



STREAM MANAGEMENT PLANNING

PEER-LEARNING VIDEO CALL

April 14th, 2022

10:00 – 11:30am

Please [register](#) to receive the Zoom meeting link!

Join River Network, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Mountain Studies Institute, and the Boulder Watershed Collective in a conversation about integrating forest health into Stream Management Plans. Together we'll think through why it's important for SMPs to include an element of forest health, how to incorporate forest health into SMPs, and the benefits of doing so.

AGENDA

10:00 – 10:05 a.m. Welcome, Agenda Overview and Zoom Logistics
Stacy Beagh, Strategic by Nature/River Network Team

- Field Trip (July 7th & 8th, Steamboat)

10:05-10:15 a.m. Impromptu Introductions
Stacy Beagh, Strategic by Nature/River Network Team

Stacy's welcome included a verbal poll about hands-on topics to explore at the SMP field trip in Steamboat in July. Possible topics and votes are listed here: diversion infrastructure assessments (7), fluvial hazard zone mapping (6), R2CROSS flow evaluations (8), public-facing river scorecard efforts (5), and macroinvertebrate community monitoring (2).

10:15 – 11:25 a.m. Forest Health and SMPs
Statewide Forest Health Efforts (15 min)
Chris Sturm, Colorado Water Conservation Board

Chris gave a presentation on the State's Wildfire-Ready Watersheds initiative, which has significant overlap with stream management planning and watershed planning. The effort started last year and involves a statewide susceptibility analysis that produces a map showing the most susceptible HUC-12s in the state to wildfire impacts and develops a framework for communities that they can implement themselves, with CWCB reaching out to priority areas and promoting implementation of the framework. Contact Chris Sturm for the most current information about the Wildfire-Ready Watersheds Program.

Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Program (15 min)
Mandy Eskelson, Mountain Studies Institute
Seth Mason, Lotic Hydrological

Aaron and Mandy highlighted the tight association between forests and rivers, particularly in the southwest, and their efforts to integrate those areas even though the silos often exist for a reason. This integration led to the establishment of the Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership, and an effort to integrate forest collaboration with the SMP process. They worked with Lotic Hydrological on Phase I and Phase II of their effort, with Phase II including characterizations of current and future hydrologic regimes, ecological integrity, recreational uses, and agricultural infrastructure. Exploration of the forest health nexus involved identifying and mapping high-risk drainages for



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potential impacts from wildfire activity and sediment delivery hazards to water infrastructure and high-value aquatic or riparian areas. More information on these efforts is available in [Mandy's slides](#) and this [storymap](#).

Fishbowl Problem Solving Discussion (30 min)

As a group, we'll help Maya MacHamer, Boulder Watershed Collective think through how to incorporate elements of forest health into the Boulder Creek SMP.

Maya provided some background on forest planning and SMP development in the Boulder Creek watershed. She explained that while they are in the early stages of the SMP process, they have already done a lot of work related to forest planning (a lot of data being collected, a strong community awareness of post-fire impacts) but the two efforts are happening separately. They are really interested in the SMP as an opportunity to integrate headwaters and agricultural areas into a unified planning effort.

Maya brought up the idea of increased streamflows as a result of wildfire mitigation. Aaron, Chris, and Seth all raised concerns about this approach, reminding the group that water quantity is a very complex calculation and that there are significant challenges to linking forest thinning treatments to changes in hydrologic regime behavior. It is critical to be cautious about setting this expectation, and it is much more important to focus on enhancing and protecting ecosystem health and function.

Seth suggested first looking at high-value ecosystem attributes and important infrastructure, and then doing an overlay analysis on how these areas might be impacted by an upstream wildfire. Mandy added that while the WEP has collected a large amount of data and prioritized projects, the projects that end up moving forward are those that have a solid project proponent.

Stephen Brandt inquired about the reality of doing assessment work in wilderness areas if you are unable to actually do projects in those areas. Aaron said it's still worthwhile to conduct desktop/GIS analyses but that Stephen is correct and work can't be done in wilderness areas. Chris added that in advance of a fire is a good time to be talking to local forest service staff who may be able to find some grey areas as to what you can/can't do under that type of management. It is worthwhile to do some level of assessment about what's coming even if you may not be able to work in the headwaters (for example, early warning systems or alluvial fan exit strategies).

Sarah asked about the water quality component and wondered whether legacy pollutants from historical hard rock mining in headwaters areas are part of the assessment process. Chris pointed to the data preparedness component of the state's wildfire-ready watersheds program (e.g., data on active drainageways through mine tailings). Maya spoke about the BWC's work on projects to lessen fire severity from mine areas. Mandy informed the group that macroinvertebrate monitoring results



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after the 416 fire show that treatment of mining areas is helping: while metals concentrations have not yet decreased much, macroinvertebrate community composition is recovering.

Seth introduced a quick thought experiment to the group: imagine asking your stakeholders if they knew a fire above something they care about was going to occur in 3 months, what would they do? This allows you to focus on learning about the community's values first. It also helps to avoid difficult broad-scale projects. You don't need to start with a detailed, full-blown assessment to initiate good conversations, develop project ideas, or even implement a project.

11:25 - 11:30 a.m. Wrap-Up/Adjourn

Stacy Beagh, Strategic by Nature

- [Evaluation](#)
- 2022 Peer Learning Schedule
 - July 7th and 8th: Steamboat Springs field trip
 - August 18th: Peer Call
 - Early October: In-person workshop, in conjunction with SCWC

Additional Resources – Check them out!

- [CWCB white paper on forest health](#)
- [Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership Environmental and Recreational Needs Assessment Storymap](#)
- [Sediment Source and Storage Study for Disaster Planning \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- [2022 River Rally – registration is open!](#)
- [Join our online community here!](#)