

## **Chiricahua-Dragoon FireScape Meeting Notes**

**September 1, 2010**

**9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Benson Center, Cochise College (1025 S Highway 90, Benson)**

**In attendance:** Mark Crites, Cori Dolan, Bill Edwards, Danielle Foster, Brooke Gebow, Joe Harris, Glenn Klingler, Jim Malusa, Jesse Minor, Ruben Morales, Chris Stetson, Craig Wilcox (Notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow)

### **Updates**

Danielle will be replaced by a person on a 4-month detail but it has not been decided if this person will replace her on the FireScape project.

### **MSO design criteria**

Brooke brought the updated design criteria chart with the changes that were made at the last meeting, which included taking out what didn't fit from the Huachuca Design Criteria.

The group was satisfied with the updates and felt the new language included actions that were reasonable to accomplish on the ground. Mark C. recommended noting in the chart where and why we are deviating from the Recovery Plan. Mark also noted that there is a new Recovery Plan in process. The final product delivery date is uncertain but is fairly close to the review stage. **Brooke and Glenn will work on updating the chart to include Mark's recommendations.** Mark C. reported that the FWS will be sending a letter of issues to the deciding officials for the Forest Service (Regional Forester) and the NPS (Superintendent). He will wait to send this letter until after Brooke and Glenn send him the updated design criteria chart. Mark C. suggested we be rigorous about our justifications for treating in breeding season and treating in cores specifically if that is what we are proposing to do.

### **MSO survey contract**

At the last meeting it was decided that a FWS-protocol MSO survey was needed. **UPDATE** since last meeting: we can use TEAMS money to hire local contractors to do the survey. Mark C. reported that the FWS has a new survey protocol coming out soon, which may include information on how long surveys are good for. Mark C. did not feel however that the survey protocols themselves would change. He reported that the 2 year survey doesn't have to be done in consecutive years. For example, initial survey can be done one year and then the second one could be done the year preceding treatment implementation. Mark C. also stated that the after-treatment surveys were different from the pre-surveys. The group discussed the advantages of doing a 2-consecutive-year survey with the funding that we have now that would cover a larger area so we can have shifting project areas.

### **Desired Condition Statements**

Cori brought a chart of the desired condition statements for Jim's new vegetation list, including statements from USFS, BLM, and NPS. Bill pointed out that the statements have similar general themes across agencies but may have differences, which relate to differing agency goals. Our overarching goal is to manage fire across those jurisdictional boundaries without changing strategy. Craig reported that the statements reflect the natural variability of vegetation types across landscape and recommended that

the group go through the chart to see if there really are conflicts across land managers. **Craig will edit forest planning DC for this project area** (during the week of September 13), **and we will subsequently ask NPS, whose statements were much less specific, to review and determine whether FS DC can be adopted. Cori will coordinate with Mark Pater on BLM DC statements.** Our goal is to show where each agency is lined up in a common language and where there are exceptions.

### **Fuels map update**

Chris is in contact with Joe and Don H. who have made their adjustments and are happy. Don asked for some missing information from past fires, which Chris has already provided. Sample runs for the fire behavior models are scheduled for the end of the week. The model was missing some things, like mid-elevation temperatures and relative humidity ranges. Chris gave Don the forest-wide ranges from 4500-5000 ft to work with. The group discussed holding an annual update session to keep the map and models current with new fires.

### **Updated Ecological Units**

Jim gave a presentation describing his new list of vegetation type. All told, the assessment area is a 468,000 acre system. Jim explained that Ecological Systems (ES) don't use species in the descriptions, rather they are existing vegetation. Ecological Units (EU) on the other hand, are potential vegetation.

Jim went through the new list of 12 ecological types and had two main questions: what to do with a mystery vegetation type and should we fold Arizona Cypress into another category? Jim showed pictures of the mystery vegetation type on limestone slopes with alternating mountain mahogany and pinyon pine dominance. It was decided to make it its own category (**UPDATE:** Madrean Oriental Chaparral) because it would likely respond differently to fire and treatments. It was also decided that we would not call out Arizona Cypress as a system by itself, rather fold it into surrounding systems and note its presence in unit descriptions. Danielle commented that the Monument had thinning treatments planned in cypress areas and that they were seeing lots of recruitment with summer flooding.

The group also discussed putting explanations and definitions of treatment options (with photos) in the EU descriptions. **Bill has some photos of treatment effects in a PowerPoint which he will send to Cori.**

There was also a discussion on whether to make the upper and lower pine oak one EU. Jim is waiting to hear from Jack Triepke to see how that is explained. Brooke and Bill asked that we consider leaving them as two EUs because the lower one has an understory description missing from the upper one, and the vegetation types may be moving up the mountain. The group discussed having Jim do one more trip and then one more correcting session.

### **Fire history update**

Jesse reported that he is still working on the permitting aspect of his project. The two issues with permitting are a scientific collecting permit and wilderness. Bill asked for a formal proposal from Jesse and suggested that Jesse include strong justifications for collecting in the wilderness (what is it about wilderness sampling that you cannot accomplish outside of wilderness?). Jesse hopes to have the permitting worked out by next summer so he can start.

### **Ranchers and effects analysis**

Joe reported that a letter to the ranchers is in process, but may need some direction on what the final letter needs to say. Brooke reported that the goal of the letter is to keep ranchers informed on specific steps that are about to happen with NEPA process. **Brooke will meet with Joe to discuss the letter contents. Joe will also get BG a contact list.**

### **Homework**

**Jim will do write-up for new veg type on limestone.**

**Cori will contact Mark Pater to go over desired condition statements.**

**Craig will look at the USFS desired condition statements and send his changes to NPS for comparison. Jim and Craig will get together one Friday in the month of September to look at desired condition chart to see what works.**

**Chris and Brooke will go through the list of final vegetation types and treatment descriptions and update the treatment options chart for Ruben and others to review. The exceptions column is meant for jurisdictional exceptions.**

**Chris will help find old fire atlas records for Jesse.**

**Jim will provide acreages for each vegetation type and get the boundary of units to Chris to help get numbers for wilderness and different jurisdictions .**

**Glenn and Brooke will review MSO design criteria and explain rationale for deviating from the recovery plan.**

**NPS, BLM, USFS will send mailing lists for scoping to Cori.**

**Glenn will continue working on the scope of work for owl surveys.**

**Joe will get the boundary details nailed down and then send to Jim and Chris. Joe and Brooke will draft a letter to participating private landowners to lay out next steps.**

**Danielle will look into NPS staff person to replace her.**

**We are aiming for the Scoping Notice by the end of September (Janel).**

**Next meeting: FRIDAY OCTOBER 8<sup>TH</sup> at 9am, Place to be determined (FRIDAY instead of the first Wednesday due to a CNF-wide conflict.) Back to first WEDNESDAY in November.**