



Meeting Minutes

Date: August 23, 2023
Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM MDT
Location: Microsoft Teams
Subject: USFS Lower South Vegetation Management EA – Draft Public Participation Plan Review (Contract #47QRAA22D006T)

ATTENDEES

Name	Organization	Email Address
Ryan Kolling	USFS	Ryan.kolling@usda.gov
Jim Gerleman	USFS	James.gerleman@usda.gov
Michelle Putz	USFS	Michelle.putz@usda.gov
Brian Banks (partial)	USFS	Brian.banks@usda.gov
Allison Haraminac	Consultant Team	Haraminac@pinyon-env.com
Benjamin Burns	Consultant Team	burns@pinyon-env.com
Katie Evans	Consultant Team	kevans@pinyon-env.com

INTRODUCTIONS

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- USFS Box Folder:
 - The project team will utilize a Box folder that USFS has set up for this project.
 - The NEPA project record folder should be used to upload and organize documents pertaining to the EA. The EIS and CE folders are not currently applicable. There are NEPA examples posted that can be a reference for this project.
 - Pinyon will maintain their own project record but will make weekly uploads (or other designated frequency) to the NEPA Project Record on Box.
 - There is also a Contract Management folder that houses some of the overarching documentation for the project, including the cultural resources Programmatic Agreement.
- Emergency Declaration:
 - USFS has received approval to use an emergency declaration for this project. From a NEPA perspective, this means that there is no requirement for an objection period and the EA is only required to evaluate the No Action and Proposed Action. However, additional

alternatives can be included if necessary. The EA will include an Alternatives Considered but Eliminated section.

- Multiple alternatives are not likely as the action is cut and dry. Jim indicated that the only potential additional alternative beyond the Proposed Action is perhaps a roadless option which Michelle and Brian both agreed is possible but not likely.
- Review of USFS Comments on Draft Public Participation Plan (PPP):
 - USFS will create a GIS folder on Box to provide the project area shapefile to address comments related to the geographic extent of the EA.
 - The Proposed Action and Purpose and Need are still pending from the U.S. Forest Service. Pinyon will need these to update the project description language in the PPP.
 - Several USFS comments pertained to “fire preparedness” language used in the Draft PPP. That language will be updated for consistency with the Purpose and Need and Proposed Action, once that is provided to Pinyon. Generally speaking, the focus will be on fuels reduction.
 - Comment methods/platforms will include only written comments provided via a comment box at the in-person scoping/public meetings or via the website/CARA form; there is no central email address for comment purposes. During the virtual scoping/public meetings, the chat feature will not be used for comment submission. The public can use the chat feature to submit questions, but if a member of the public wants a question to be formally submitted as a comment, they must use the website/CARA form.
 - Announcements/invitations for scoping:
 - The USFS will host project documents and announcements on its own website (Pinyon will not create a new website for the project). The USFS will need a few days’ advance notice for posting materials on their website.
 - Ben indicated that agency letters were intended to target specific elected officials and would provide more detailed information on the proposed action than other notifications, to allow public officials to be informed to address potential questions from constituents. **Michelle indicated that for an EA, these agency letters are not necessary and advised that the same notification materials be sent to agencies and the public.** Tribes will be the only stakeholder group that receives a different format for the scoping announcement.
 - Native American Tribes and Nations letters will go out approximately 2 weeks prior to the other stakeholder notifications. Jim will confirm this timeframe with the tribal relations staff. The group discussed Michelle’s question regarding whether these letters were meant to be “offer to consult” letters. Michelle indicated that she considers these letters as both Section 106 (i.e., an opportunity for tribes to provide information on sacred places and other tribally important resources) and as notification of initiation of the project. However, she emphasized that these letters are not necessarily the start of consultation and should state that this is an “offer of consultation.” Brian did not have an opinion.
 - Postcards will not be used as a method of notification. There is no significant cost savings over a letter and Brian indicated that there are people who don’t have access to the internet, and he wants to ensure they receive a letter.
 - Newspaper notifications and letters will be the primary means of notification of the general public.
 - All letters will include a short description of the proposed project and how to comment. Additional detail will be provided on the website. Letters will also include

- a statement about the emergency declaration and the lack of objection period for this project.
- Letters will not go out to every resident within the project area but will instead go out to a scoping list that the USFS is currently refining.
- **Newspaper legal notices are not required for the scoping of an EA.** Jim indicated that USFS will provide newspaper notification as an advertisement; however, Brian will provide feedback prior to making a final decision.
- The Golden Transcript is not the USFS newspaper of record and therefore any notification published should be an advertisement. The Pueblo Chieftain is the newspaper of record and notices are also placed in the Douglas County News-Press. Brian will provide guidance on whether publication in the Golden Transcript is needed.
- The PALS project website will be used and all materials will refer to that site to find additional information.
- The in-person scoping meeting location (library) will come from Brian.
- Scoping Meeting Materials:
 - Michelle brought up the potential need for posters at libraries and post offices. She indicated that based on previous work in the grasslands, posters were placed in a few locations. Ben indicated that he has seen this done on other projects to comply with Title VI and environmental justice requirements. Jim indicated that USFS will decide on this based on feedback from Brian.
 - To address the USFS question on what EA topics would be included as a scoping poster, Ben indicated that they would likely be environmental resources of note, such as biological resources and recreation. The link between recreation and this project will be acknowledged in scoping materials.
 - The schedule for the development of draft scoping materials will be dependent upon receipt of the Purpose and Need and Proposed Action from USFS. Pinyon will provide a detailed schedule once that document is received.
- Public Meetings:
 - Michelle indicated that USFS does not typically do hard copy EAs unless they get people who say that they don't have access to a computer. Jim agreed that this approach was sufficient but confirm with Brian. Michelle advised that several hard copies would be brought to the public meeting to show the public what exactly is available on the website. For any members of the public who do not have Internet access, their names and phone numbers will be taken.
 - Michelle indicated that USFS notices of the public comment period do not provide actual dates. Their notices are worded to say "this is the 30-day comment period which is based on the date published in the newspaper." She will provide an example notice.
 - The newspaper notice for the 30-day comment period in the Pueblo Chieftain is a legal notice and the date of publication in that newspaper is the start date for the public comment period.
 - Posting of the EA on the USFS website will require a longer lead time.
 - With respect to public meeting materials (also applies to scoping meeting materials), USFS will let Pinyon know if they have standard templates for things like sign-in sheets and comment card.
- Public Participation Tools – The use of email was discussed. Michelle indicated that she needs to check internally on the use of the USFS GovDelivery system. If that is to be used

for this project, she will ask Pinyon for the content/text for any emails and the list of recipients and will copy/paste and send it out. Note, as an email follow-up, Michelle indicated that Pinyon is to send emails out for the project, retaining copies of all emails sent/received for the project record.

- Communication between EA milestones will generally not be done unless it is something simple like adding a new stakeholder to the list. If Pinyon receives something that may require communication between milestones, it will be passed along to USFS to make a decision on how it will be handled.
- Stakeholders and Target Population:
 - The potential to consult with USFWS was discussed. USFWS is not a cooperating agency and will receive a letter via scoping.
 - For interested individuals/user groups, Michelle indicated that it would be helpful to put up a poster at trailheads and campground to hit that stakeholder group. Jim will discuss this idea with Brian.
 - The USFS would like to be included on any stakeholder/scoping communication that is done by email.
- Table B-I Preliminary Stakeholder List does not reflect the USFS collaborative and interested parties list which Pinyon has not yet received as it is pending the addition of permittees from the USFS special uses staff and by Brian. Pinyon can update this table to reflect the list from USFS and send it back out for review.
- A revised PPP will be provided during the week of August 28, pending the action items below. Pinyon will provide a deliverable schedule based on receipt of the Purpose and Need and Proposed Action.
- Schedule: Scoping is slated for completion by October 30. This timeline may need to be revisited but Jim feels that the current schedule is on track.

ACTION ITEMS

Item	Responsible Party	Due Date
Create a GIS folder on Box and upload the project area shapefile and other relevant shapefiles.	USFS - Ryan	8/31/2023
Provide Purpose and Need and Proposed Action	USFS – Ryan/Jim	8/31/2023
Confirm timing of Tribal notification letters with Tribal Relations staff	USFS – Jim	8/29/2023
Provide decision on use of newspaper advertisements for scoping notification and if used, provide decision on whether the Golden Transcript should be used for notification	USFS – Jim/Brian	8/29/2023

Provide in-person scoping meeting location	USFS – Brian	9/5/2023
Confirm the use of libraries and post offices for posting of project information	USFS – Brian	8/29/2023
Confirm that hard copies of the EA will not be required	USFS – Jim/Brian	8/31/2023
Provide public comment notice example	USFS – Michelle	9/5/2023
Confirm whether USFS has standard templates for things like sign-in sheets and comment cards	USFS – Michelle	8/31/2023
Confirm whether posters at trailheads and/or campgrounds will be a means of communication	USFS – Jim/Brian	8/31/2023
Provide USFS collaborative and interested parties list	USFS – Ryan	8/31/2023
Provide schedule of scoping deliverables	Pinyon	9/8/2023* dependent upon receipt of P&N and Purpose and Need