

**Otero Working Group  
February 21, 2018  
Cloudcroft Ranger Station**

Attending

Gordon Martin, Lincoln National Forest  
Jared Aguilar, NM State Land Office  
Rick Evans, Boss Reclamation & NM Forest Industry Association  
Wilmer LaPaz, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Vern Maker  
Sandra Hunt, Spirit Ranch  
Nick Smokovich, NM State Forestry Division – Capitan Office  
Frank Silva, NM State Forestry Division – Capitan Office  
Dave Venable, Village of Cloudcroft  
Rick Merrick, South Central Mountains RC&D  
Alan Barton, NM Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute

Tularosa Creek Focus Area

There is a focus on maintenance of treatments in this area. NM Game & Fish is funding projects in this focus area. Their money can be used without much in the way of restrictions.

Two Goats/High Rolls/Maruchi Canyon Focus Area

A grant application is underway, partners are: USFS, SCMRC&D, NM Tech, Otero SWCD, Otero Extension Office, Mescalero Apache, Ecoservants, City of Alamogordo.

Field trip – there is talk about a field trip to look at the Alamo Canyon thinning project. The field trip has not been organized yet. It would be to the headwaters of the Two Goats area, which is a good show project.

SSRP

The South Sacramento Restoration Project is a 140,000 acre landscape analysis, covering nearly 1/3 of the Sacramento Ranger District. NM Game & Fish is funding this. SWCA is the third-party partner, preparing the EIS. They are looking for a decision at the end of 2018, and want to have about 20,000 acres shovel ready at that time. They want to start implementation on the priority areas once the ROD is signed. Some of the initial area is north of Timburon. Also, looking at managing within MSO PACs. This project is a regional priority with the Regional Forester.

There is a public meetings upcoming on the SSRP project. The date hasn't been set yet but it probably will be in June or July.

Custom Crates & Palletts CFRP

Custom Crates & Palletts has acquired a feller-buncher from someplace in the East. They added a processor head. They also are looking to buy a chipper, a Bandit 2400. That has been delayed in transit.

**Otero Working Group  
February 21, 2018  
Cloudcroft Ranger Station**

The chips will go to Mexico, and made into chipboard for furniture. The company in Mexico is Macisa. There is another plant farther south in Mexico that is also interested in purchasing this material.

Currently, they are shipping 3 truckloads a week to Mexico – they are shooting for 36 truckloads per week in the future

They need a moisture content of about 12%. They may want to ship by rail from White Sands. Should help with drying.

Statewide Prescribed Fire CFRP

The Nature Conservancy will run a 2 week TREX in April in Taos.

The WUI Summit is April 10 to 12. (It overlaps with the TREX).

About \$3,000 per year in the Statewide CFRP comes to the Sacramento District. It is used to support Rx fire. Right now, the Sacramento District has a prescribed fire going in Perk Canyon. This will continue for the next couple of weeks. Conditions are good.

The Statewide CFRP grant covers the Lincoln NF, the Carson NF, the Cibola NF, & Taos BLM. The Mountainair District has spent its money already. The Sandia District has also put some funds to work. The Carson NF has been slower. There has been some work in the Angel Fire area. The grant is mostly to train people who have never been on a fire to get out and get some experience. Relationship building across fire departments is an important part of this grant.

Otero County CWPP

The original intent of this group was to prepare a CWPP. Otero County has a CWPP link sent out on email.

They should do an annual review of the CWPP, to see what is being accomplished.

One area of interest is what is being done along Highway 82 between Cloudcroft and High Rolls. No NEPA has been done in this area. CEs through the Farm Bill are a possibility.

Equipment – There is an interest in using steep slope equipment, including in the USFS Regional Office.

Beth has worked with the Department of Transportation, and believes they would be a good partner in the OWG. She will invite them to the next meeting.

Everyone should look at current CWPP. It is on the State Forestry site under Fire Management.

For now, they are looking to update the CWPP with projects that are underway, and with public outreach for Firewise. Are there other partners for the OWG? Rick has an annual evaluation form – he'll send info out.

**Otero Working Group**  
**February 21, 2018**  
**Cloudcroft Ranger Station**

RAC Project

Agreement with Village of Cloudcroft has been signed. Project is ready to go - \$48,000 thinning project.

Blue Water project

With NM State Forestry Division, \$400,000 project, app. 400 acres.

Round Robin

Mark – Rachel Wood has a CFRP on chain of custody and branding of wood products. Rachel is going for another grant to extend this project. Travis wants to get the Lincoln NF involved in this. Could be an opportunity for OWG.

Gordon – Guadalupe Ranger District, about half of it is in Otero County. Looking at burning plans over next 5 years. Primary interest is juniper reduction.

Jared – SLO, nothing else to report on.

Rick – NMFIA is looking to purchase a simulator, right now putting together a feasibility study and need support letters. Equipment – a simulator used for training, for safety, mitigating fire risk, can use for practice on operating many types of equipment. Also for fire safety, maintenance. Certification – prepares people who can work as contractors.

Wilmer – BIA. Have shut down burning projects for the time being. Lots of slash piles still need burning. Have a 2,000 acre broadcast burn they're waiting on, probably until the Fall.

Robert – SLO. Circle Cross area north of Timburon, have looked through for potential projects. Pretty steep terrain. They have found some areas to work in, and they're putting together a plan.

NRCS Coordinated Research Management Plan (CRMP), recently signed for work south of Timberon. Around 500 acres.

Couple from Weed – good to see so many different departments working together. Residents never hear about this.

This can build a better relationship between the USFS and the ranchers and farmers. More community interaction would be very positive. Also, better publicity through news media, like Mountain Monthly. Should report on these meetings.

Nick – NMSF, glad to see the activity here in this district.

Frank –NMSF, Looking at NFL grants, in High Rolls / Maruchi area. Generally about \$300,000, usually in WUI areas. Also looking at treatment with BLM near Timberon.

**Otero Working Group**  
**February 21, 2018**  
**Cloudcroft Ranger Station**

Beth – USFS Sacramento RD, USFS has been working hard to get status updates out to the Weed community – have gone to community meetings to give updates. Not too many people showed up. Any suggestions on how to reach people are welcome.

Prescribed burning – a lot of private landowners are soliciting that their land be included in prescribed burns.

Rick – First thing, landowner needs to have a plan with NMSF, with Rx fire as a tool that can be used. Nick – NMSF plans work for NRCS as well.

Beth – Tony McWilliams is no longer with the USFS. Looking to fill his position. Andy & Beth will cover until the position is filled.

Dave – Cloudcroft mayor, RAC grant finally moving. There was a fire in High Rolls a couple of weeks ago, they dodged a bullet because the next day the winds picked up to about 50 mph.

Alan – Rick and Alan will be attending a meeting at Colorado State University next week on collaboration.

The NMFWRRI has a vegetation treatments map online. You can link to it from the Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute website.

Rick – The NM Wood Industry Summit will be in November. There will be a focus on three areas: wood products, youth, and vendors. The organizing committee is inviting all kinds of people to the summit. They have a logo, which is a triangle with wood industry, healthy forests, community.

Otero County WUI cost-share program still has money left. If you know anyone who has some land that needs treatment, let Rick know.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 18.