



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition Quarterly Meeting August 18th, 2022

Meeting location: *Glorieta Camps 11 State Route 50, Glorieta, NM 87535*

Participants: *Mike Martinez, Tesuque Pueblo; Ryan Swazo-Hinds, Tesuque Pueblo ; Beth Ihle, Deputy Supervisor; Alan Hook, Santa Fe Municipal Water; James Duran, Forest Supervisor; Anna Hamilton, Santa Fe County Commissioner; Porfirio Chavarria, City of Santa Fe Fire Department; Mateo Pomilia, Forest Stewards Guild; Jon Malvig, Glorieta Camps; Sandra Imler-Jaquez, Espanola District Ranger; Dave Issacson, Santa Fe National Forest; Terrance Gallegos, Santa Fe National Forest; Brad Ashwell, Glorieta Camps; Josh Hall, Santa Fe National Forest; Ellis Margolis, USGS; Esme Cadiente, Forest Stewards Guild; Ariel Patashnik, Santa Fe Conservation Trust; Wendy Jo Haskins, SW Regional USFS; Rita O'Connell, Senator Heinrich Office; Teresa Seamster, Sierra Club; Melissa Houser, Santa Fe Conservation Trust; Jacob Key, Espanola Ranger District, Fireshed Coordinator; Tony Batha, Executive Assistant SFNF; Tony Armijo, Santa Fe County Fire Department; Elaine Kohrman, Deputy Regional Forester; Sherri Schwenke, Deputy Regional Forester; Steve Romero, District Ranger Pecos/Las Vegas; Mori Hensley, Santa Fe Watershed Association; Julie Anne Overton, Santa Fe National Forest; Jonathan Frenzen, Communication Committee Chair; Eytan Krasilovsky, Forest Stewards Guild; Joey Smallwood, Fireshed Ambassador Glorieta; Alan Barton, NMFWR Director; Matt Picarello, TNC*

Notetaker: *Gabe Kohler and Mateo Pomilia*

Inflation Reduction Act – Opportunities for Forestry Planning and Treatments - (Teresa)

Teresa Seamster, Sierra Club: I want to introduce some ways that we can benefit forest areas in terms of soil health and microorganism health. This can help reduce invasives, which convey a fire risk of their own. Recommendations include:

- Awareness of spacing residual trees
- Evaluating soil moisture retention
- Supporting microorganism communities with treatment planning. Research from other locales may be consistent in New Mexico regardless of the forest type.
- Open-ended discussion with fire personnel about how safety parameters may have been implemented.
 - Test burn,
 - Local input on prescriptions

Resilience Strategy signatures – (Porfirio)



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

The strategy document is what the coalition is based on. This is a binding document that everyone can agree to. What needs to happen across the landscape to work toward cohesive strategy: resilient landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and safe wildfire response. Fireshed is broken up into focal areas. There are multiple roles in the Fireshed, both advisors and partners. Advisors can sign the strategy, but partners are required to sign.

We only have a handful of signatories and need to get more. The City is holding it and waiting to see what the outcomes are going to be over the next week or two. The political body is waiting for the bigger picture to emerge before they sign on. City Council did not have any idea about the resolution that came from the city. The City is waiting to see what happens with the moratorium, but they also want to see the success stories about what the Fireshed has accomplished.

Strategy dovetails with the EA. The document is well aligned with the NMSF Forest Action Plan, which has helped for it to be taken seriously.

Communications Committee Update (*Gabe Kohler, Forest Stewards Guild*)

Kohler introduced that many Coalition members felt frustration about how the EA was paused and that the communications committee wanted to coordinate messaging that allowed enough flexibility for partners to express their own messages while also providing some cohesion.

Kohler introduced three items that the communications committee was interested in receiving Coalition input on: a virtual field tour of Pacheco Canyon, talking points for Coalition members to use to coordinate communications about the CC/HP wildfire and the pause of the EA, and the potential for a letter to the Regional Office expressing frustration about the collaborative process and the decision to pull the EA without communication to the Coalition.

Kohler passed out talking points and outlined a process for Coalition members to provide input to the communications items that were described. Email contact information was printed on the talking points as well as a process for providing input.

Seamster and other Coalition members expressed trepidation about the messages in the talking points that signaled continued support for the use of prescribed fire

Cadiente requested that the group move on in the interest of discussing the pause of the EA in greater detail and with input from Forest-level and Regional FS participants.

Santa Fe Mountains Resiliency Project EA – decision and next steps (*Porfirio, SFNF*)

Elaine; Sharing the Forest Service's perspective: The project has been paused, not shelved. Folks in the room represent the Forest Service. The Coalition does not need to write a letter. The region and SFNF are here. There is a lot of loss and grief related to the CC/HP wildfire. Losing Debbie Cress to a detail in early July was a huge challenge while figuring out the post-fire



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

flooding. This was not known to us and we had to figure out how to stand up a leader during the CC/HP crisis. James came on as new leader on July 11th and there was an objection meeting on July 21st. In our minds, how could they hold an objection meeting when we have a new leader, we're taking care of people and without having a conversation about transition and the current context around the project? Our first public meeting would have been telling the communities about the EA instead of addressing their loss. We don't want to signal that we're not behind the project. We also didn't want to be tone deaf to the Chief and the moratorium. There were 40 people that were not in the Coalition who wrote in and objected. We chose to take the empathetic route. We (the Region) did direct James to delay the project to get around the NEPA deadline. I'm not asking to accept or agree, but to understand. It is not about the project, it is not about the commissioners resolution. This is not what lead to the pause.

Michael: *Is the EIS a consideration?*

Alan: *I appreciate you being here and the sensitivity, but the frustration comes from not having known about the situation going into the situation.*

Elaine: *We acknowledge that and can accept blame for that.*

Eytan: *Elaine, thanks for sharing that. Like Alan said, I appreciate trying to do this with all the tragedies and events unfolding. We all were wanting to be included and have some of that thought process laid out. Given the history, the coalition wanted to be more queued in to be involved in the process.*

Elaine: *We apologize for not queuing you all in. We are going to need to work together going forward.*

Ellis: *from your view at the regional level, what does collaboration mean to you?*

Elaine: *Forest supervisors are the core of convening collaboratives and rangers convening these collaboratives. My heart and soul is collaborative. All regionals are behind collaboratives. They want to support leaders in being part of collaboratives. At a regional level we want to support our leaders to be collaborative, but it is not our role to be in the collaborative.*

Ellis: *This collaborative process was chopped in half from the regional level. Somewhere from the bottom up, this was not conveyed.*

Elaine: *We misgauged how this collaborative was.*

Ellis: *What did you think it was?*

- This question was not answered, because James Duran began speaking. -



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

James: I won't repeat anything Elaine shared. Many know that we have signed the Carson and Cibola National Forest plans. Just because we use the word (collaborative?) does not mean we are experts at it. Now we have many (collaboratives?) across NM. From this collaborative, there is a lot of focus on the Fireshed. We are trying to figure out how we can manage all these collaboratives. We've landed on the fact that collaboration is not ours to define. How the communication rolled out with the Fireshed Coalition, now I wouldn't say that we did it wrong, just that we did the best we could at the time. We've given up a lot of control over the years and let our partners lead.

NEPA has a lot of confusion. Many focus on NEPA as a solution. It is important, but collaborative is really about shared understanding. The other thing about collaboratives - there will be challenges. We're thinking about the communication need, how can we do better. We want to do better at giving control to let others take the lead.

The HP/CC has changed the course of many people's careers. This is a big deal and has been devastating. We want to do everything that is right for Northern New Mexico. We need time to recalculate.

Matt Piccarello: Are we still on the subject of the EA?

Jacob Key: they had the forest plan signatures from Cibola and Carson.

Sandy: They will add input from CC/HP review.

Sherry: Today is the 90 day. The chief has reviewed and that there will be work to be done at all levels of the agency. There will be multiple phases of the review. FS is not the only one that burns. They want to sit down and work through things together.

Michael: What is the worst case scenario? We are talking about the EA getting approved in December? With the county saying they want and EIS, does the county commissioner have more clout than tribal government.

Anna: I would like to say something about the intent of the EA. Part of what is needed. James and Beth have spent a lot of time speaking to us. I can see myself in their position. I'm in favor of the project in general. The problem is that RX fire is good in certain situations. No one would say RX fire is always good. It is time and situation specific. When you have issues like the fire and you have a talking point that says "what do we need to do to start burning again." I have many educated people that ask how can you keep doing business as usual because so many things have changed over the last 30 years. At some level it doesn't matter, in the bigger area it turned into a red flag day. To declare that we are willing to accept the risks of forest thinning, pile burning, and prescribed fire. The tradeoffs are going to be different in different areas. Putting the EA back out and not addressing the issue does not address the risk aversion and tradeoffs. The Forest Service people are saying the same thing: we cannot do business as usual.



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

We need to acknowledge that things have changed, we are considering this type of criteria.. There has to be some real change and it needs to be dealt with on a technical basis.

Matt Piccarello (TNC): *We cannot go on with business as usual. Teresa laid out some things that could be changed about RX fire. Commissioner Hamilton laid out some things that need to change. Once the conversation about the EA is over, we all can participate in this discussion. I wants to make the point that those changes won't happen in an EA or an EIS. If we support RX fire in general then we should support an EA. The changes that need to happen with RX fire will happen separate from that. You cannot change RX fire and burn planning through NEPA. One of the first comments in the New Mexican was "we should only do mechanical thinning" - That's not how this works.*

James: *the back to burning is about how RX fire is an important tool. NEPA doesn't fix everything. The most valuable NEPA is the NEPA that gets implemented. Whatever we implement, the Forest is committed to working with the Community/coalition to getting there. Even if they were ready with NEPA, they would still need to pause and figure out how to implement. Collaboration is not just about planning. Collaboration involves implementation as well.*

Anna H: *I actually have a question about that. I know different agencies have different process. Every NEPA I have been involved in you cannot evaluate effects until after a project description. My question is "in terms of how to specify where a project is"*

The purpose of NEPA is to describe the proposed action so that we can also describe the effects and see if we are meeting the desired condition. We need to know where the project is to evaluate.

Jacob: *Condition-based EA may be that maybe the conditions are not explicit enough. They are trying to not get to a one-size-fits-all approach. The EA is trying to leave some of the detail up to the specialists. If they put too much detail in, then they lose tools.*

Anna: *Part of me, the professional part, is on board. The sociological part of me, says that you cannot go to people and say "what we did was a mistake, but the way we analyzed it is fine"*

Elaine: *As Sherry pointed out, we are going to have some new reports going out. Can you help us read them and let us know what needs to be put in them?*

Teresa: *what we found about state NEPA discussions is that the solution is not going to be in re-writing the EA or writing the EIS. There are so many people that are lightyears ahead. Science only proves what you ask it to prove. Some situations of thinning and burning are not success stories. We have an opportunity, there is a lot of federal money, what does FS need from us?*

Elaine: *the EA is a process. They want to have 0 objections. They want to make a decision that is upheld by everyone.*



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

Jacob: *that ties to the need. We need to work together and move forward so things are not stalled. We have NEPA projects that are still going on.*

Mateo: *one thing that is irrefutable is the fire deficit across the west. There is not one way to deal with it, but that is the elephant in the room.*

Jacob: *we don't know the exact changes, we just know there will be changes. It would be great to not have objections, but the last round we had 40. We expect the next round will have more.*

Esme: *Can new people object?*

Jacob: *We will have a new objection period. The last objection period was right in the middle of the blowup.*

Sandy: *if we do minor changes, it can go straight out for objection. If they do significant changes, they will have to go back to the comment period.*

Elaine: *You probably know about the 4FRI. It has been going on for a long time. They just finished an EIS. They got together and talked out objections and they were able to get a letter of support from all partners. They had 3 objections. You are going to have to talk to people that do not agree with this project.*

Sandra: *How can you help us get the message out and share the message?*

Ellis: *can you provide a timeline?*

Sandra: *There hope is late Fall to start the objection review process.*

Elaine: *the fewer objections the sooner we get to a decision*

James: *We have an EIS in our forest plan revision. We are not perfect at collaboration. We want to do more effective public engagement. We need to share more desired future conditions. Some are about fuel conditions and others are about soils.*

Porfirio: *I appreciate all the discussion. I would like to move on. Are there nominations for implementation committee chair?*

Esme: *I think it makes sense for State Forestry to stay in this role. Without state forestry present right now, we may need to pause here and reach out to them unless anyone else would like to nominate someone in the room?*

Alan: *the vegetation treatment map is still treated regularly. We are turning this into a national project. Send projects to Katie Withnal.*



The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition

Alan Hook: *Is there anyone from NMFWRRI that can be a chair for implementation?*

Alan B.: *No, we do not have that.*

Porfirio: *For the social media, it would be nice to have someone not agency affiliated.*

Accomplishments Report – survey (Mateo)

Esme: *I will turn it over to Mateo for the accomplishments report.*

Mateo: *I have been entrusted to Shepard this process. The accomplishments report was created collaboratively from input from last 6 years. We can do better to tell our accomplishments. The primary audience for this is outward facing. This will be a chance to collate successes and share.*

Ellis: *Can Forest Service accomplishments be tracked? I think so. In my mind these need to be tracked.*

Meeting adjourned.