

Otero WUI Working Group

August 22, 2018

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Update Southern Sacramento Mountain Watershed and Forest Restoration Strategy:
  - Tularosa Creek Focus Area
  - Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area
  - Southern Sacramento Restoration Project Focus Area
3. Update on Custom Crates and Pallets CFRP Utilization Grant
4. Review Otero County CWPP
5. 2018 NM Wood Industry Summit update
6. Westside Sacramento Mountain Watershed and Forest Restoration Implementation CFRP grant proposal "2019"
7. Lincoln National Forest and South Central Mountain RCD Partnership Agreement
8. Update from agencies

Next meeting October 2018

**Otero Working Group  
August 22, 2018  
Sacramento Ranger District, Cloudcroft**

**Meeting Minutes**

Attending

Frank Silva, NM State Forestry Division, Capitán  
Nick Smokovich, NM State Forestry Division, Capitán  
Scott Lerich, Wild Turkey Federation  
Beth Humphreys, USFS Sacramento District Ranger  
Craig Wilcox, US Forest Service, Lincoln National Forest Supervisors Office  
Mr. & Mrs. Hoakum, visitors  
Alan Barton, NM Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute  
Rick Merrick, South Central Mountains RC&D

Tularosa Creek Focus Area

There is not much going on there now. Representatives from the Mescalero Tribe were not at this meeting.

Two Goats/High Rolls/Maruchi Focus Area

Beth is looking at getting a CFRP grant to work in the area. There is work on private land in the area. Rick Blankenship property; his road goes through USFS land. Has cleared his land.

The RC&D worked with various partners to apply for a CFRP this year, but did not get it. Rick recommends reapplying for the next round. The monitoring aspect of the proposal involved NM Tech and Ecoservants, with training from the NMSU Extension Service on invasive species. This would be repeated each year. This didn't seem to get much praise from the CFRP committee. Will seek a report on strengths and weaknesses and improve the proposal for next time. The price per acre was a big issue they discussed; they need to get the per acre price down for next year's proposal. The administrative fee was good.

The RC&D is the applicant on this proposal. Rick asked if they needed to put up for bid in a wider area for USFS. Beth said the problem is the local contractors are too busy. They can extend the bidding to a larger area; some projects are getting bids from as far away as Oregon.

Another issue from the CFRP panel was the proposal didn't show any utilization.

For next time, the proposal needs to describe the landscape, and perhaps show photos.

The proposed project was 285 acres, at \$1,200 per acre, in La Luz Canyon, which is an important area for the City of Alamogordo. Next time, perhaps a larger acreage at a lower cost would be more attractive.

The project area is in 2 units, just south of the Mescalero border at the southwest corner of the reservation. One of the areas belongs to the City of Alamogordo. The NEPA was done by a CFRP planning grant, that included these two areas and two more at the southeast area of the Two Goats project area boundary.

**Otero Working Group  
August 22, 2018  
Sacramento Ranger District, Cloudcroft**

There were non-native elms in this project area, which increases costs because you have to cut and spray in these areas. But, the City of Alamogordo didn't like the idea of spraying in their watershed.

Rick said the City of Alamogordo has bumped up their funding for their Water Dept.

Other work in project area – there has been a lot of work, for a total of about 6,000 acres, along the Sunspot Road and Alamo Peak area.

Beth said that completing work on these areas is in the 5 year plan. They need to pursue CFRP funding. Right now, the SSRP is the main focus.

The USFS has ramped up their treatments – close to double what it was. Previously the target was about 12,000 acres per year. This year it's 18,000 acres and next year it will be 22,000 acres. These figures are for the whole Lincoln NF.

Prescribed burning is difficult in this area due to weather and terrain, as well as all the NEPA and pre-work (archeology, wildlife). They NF has used some managed wildfires, and is looking to increase treatments. But, there are only a few operators with equipment, which is very expensive.

#### Water Funds

Rick Merrick, Scott Lerich, Laura McCarthy & Brent Racher approached the City of Alamogordo about a water fund. Rick also proposed it as part of the northern Sacramento Mountains strategy as Alamogordo has land in Lincoln County as well.

The fund would add \$1.00 to each water bill each month. Then, every year, the City would sit down with the USFS to review the projects going on and the City could decide how to dedicate the funds towards forest restoration.

Scott said that at \$1:00 per meter, it would total about \$157,000 per year.

Last time, due to the political conditions, and a change in mayors, along with other factors, the water fund never went anywhere.

Rick suggested the Village of Tulerosa may be amenable to a water fund as well.

#### SSRP

Crag Wilcox – There will be a collaboration field trip for the SSRP project tomorrow. The draft EIS is close to completion, it should be out early Fall, and ready to sign in late Spring 2019. Tomorrow they'll be reporting back to the collaborative partners. Tomorrow they'll go to 3 different stops and report on how they addressed the issues. One stop will be in Agua Chiquita, where there is an MSO PAC. At this site they'll show how they want the forest to look. There are lots of steep slopes in this area, so they'll talk about treating these areas. Scofield Canyon is the second stop, and Alamo Canyon is third. They will look at treatments done in that area.

**Otero Working Group  
August 22, 2018  
Sacramento Ranger District, Cloudcroft**

Beth said the USFS just secured about \$900,000 from NM Game & Fish to prep for implementation on this project, including 20,000 acres of treatment in the first phase. The prep includes archeological surveys, as well as some of the silviculture prep work. Treatments will occur in owl PACs, including thinning and prescribed burning. They've never done this before. They are collaborating with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and university folks.

Circle Cross

Craig said the USFS will hand this off to NM State Forestry Division, but they need assistance on the utilization side. No one wants to see wood wasted. They will use small operators. The volume could double in a couple of years.

A lot of the material is small diameter – biomass will be a key issue. The school is looking at heating/cooling as a possibility.

NM Wood Industry Summit

Rick discussed the meeting this morning on the Wood Industry Summit. This will help build ties to some of the industry in the area.

NMSU is a new sponsor. This started with Society of American Foresters (SAF), which will offer CEs for the workshop. NMSU saw the email on this and came on board as a sponsor.

Scott suggested having a speaker who can discuss reducing costs. Shilo Old is one possibility. He could also talk about Old Wood.

Rick said Cal Joyner is the scheduled keynote speaker. But, the Summit has to be on the USFS regional events list.

Rachel Wood will talk about certification.

John Shaw from Utah will talk about growth and mortality in NM Forests.

Ed Singleton will talk about NMSU research on markets for biochar.

Will Donahue will talk about biomass utilization study.

Brent Racher may be able to come and talk about the Jemez Pueblo and Walatowa Collaboration.

Other potential topics are GIS and new uses for technology coming down the road.

Scott said last week he saw a presentation on use of tablets for data collection. Good cost savings.

Rick said that one of the purposes of the Wood Summit is to raise the profile of the wood industry in NM. Many of the mills and operators stay pretty low key, but we need to get more attention to the industry.

**Otero Working Group**  
**August 22, 2018**  
**Sacramento Ranger District, Cloudcroft**

Why would wood industry want to remain under the radar? For one, they don't want more regulations. For another, they take a lot of heat for destroying the forest.

The capacity of local industry around the state raises a lot of questions. But, this is probably the future of utilization in NM.

Rick talked to Jeffrey Halbrook in AZ and hopes to get someone to talk about 4FRI at the Summit.

Custom Crates and Pallets

This is a CFRP Grant. They purchased a feller-buncher, which is working, and now is in the Jim Lewis area. They are having trouble hiring people – they're looking for 2 or 3 people, but they are getting no applicants. One guy did start, but only lasted 2 weeks.

The CFRP grant bought the feller-buncher as well as a self-propelled chipper that they are not using at this time. They want to find a piece of property where they can locate the chipper, and bring logs to it and let them dry for awhile, then chip them.

The company should continue to grow.

The monitoring part of this project is weak. The Ecoservants are going to carry out the monitoring. Ecoservants is an Americorps project.

Otero County CWPP

Not a lot to talk about at this time – we'll table this for now.

Beth described how the USFS used the CWPP, to raise money and in work with local fire departments.

Nick described how NM State Forestry Division uses the CWPP, for NFL proposals.

Lincoln NF & SCMRC&D Partnership Agreement

The RC&D had brush disposal money, some of which was dedicated to Rx burns on USFS land. Now, the RC&D is partnering with contractors. Need funding to bring contractors on board.

Round Robin Updates

Nick – NM State Forestry Division projects, Lincoln County WUI funds are coming, and there is some for Otero as well. Blue Water project – they need to get the work plan out for this project. This is NM Game & Fish money. The project is located southwest of Weed, part of the Jim Lewis Planning Area. It totals 400 acres.

Grant for non-federal lands is up for bids now. Non-native treatment. Hondo SWCD got it last year. Could be SWCD, County, Weed Control District.

Frank – NM State Forestry Division is working with NRCS on a couple of projects. Their focus is brush management, but NMSF works with them on timber management.

**Otero Working Group**  
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Scott – The Wild Turkey Federation is excited about the agroforestry workshop.

Environmental Analysis Roundtable – USFS internal review with partners, to get input on how NEPA process is handled by the USFS.

Ft. Stanton – 450 acre P-J thinning project – Devil’s Canyon – ESE of the airport, with BLM Roswell Office.

Beth – The USFS is looking at writing NEPA documents in a streamlined way, working on improving with their specialists. Should improve NEPA projects in the future.

Beth will retire in about 5 weeks.

Sep. 15 & 16 at Black Bear Campground, there will be a party for Beth.

Mr. & Mrs. Hoakum – they have been doing this for 62 years, and have seen it all. Rangers coming and going, eradicating non-native species, rampant logging. Things come around again. What they want is to graze their cattle and have water.

Rick – if anyone needs help from the South Central Mountains RC&D, let Rick know.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 17 at 2 pm.