



Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team

Hinsdale County • Mineral County • Rio Grande County

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RWEACT (Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team) is working closely with the Rio Grande National Forest and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to address effects of the West Fork Complex fire in south central Colorado.

October 2013

Hydrological Team Update

The Hydrological Team is working to install two additional stream gauges above the Little Squaw Creek Resort with audible alarms to notify the resort residents. The gauges will monitor flow as well as flow stoppage. We are also working to install signage for the six rain gauges, and developing a model to predict potential spring run-off.

Emergency Management Update

The Emergency Management team is working to install a 300-watt National Weather Radio Transmitter to improve weather forecasting in the Upper Rio Grande Valley. This radio will use the existing State of Colorado 800 tower on the Pool Table Road. The Emergency Management team helped host a visit from the Army Corps of Engineers to look at further protection of assets and may look at a Sandbagging Workshop in the future.

Natural Resources Update

The Natural Resources team has been working with the US Geologic Survey to map debris flow potential. In coordination with the Division of Water Resources, the Natural Resource Team will be installing six water quality probes to monitor dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, dissolved solids, and dissolved sediments in strategic locations. Plans continue for a debris flow management structure above the Little Squaw Resort. The NR Team is also developing a seeding and hydro-mulching project for up to 6 test plots in the burn scar areas adjacent to Forest Service Road 520 below Rio Grande Reservoir. In addition, RWEACT is partnering with the Brown Family, owners of Lake Humphreys to cost share sediment dredging, a debris trash rack and debris boom. This project will both preserve and protect this 482 acre foot, pre-compact, on-channel reservoir from the aftermath of the recent fire along Goose Creek as well as protect human life and structures on the lower Goose Creek corridor.

Economic Recovery Update

The Economic Recovery Team has been focusing on marketing and business recovery discussions, including the potential rebranding of the Silver Thread corridor. A Social Media workshop is planned to help managers and business owners learn more about accessing and utilizing Social Media tools for current information to the public and consumers. Additional, regional discussions include working with the Lodging Tax board of all three counties and an increased emphasis on sustainability and resiliency of local businesses.

Communications Team Update

The Communications Team has released an interactive map of the West Fork Complex fire which includes a photography tour, hydrologic instrumentation deployment, layers of Values at Risk and Burn Severity, and will eventually include progress of RWEACT and BAER projects. Find these maps online at www.rweact.org We are also working on a commemorative poster and other communication products. Photographs are being taken each month from the same location to depict natural changes.

Leadership Team Update

The continued functioning and success of RWEACT relies on visionary leadership. Our current Leadership Team includes Travis Smith of the San Luis Valley Irrigation District and Colorado Water Conservation Board; Dan Dallas of the Rio Grande National Forest; Stan Whinnery of the Hinsdale County Board of County Commissioners, the Colorado River District Board, Rio Grande & Gunnison Basin Roundtables; Karla Shriver of the Rio Grande County Board of County Commissioners and the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable; and Ramona Weber of the Mineral County Board of County Commissioners.

The purpose and novelty of RWEACT and its overall effectiveness and efficiency directly relates to a willingness to work together and focus on common goals to protect human life and safety of the Creede and South Fork areas and the long-term recovery of the Rio Grande watershed and forest.

RWEACT has accomplished a significant amount in a short time! As we move out of the emergency phase and into the longer recovery phase, we need and value your continued involvement and feedback.

In a portion of the Rio Grande National Forest, we now see a diversity of ages and species of trees which will make the forest more resilient to disturbances such as wildfire or beetle-infestations. As RWEACT works in concert with our federal and state partners to monitor the long-term impacts of the West Fork Complex fire on both the ecological and human landscapes, we intend to continue this model of partnership and effective collaboration.

Respectfully,
Tom Spezze, Executive Director

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