

**Magdalena Collaborative Meeting**

March 8, 2024

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://nmhu.zoom.us/j/92468473529?pwd=TEExCV1dOUlF6ckRmMGVlOW9TRWNlZz09>

Meeting ID: 924 6847 3529

Passcode: 760634

**Meeting Purpose:**

Update from Magdalena Ranger District. Discuss collective interests/purpose of the group and next steps.

**Magdalena Collaborative Goals:**

The Magdalena Collaborative was established in 2018 with two main goals;

- 1) Convene diverse partners working in the greater Magdalena landscape to identify shared interests, priority needs for collaboration, and clear action steps, and
- 2) Foster networking and relationship building.

**Agenda**

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1:00 pm	Introductions	Crystal Medina (Facilitator)
1:10 pm	Current Projects and Updates	Tina Cason, District Ranger
1:30 pm	Discussion: Collective interests/purpose of the Magdalena Collaborative. What are our next steps?	Crystal Medina
1:45 pm	Partner Updates	Everyone
1:55 pm	Identify next Meeting Date	Crystal Medina
2:00 pm	Meeting Adjourns	

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*Meeting Notes on Next Page*

**Magdalena Collaborative  
General Meeting  
March 8, 2024  
Zoom**

**Attendance:**

- Ray Martinez – County Commissioner, District 5, Socorro County
- Jim Nelson – Trustee for Village of Magdalena, but attending for personal interests
- Mary Katherine Ray – Interested local citizen
- Phil Rudy – Partnership Coordinator, Cibola NF, USDA FS
- Chris Nichols – Recreation Program Manager, Cibola NF, USDA FS
- Katherine Haveman– Recreation Partnership Coordinator, Cibola NF, USDA FS
- Tina Cason – Magdalena Ranger District, Cibola NF, USDA FS
- Crystal Medina (Facilitator) – NM Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI)
- Alejandro Collins (Co-Facilitator, notetaker) – NMFWRI
- Eleanor Ludwig (Co-Facilitator, technology) – NMFWRI/AmeriCorps VISTA

**Magdalena District Updates**

Tina Cason  
Magdalena District Ranger  
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

**Fuels Projects**

*Hop Canyon WUI*

The district expects to receive allocations through a Good Neighbor Agreement through the Good Neighbor Authority with the New Mexico Forestry Division (NM FD) of the NM EMNRD to conduct fuels reduction projects in the Hop Canyon WUI project area. Once the district reviews and signs the agreement, NM FD will move forward with seeking contractors for the projects. Fuel reductions will take place in Units 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the project area. Importantly, the district seeks to work cooperatively with landowners in and near these units. Unit 1, referred to as the “Patterson Area” has already started to be surveyed and flagged for hand thinning. After thinning, it is intended to be opened for fuelwood gathering. Due to proximity of homes and structures, the district is exercising increased respect and caution with treatments in Unit 2. Thinned materials will be piled and burned when all environmental and social conditions are met. Unit 3 will also be opened to the public for firewood gathering once thinning concludes. The district is looking into working with relevant landowners to open Unit 4 to firewood gathering after thinning. The planned treatments amount to 500 acres combined.

*Durfee Bolander*

The Durfee Bolander area is already NEPA cleared and ongoing active treatments. The NM FD has the “Alamo Cutting Crew” currently working in Unit 1 to clear and remove piñon, juniper, oaks, and shrubs. When finished, and all conditions are met, the USDA FS will do prescribed burn. Units 5 and 6 are already cleared and will be prescribed burned when conditions are met. The proximity of private homes and presence of Mexican Spotted Owls require more extensive requirements prior to burning. If the owl breeding season continues for longer than expected, it is

possible that the district will conduct prescribed burns on Units 11, 12, and 13, depending on conditions. An adjacent landowner, whose property does not have structures or wells, is also motivated to burn and is interested in the prescribed burns to run through this property. When appropriate, the district will coordinate with the NM FD, who has jurisdiction for wildfires on private property, to assist in accomplishing this.

### *Bear Trap Fire*

The district continues to assess fire and post-fire damage from the Bear Trap Fire. The assessment is being done in-house, but snow and erosion is making it difficult to assess damage. It is unknown whether the USDA FS will have the capacity for restoration work once the assessment is complete. Due to an unknown timeline for the assessment and the following NEPA process, it is difficult to gauge whether they will do the work themselves or seek contracts.

### *Magdalena Mountains*

The district intends to start the NEPA process for the Magdalena Mountains to cover wildfire, prescribed burns, and thinning. Deciding on a course of action will depend on future conditions. Thus far, there is an assigned WUI for the area. The project idea is to create fuel controls and position lines to better manage a potential wildfire. Local residents express a motivation to conduct prescribed burns due to the presence of excess lightning in the area. However, as of now, there is greater traction to move forward with the projects associated with the Bear Trap Fire.

### *Fire Season*

The fire season is approaching quickly. The lower country areas appear to be set for a wildfire to cause damage; humidity is low, and fuels are present. If there is an ignition and strong wind, it is likely that we will see significant fire movement. Conversely, snow at higher elevations is keeping the area wet and in favorable conditions with regards to potential wildfires. The district is preparing to do what needs to be done to be ready for a fire. In the event of a fire, firefighters must often make difficult decisions in efforts to suppress the fire by considering potential damage and eliminating ignition areas; in these cases, firefighter safety is paramount.

### Staffing

The district successfully completed their search and hiring for two positions. Kirk Barren, who has previously worked in the district, will serve as the Assistant Fire Management Fuel Officer. Wyatt Shellhorn, a former member of the Gila NF Hotshot Crew, will assist with operational aspects of prescribed burns and wildfires.

## **Recreation Updates**

Chris Nichols  
Recreation Program Manager  
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

### *Upcoming Trail Work*

The district has contracts with Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, NM Wild, NM Youth Conservation Corps, and others for 5 to 6 hitches for trail work this summer, each of which is expected to take about 8 days.

### *Bear Trap Fire Burn Scar*

Thus far, the district has been unable to move forward in the Bear Trap Fire burn area. The plan is to assess the status of trails in the burn scar this summer and then create a plan. Seventy thousand has been allocated for recreation and trail work in the area.

### *Water Canyon Maintenance and Fees*

Maintenance and repairs at the Water Canyon picnic areas are ongoing and almost finished. Over the past two seasons, staff and crews have added gravel to picnic sites, improved parking spurs, replaced fire rings, and installed a kiosk. The plans for this season are to clean up debris from the area left from last season's efforts.

A new \$10 per night fee for Water Canyon will be implemented this year. Fee funds will be used to make improvements in the area. The most recent renovation was 20 years ago, and the facilities are nearing the end of their useful service life. The intention is to build a sustainable recreation model to be able to keep up with maintenance. Fees will be primarily enforced by staff through education, but the possibility of law enforcement issuing citations is a possibility. Chris emphasizes that if citations are necessary for enforcement, the educational component would have to be improved. Tina adds that they strive to make paying fees accessible through the use of iron rangers to collect fees, but that camping sites will require reservations through recreation.gov. Tina also states that they have a new employee to help with the technological component of reservations. Further, the Forest Service honors America the Beautiful National Parks pass, to an extent. Holders of this lifetime pass will receive a 50% discount for single overnight sites and picnic areas, but not for group sites. The USDA FS has an annual pass to access all National Forests in New Mexico that can be purchased for \$40 per year. Individuals may also volunteer at National Forests for a total of 24 hours in lieu of purchasing the pass. Attendees ask that this information be distributed to the group.

### *Trail Maintenance Volunteers*

Chris is seeking to formalize volunteer groups to do trail maintenance. He mentions that he knows people are doing trail maintenance on their own, but it would be beneficial and more efficient to organize these individuals to collaborate on maintenance. There are sometimes opportunities to receive funds to do trail maintenance, but it is not always clear which trails would benefit the most. Having this group would allow funds to be directed more purposefully, leading to an increase in positive outcomes.

## **Survey Results and Next Steps**

### *Survey Results*

Topics of interest identified from a survey sent to the group last year include ecological health, wildfire, and general recreation. Comment responses from the same survey included cross-boundary integration, land management, bottom-up approaches to management, focused working groups, wilderness protection, and road maintenance. Crystal states that these results are outlined in the August 2023 meeting notes. Previous meeting notes can be found on the NMFWR website: <https://nmfwri.org/collaboration/magdalena-collaborative/>

### *Next Steps*

Attendees expressed an interest in having ecological and archaeological topic-experts present on local resources, respectively, at the next meeting. A naturalist with local knowledge is likely a good candidate to fill this role.

**Next meeting will take place over the summer of 2024.**

**Meeting Adjourned**