

**Santa Fe Cohesive Strategy Meeting
December 18, 2015
Meeting Notes**

In attendance:

Tony Delfin (NMSF - Chair)
José Varela Lopez (Santa Fe-Pojoaque SWCD & NMFIA)
Cliff Dils (USFS – RO)
Susan Rich (NMSF)
Anne Bradley (TNC)
Laura McCarthy (TNC)
Cal Joyner (USFS – RO)
Bill Van Bruggen (USFS – RO)
Sandy Hurlocker (USFS – SFNF)
Steve Romero (USFS – SFNF)

Eytan Krasilovsky (Forest Guild)
Maria Garcia (USFS – SFNF)
Porfirio Chavarria (SFFD)
Alan Hook (City of Santa Fe Water Division)
Paul Orbuch (USFS & CWSF)
Eddie Tudor (NMSF)
Micaela Hester (NMSF)
Greg Gallegos (SFFD)
Erik Litzenberg (SFFD)
Mike Feulner (SF County FD)

Tony Delfin opened the meeting with a round of introductions and a review of the agenda and purpose: to discuss forest management and wildfire risk reduction in the Santa Fe area.

Todd Haines described the work New Mexico State Forestry (NMSF) is doing in the Santa Fe area. See [Handout 1](#) with map and list identifying acres, forest type, funding source and land status for NMSF projects in Santa Fe County. Greg Gallegos pointed out the chain of projects on different ownerships going up the canyon. Todd spoke about how providing technical and cost-share assistance to private landowners can lead to them becoming peer educators and public advocates.

Greg Gallegos described the risk assessments and priority list that the Santa Fe Fire Department (SFFD) has developed. Porfirio Chavarria said the SFFD has completed over 1500 home assessments on the east side. He observed that the tide of public opinion seems to be turning to favor taking action. Erik Litzenberg agreed, adding that meetings where there is strong dissention by opponents are becoming a thing of the past. What started as a watershed infrastructure project moved into a community protection concept and is now expanding to a landscape scale understanding.

Laura McCarthy said that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) survey showed that public awareness of the issue in Santa Fe is high, willingness to pay is very good. People don't want to pay for small projects, rather they want to see their money go towards part of a package for the larger landscape.

Cal Joyner noted that this landscape is the Forest Service Regional Office' (USFS - RO) number one for the "Two Chiefs" joint landscape restoration partnership in New Mexico. He reminded the group about Stevens funding which provides \$15-\$17 million per year for fuels and fire and can be spent on any lands, not just those in the national forest system.

Porfirio Chavarria distributed [Handout 2](#), a draft resolution under consideration by the Santa Fe City Council designating the Santa Fe Fireshed and directing staff to include it in the city plan and identify funding sources for projects.

Alan Hook distributed [Handout 3](#) and [Handout 4](#), briefing papers showing Santa Fe Watershed treatments, watersheds, land status and fire history. One chokepoint in the past has been NEPA. The City has funded environmental analyses for work in the wilderness, including prescribed fire. An issue of concern is the Pecos Wilderness expansion proposal supported by the Wilderness Society, which would expand wilderness status down below Nichols Reservoir and create special management areas, adding thousands of acres within this group's area of concern that would become very difficult for the USFS to actively manage.

Steve Romero said that San Miguel County passed a resolution endorsing wilderness designation for inventoried roadless areas adjacent to the Pecos Wilderness. This is part of a national effort; it does not have support in Taos County. When asked whether conditions inside the roadless area are conducive to prescribed fire without mechanical thinning first, Greg Gallegos replied no, it needs pre-treatment. That west face is the FD's biggest worry. There would be major impacts to downstream communities if it burns. NEPA has only been done for a few smallish parcels above Tesuque Pueblo south of the Pacheco Fire and around the villages of Cañada and La Cueva on the east side.

Eytan Krasilovsky described a targeted thinning strategy for burn units: hand thin and pile, burn the piles, then go back and broadcast burn at a cost of \$50-\$100/acre by helicopter.

Attendees decided to form a Core Team to draft a strategic plan for the Santa Fe landscape area. A similar type of [Landscape Restoration Strategy](#) was completed by the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition and partners in less than six months. Initial members will include Steve Romero, Sandy Hurlocker, Porfirio Chavarria, Jon Williams (SFNF), Todd Haines, José Varela Lopez, Anne Bradley, Laura McCarthy, Eytan Krasilovsky, and Eliza Kretzmann (NMSF's Cooperative Forester for NRCS). Eytan will also invite consultant Krys Nystrom. Modest funding for this effort will be available from a LOR Foundation grant to the Rio Grande Water Fund and through the U.S. Fire Learning Network that is a partnership of TNC, USFS and the DOI agencies.

The first task for the Core Team will be to outline a process and suggested timeline to develop the Landscape Restoration Strategy. During the discussion, the group established that this strategy development should be completed fairly quickly (6 months) and could be a framework for coordinated NEPA that will be needed before implementation. The proposed process/timeline will be prepared in time for the larger group to consider when they reconvene during the last two weeks of February. Tony Delfin will send out a doodle poll.

Outreach: Susan Rich and Eliza Kretzmann will reach out to NRCS. State Forestry will contact Brian Bird of Wild Earth Guardians. Steve Romero will get in touch with his contact at The Wilderness Society. Erik Litzenberg will speak with local public official(s).

Eddie Tudor said that, between now and the next meeting, the state will try to find funding to get started on some low-hanging fruit like Aztec Springs, Hyde Park and/or TNC property in the next few months. Cal Joyner said the USFS will look into the feasibility of using categorical exclusions permitted under the insect and disease provisions for treatments on high-priority sites. Porfirio Chavarria will take first stab at a CFRP proposal for the Santa Fe fireshed -- a planning grant that will focus on NEPA needs. It will be a short timeframe, so he will need letters of commitment from partners very soon. A proposal team including Porfirio Chavarria, Eytan Krasilovsky, Anne Bradley, Alan Hook, Sandy Hurlocker, and Andy Otto will meet on December 21 to discuss.

Action Items

Porfirio – CFRP proposal team
Sandy – look into appropriate CEs
TNC – landscape strategy core team
Tony/Eddie – contact WildEarth Guardians
Susan/Eliza – contact NRCS
Steve – contact Wilderness Alliance
Erik – contact local official