

Uncompahgre Plateau Project
January 20, 2005
9:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Norwood Fire House north of Main Street
Norwood, Colorado

Objective/Purpose

Purpose of the meeting: The purpose of this meeting was to complete steps 2–4 of the planning process outlined below, with the goal of providing input to the resource staff.

1. Identify the major vegetation types and develop a landscape-level profile of the HRVs in each of them (i.e. quantify the ranges of patch sizes and seral stages).
2. Develop a list of the mosaic drivers/modifiers based on management objectives (i.e. WUI)
3. Prioritize the drivers and modifiers for areas with overlap
4. Develop specific mosaic profiles for these objectives
5. Compare the presumed HRV ranges with existing conditions (seral stage/patch size)
6. Identify areas with departures from the HRV
7. Develop a proposed action to be analyzed through the NEPA process

Objectives:

The group will develop a list of management drivers and modifiers that are affected by vegetation mosaic and develop mosaic profiles for the drivers. This information will be used by the resource specialists to complete planning steps 5–6 above, and identify proposed actions.

Presentations:

Maggie McCaffrey: Quick overview of the UP history and purpose and update on current status. For more information on the UP, please visit the UP website at www.UPproject.org.

Amanda Clements: Overall review of the process and scope of this analysis. For copies of Amanda's presentation, contact Amanda at amanda_Clements@co.blm.gov

John Moore: Overview of landscape in the area and discussion of HRV.

After the presentations the group proceeded to:

- A facilitated brainstorming of management issues in the SW quadran
- Identification and prioritization of management “drivers” – issues affected by vegetation that have highest priority (those driven by law, regulation or public safety) and will be considered at a large scale when planning for vegetation mosaics.

DRIVERS:

- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) & Powerlines
- Sage Grouse
- Lynx
- HRV – Forest/Rangeland Health
- Identification and prioritization of modifiers – issues affected by vegetation but not mandated by law or public safety. These will be considered individually at a project level and may modify treatment design within the HRV to accommodate specific issues of concern.

1ST ORDER MODIFIERS:

- Elk winter range – distribution / migration patterns – in the pinyon-juniper
- Deer winter range – health and survival of fawns – in the pinyon-juniper
- Livestock grazing – forage improvement
- Migration corridors elk and lynx.
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).
- NC designation.

2nd ORDER MODIFIERS:

- Water distribution and management – municipal – water quality.
- Fisheries/riparian areas.

Presentations:

Dan Huisjen: Dan walked the audience through the process used in the south east quadrant for developing mosaic profiles for WUI. (see below)

Major focus:

- mapping criteria for various drivers and differences between HRV Mosaics and Driver Mosaics which are designed to achieve more specific results

Discussed WUI mosaic with specific examples of using the WUI Driver modified by the Deer Winter Range Modifier.

Showed photographs of actual implementation and discussed various tools, ownerships, and funding/labor contributions.

Discussion of how the WUI areas were refined from '1 mile' width to priority treatment areas (includes Powerlines now).

1. Primary influencing factors are density of development, vegetation type, aspect/slope, and fire occurrence
2. The importance of some primary factors caused them to be weighted higher than others, i.e. density of development (why we are treating) and vegetation type (what we are treating) were weighted higher than aspect/slope, and fire occurrence.
3. The relative risk level for each of these factors is broken into 3 fire risk levels: high, moderate, or low
4. The primary factors are then mapped by risk level using GIS, resulting in 4 layers of relative risk levels for weighted primary factors.
5. New polygons are then created which display a specific ranking (between 0.0 and 2.4).
6. Polygons were then grouped into 3 categories (low: 0–0.8. moderate: 0.8–1.6, and high:1.6–2.4).
7. Areas with a score of 1.6–2.4 were prioritized for treatment.

Group discussion of WUI:

- Where do powerlines rate as a fire risk level? High, Moderate, or Low? Probably High due to immense off-site impacts.
- There is a tremendous amount of SW aspect with slopes in the higher risk level within Iron Horse, does this need to be modified? May want to keep it the same as Spring Creek/Dry Creek effort so we can prioritize not only within a watershed but also between watersheds. Will analyze after first run.
- Is it a higher priority to treat an undeveloped but potentially dense subdivision over existing scattered development? This would be a case by case decision if both came out as High.

Group Discussion of Sage Grouse mapping

- Generally Craig Grother and John Moore felt that all of the sagebrush vegetation type within the Iron Horse planning area should be considered for the sage grouse mosaic.
- No resistance to this idea.
- May want to look at some of the currently forested areas and see if they have sagebrush or were originally sagebrush as well, particularly areas that were planted into plantations (were they once sagebrush?)
- For sagebrush areas discussed general sagebrush disturbance regime and resulting mosaic.
- For Sage Grouse driver mosaic discussed how the mosaic was skewed to the earlier seral stages to meet the needs of the sage grouse at various points in its lifecycle. Noted that some drivers might actually skew the need mosaic to the very sideboard of HRV or even out of HRV slightly in order to obtain specific objectives on some pieces of land.
- Need to utilize the San Miguel Basin Sage Grouse Conservation Plan to help in developing population specific mosaics.

Discussion of Lynx mapping

- Craig said we needed to go with that portion of the Lynx Analysis Unit that fell within the Iron Horse planning area, which is basically all the Spruce/Fir and Aspen in the planning area. Everyone agreed to this.

OTHER OUTCOMES:

INDICATORS/DEFINERS OF HEALTH:

- Invasive species
- Native plants
- Hydrology
- Biodiversity/ overall health of ecosystem processes.

TOOLS and IMPACTS:

Land uses that can be skillfully implemented to aid natural processes in affecting vegetation mosaic and enhancing ecological health.

- Prescribed fire use/ management.
- Planned grazing by livestock.

- Water distribution/management (water points).
- Planned logging.
- Mechanical and chemical vegetation treatments.

Other land uses that directly or indirectly impact vegetation mosaic and land health:

- Recreation
- Travel Management
- Oil and Gas Development

Group continued to discuss and clarify concepts addressed. Step 4 was not accomplished but we all felt the discussion was very important.

Assignments:

An interagency team of specialist will go back and work on Step 4 of the process and develop specific mosaic profiles for the management drivers (WUI/sage grouse/lynx). They will then develop a map with these management areas and then on the remaining landscape, compare the presumed HRV ranges with the existing conditions (seral stage/patch size) and identify areas with departures from the HRV.

Agenda for Next Meeting:

The group can reconvene to discuss:

- The vegetation mosaic profiles developed in the Jan.18–19 HRV meeting
- the “driver” mosaic profiles and their location on the landscape
- the areas of departure next step in planning