday afternoon, 5:30-7:30.

Consuelo Lemaire: At the headwaters of Bluewater Creek there is a histosol fen (named [Shush Ken Fen](#)) which we are working on restoring, as well as four springs which are nearby and part of the same water source. They are working with Bat Conservation International (Dan Taylor) to build a pipe fence around the fen (to protect from cattle), plus barbed wire fence (some temporary and some permanent) around some of the springs to restore them to their full potential. They are also using beaver dam analogues and erosion control dams to stabilize banks. The regional fish biologist has been helping with this, while New Mexico Game & Fish, the local graze permittee, and range staff have been helping repair pasture fences to control cattle. The state is constructing barbed wire fences. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is contributing as well. At the end of August, they are going to begin building the pipe fencing, and a volunteer opportunity. The work is happening north of Forest Road 450 next to the Cerna homestead. [Brant] Are there still beavers? [Consuelo] *hasn't seen sign of them recently although there may be some in Redwall Canyon.*

Lee Regan: Tim McGrath (Native Plant Society, now living in Silver City) was curious about plans to build the Shush Ken Fen fence. If they schedule that for fall, he can gather volunteers. [Consuelo]: Kick off will be the last full week of August. [Eyta]: Please let us know so we can post on our website to obtain volunteers.

Chad Baumler: Two week ago, they conducted the best Zuni Bluehead Sucker sampling he's been a part of, with ~270 total individuals recorded: 115 in the Rio Nutria, 88 in Agua Remora and 66 at Silva's site. Spawning behavior was observed, and they caught larval Bluehead Sucker. This year US Fish and Wildlife aims to cryopreserve gametes from a captive population; if successful they hope to preserve wild stock in the future. They want to work up (evaluate) genetics from the three Zuni populations. Populations at all three sites have been slowly declining since 2012, with higher numbers this year than the previous two years, perhaps due to the timing of sampling (pre-monsoon). They are not sure how the fish are moving through the system once flow rates subside.

Mike Henio: he and his crew were shut down for two years but got back on the landscape this spring. His crew has been thinning Juniper in the Mountainair area off Highway 42. They will be working in this area through the end of the year. [Yolynda]: it would be interesting to see if, through the Tribal Forest Protection Act program, we can increase Ramah Navajo Chapter Forestry crew's work in the landscape.

Gloria Skeet: before Covid, attempts were made working with the Guild at the Chapter house to create defensible space around homes. There are real challenges to working with her community. She lives in one of the three highest-risk wildfire areas (right next to Cibola NF). She is trying to get leadership to address potential wildfires but has encountered resistance as some don't want to witch the community by speaking of the possibility of wildfire happening there. The wildfire in Las Vegas / Mora has been a wakeup call; she is concerned Baahaali is not prepared and community members don't understand the risks. Jobs are needed in her community, especially for young people.

10:30 – 11:00am

Current state of the landscape
Current events and ongoing work

Forest Service Updates

[Yolynda Begay]

Forest Plan: we are close to signing the Forest Plan Revision decision based on the updated 2012 planning rule

(https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_065627). [Jay]: we're on track for July 15th signature. [Yolynda]: A lot of folks in this group were instrumental in getting us through this marathon process. A lot of faces have changed but the effort has been there. The big question is what is next - we will be working with the Zuni Collaborative for implementation. We will reach out in the fall to explain how the plan is going to function for years to come and how we can all work to implement the revised Forest Plan. there will be opportunities for this group to help with monitoring.

Trails: there is currently a strong organizational structure and a strong collaboration with Cibola and McKinley Counties. Everything in the Mill Ranch area is done, we are now switching gears

to work on a new section of trail on McKenzie Ridge. Work will be reinitiated, with a contractor, now that the forest closure has ended. There is a new feature on the trail – large cairns – on a rocky ridgetop, which will create a new signature for trails in the Zuni Mountains. Completion of Quartz Hill is being picked up with Cibola County with hopes to move forward with their contractor. Most of this trail is done and they are working on signage, potentially with the Ancestral Lands crew. Yolynda is most excited about how this is going to link in with the recreation economy for rural economies. This will be one of the longest west-to-east trail systems that they have. Overall, this system is growing: Lobo Canyon, Continental Divide. There are lots of opportunities on the district.

Range: restoration of Shush Ken Fen will benefit rangeland, the spring and wildlife. This project is the closest example of what they will do in the future in terms of spring restoration. For the three northern forests (including the Cibola) the Environmental Assessment (EA) is done ([Northern New Mexico Riparian, Aquatic and Wetland Restoration Project - EA](#)), essentially acting as a programmatic NEPA document, shortening the analysis process for individual projects which the district hopes will in turn lead to more projects. In New Mexico, water is one of the most important things to the public and the Forest Service wants to do more water source restoration to ensure a steady supply of water to communities. It takes many partners to accomplish the level of work which is planned for this fen/spring restoration and Yolynda wants to maintain that level of collaborative achievement.

Fire: building on this other successful project work, how do we link it up and move it forward? The intent is to pick back up with prescribed burning in the fall (previously they have burned hundreds of acres at a time) with a small amount left in the Copperton/Redondo area. Yolynda acknowledges the concerns of the public and partners but wants to emphasize that this type of work is valuable and needs to be done. The backlash will be most challenging for Eddie. This conversation may be worth saving for a later time, but it's on the horizon. [Eddie Baca] In 2021, they accomplished 1,700 acres, including about 150 Copperton-area acres in the fall of 2021. In 2022, they were planning to do 1,700 more in the Copperton area and 600 in Sawyer. The fire shop's overall prescribed fire strategy is to burn blocks on the SW side of values-at-risk to protect against wildfires driven by the predominant winds. This year, the fluctuation in daily Energy Release Component (ERC) has been historic in the sense of seeing erratic conditions extremes. For a time in the spring, fuel conditions were wet but then went “out of prescription” (dried out beyond the point of safely carrying fire) within a week and a half. He made the decision not to burn anything this year due to the extreme weather. When determining whether to burn, Eddie refers to a chart that shows potential for extreme fire growth (above the red line, or the 97th percentile); this has now dropped precipitously in a pattern he has never seen. There are problems with the weather monitoring that they have been using for the past 50 years as predictions based on historic weather conditions are no longer reliable. He hopes they will “come into prescription” in the fall. With intensifying climate change and the megadrought this may mean trying to burn during the wet spells. He noted that there were some anomalies to the decisions made and conditions encountered during the prescribed fire which became Hermits Peak. Eddie's crew lost a prescribed fire previously; now the public perception is different. They (the burn crew) are following right behind timber, with “shelf-ready” (analyzed and burn plans

written) burns planned throughout the piñon-juniper and ponderosa pine Puerco area for the next 5-10 years. On the Mt. Taylor side he wants to focus on managing wildfires for resource benefit instead of putting them out right away. We need to utilize natural ignitions to get the forests back to how they were. They managed the Triple Nickel Fire on Mt. Taylor where mortality was low and the ecological benefit ended up being amazing. After the 1910 fires, the Forest Service put fires out for over 75 years. Add in bug kill and drought and it's a mess now.

Insects and disease: There is an updated [kill and disease report](#) from the USFS and a [2020 Story Map on New Mexico forest conditions](#). EMNRD released its [2021 Forest Health Conditions Report](#) and [summary](#) stating that there was a 240,000 acre year-over increase in insect (primarily bark beetle), disease, and drought-stress impacts on New Mexico forests. The situation is bad up where Les lives. Having an open dialogue with partners and the public is key.

Forest Service staffing: there is so much opportunity with the Infrastructure Bill and the Great American Outdoors Act - this funding means an opportunity to increase staffing on Yolynda's unit, including bringing on a new Assistant Fire Management Officer (AFMO) on July 3rd. This individual will be devoted to monitoring vegetation, fuel moisture, etc. They are hiring another new position, a GS-9 archaeologist. All projects require eyes on the ground from a heritage standpoint, for tribal resources as well as mill relics, and this landscape is especially rich in cultural resources. They have also hired a new Assistant Wildlife Biologist who is certified to help with MSO surveys. On the timber side, they are proposing a GS-9 Timber Preparation position to help Jason with timber marking. [Eddie Baca] After 23 years of requesting support, these positions are finally being funded. Instead of one person managing burn plans, fuels, and suppression duties, he can now give it to a specialist for quality control. There is also a dedicated fire prevention person (prevention officer) starting next week who will be able to get education programs up and running. The fire crew, formerly a 5-person crew, is now a 10-person crew. Because the span of control has gotten too big on the district, they are proposing to move the Mt. Taylor Hotshot crew (now 25 people – 14 permanent full-time and seven who work 18 pay periods and are off eight pay periods) to Albuquerque. This added capacity was provided because of the fire season extending into shoulder seasons. [Yolynda] Fort Wingate is now a duty station with staff stationed there. Forest Fitness currently occupies the volunteer house. The FS is looking to be more proactive in utilizing that space. [Dan Coyle] suggests the Forest Service communicate more clearly why they burn when they burn and the criteria for doing so, to be transparent, otherwise members of the public will turn against them. [Eddie] we've been dealing with this his whole career because Smokey Bear's message has changed. Education is a weakness within the FS. He wishes there was a way to have people go out to the areas treated versus areas which grew back is "doghair" thickets (very dense stands of young trees) due to clearcut logging in the '30s. The FS plans on bringing more members of the public out to observe prescribed fire and see first-hand how the decisions to burn are made. [Gloria Skeet] outreach to the public is so important. She is always thinking about how to get partnerships into the Chapter house, especially for youth employment. [Les Gaines] what plan is in place for the (high elevation) mixed conifer area with all the downed trees? [Eddie] in mixed conifer it is a long term (50-300) year fire return regime. A 1931 fire burned to the top of Mt. Taylor. Aspen

colonizes burned areas, then over the course of time mixed conifer works back in. We essentially plan to not treat this area and let it treat itself.

Funding: expected and committed

Aaron Johnson: with the 10-year CFLRP extension comes \$1 million/year to do work on the ground. In addition to that \$1 million, there is \$720,000 from the [2021 Infrastructure Bill](#), for a total of \$1.7 million this year going to go toward work on the ground. They are commodifying their existing agreement with National Wild Turkey Federation and continuing to identify the next acres to treat with about 1,200 additional acres being funded. The CFLRP helps identify and prioritize the acres which most need to be treated. As such, the CFLRP footprint will be used to leverage additional funds, including cost-share agreements with the state (EMNRD) which will provide funds to treat Forest Service acres. As Clay alluded, EMNRD has already treated a lot of acres on their side of the fence and on private land. The Forestry Division is funding: thinning in the campground unit (using their contractor); aerial surveys - about \$400,000 for 500 acres - to survey acres in western Puerco / Bread Springs area where thinning is much needed for fuel reduction and to provide firewood; and heritage surveys in the Timber Lake area with treatments planned to address the strong need for restoration work in 1-2 years. The Forest Service has received \$50,000 from Secure Rural Schools to fund wildlife surveys and \$600,000 from Cibola County to work on roads. With infrastructure funding, there will be opportunities for firewood supply to Chapter houses, the Zuni and Ramah Navajo. This is an exciting time. Overall, the CFLRP has been integral to leveraging additional funds to do work. [Jay Williams] agrees with Aaron that this is an exciting time to put money on the ground. One of the things that this priority landscape has going for it is that there is a lot of work in the pipeline (“shovel ready”) which makes us a “good buy” for state and federal funding. No doubt that this landscape will continue to benefit from these funds. [Eytan Krasilovsky] other states are envious of the fiscal amount that NM is able to invest in forests and watersheds through different state funding approaches (legislature, FAWRA, federal programs, etc.). Everyone has a role to play; this could mean pulling in projects, small or big, that fit the forest plan and using the creativity of the Zuni Mountain Collaborative and the Mt. Taylor group in other ways. We ought to stay abreast of opportunities with the Tri-Forest Riparian and Aquatic Restoration decision (see NEPA document link, above).

Discussion: [Les Gaines] how are we going to complete the restoration projects if the mill is not here? State and federal funding are good, but the mill and other private businesses are really struggling with overhead costs, long periods of time with no work. It has to be stressful. What do we do to ensure they remain in business? They were without work for five weeks this spring. [Eytan Krasilovsky] the Guild reports on jobs created with project funds; we know that the mill is an important value for people and the collaborative, especially EMNRD has worked to supply wood from private lands to the mill (during the MSO shutdowns). [Yolynda Begay] the CFLRP was built on the idea of using local businesses to thin the forests – improving the recreation economy for rural communities. We will share success stories and pathways forward to see what potential opportunities are there to keep our local businesses open. The forests were closed because the risk of a human-started fire getting away from us was too great and it's not a decision

we wanted to make or made lightly. Early on our fire guys threw a hotshot crew at a campfire-ignited fire that burned 14 acres. They contained it but decided they might not be able to deal with that again (or, worse, if there were two or three fires burning at the same time).

[Lee Gaines] the state recreation division has a lot of money to distribute, how much of that can be directed into trail development, parking areas, etc.? [Yolynda Begay] in terms of recreation economies, Alexi Navas is heavily involved. There is a lot of potential with Grants, the Continental Divide, to have a unique recreation experience that is high quality but not like Moab where the area is overcrowded and overrun. There is good movement with the Cibola trail alliance. That is the conduit, and the Zuni Mountains Collaborative.

11:15 – 12:45pm

The next 10 years

CFLRP Boundary Adjustments

Surveying and NEPA

Breakout group discussions

Climate reality and challenges

Boundary Adjustments

[Shawn] When working through the CFLRP extension proposal, the group made the decision to not ask for a project boundary adjustment so as not to jeopardize the proposal. That being said, we now have a narrow window of time where we may be able to request small boundary adjustments. The Forest Service was able to expand the boundary to include the Hogback; we will be completing heritage surveys in this area to enable them to break ground next year.

[Eytan] We now have the potential opportunity to expand the boundary to include the Tampico Draw area so that we can do Ponderosa thinning on the mesa tops surrounding the draw. We have modeling and studies to support this action which say that high severity fire in the areas upstream of the Zuni Bluehead Sucker habitat (in that draw) would be detrimental to the endangered fish. There is currently no treatment plan in place, just an opportunity to expand the footprint and to work with the checkerboard land jurisdictions ownership, including working on state land. The timeline for making these boundary adjustments is a regional deadline – we will follow up with Jay Williams (USFS Region 3 Office). We will send out maps with the meeting notes and reconnect in mid-July.

Monitoring and NEPA

[Mateo] in 2021 the Washington Office released guidance for more standardized CFLRP monitoring; we now have 13 monitoring questions we are required to answer:

Ecological questions

1. Fuels
2. Forest landscape condition
3. Focal and at-risk species
4. Watershed condition
5. Invasive species

Socioeconomic questions

6. Changes to socio-economic context
7. Supported local jobs and labor income
8. How project agreements affect local communities
9. Number and diversity of wood products processed locally
10. Economic utilization of restoration by products

Governance questions

11. Who is involved in the collaboration
12. Whether the project is encouraging effective and meaningful collaboration
13. Whether the project has attracted partner investments

This does not preclude additional monitoring, but we do need to recognize our limitations. [Eytan] the collaborative, and specifically the Guild, should be uploading and updating our monitoring findings to the NM Shared Stewardship Portal. We can also use this resource to publicize what type of monitoring is currently happening. In all ecological monitoring, we have control plots and plots which are treated which should allow us to assess the impacts of treatments; however, some of the past control plots have been burned over by wildfires or otherwise impacted.

Breakout Group Discussions

Prompt 1: With an additional 10 years of funding comes an additional 10 years of ecological and socioeconomic monitoring. *Name your top 3-5 monitoring needs, interests, or plans.*

Monitoring priorities takeaways:

1. Long-term monitoring should feed into adaptive management while telling our management story
2. Increase monitoring of understory plants and plants with significance to indigenous communities
3. Increase focus on riparian and aquatic habitats (including the impacts of restoration)
4. Understand socioeconomic impacts to underserved communities

Group answers:

Group 1:

- Top monitoring concerns: detrimental impacts mitigations, project and program effectiveness (are we meeting our goals)
 - Erosion
 - Illegal dumping
 - Plants significant to tribes: Ceremonies, forest products (e.g., weaving)
 - Modifying treatment plans to account for drought and climate change:
 - Adaptable management
 - Springs: better or worse after treatment?
 - Watershed capacity

- Thinning with regards to fuels
- CFLRP / forest plan / mitigation
- Will requirements for monitoring be in place?
- Wildlife monitoring: MSO requirements
- Timeframe tied to monitoring
 - We are moving toward our desired conditions, we won't necessarily be there at the end of the CFLRP, so long-term monitoring will be necessary to track effects.

Group 2:

- At-risk vegetation
 - Riparian vegetation
 - Special habitats: fens, histosols
- Water source protection
 - Understand status
- Grazing permittee implementation
 - Pressure with drought
 - Head
 - Cattle water source
- Forest regeneration (future forest)
 - Type conversion

Group 3:

- Fuels
- Forest landscape condition (pre- and post- treatments)
- Ecological monitoring is already robust, but could incorporate Beavers
- Socioeconomic impact of CFLRP on underserved communities
 - Fuelwood (coordinating distribution)
 - Employment (when logging shuts down)
 - Better coordination / communication (Facebook, etc.)
- Collaborative: info sharing among involved organizations

Prompt 2: Increasing pace and scale means finding new ways to get the work done through creative agreements and leveraging funding in a mix of topical & geographic areas and jurisdictions. *Brainstorm up to 3 agreement and contracting and/or funding opportunities*, or new ideas (e.g., project planning meetings that focus on non-vegetation resources), the Collaborative could explore moving forward.

Funding/collaboration opportunities takeaways:

1. Expand local involvement especially related to recreation and ecotourism
2. Increase capacity to provide fuelwood to communities; there is federal funding potential
3. Increase involvement of local tribes
4. Bring in new partners to increase collaborative capacity

Group answers:

Group 1:

- Working with neighboring tribes under 638 contracting through TFPA - Bread Springs to treat 9,000 acres?
 - High Water Mark – Cochiti Pueblo
- Funding opportunities with state, Game & Fish, BCI, abandoned mine projects
- Infrastructure bill to support fuelwood projects
- Focusing efforts on providing fuelwood to communities – there are many possible agreements in the Forest Service toolbox
- Working with NFF
- Bat Conservation International – further nurture this relationship and bring in Game and Fish. Their interests are:
 - Springs (Agua Remora?)
 - Developed waters
- DOD / Abandoned Mines
- Youth employment opportunities
- Who are we not talking to who could be a potential partner?
 - Partnerships with universities and colleges (e.g. UNM college of Engineering – there is money in the universities, in research, plus students willing to do work)
- Internship opportunities
 - Special niche businesses (e.g. youth employment opportunities through local tribal chapters)

Group 2:

- State (recreation)
 - Ecotourism
 - Recreation use surveys
 - Build local buy-in
- Invest in people to learn and network, at state, regional and national scales, to do more of what we need and do it faster and more effectively.
- Wood transport (hauling/trucking)
 - Mill
 - Communities
 - Wood for Life
 - Chizh for Cheii

Group 3:

- More help/capacity
 - a. FS fuels program capacity is about to go up. Their target is 4-5,000 acres treated/year
- More input and staffing from Soil & Water Conservation Districts (Lava & McKinley)
 - NFL WUI
 - LSR (up to \$300,000, applicable to private lands)
 - Good examples out there for S&WCDs
- America the Beautiful Challenge: post-fire research
- BLM
- Ramah Navajo

Prompt 3: After hearing about our proposed CFLRP project boundary adjustments, brainstorm what geographic areas we are not including or what factors we are not considering in our request for these boundary adjustments. *Write down up to three blind spots you identify* and, if necessary, the reasoning behind why they should be considered.

Boundary adjustment takeaways:

1. There is broad concern over the Collaborative's capacity to treat more acres
2. Pay increased attention to areas of high natural and cultural value (e.g., water features)
3. Increase collaboration with private landowners and/or work around inholdings

Group answers:

Group 1:

- Little Water Canyon, Tampico Draw
- Private landowners near Agua Fria
 - State of NM: funding potential

Group 2:

- Better understanding of boundaries as they are now.
- Think about values (natural features) rather than jurisdictions.

Group 3:

- Concern over added work in burn-only but also in general
- Leverage areas where work is ongoing ("low-hanging fruit")
 - Continental Divide, Thoreau area
 - Pratt Ranch
- Zuni – Lindsay Quam
- More contractors and contracts

Climate reality and challenges

[Yolynda] How much of the unprecedented change we are witnessing in our environmental conditions can be attributed to climate change? How will it change our ability to work moving forward? What is realistic so that we can continue to be successful under current conditions? As fire season stretches into a year-round reality, weather events become less predictable, and forest closures become a more necessary tool, accomplishing our forest and landscape resiliency work moving forward is going to become more challenging. It will require building trust with our collaborators, our communities and the public. It may mean rethinking what a healthy forest looks like as climate change alters what our lands can support and what can grow and thrive here. This will continue to be a challenging conversation moving forward but we want to bring all partners to the table to keep having it.