

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

**May 6, 2010**

**9:30 am at The Nature Conservancy (1510 E. Fort Lowell)**

**In attendance:** Averill Cate, Cori Dolan, Don Falk, Brooke Gebow, Jim Malusa, Jesse Minor, Steve Plevel, Randall Smith (notes by Cori Dolan and Brooke Gebow)

**The fate of June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting:** Our next regularly scheduled meeting, June 3, is canceled due to absences of various folks and fire season. **Our next meeting will be July 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:30 am (TNC office, 1510 E. Fort Lowell).**

**Fuels workshop update.** Don reported that the objective of the April 19-21 Fuels Workshop was to create a high quality fuels layer for the project area. Because covering the entire Coronado NF brought in only a handful of additional vegetation/fuel types, we expanded the map to the smallest rectangle that included the whole forest. The result is a 14-million-acre Sky Islands fuels map. Joe Scott and Don Helmbrecht led the exercise, and we had attendees from the CNF, BLM, NPS, UA, and TNC.

One of the rules was that we accepted LandFire's existing vegetation type (EVT) assignments for our giant rectangle. During the workshop, attendees looked at the fuel models that LandFire assigned and refined the models to improve fit with actual vegetation. Each EVT was assigned a set of Scott and Burgan fuel models rather than a single model. We made it through 97% of the rectangle EVTs and 99% for project areas (Catalina-Rincon, Chiricahua-Dragoon-Dos Cabezas).

The second exercise looked at changes in fuel models in EVTs based on low, moderate, and high-severity fire. Again, we assigned a distribution of models rather than a single model to each severity level for each EVT. Homework was to get additional fire (or treatment or other disturbance) polygons (with severity) to Joe and Don. Once that map is complete, the group's homework assignment is filling in the missing EVTs and repeating the low-moderate-high severity model assignments for new EVT's captured by new fires. We are asking **Don, Jim, Perry, and Chris to complete this fill-the-gaps homework assignment, with Don coordinating.**

Don feels that, although we still need to do a few tiny patches of EVTs, we are in great shape (and ahead of schedule) to run fire behavior simulations. Joe and Don will give us a report that includes very basic fire behavior simulations under existing conditions. Brooke mentioned that she will coordinate with Janel to obtain TEAMS help on simulations under different treatment scenarios and write the fuels reports for the NEPA documents.

Chris Stetson will be the keeper of the map that was created at the workshop when we get it back from Joe Scott and Don Helmbrecht. The goal is to then have an annual meeting/workshop to update the map. Don pointed out that any updates we do to the model or map will not flow back into the national LandFire database. He also mentioned that once the map is complete, we will need to make sure that everyone knows how to use it, the scale, and what you can and cannot do with it. A rollout to users for later this summer is in the works.

**Buffelgrass workshop update:** The first annual SABCC Buffelgrass Science Meeting was held May 4-6th at the Office of Arid Lands Studies. Steve reported that the purpose of the meeting was to develop a data management system and decision support model to answer questions of potential buffelgrass spread and establish treatment priorities. Grijalva held a Congressional hearing in mid-April, and SABCC is pushing for a \$2M earmark to treat buffelgrass on federal lands. They are still waiting to hear if they will get the money. Steve also reported that because their assessment area overlaps with ours, SABCC may be able to provide data on buffelgrass distribution, abundance, and treatment. In return, FireScope may be able to provide SABCC with data about the ecosystems, fire behavior, fuel modeling, and fire return information. SABCC has created an Assessment Form for buffelgrass data capture that Jim suggested we could put on our website. **Jim will contact Lindy Brigham about the form.**

Aaryn Olsson, the Phd student working on buffelgrass and whose data informed all the models at the workshop, will be graduating this month and moving to NAU for a post-doc. At present time there are no plans to continue his work here in Tucson.

Perry Grissom was tasked with trying to crosswalk the buffelgrass model (% cover) with the fuels layers to get at fire behavior. **Cori will act as liaison with SABCC to determine if there are data that FireScope can contribute to help with this or other tasks.**

**Website directions.** Averill Cate, a sub-contractor with the UA ART lab, updated the group on website options and new directions. Averill added a Google counter to our website that tracks how many hits we get each day and which states they are coming from. So far most hits come from Arizona, but there have been a few from Montana and New Mexico. Averill then asked the group to define what role the website plays. Brooke suggested that currently the website plays a more official role, pointing people to documents and data, but that in the future it will become a source of information for public outreach. Don also suggested that the website could be a place to outline the natural role of fire and what the end vision of the FireScope project is to counter some of the sensational messages available about wildfires. **Don offered to write a short piece for the website homepage to that end.** Brooke also reported that she would like to see the website cover FireScope projects across the region, not just the Catalina-Rincons. **Cori and Averill will meet to discuss ways to re-structure the layout of the website to accomplish this.**

**Averill will put a questionnaire on the website for our Key Participants to fill out regarding website function and how he can make it more user friendly. Once it is in place, Cori will send an email pointing Key Participants to the survey.**

**Outreach talking points.** In the “what is FireScope” department, Brooke asked Catalina RD fire staff what FireScope products/outcomes would really help them. They listed 5 things:

1. Jim’s landtype association/ecological map as a very useful description of the mountains
2. Fuels map (kept up to date) as a modeling tool
3. Broad-scale compliance coverage for a menu of treatments (section 7, NEPA, NHPA)
4. Clearance to treat in wilderness to lessen risk to Summerhaven
5. Assistance on outreach (e.g. smoke issue)

Steve put together a list of project themes for the group to refine. Project themes are meant to be generalizable across all FireScape projects with specific examples that can be tailored to individual audiences. **Cori will update the list of Project Themes (attached to the end of this document) and send it to the larger group for further revision.**

**CFLRP proposal.** Randall reported that Jeanine Derby is retiring June 3, 2010, and it will be many months before her permanent replacement is named (Reta likely acting). He also reported that the CFLRP proposal got mediocre scores because it included two projects and little commercial utilization. To make the proposal more appealing in the second round and to make the budget more realistic, they decided to take out the Huachuca piece and focus on PERP. All the region's proposals now go to Washington for the final decision. Randall feels that even if we do not make the cut this time, our name and project is now out there as one of the major planning efforts in the region. The proposal is due to the Washington office on Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Treating in Wilderness:** Brooke reported on the obstacles with tool use and obtaining clearance for fire history sampling in designated wilderness. Randall is looking for a model on how to go through the process. Donna Mattson with TEAMS is doing the minimum tool analysis for the sampling in the Galiuros; chainsaws are preferred over cross-cut saws, and, in this case we can argue that chainsaws are actually the tool of lesser impact. Jesse will need something similar for the Chiricahuas.

Randall spoke with representatives from the Carhart Center about different wilderness exemption scenarios. They felt we had a good case, and we just needed to follow the procedures. However, there seems to be little precedent for successful negotiation of that process. The decision sits at the USFS Regional Forester level. Don suggested that we need to make it clear that the fuel build-up in the wilderness area is a direct result of man's intervention, and is therefore *not* natural. TEAMS will likely also be working on this issue for Rx burning in the Galiuros (helicopter use for ignition) and the Chiricahuas and Catalinas (doing the kind of pre-treatment mechanical fuels reduction that could easily be authorized during suppression actions).

**Outreach next steps.** Steve set three priority groups for contact in the immediate future.

1. Decision makers key to funding (e.g. Congressional delegation, Jeanine Derby, Darla Sidles)
2. Groups that we need their support and help (e.g. affected communities, adjacent landowners)
3. Groups that have information or ideas (e.g. outlier academic groups)

**Steve also asked that each Key Participant go through the contact list on the website and identify people/groups that they have contacted already about FireScape and put them into one of the three categories listed above. Averill will add a field in the Contact List database to facilitate this. Cori will send instructions to the larger group when it is ready.**

Randall passed along a list from Jennifer of USFS contacts. **Cori will send the list to the larger group for inclusion in the above homework assignment.**

**Please review the following key themes and send any additions or changes to Cori.**

### FireScape Key Themes

This list represents key themes that should be generalizable across all FireScape project areas. The goal is to incorporate this list into all documents, presentations, and website materials for continuity. Each theme will also have a subset of specific examples that correspond to each FireScape project (e.g. Catalina-Rincon, Chiricahua-Dragoon, Huachuca, etc.).

1. FireScape is an umbrella under which fire management can operate on a larger scale than in the past, e.g. entire mountain ranges.
2. FireScape does not operate in a vacuum. It is an integral part of overall land and resource management. Examples: Coronado National Forest Land Resource Plan revision, Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, Buffelgrass Initiative.
3. FireScape is a collaborative effort where experiences are shared and people are engaged early and often throughout the planning and implementation processes.
4. Apply innovative scientific and management approaches.
5. Treat fuels and restore fire to help produce sustainable and resilient ecosystems.
6. Use vegetation mosaics from recent fires that have altered fuel complexes.
7. Use adaptive management and monitoring.
8. Take invasive species into account.
9. Streamline planning and paperwork so we can focus on the doing.
10. Keep people safe, e.g. firefighters, public, homeowners.