

Zuni Mountain Landscape Collaborative

Meeting of the Collaborative

November 12th, 2015

Albuquerque Fire Department Training Academy

11500 Sunset Gardens Road Southwest, Albuquerque, NM

Meeting notes

Discussion: What is the Zuni Mountain Landscape (ZML)?

- It is a physical landscape as well as the communities that use the landscape (recreation, tribal, residents etc.)
- Defined geographically by mountain range, aquifer recharge zones, and is watershed based.
- Does the ZML include Mount Taylor?
 - Should there be a Mount Taylor Collaborative as well? Yes, probably and both collaboratives could join together when needed on larger efforts.
- The ZML should connect with the current Mt. Taylor Landscape Team (a group of USFS employees working on Plan Revision on the Mt. Taylor Ranger District).
- All agencies are a part of the landscape (state land, state forestry, BLM, etc.)
- The landscape includes Bluewater Lake and other communities.
- The Zuni Mountain Landscape is a cultural landscape that contains tribal cultural properties that are important to Acoma Pueblo, Zuni Pueblo, other Pueblos, and the Navajo Nation.

Water quality monitoring

Data gaps

- The UNM cost-share agreement with the USFS ends in December. This is a very mutually beneficial agreement that should be renewed if possible.
- A handheld meter for measuring turbidity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature is needed. The Forest Stewards Guild should purchase one instead of borrowing a UNM device.
- Data analysis of continuous water quality data using Aquarius software was being handled by UNM. The freeware R could be used, but needs to have a skilled coder to operate it.
- Snow pack is only being measured east of the continental divide. While snow-water equivalent is being measured west of the divide, it does not replace snow pack data.
- Biological inventory (macro-invertebrates, diatoms, etc.)
- Spring inventory and conditions (post-December 2015).

Additional partnerships

- U.S. Geological Survey
- UNM biology department and Earth and Planetary Sciences Department
- Other students
- Coca Cola (funding)

- New Mexico State University

Restoration and resilience in the Zuni Mountains: guiding principles

Issue and concerns

- Excessive cutting of large diameter trees
- Increase habitat for wildlife
- Develop a fire resistant landscape for the future
- Prioritize F.S. lands that are adjacent to private communities to make them more fire resistant.
- Climate change
- LEED and U.S. Green Building certification does not recognize the good forestry happening in the Zuni Mountains
- Increase snowpack (a goal).
- Increase access for mountain bikers.
- Potential negative impacts to wildlife and soils and hydrology as a result of thinning and prescribed fire.
- Preserve and enhancing biodiversity.
- Preserve and enhancing ecosystem utility.
- Increase landscape resilience as a restoration goal.
- Education on the cost, value, or balance of harvesting larger trees.
- Start with problem identification and see where it leads.
- Develop “green” label for marketing and promotion of wood products that come out of the Zuni Mountains.
- Increase USFS prep and capacity to accomplish work (monitoring, implementation, NEPA etc.).
- Identify tree disease and damage agents and share with the collaborative.
- Prepare for post-fire recovery of burned landscapes.
- Establish a plan for salvage logging in the event of a wildfire.
- Make restoring ecological processes the goal of restoration.
- Seek new sources of funding.
- Preserve water quality.

Solutions, data gaps, and ideas

- How do we define “excessive” in regards to cutting large trees?
- Develop a verification or tracking system for cutting trees >18” in diameter.
- Identify how many large trees have been cut.
- Take an adaptive management approach.
- Develop a large tree retention strategy.
- Where is the old growth? Conduct an inventory.
- The Cibola NF is considering developing a restoration strategy.
- Evaluate and update the marking guide.
- Organize a field trip with mountain bikers to establish GPS points of interesting forestry and fire ecology sites and to bring more attention to the Zuni Mountains and the CFLR.

Next steps

- Develop a series of alternative actions to cutting large trees.
- Pursue an adaptive strategy.
- Conduct field visits (visit old growth, marked stands, unmarked stands).
- Discuss, update, and adjust the marking guide.
- Determine it is possible to develop a report to:
 - Map old growth
 - Characterize existing conditions
 - Characterize project actions and effects
- Schedule a January meeting of the Collaborative to elect co-chairs.
- Create project maps and bring them to meetings.
- Organize a tour of Mt. Taylor Manufacturing sawmill.
- Make GTR-310 available: bring copies to 11.19.15 meeting and post online (complete).
- Post the Bluewater EIS and Record of Decision online (complete).
- Create fact sheets about restoration guidelines, wood utilization etc. (in process).

General comments on the collaborative

- Reaching a quorum at meetings may be a challenge given how dispersed partners are from Gallup to Santa Fe.
- Does the Collaborative need to elaborate on the role of science?
- Does the Collaborative need to elaborate on the role of co-chairs to “throw-out” scientific arguments as being irrelevant?
- Should the ZMLC form a science committee to evaluate what science the collaborative endorses, uses to inform decisions and recommendations?
- Potential sub-groups include: science, wood utilization, water resources, funding, vegetation.

Next steps

- Explore a call-in function for meetings or use webinars for some meetings or for people who are unable to attend in person.
- Complete sign-on period by 12.15.15.
- Develop a strategy for sign-on outreach.

Thinking beyond 2019...

- Pursue special designation for Little Water Canyon?
- Get range interests more involved (hunting, tribes etc.).
- Engage Albuquerque Wildlife Federation.
- Coca Cola has funding related to water resources.
- Host informational meeting about the Zuni CFLR in Albuquerque.
- Celebrating our successes to raise the profile of the Zuni CFLR and ZMLC.
- Tie-in with the Mount Taylor Landscape Team that is working on the Cibola National Forest plan revision.

- Contact KUNM science café about having a show on the Zuni Mountain landscape and CFLR.