**Cragin Watershed Protection Project (CWPP) stakeholder interview summary**

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**Background**

In August 2015, CWPP stakeholders were interviewed, primarily by phone, regarding their thoughts about the collaborative process, fuels reduction efforts, key issues and availability to participate in the CWPP planning process. This synthesis is the result of those conversations, organized by general theme, with 17 individual stakeholders.

**Knowledge of the area**

* Ranged from never having seen the reservoir to people who have lived and recreated in the local community for generations.
* **What do you value most about the Cragin area or the Mogollon Rim Ranger District in general?**
* A functioning watershed that produces high quality water
* Sustainable water availability and watershed
	+ Maintaining in-stream flows – quality and quantity
* Recreation
	+ Hiking trails
	+ Motorized and non-motorized travel
	+ Hunting
	+ Boating
* Wildlife, especially T&E and riparian-based species
	+ Mexican Spotted Owl, Little Colorado River Spinedace
	+ Elk
	+ Important bird area (IBA)
* Habitat for wildlife
	+ Riparian areas
	+ Canyons and draws – high elevation riparian areas
* Aesthetics
* Keeping the forest and local communities healthy with Firewise work
* Available timber products
* **Do you have any concerns/ideas about specific issues relating to fuels reduction work that has occurred elsewhere in the watershed?**
* **Fuels reduction project** vs. **forest** **restoration** –
	+ Terminology matters-
		- “fuels reduction is a method to reach restoration objectives”
	+ Treatments should have a restorative element (open spaces, meadows, natural fire regime)
	+ Stakeholders had questions:
		- Does “fuels reduction” call for more/better funding/grants?
		- Does “forest restoration” insight potential legal issues with conservation/environmental groups and is the planning process longer?
		- Why an EA versus and EIS?
	+ Maintenance in 10 years (recognition that going in once isn’t enough)
* Speed of getting work done on this project versus other forest fuels/restoration projects – would like to see tangible outcomes of acres treated (from the industry side as well) versus more talk and meetings
	+ Likely that the treatment of mixed conifer will slow the process
* Pre-commercial thinning that could use volunteer efforts to minimize the dollars spent
* Maintaining quality downstream flow for native biodiversity
	+ Minimal soil disturbance while thinning
	+ Buffering riparian areas
* Timing of treatments
	+ Smoke in local communities
	+ Hunting season overlap
	+ High volume recreation week/weekends
* Invasive species (crawfish, mussel) concerns
* Roads- utilize conservative approach and active obliteration post project
* Utilize existing research publications regarding treatments in Important Bird Areas-*Mogollon Rim Snowmelt Draws*
* Coordinate with the USFWS for owl habitat treatments and monitoring
* Scale – current forest inventories may be too broad for industry, finer resolution needed
* Cragin location may be challenging for current timber processing infrastructure
* **What have been your experiences with collaborative processes (both good and challenging)**
* Most stakeholders interviewed have been involved in some sort of collaborative process
	+ Honesty is better than making everyone happy
	+ Good level of trust with partners- “I trust people smarter than me”
	+ Concerns about environmental groups/wildlife protection groups have too much pull
	+ Avoid the dominating personality running things/causing controversy on the stakeholder end of things
	+ Many stakeholders are experiencing what they called “collaboration fatigue”
* **What would be some positive, meaningful outcomes of this collaborative?**
* Have an overarching group of stakeholders with time and expertise and within that framework have smaller focused working groups
	+ Having folks involved that want to be there, not assigned to be there
* A timely plan for getting timber out of the forest
* Finer scaled forest inventory data to inform contracting, and elicit better industry response
* Utilize lessons learned from other forest restoration projects (4Fri)
* Speed, efficiency, and minimizing controversy
* Transparency from the agencies and organizations involved
	+ Early availability of project documents for stakeholder review –project website would be utilized by most stakeholders
	+ Utilize a trusted “neutral liaison” to keep them up to speed during project planning
	+ Timely engagement of stakeholders- at key project planning stages when input is most needed.
* **Increased communication & education**
	+ Maintain a positive and informed public throughout the project
		- When will the treatments happen/smoke
		- Wildlife as a consideration
		- How treatments affect reservoir levels
	+ More information about the prescribed burning process in general was requested by few stakeholders
	+ Work on the ground and follow up, including the “younger” generation
		- Environmental education opportunities are important
* **What are key issues that should be discussed in a collaborative planning process for this project?**
* Make sure that industry/economic representatives are involved in order to make sure there is efficacy in carrying out the on-the-ground work.
	+ Understand what industry needs to grow
* Relationship of Cragin fuels reduction within the 4FRI footprint.
* Inclusion of all parties – “East” side and “West” side, seasonal residents and grazing permitees
* Interview potential litigants.
* Develop purpose and need jointly with stakeholders, or have a working version with stakeholder input
* Have a bounded conversations, not open ended, which result in project moving forward
* Using best available science to determine watershed condition
* Treat canyons and riparian areas using best available science
* For efficiency, some stakeholders suggested streamlining the silviculture and prescribed fire element and “rolling the rest” (meadow restoration, smaller embedded projects) into the next 4Fri EIS planning.
	+ Others felt all aspects of forest restoration should be included in the CWPP footprint

**For more information on CWPP please visit these websites:**

**National Forest Foundation Project website**

* [**https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/southernrockies/cragin**](https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/southernrockies/cragin)

**Coconino National Forest**

* <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/coconino/CWPP>

**Salt River Project**

* [www.Srpnet.com/forests](http://www.Srpnet.com/forests)