

Zuni Mountains Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
Tribal Partnership Meetings
Notes

Background

The landscape restoration strategy embodied in the Zuni Mountains CFLRP is essential to accelerating the Cibola's restoration efforts while stabilizing local wood manufacturing industries and creating jobs. Planning at the multiple watershed level, the Zuni Mountains landscape strategy approaches forest restoration and economic development at a scale that achieves meaningful ecological, social, and economic results across jurisdictional boundaries. The project plan identifies a land base anchored by prioritized national forest system land in need of restoration and adjacent high priority tribal, state, and private land holdings.

Tribal participation is essential to ensure program success. The Tribal Partnership meetings are a critical tool to encourage tribal participation. In an effort to establish meaningful, on-going relationships and the development of future collaboratives, the Forest Stewards Guild hosted a series of meetings in early May of 2016 with representatives from the Cibola National Forest and five tribes directly impacted by the program (Baahaali Navajo Chapter, Ramah Navajo Chapter, Pueblo of Zuni, Pueblo of Laguna, and Pueblo of Acoma). Below are the notes from those meetings.

Gallup, New Mexico
May 3, 2016

Pre-meetings discussion

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant, Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer), and Forest Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as Facilitator.

- The purpose of the Partnership is establishing relationships for on-going and long term collaboration.
- It was suggested that Churchrock and Thoreau be encouraged to participate in the Tribal Partnership going forward.
- It was stated that it is likely that Marino has no interest in participating in the Partnership.
- Torreon may be interested.
- It was suggested that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Eastern Navajo Agency be invited to future meetings. Contact information for appropriate representatives was provided.
- Forest Service staff reported that NEPA for the "Puerco" area is their next big project that will continue through the end of the CFLRP. Early involvement by tribes is welcome. There will be a FS meeting in a couple weeks to discuss next steps.
 - There is an opportunity for tribes to provide input to the design of the Forest Service's Cultural Resource Survey.
 - The CFLRP is being implemented in two stages – Bluewater is underway now (30,000 acres – burning and thinning), and Puerco is next.

Baahaali Navajo Chapter

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant; Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer), Forest Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), and Baahaali representatives (Gloria Skeetdecruz and Guarena Skeets), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as facilitator.

- Baahaali reported never having formal discussions about their forested lands, and those adjacent to their Chapter. They are currently working on a revision to their Community Land Use Plan. And, they participated in the 2013 update to the McKinley County Community Wildfire Protection Plan with the Forest Stewards Guild.
- They are very concerned about wildlife protection. The 10-year Stewardship Agreement the Forest Service has with the National Wild Turkey Foundation was discussed.
- The Chapter is aware of, and a part of, the greater Zuni CFLRP Collaborative, which has a contract with Mt. Taylor Machine (Milan, NM) for utilizing by-products from the thinning projects.
- The newly developing Zuni Trail System will go through Baahaali land. Contact information was provided to the Tribe for further information.
- Baahaali has a Youth Corp working on trail restoration and land conservation. Opportunities exist for expanded collaborative programming. Annually, the Chapter receives funds from the Navajo Nation to employ youth. They currently have three different employment programs established. They would like to expand their land and watershed conservation program. The Forest Stewards Guild manages a Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) crew out of the Mt. Taylor Ranger District that may be available for collaborative programming. Student internships and Americorps were discussed as other opportunities to engage youth.
- Baahaali is interested in any job creation opportunities available to Chapter members.
- Access to traditional plants (for medicine and natural dyes) is a concern because they have become difficult to locate and are in limited quantities due to forest overgrowth. Forest Service staff encouraged Baahaali to share with them the plants of interest and priority areas to encourage plant protection and propagation going forward.
- The Chapter has concerns regarding Fort Wingate area restrictions, however it was agreed this is outside the scope of the Zuni CFLRP and could not be addressed by this Collaborative.
- Access to firewood is an on-going concern. A lot of poaching occurs on federal lands, mostly because of limited access to permits. After a brief discussion, the Forest Service offered to set up an auxiliary office on-site to sell permits.
- Baahaali has established an ALERT (Authorized Local Emergency Response Team). However, emergency egress issues with neighboring tribes and federal land managers persist. It was reported that some roads are completely inaccessible (e.g. there are large boulders blocking 191).
- Concern was expressed regarding protection of sacred sites. In order for Forest Service to ensure site protection, staff need to know locations. This is a delicate subject, which requires further discussion to ensure locations remain secret, but sites protected.

Ramah Navajo Chapter

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant; Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer), Forest

Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), and Ramah representatives (Mike Henio, Costley Beaver, and Yin May Lee), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as facilitator.

- Ramah Chapter expressed concern regarding access to forest products for traditional use, specifically logs for Hogans and Oak for shades and arbors. Permits are especially difficult to acquire because of distance to Forest Service locations.
 - Forest Service staff described the possibility of establishing an auxiliary permit office in a more convenient location, similar to what was discussed with Baahaali. They also reviewed the “Traditional Free Use Permit” which can be issued, on an annual basis, to a requesting tribe for certain approved uses.
 - The Ramah Navajo Chapter is requesting for individual tribal member permits – VS – permits for requesting Tribes.
 - Ramah representatives described how tribal members are not clear on permit requirements for medicinal plants – (i.e. timeframe for approval, where to apply, cost, etc.), and are concerned about climate change effects on plants. The latter was highlighted as a potential BIA grant opportunity.
 - Forest Service staff reported that a new directive, Forest Product Collection Policy for Traditional Use, will be published soon and will speak to all of the above concerns.
 - Ramah representatives reported that their Chapter is working on a mapping project with elders to identify medicinal plant names and locations in Navajo. It was agreed that this information would be incredibly useful to the Forest Service when planning future restoration projects.
- Another area of concern is road access. Currently Oso Ridge access is cut off, requiring new/different vehicles for access. While it was agreed that part of this issue falls under the Travel Management Rule, and not the Zuni CFLRP Collaborative, road issues regarding access to forest materials for traditional use (e.g. hunting and medicinal plant gathering) does. Continued access to traditional areas is essential to the Chapter.
- Youth training is an ongoing important initiative by the Chapter. There is a 4H type program (sheep, goats, cows, pigs) with new grant to expand to forestry. Ramah Navajo is working to expand the 4H program to go beyond sheep, goats, cows, and pigs to encourage youth to pursue careers in agriculture and forestry. There is an intergenerational relationship building project (hairbrushes) and a sheep wool camp this summer, which focuses on traditional dyes. There is an Ancestral Lands Project – similar to AmeriCorps, working on land restoration, and funds are in hand to support a summer youth program. Significant opportunity for collaboration exists.
- Job creation and addressing the high rate of unemployment on the Chapter is a great concern.
- The Zuni Mountain Trails project represents an opportunity for collaboration and training. NEPA is currently underway. The local County is responsible for maintaining trails and has funds to pay workers. Contact information was provided to Chapter representatives for further information.
- Ramah Navajo is concerned about the low amounts of restoration work being accomplished in the Zuni Mountains. More forest thinning should be getting done.
- A brief discussion was held regarding drought and its effects on livestock grazing. Currently livestock graze year-round on reservation lands. There is a clear need for rotation and access to FS lands to expand grazing area. This is an issue that Ramah would like to further discuss with the District Ranger.
- The FS has expressed interest in establishing a Participating Agreement with Ramah Navajo Chapter to formalize their future cooperation on projects of mutual interest and benefit.

- The BIA RTRL (Reserve Treaty Rights Lands) funding opportunity was discussed as an available resource to accomplish restoration treatments on adjacent non-tribal federal lands.

Pueblo of Zuni

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant; Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer), Forest Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), and Zuni representatives (Kirk Bemis, Hydrologist; Mark Harrington, Conservation Program; Nelson Luna, Fish & Wildlife Program; Andres Cheama, Water Rights Program; Tammy Parker, Environmental Protection Program), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as facilitator.

- Zuni has a 16 person thinning crew. They just completed a 495 acre parcel. It is a new crew and they are developing their skills, experience, and resume. There is interest in splitting the crew to have half work off reservation. Zuni is also supporting another two tribal members who have been trained by, and work under, the Southwest Conservation Corp. These skilled workers represent a big opportunity for Zuni to work in partnership with the FS on tribally sensitive federally managed lands.
- Zuni has FY 15-16 RTRL funding (Parcel 1 Ft. Wingate Spring 2017). This funding can serve as match for the Zuni crew to do restoration work on tribally sensitive areas as part of the upcoming Puerco portion of the Zuni CFLRP.
- Zuni representatives are especially interested in watershed restoration in order to protect the Zuni Bluehead Sucker fish.
 - Concern was expressed regarding the newly developing Tampico Springs Ranch sub-division which is slated to drill up to 100 new residential wells.
 - Additional concern was expressed about a new Monastery to be developed in the same region.
 - Nutria watershed monitoring represents an opportunity for collaboration.
 - Roads and sediment are also of concern especially with new construction.
- Zuni reps queried FS representatives regarding plans to monitor wells on newly acquired federal lands.
- Zuni reps discussed long-standing concerns regarding on-going water rights issues by upstream users that impact their lands and water.
- Zuni representatives identified a problem with “green cutting” and forest product “leakage” off reservation. They would like to learn how to improve monitoring and compliance. This issue is a good opportunity for further collaboration.
 - Zuni is considering closing access to some sensitive areas in order to let land rest.
 - Zuni offers tribal members a permit for removing material off reservation.
- A discussion was held regarding access to forest products for traditional use. The Traditional Free Use permit represents an opportunity for the Pueblo. The FS is open to setting aside specified areas for leaving forest material for tribal members to pick up (posts, poles, boughs, firewood, etc.). Reasonable access to those areas is of concern.
- In general, access to firewood is a growing concern as there is already too much pressure on Zuni lands now. They would like their tribal members to access adjacent federal lands but getting a permit is a burden.

- The Zuni Heritage and Preservation Office and the Zuni Cultural Resource Advisory Team (working under the Zuni Cultural Resource Enterprise) identify cultural resources. There are limitations to working alongside these entities, and funding is an issue.
- A discussion was held regarding effective management of adjacent private lands. Concern for education/outreach and stewardship of these lands was raised. A number of resources for private lands, which fall under the State's jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, the following, were identified:
 - Community education/outreach – State and Forest Stewards Guild (e.g. Talking Talons project);
 - Youth education/training – YCC programs;
 - Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas has a partnership program for tribal youth;

Grants, New Mexico

May 4, 2016

Pueblo of Laguna

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant; Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer; Ian Fox, Program Manager), Forest Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), and Laguna representative (Adam Ringia, Director Environmental & Natural Resources), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as facilitator.

- Laguna has a nine member thinning crew working on Pueblo lands with BIA funding. The Pueblo is interested in continuing education for the crew in order for them to achieve higher level certifications (some are going for 'B' rated faller this summer and there is the desire to get at least one crew member 'C' faller rated).
 - Mt Taylor RD has a need for seasonal workers to assist with multiple tasks including monitoring, tree marking, etc. The opportunity exists to sign a multi-year (5 years) umbrella Agreement with the Pueblo. An Agreement would lead to diverse training opportunities for Pueblo crew members.
 - Laguna is considering getting their crew fire trained via the BIA.
 - Laguna expressed interest in exposing their crew to any training opportunities including stand exams, marking, etc. (some training can piggyback off of other tribes' crew training).
- A FS representative indicated his desire to morph the Zuni CFLRP Collaborative and Tribal Partnership into a larger geographic collaborative.
- It was noted that the FS maps are out of date with regard to Pueblo of Laguna lands.
 - Reportedly, the BLM has the correct and current land shape.
- The Laguna representative expressed overall concern about access to and protection of tribally sensitive lands from Mt. Taylor all the way to Chaco Canyon.
 - Laguna's priority is for the FS to restore the federally managed side of all tribal boundary lands, especially the Eastern slope of Mt. Taylor (Caldera side).
 - There is significant concern about mistletoe growth. Laguna is addressing the issue on their side of the fence, but need the federal side to be equally addressed.

- Laguna’s Tribal Historic Preservation Office has a team of seven, however there is no on-staff archaeologist. Instead, they pay a contractor when those services are required.
- Laguna is not yet convinced about the benefits of RTRL funding because it is limited to non-tribal lands and as a condition of RTRL, they would be required to give up BIA funding for treating their own lands. A brief discussion was held regarding other funding opportunities, including NRCS, and others, which are of interest to the Tribe.
- Per Laguna, their TCP is in place, and sacred site protection is always a great concern.
- Laguna already has an annual Traditional Use botanical permit with the FS, so that is not an issue.
- Laguna reported no access to material issues.
- The Tribe has instituted a moratorium on uranium mining on tribal lands.
- Laguna water rights have not been adjudicated and extreme water concerns persist. The towns of Grants and Milan, and many residential users are upstream.
- Laguna does not have a youth program, per se. They do not have dedicated trained staff and there are restrictions on accepting volunteer trainers (must have job description and pass drug test) which limits opportunities. There is no current connection between the Environmental & Natural Resources Department and the area high school.
 - However, this summer Laguna will hold their first natural resources camp, as a trial initiative. Opportunities exist for partnering with FS and Forest Stewards Guild for programming.
 - The Laguna Development Corp (LDC) is responsible for youth programming – but their focus has been on the casinos and the revenues they generate. There is no connection between Environment & Natural Resources with the LDC.
- The BIA is working to update Laguna’s forest plan. It should be complete in mid to late 2017. A hazardous fuels plan from the BIA is current.
- The BLM is evaluating a proposal to establish a 66 mw solar plant adjacent to Laguna lands.

Pueblo of Acoma

Present: Forest Service representatives (Alvin Whitehair, Mt Taylor District Ranger; Shawn Martin, Silviculturist; Jeanne Dawson, Timber Management Assistant; Cynthia Benedict, Tribal Liaison Officer; Ian Fox, Program Manager; Virginia Yazzie Ashley, Range Management), Forest Stewards Guild (Matt Piccarello, Community Forestry Coordinator), and Acoma representatives (Randall Vicente, Shirley Piqosa), with Naomi Engelman of QB, LLC as facilitator.

- Acoma representatives are both new to the program (just over one year). They have successfully completed several small projects on Pueblo lands and would like to collaborate and work with other tribes.
- Acoma does not have their own restoration crew and would like to develop one. Currently, they contract out thinning work.
- The RTRL funding that Acoma has allows for a five person crew.
 - Acoma is interested in working with SIPI for training
 - They have people interested in training and crew opportunities
- Acoma has Workforce Investment Act funding for a summer youth program – last year they did tree marking, and other restoration activities.

- They have a Southwest Conservation Corp crew and supervision already funded for this summer, but they are looking for project site and project to work on.
- June 17 – Acoma Agriculture Day
 - An Invitation to attend was extended and the FS and Forest Guild are welcome to have an informational table.
- The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) under Damian Garcia is responsible for all historic preservation and archaeological work.
- Acoma is interested in obtaining a list of traditional plants of interest for medicinal and other uses.
 - Roof Rock school in AZ has book of plants of interest, Navajo Community College may also have.
 - A brief discussion ensued regarding protecting species of significance immediately for the Bluewater phase of the Zuni CFLRP already underway.
 - Southwest Conservation Corp is reportedly working on site for a seed banking project. They are looking for an adequate facility (or funding to construct a facility) to store seeds. Aaron, the former YCC leader is leading this initiative.
- Acoma would like to talk to other tribes to make sure everyone is on the same page about how to treat certain species.
- Access to traditional materials – specifically Aspen for drum making (prefer dead and down, about 18-20”) – is an immediate need. Acoma is aware of the federal permit requirements and options. They also need Spruce for ladder making (currently two groups have made requests).
- Acoma requested that any archaeological sites that are discovered on federally managed lands are reported to their HPO.
 - FS representatives reported that everything they discover is uploaded onto the State’s database.
 - FS representatives expressed interest in help train Acoma tribal members to increase tribal knowledge.
- Acoma is preparing to do NEPA on their land and would like help.
- Acoma requested exclusive Mt. Taylor and Zuni Mountains access for special occasions (usually very early in the morning).
 - The FS can issue a closure order, however, they need two weeks lead time.
 - A brief discussion was held about potential access even if the forest is closed (possible waiver).
- Acoma is considering uses of RTRL funds: restoration work on adjacent BLM lands or work on Park Service lands near Malpais.
- Acoma is interested in learning about best practices for burning on shared boundaries.
 - State Forestry and the Forest Stewards Guild has publications available.
 - FS representatives stated that they are not interested in forcing their practices on any other entity, but that the other entity determines what is best for their lands and people.
- Acoma has job vacancies in their forestry department including a Silviculturist and sawyers.
- Sept 2 is Acoma Feast Day and an invitation was extended to all.
- Concern was expressed about excessive trash on Mt Taylor and how to preserve and protect.
 - It was suggested that perhaps the affected tribes can collaborate to clean up.

Next steps, recurrent themes, and opportunities for future collaboration

- Accurate mapping of sacred sites, tribal lands, and traditional plant species is lacking. There is a balance between mapping and identifying sacred sites etc. with privacy concerns.
- Forest restoration represents an important economic opportunity both for tribes that have thinning crews established and tribes that are interested in starting crews. The Zuni Mountain Landscape Collaborative (ZMLC) has a role to play to make the connections between those with acres in need of treatment (federal and state land management agencies, private land owners etc.) and those with the capacity to treat them (tribal thinning crews, local contractors etc.).
- Traditional ecological knowledge of the location of culturally important plant species is a valuable resource that can be used to guide restoration prescriptions on federal, state and private lands as well as on tribal lands. An opportunity for collaboration exists to combine ongoing ecological monitoring efforts with monitoring for culturally important plants.
- To better facilitate obtaining fire wood permits, staff from the Mt. Taylor Ranger District will follow up with Baahaali Chapter officials to issue Forest Service permits from the chapter house.