

Southwest Jemez Mountains Successes, Challenges and Emerging Issues

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Successes:

- Hiring a SW Jemez partnership coordinator was a major success by SFNF leadership and the person they hired, Phyllis has been a huge success.
- There is general agreement (some disagreement on “how “and some details such as roads and Plan amendments) aside from two vocal outliers that came late to the project, that fire and thinning are an appropriate, necessary, and economical tool.
- The scale of the NEPA efforts by the VCNP and the SFNF are successes in themselves. Specifically, long-term time periods and landscape actions (instead of piecemeal approach of project by project NEPA.
- Monitoring is a real, and ongoing activity with leveraged investments because of the many science collaborators gathering data on the VCNP and SFNF.
- People are really interested in this landscape and want to help. We get great turnout for every meeting we’ve called, and more takers than we have spaces for field days.
- Our annual “All Hands Meeting” for agencies and collaborators (and the general public) on CFLRP monitoring results and implementation plans are standing-room only in a college auditorium!
- Many collaborators (NGOs, Universities, individuals) are integrated into the monitoring program via direct funding (i.e., contracts, purchase orders, agreements) for specific monitoring tasks, which integrates both participation and coordination, and ensures timely data delivery, analyses and dissemination to managers and the collaborative community.
- The Collaborative helps us deliver key messages allowing the public to hear from others besides the Forest Service. Whether it be convening public meetings or planning the upcoming Living with Fire in Northern New Mexico Workshop on November 16, 2013. Their work and support has helped us build advocacy for the project.
- Working with Walatowa Timber Industries and increasing our capacities to utilize the low value wood.

Challenges:

- We started as an informal group before the legislation that met at least quarterly to discuss fence-free management of the east side of the Jemez River basin. We were Not a collaborative before the Act, we weren't an independent external group, and had no strong relationship with the larger group of people interested in the SWJM. But, really raised expectations.
- Having two distinct land managers is a challenge with two different agency cultures. Different governance, different NEPA process. Coordination can be challenging.
- Agency turn-over (NEPA Planner, Deputy, and Supervisor) changed how the collaborative efforts work (or don't) and the collaborators interact (or don't), and there are less open discussions between USFS and collaborative. Was a turning point, doing away with quarterly meetings?
- One of reasons quarterly meetings were stopped was concern that they were a violation of FACA. Every forest has a different interpretation of how FACA relates to collaboration. The USFS and the collaborative are still trying to find our way through the FACA question during NEPA.
- Also with agency turn-over, it took time to redevelop relationships and for new personnel to get up to speed. Meanwhile, a new group that was informal and external to the FS kept on showing up. It wasn't an established collaborative that had members that felt represented; in other words, we were not chartered as a group or the 4 that showed up as designated reps.
- USFS has now stepped outside its comfort zone to reach out to the collaborative. It's important that Joe is leading this since he is a line officer so commitments can be made to collaborative.
- SFNF hasn't invested in collaborative with project funding or forest/Caldera funding for money to pay for a collaborative collaborative liaison or coordination position. "We see lots of actions that need doing, but don't have the capacity to do them."
- The Forest Service Steering Team has other duties and responsibilities beyond the SWJ Restoration Project ie. Deputy Forest Supervisor, Jemez District Ranger, Ecosystem Staff Officer, as such, since June, we've experienced:
 - 6 weeks of high intensity fire activity
 - Focused post-fire BAER work
 - The search and memorials for fallen fire figherToken Adams
 - Severe flooding in mid-September
 - Government shutdown

The government shut down contributed to slowing progress on the draft SWJM DEIS as many specialists involved in writing the draft were involved in the above activities. We had to cancel meetings with our

Collaborative, cancelled public field trips and cancelled a 6,000 acre prescribed burn.

Emerging Issues:

- How to incorporate the collaborative group, the monitoring efforts, and adaptive management/"closing the feedback loop" in the implementation?
- Does collaboration need to be "re-set," pull in new partners, does the USFS need to reevaluate their role?
- Formalizing the collaborative may address some of our challenges and it needs to be brought up and kept on the radar.
- Emerging issues due to pending listing of the Jemez Mountain Salamander and Mexican Jumping Mouse.
- It's not a matter of if, but when the next wildfire will occur. How do we deal with that when it happens?