

Otero County Planning Group

February 18, 2015

Summary of Minutes

Present - Rick Merrick, Tony McWilliams, Bela Harrington, Frank Silva, Thora Padilla, Pete Haraden, Mark Cadwallader, Scott Lerich, Kim Kuhar, Vicky Milne, Kent Huisighn and Vicky Estrada.

Mission Statement - Final Mission statement was handed out to all participants.

Planning Group vs. Working Group Roles – Vicky outlined the main points identified by the Planning Group members at the previous meeting. The role of the planning group is to provide general direction for the working group and develop agenda outline for the working group. This will help ensure that working group meeting time, which involves multiple partners, is used as effectively as possible. Participation in planning group requires additional time and commitment to participate consistently. The Planning group meets bi-monthly on an alternate schedule with the Working Group. Working Group was invited to ask questions and voice opinion about the Planning Group role. Working Group voiced support for Planning Group and role. Working group members were invited to participate in Planning Group that could meet the additional time and commitment. Thora Padilla, expressed interest in attending Planning Group meetings.

Project Priority Area/s and Potential Partner/Stakeholder Exercise – Vicky displayed revised priority area map based on input from Planning Group at previous meeting. In addition to using criteria of Focal Area/Greatest Fire Risk Area (based on State Forestry and The Nature Conservancy Analysis), the group identified WUI, CWPP priority communities, on-going and already planned future work and partnership opportunities, as additional criteria used in finalizing priority project area. The group then initiated discussion on how to proceed within the priority project area. Six areas of focus were identified based on the same criteria mentioned above. The following areas were identified: 1) Maruchi area, 2) High Rolls, (combined into 1 area), 3) Jim Lewis, 4) Cloudcroft and SR82 Corridor, 5) Sacramento River area, and 6) Rio Penasco area.

It was agreed that Maruchi area and High Rolls areas should be combined into one area. Group agreed that greatest opportunity given current and planned projects along with partnership potential was High Rolls/Maruchi. For each of the focus areas, the group brainstormed a list of potential partners and stakeholders. Vicky will send this list out to working group members to add any that were not identified during the meeting. It was agreed that at the next Planning Group meeting, work would focus on preparing for participation of High Rolls/Maruchi area partners and stakeholders in meeting to discuss on-going projects and potential future planned projects and involvement of partners and stakeholders in these projects.

Regional Water Planning Effort

Rick Merrick and Vicky Milne shared information about the regional water planning efforts currently ongoing and how the Working Group efforts should be integrated into the regional water planning work. Rick provided the initial priority project area map along with a map identifying past, present and future planned work created by the working group. Vicky Milne was given a map with the final priority project area and agreed that she along with Rick would share efforts of the Otero County Working Group in the regional water planning efforts.

National Forest Foundation Grant

Rick handed out information about a grant opportunity from NFF that fit within the priority project area and criteria of working group. Given the short turnaround time required to complete the application, it is not likely that a proposal could be completed in time. However, this did raise awareness among the group's members, of the need to identify funding sources and options, once specific project activities are identified. The importance of having enough advance notice to apply for funds was also recognized.

Next Meeting Items

Next Meeting of Planning Group will be held at the USFS Supervisor's Office in Alamogordo on Wed. March 18th at 1:00 .