

Chiricahua FireScape Meeting Notes

October 8, 2010

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

In attendance: Cori Dolan, Bill Edwards, Brooke Gebow, Matt Littrell, Jim Malusa, Brian McKeon, Ruben Morales, Chris Stetson, Craig Wilcox (notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow, approved by Bill Edwards)

Update on Danielle's replacement

Welcome Brian McKeon. Brian is on a detail at Chiricahua National Monument from Glacier National park until mid-December.

Updated Ecological Units

Jim Malusa gave an update on the state of the ecological map which is almost complete. He is also finished with the ecological unit descriptions. **Cori will get those from Jim for inclusion on the website.** Jim explained that it took longer than expected because there were discrepancies among the 3 sources of information: USFS mid-scale map, ReGap, and LANDFIRE EVT. Jim has made boundary decisions using Google Earth and his own photos to decide how best to classify each type. Jim found a lot less pine-oak, especially lower pine-oak, than expected. There was also a question of what to do with Mountain Mahogany. It was decided to replace the Madrean Oriental Chaparral with Madrean Pinyon-Mountain Mahogany on Limestone. This new type has already been included in the scoping notice. Due to the changes described, acreages may change significantly. Bill gave Cori photos of treatments, which **she will add to the unit descriptions when Jim has completed them and the scoping notice.**

Fuels map update

Joe Scott and Don Helmbrecht are coming to Tucson with the fuel model map November 3-4. On November 3, the morning session will be used to make corrections to the map. In the afternoon we will hold a "rollout session" where we learn how to use/not use the map and what kinds of information it can tell us. This afternoon session is open to interested staff across agency partners. The purpose of the session is to educate potential users of the map. This could include FMO/AFMO/Fuels types and district biologists. **The group will send contact info to Cori for people they think will be interested in the afternoon session.**

Chris explained the results from initial fire behavior model runs at a 90m resolution/scale using basic model inputs reflecting fire-season conditions in southeastern Arizona, such as: upslope wind at 15 mph (20 ft from the ground), relative humidity 15%, air temperature 95°F, 100-hour fuel moisture 8%. Because topography is so complex, they adjusted fuel moistures based on elevation and aspect, using 4500 as a base elevation. This sort of model conditioning allows for fuel moistures to vary over elevation and aspect: 1-2% for 1 hr fuels at valley bottom, but 7-8% at higher elevations. Temperatures and relative humidity change with aspect/elevation, so this is a nice model capability--more realistic for running fuel moistures across a whole landscape. The inputs can be adjusted based on realistic inputs from experts. The 30m resolution map may also be done but it's too large to email so Joe and Don H. will bring it with them in November. These inputs are for the giant landscape delineated by a rectangle around the entire forest, not just the Chiricahua-Dragoon-Dos Cabezas area. Chris reminded the group that the product is still very general, but we can modify inputs to make it more appropriate to our scale. The group discussed what numbers to use in the next round of model runs. Craig feels we should model in 97th percentile fuel weather because those are the fires we're trying to prevent. The Aspen and

Bullock fires happened at 97th percentile fire weather, so this model run, at 90th percentile, is sort of soft-peddling the fire risk, since the big, fast-spreading, large-footprint fires of late have been more extreme.

Craig explained that the Pinaleno Ecosystem Restoration Project (PERP) used the 95th percentile. At the 97th percentile they couldn't see the impacts of the treatments because the fires are so severe. Bill feels the inputs from Joe's initial run are conditions we can expect any spring. Bill suggested a seasonal model: spring versus summer. The data that create the percentiles are regional (SEAZ) fire occurrence and weather data. The group discussed doing a run at the 95th percentile would be instructive; maybe we do that in November with Joe and Don H. The group also discussed how to best use this tool for affects analysis and with the public.

Desired Condition Statements

Brooke, Cori, Jim, Mark P. and Craig met in September to update the desired conditions statements. The next step is to make a chart highlighting areas of "agreements" and "exceptions" across agencies. Cori is working on this and will have something by Oct. 22. **Cori will add a Fish and Wildlife Service column to this chart for Leslie Canyon.**

Scoping Notice/Proposed Action

Using the Huachuca scoping notice as an example, Janel completed a draft of the Catalina-Rincon scoping notice. Brooke made corrections to make it even more Chiricahua centered, including the addition of the initial flame length fire behavior model run discussed under Fuels Map Update. Brooke mentioned that the issue of wilderness is missing from this scoping notice. Since 25% of the total area is wilderness and we are proposing to treat in wilderness, this needs to be added to the document. Brooke suggested that we add the wilderness boundary to the model run map to illustrate the need to treat. The objective is to maintain wilderness values. Bill suggests we take each treatment option and address whether or not it will occur in wilderness. For example, mechanical thinning will not occur in wilderness but broadcast burning will. **Brooke will add language on wilderness to the scoping notice.** Cori, speaking for Janel, asked if the document was too long. Craig and Bill agreed that the document was longer than most scoping notices, but that is appropriate given the complex nature of the project. Craig added that the public needs enough information to develop an alternative. Bill would like to see photos of treatment options/results added to the scoping notice. He gave some photos to **Cori and she will add them to the scoping document. Craig will write a short paragraph about how silvicultural prescriptions will be developed for individual projects.**

The group also discussed whether the desired conditions should be added. Craig suggested that fuels and general ecology are already described well in the scoping notice, so adding the table would be repetitive. Craig then led the group through the treatment options table and revisions were made. The vegetation types will be re-ordered along an elevational gradient and the treatment options were finalized. **Cori will update the scoping notice with these changes and send to Brooke.**

There was also a discussion about including aerial spraying of herbicide in the treatment options. Since the BLM is the only agency that would use this option, **Cori will confirm with Mark Pater that it needs to be in the scoping notice.** The group also discussed adding contact information for various agencies

for various constituencies to the cover letter. The scoping notice, however, will keep USFS as lead agency and single clearinghouse for comments. **Cori will ask Mark if he wants BLM contact information in the scoping notice cover letter; Brian will find out for NPS. Craig will contact Debbie Kriegel to find out where Visual Quality Objectives currently stand under the plan revision effort.**

MSO design criteria

Brooke and Glenn are working on updating/revising the design criteria. At the Catalina-Rincon meeting October 7 Randall expressed the need to apply the same criteria forest-wide and will wrap them into planning with Rick Gerhart and the BLT. Glenn created a scope of work for a contractor, and FireScape funds can pay for a MSO survey in the spring.

Ranchers and effects analysis

Joe and Brooke drafted a letter to explain to ranchers about FireScape progress and upcoming NEPA process steps. Joe will send it to Bill for signature.

The next meeting will be Wednesday December 1 at 9 am. Place TBD.

P.S. Since it was legitimized by NPR, everyone needs to read Jim's book before the next meeting (**Into Thick Air**).