

Catalina-Rincon FireScape General Meeting Notes
Catalina Ranger District Office, Sabino Canyon (5900 N. Sabino Canyon Rd.)
September 8, 2011
9:30am

In attendance: Ben Brochu, Cori Dolan, Don Falk, Brooke Gebow, Perry Grissom, Martin Guerena, Bob Lefevre, Matt Padilla, Steve Plevel, Stephanie Rayburn, Joe Sacco, Chris Stetson, Scott Stonum, Josh Taiz, Craig Wilcox, Rodgers Wright (notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow).

Introductions

Brooke opened the meeting by explaining the purpose of the FireScape projects and this meeting. She recounted the products available to date (including GIS layers, fuel map, ecological unit descriptions with photos and fire behavior model runs), changing climate scenarios analysis, NEPA and compliance, and the science component (to answer big questions about fire behavior and effects in this area). We have launched the scoping notice and are underway with help of TEAMS Enterprise (outside USFS consultants). This is not a formal IDT meeting (not using this meeting to make decisions), but will serve as an information gathering session, to answer questions for new folks, and find out what we need to move forward.

Analysis progress report

- Scoping notice – Stephanie reported that the scoping notice went out in April 2011 and the initial comment period has been completed, although we are still accepting comments. There are nine comments so far. A link to the comments is available for view. **Steph will email link to group.**
- Departure Analysis – Stephanie reported that Don Helmbrecht is still working on the fuels side of the specialist report and departure analysis. Stephanie and Craig are producing the vegetation side of the report. Don H. would like to talk about the appropriateness of using FLAMMAP vs. FSIM for effects analysis for our scale project. We need to think about what products and outputs best present information to the public in the NEPA document. Don F. suggests that we could show FLAMMAP for three weather scenarios (different percentile conditions—we used 90th in the scoping) to express the range of predicted fire behavior. **Steph will set up a phone meeting with Don H, Perry and Don F to give Don H direction on what model to use as a basis for products. Steph will go through Janel to set up that meeting.** Craig reported that all reports are part of the public record and will be available to public after they have been finalized. Steve asked if we could get summary of information from specialist reports for public that we update as we go along. We may be able to post that information plus departure analysis and FSIM runs when complete on FireScape website.
- MRDG – Stephanie explained that the MRDG (minimum requirements decision guide) analyzes the need to take action in Wilderness and use of tools. Possible draft alternatives are: No action, prescribed fire with prep (thinning by hand) in narrow corridors around perimeter, and prescribed fire with prep (using mechanized tools) in determined areas along the perimeter and interior of wilderness area. **Cori and Steph will set up a small group meeting to discuss the alternatives in wilderness.** Ben mentioned that Pusch Ridge was created for sheep and fire is good for sheep habitat. Currently fire managers view treatments in Wilderness necessary before approving any management of lightning-caused fires. **Don F. will ask Don H. about running some treatment scenarios in FSIM.**
- Biological Assessment – Josh has been in contact with TEAMS biologist, Janet Moser, about coming for a tour in the next month. They will keep Craig updated as they complete the BA & E.

- NHPA – Kathy did get time allocated to work on the Archaeology report.

Update from LiDar Workshop

Craig explained that LiDAR (**Light Detection And Ranging**) is an optical remote sensing technology that can measure the distance to and other properties of a target. Some UA students are using the technology to collect height and cover measurements to create structural models of forests. These students presented data and research at the workshop held the last week of August. The workshop included a training session for using LiDAR and lessons learned. A mix of local folks plus national users who want to set up similar projects attended the workshop. Current LiDAR data available now includes Pinaleno Mtns, Pima County, and Pima Assoc of Governments (PAG). The latter is using LiDAR mainly from an engineering angle but also collecting habitat and riparian information. Don F suggested that LiDAR may have an unrealized potential to map fuel parameters. This still requires on-the-ground data, but may be an asset in the future.

Proposed bighorn sheep reintroduction

Ben Brochu (AZGFD) reported that they will be reintroducing big horn sheep into the Pusch Ridge Wilderness, possibly bringing 30 sheep in November 2012. They will collar all 30 sheep to gather data on what happens to sheep (predation, habitat use, etc). Some sheep were released in the Mineral Mtns last year and they have been collecting data on them. So far they are doing well. Lamb survival may be an issue of concern. Ben is interested in collaborating with FireScape because studies support that fire is beneficial to sheep habitat. Sheep use open areas with high visibility to reduce predation events, and openings can be maintained by fire. There is concern that high-severity fires may cause erosion that fill in water sources like tinajas. FireScape tools may help outline how to treat habitat. AGFD has planned substantial outreach to educate about the sheep and the program. Ben is also interested in working with someone on Buffelgrass issues in the area.

UA Science

Don reported that the initial goal of the UA Science arm of the FireScape project was fuels and fire behavior. There are four graduate students working on just that. A secondary goal is a fuel moisture stress assessment (FMSA). Steve Yool (UA) has data through 2004 available now which is being updated. FMSA product may be useful for specialist reports. Don is also interested in doing a companion soil moisture index. **Cori will coordinate with Don to deliver the first round of UA science products to TEAMS (thru Janel).** Don is also devoting more effort to post-fire effects and research pathways during severe fires as well as continuing to work with Joe Scott and Don H. on fire behavior. Don reported that although Fire Return Interval Departure (FRID) was an original goal, we are moving away from it because it is not as informative as we would like. Don is moving toward using severity of fire plus the fire perimeter through time as an indicator of landscape fire regime condition.

ILAP meeting

The Integrated Landscape Assessment Project (ILAP) uses state and transition models to aid managers in making decisions on the landscape. ILAP includes all wildlands (forests, woodlands, shrubs and grasslands) across Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington at broad to mid-scales. It does not focus on any one resource, but rather the integration of resources (invasives, climate, fire, insects, etc) to have a system where you can look at them all together. To do this, vegetation is divided into state classes that are connected by variables that can transition vegetation from one state to another (as a

function of growth, regeneration, succession, fire, insects, windthrow, etc.). The model run then examines trends in vegetation conditions over time. We have been working with the ILAP team to show what No Management scenarios would actually look like on landscape scale. They can also provide carbon stock outputs. **Cori will send new updated scenarios that Miles did (ppt) to Brooke and Chris.**

Next steps

- Meetings: Chris will get with Don H to get training on how to update the fuels map. Cori and Chris will try to coordinate getting logistics for Nov meetings together.
- Budgets: Chris reported on the process for determining budgets for proposals. Chris and Craig are part of the Integrated Vegetation Planning Group (includes two representatives from each district plus SO staff) that meets once a year to discuss project proposals from each district. They rank each project proposal on ecosystem sustainability, hazardous fuels, values at risk, etc. and, based on proposed budget, tier them into funded and unfunded groups. If extra funds or grants are received, they use it for the unfunded group. WUI will undoubtedly be a priority for funding this year. Perry reported that the NPS is budgeting 90WUI/10nonWUI for FY12. The Big Question now is what routine funding will we get from the Regional Office? Brooke and Don had a conversation with Corbin Newman, Regional Forester, which confirmed the Coronado is unlikely in the near future to receive major funding for implementing new, big initiatives due to the budgetary demands of two Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects. However, the analysis team provided by the Region that is assisting the Four Forest Restoration Initiative is actually a statewide resource that Jim Upchurch can request.
- Next meetings: We will be scheduling a full IDT meeting in November that we will try to partner with field trips for TEAMS members. We will also be scheduling a local IDT meeting for October. **Cori and Stephanie will work on dates and email larger group.**

Outreach past and future

Don F. reported that he will be giving a presentation on FireScape at Heritage Days. Ben says AZGFD is developing a webpage that we could add a FireScape message to. Brooke and Stephanie will work on a presentation for BioBlitz. **Cori will send in Application.** [UPDATE: the BioBlitz application was accepted. The FireScape presentation will be Oct 21 at noon]. Don is already attending the AFE conference and will work with Stephanie and Cori on a FireScape presentation (whether he or someone else presents it). Ben mentioned that he would be interested in venues where he could present the reintroduction project. **Cori will send Ben School of Natural Resources and the Environment seminar series information.**