

## **Chiricahua-Dragoon FireScape Meeting Notes June 30, 2010, The Benson Center Cochise College**

**Attendees:** Cori Dolan, Bill Edwards, Danielle Foster, Brooke Gebow, Joe Harris, Ann Johnson, Glenn Klingler, Bob Lefevre, Matt Littrell, Janel McCurdy, Ruben Morales, Tessa Nicolet, Chris Stetson, Craig Wilcox (notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow). Tessa, a fire ecologist / fuels / modeling specialist, joined us from the Regional Office.

### **Veg/ecological mapping for the multi-jurisdictional area**

Jim proposed using the Landfire EVT's (existing vegetation types) as the basis for the "planning" ecological map. With help from the Forest Service Mid-scale and ReGap maps he proposed lumping 20 EVT's into

1. **Madrean Pinyon-Juniper** (includes Madrean Encinal and Madrean Juniper Savanna)
2. **Madrean Lower Montane Pine-Oak Forest and Woodland**
3. **Apacherian-Chihuahuan Mesquite Upland Shrub** (includes Inter-mountain Basins Semi-Desert Shrub-Steppe)
4. **Apacherian-Chihuahuan Piedmont Semi-Desert Grassland and Steppe** (includes Inter-Mountain Basins Semi-Desert Grassland)
5. **North American Warm Desert Riparian System**
6. **Chihuahuan Creosotebush Desert Scrub** (includes Sonoran Desert Scrub and Chihuahuan Mixed Salt Desert Scrub)
7. **Madrean Oak/Conifer/Manzanita on Hills and Mountains with Extensive Rock Outcrops** (includes Madrean Oriental and Mogollon chaparral)
8. **Southern Rocky Mountain Dry-Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland**
9. **Inter-mountain Basins Aspen-Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland**
10. **Arizona Cypress**
11. **Southern Rocky Mountain Montane-Subalpine Grassland**

Craig emphasized the need to preserve the Forest Service mid-scale units within this system—start-to-finish cross-walking with serious thought given to maintaining the statistical properties of the mid-scale. **Craig will get with Jim** to see how we might do this. We would like Jim to oversee map completion. Jim had proposed a map correction exercise step (experts looking at the new units) as the main next step. He is unable to do much work until after August 13.

### **Finishing the fuels map**

There will be a meeting on July 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am at the CNF Supervisor's Office to repair fuel model assignments for the remaining EVT's for the SE AZ map. Chris Stetson, Perry Grissom, Jim Malusa, Don Falk, Craig Wilcox, and Matt Littrell are set to attend. Mark Pater and RJ Estes from BLM, Brooke, and Tessa may also be able to attend. Once this exercise has been completed, Chris will send the information to Joe Scott and Don Helmbrecht to make the final fuels map and report. **Chris will follow up with Don and Joe to get a delivery date.**

The next step will be basic fire behavior modeling and a more detailed fuels analysis for NEPA. Brooke has been trying to engage Randy Hall, who is trying to retire, but who did the fuels and air quality analyses for Huachuca FireScape and PERP. Tessa suggested that Randy team up

with Don Helmbrecht at TEAMS, who knows the ins and outs of the fire behavior and effects models, to work on the fuels analysis. It was also suggested that Chris work with Randy to take on some of the fuels analysis in-house. **Brooke and Janel will keep working on Randy. Janel will look into the budget to see how much time we have with TEAMS for this kind of effort.**

### **Status of proposed action**

Janel will be writing the Proposed Action with help from Huachuca and PERP. Bill asked that the writing of the Proposed Action and mapping be parallel processes. **Brooke will pin down map unit names and approximate acreages** by jurisdiction from Jim by mid-July and get data to Janel.

### **Biological Assessment organization**

(for Mexican spotted owl, Lesser long-nosed bat, Chiricahua leopard frog, Yaqui chub, Yaqui topminnow, Huachuca water umbel, Beautiful shiner, Yaqui catfish, goshawk, jaguar, ocelot)

It was decided to find a TEAMS biologist and hydrologist to coordinate all sections of the Biological Assessment (BA). **Cori will act as dispatcher for the TEAMS and federal representatives. While we are waiting to identify a TEAMS member Glenn and Danielle will gather materials (e.g. previous BAs, Biological Opinions, species lists, etc).** TEAMS was used for the Huachuca BA and **Janel will try to find out how long it took biologist Brian Logan as a template of what we might need. Janel will also get a recommendation for TEAMS members to fill the coordinator role. Brooke will find out the appropriate BLM contact.**

Danielle suggested that we discuss candidate species that are on the horizon for listing. Bill reported on the status of current Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) issues. Due to recent lawsuits/appeals, the Region has reinitiated consultation, but that process has moved extremely slowly. He suggested that we may not have any actual “take” with our proposed action. We also need to keep a BLM biologist in the loop.

### **Private lands effects analysis**

Joe noted that the private lands lie mostly on the west sides of the Chiricahuas and Dragoons. Given the likelihood that these owners have received project money from NRCS, there is probably information already compiled that would support NEPA, Section 7, and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) analyses that we could use with permission from landowners. **Joe and Bill will contact the ranchers individually to see if we could look at the documents they have.** Brooke suggested Dan Robinett as a possibility for help with effects analyses on the private lands, if we can't get that done with the resources currently committed. The goal is to have something by the end of July. **Brooke will talk to Dan about his possible involvement.**

### **Wilderness**

Bill reported that prescribed burns are allowed in wilderness for fuels reduction (not resource benefit) to maintain wilderness values. Regional approval is required for such action (and obviously for proposals to use aerial ignition or chainsaws). Bill proposed not including chainsaw use in wilderness projects; Danielle said that Chiricahua NM superintendents have

granted permission for use of chainsaws for wilderness prep work (MRDG with a FONSI). Janel reported that we have the option of putting wilderness documentation in the main body of the NEPA document as opposed to doing a separate Minimum Tool Analysis, and we agreed that up front in the NEPA is the best route (and it means Regional Forester approval). We are now finding several examples that we can draw from (e.g. Gila, Lewis and Clark National Forest, South Forks Sun River). **Chris will send Janel a link to a white paper regarding the public input process.**

Donna Mattson worked on chainsaw permissions for the Galiuros for fire history sampling and **Glenn will check with her to see if it went through. Brooke will talk to the BLM regarding wilderness restrictions in the Dos Cabezas.**

Brooke also mentioned that Jesse Minor is mapping fire histories in the Chiricahuas and will be filling in gaps in the record (geography and veg type).

#### **Hanging assignments from March IDT meeting and other business**

We reworked the Huachuca design criteria (best practices that protect sensitive resources) but Brooke and Glenn will be working with FWS to modify those for MSO. There is a need to revisit the monitoring schedule as well. Clearly we will be sensitive to current regional MSO issues as we proceed.

**Next meeting: 9 am, Wednesday August 4, 2010, Valley Telecom Building, Willcox**