

## **Catalina-Rincon FireScape Meeting Notes**

**August 5, 2010**

**9:30 am to noon at The Nature Conservancy, 1510 E Fort Lowell, Tucson**

**In attendance:** Cori Dolan, Angie Elam, Brooke Gebow, Stan Helin, Kristy Lund, Janel McCurdy, Steve Plevel, Jennifer Ruyle, Randall Smith, Chris Stetson, Joshua Taiz (notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow)

### **Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) update**

Randall reported that we can have some “take” if we have strong reasons behind our treatment decisions. He recommended that once we get the fuels map from Joe Scott, we can overlay the MSO habitat to see where areas of concern might be. He reminded us that the Recovery Plan was written for places where forests look much different from ours. We need to use the Recovery Plan as a guide, but not be afraid to propose activities outside those guidelines that are justifiable. **Brooke will write up the changes made to the design criteria for the Chiricahuas and bring them to our next meeting** to help with our Biological Assessment.

### **Visual Quality Objectives**

The group went through the Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) that were written for the Huachucas as guidance to the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). Stan recommended changing VQOs to Scenic Quality Objectives (SQOs) because VQOs do not take into account man-made values, which is important in higher elevation areas for things like Catalina Highway. Debbie Kriegel will be working with us when we get to the IDT stage. Jennifer suggested waiting on all design criteria until the new USFS Forest Plan guidelines come out. **Stan, Angie and Debbie will meet to write the VQO/SQOs.**

### **Pil/Proposed Action update**

From TEAMS, Jennifer Morrissey will be helping with wilderness issues and Janet Moser will be the biologist compiling information into the Biological Assessment (BA) and NEPA documents. Devin Quintana can still help with routine GIS work (with Chris Stetson and Vicki Eubank as back-up) while a fuels specialist has yet to be named. **Brooke is still talking with Randy Hall to see if he is available.** Janel asked the group to enumerate what we wanted to take to the public during scoping. The answer: 1) Preliminary model runs from our fuels exercise to underscore our purpose and need; 2) Fire behavior/effects runs in MSO and other high priority areas; and 3) examples that illustrate why we need flexibility to treat where it is most needed.

**Janel will make the following changes to the Pil:** 1) add text to the Pil to make it clear that this is a collaborative effort being done consistent with state and private lands; 2) explain the no-action alternative (i.e. current management); 3) add timeline (**Stan will review the timeline**); 4) add Brooke’s USFS affiliation; 5) add a bullet for wilderness under Purpose and Need; 6) generalize table to show we are following Forest Plan guidelines for desired conditions. We can leave off the detailed table (but it will be useful for NEPA steps).

### **Desired Conditions update**

Jennifer reported that the desired condition statements from the Forest Plan were developed using information from The Nature Conservancy report in conjunction with a regional team that

described conditions consistent with MSO and goshawk guidelines. The final set of vegetation types in the Forest Plan should be out soon. Desired conditions should be evolving as the Forest Plan is updated and we receive input from scoping sessions. Jennifer also mentioned that the Forest Plan addresses climate change, which we could use as a template when the IDT meets. To the ecological unit descriptions, Cori will also be adding values of interest to the public that might be affected by ecologically-based management. Examples include wildland-urban interface, wilderness, research natural areas, threatened and endangered species, and cultural resources. Jennifer pointed **Cori to Chapters 3 and 4 of the Forest Plan for information that will be useful when adding special features** to the ecological unit descriptions.

### **Fuels Map update**

Chris is in contact with Joe Scott and Don Helmbrecht regarding the fuels map and specifications on model runs. They have the data and expect to have the report in a few weeks.

### **Monitoring Needs**

Chris showed us new regional vegetation management project effectiveness monitoring guidelines and reported that a committee for the Coronado is adapting these for local needs. Protocols apply fairly standard stand-exam and range monitoring techniques. Josh suggested we still need T&E species monitoring, especially MSO. Kristy suggested combining NPS and Catalina District MSO monitoring money to even out the work load. The park is promising the Fish and wildlife Service MSO monitoring every three years. Goshawk monitoring is critical as well. The AZ Game and Fish Department is doing fish monitoring. Lesser long-nosed bats and agaves merit close attention as do Candidate species. Kristy suggested that photo points/windshield surveys have significant value (especially compared with NPS fire effects monitoring methods).

### **Wilderness**

As we approach proposals for Wilderness, Kristy said that treatments needed outside wilderness areas are likely needed inside, so boundary lines may not be logical. **Chris will work with the internal plan revision group on current directions regarding wilderness.** Kristy reiterated the need for treatment and use of appropriate tools. Small crews with mechanized tools can work lighter and faster than large crews with hand tools. We need to consider the consequences of not treating in wilderness—especially putting lives in danger during suppression operations. Angie said the MRDG is crucial (and on our radar). **Chris and Kristy will send the Saguaro National Park MRDG to Janel.**

### **Other**

Next meeting: Thursday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9:30am at TNC (1510 E. Ft. Lowell)