

## Wildlife Interactions

Potential topics:

Steve Kilpatrick;

Trophic cascades

Treatments in light of current levels of browsing

What levels of browsing

How control browsing; coordination with livestock management

Comparison of treated/untreated stands where conifer die-offs are occurring

**Conflicting directions** re: lynx habitat (multi-story stands). In WY, treatments are not allowed in multi-layered stands (e.g., aspen with conifer). How maintain late-seral habitat?

Conflicts between sagebrush conservation and sagebrush/aspen treatments

Difficulties getting fires hot enough

Prioritizing treatments by conifer presence

Aspen stand/fisheries

Mark Fowden:

**Aspen stand/fisheries**: Where watershed treatments? Increased conifer = loss of water.

What are recovery rates with treatments? Have lost riparian aspen. Cutthroat trout will move miles to get to deep water in beaver ponds. When did we lose aspen from riparian? 50's-60s movement from sheep to cattle.

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Lewis' woodpeckers, other cavity nesters are impacted by aspen treatments; other species as well.

Wendell Gilgert:

**Beaver important**: As a disturbance role in aspen hasn't been explored. Lack of info on landscape scale/watershed scales with trapping of beaver. Research needed re: role of beaver. We all desire water catchments; beaver premier at providing these. In WY were reintroducing beaver in a private inholding, finding subirrigation occurring.

As a wildlife community have not been engaging this sufficiently.

**Steve Kilpatrick**:

**Water will be a major issue.**

Joshua \_\_\_\_:

Fires will be occurring more frequently

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Whitebark pine being lost; krummholz aspen a potentially critical wildlife habitat - may be released by a warming climate

With climate warming, where will we see increases/decreases of aspen?

Mark \_\_\_:

How will aspen as a community (i.e., incl. understory) be responding to conifer die-offs? What role will elk play in large-scale suppression of rejuvenation of aspen? An urgent issue to be addressed

Mary O'Brien:

Possibility of beaver being a focus of this conference in another year: interactions with fisheries, cavity-nesters, aspen/willow/cottonwood, hydrology, ungulates

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How moose interact with aspen treatments on transitional ranges. Less attention being paid to moose than to elk.

Wendell Gilgert:

Connelly et al.-type guidelines for aspen stand management for wildlife habitat (e.g., including understory)

Miller's publication on western juniper provides a question-flow to help decide re: treatment. Provides quality criteria for what want to end up with.

Steve Kilpatrick:

Mueggler communities, fire guidelines, haven't been putting together treatment prescriptions with treatment objectives (to then guide monitoring as well).

Frank \_\_\_:

Monitoring of wildlife post-treatment is needed as well as monitoring of vegetation. We know more about deer/elk than some of the other species.

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Scale of treatment design research is needed in light of various wildlife species

Channing Swan:

Communities on down to stands of aspen need higher profile in forestry projects, which tend to focus more on fuel reduction, sage grouse, elk/deer, etc. Guidelines would help provide for more consideration of aspen.

Steve Kilpatrick:

Perhaps water is the "spotted owl" of aspen. With improved water relations, other wildlife habitat follows.

Mark Lowden:

Have been talking about amending aspen classification; how can tie to management prescriptions in light of changing climate. Perhaps, e.g., reduce emphasis on conifer encroachment and more attention to the pure (stable) aspen.

Steve Kilpatrick:

**How to deal with herbivory:** domestic and wild. Examples of successful aspen recruitment with existing wild ungulate populations?

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Size-dependence: Aspen treatments under 100 acres won't be successful. Larger treatments should be able to disperse the browsing.

Nile Sorensen:

Some fires that have been large have nevertheless failed in regeneration. Politically difficult to reduce elk herd numbers.

Mark Lowden:

In one large watershed project 15,000 acres brought sportsmen to the table; agreed to a short-term reduction of herds. We allowed elk to come back too quickly; had thought 8-10' aspen were tall enough.

Nile Sorensen:

Population on Fishlake was knocked back. Politically was a hot-button; the herd was back to objectives w/in 5 years.

Mark Lowden:

**Public trust** goes both ways: Both wildlife and habitat for wildlife.

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This is starting to sink in.

Mary O'Brien:

Dilemma of habitat responsibility (e.g., Forest Service) and wildlife responsibility (e.g., wildlife agency).

Steve Kilpatrick:

It helps to have a habitat specialist in the wildlife agency.

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Utah Partners for Conservation in Utah has helped with focusing objectives on projects. The conversation is there; running adjusted seasons past Wildlife Boards, etc. is more complicated. Paradigm shift to restore habitat for mule deer, sometimes at expense of elk. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is looking at the larger picture

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Natural predation would address some of the issues of aspen regeneration.

Steve Kilpatrick:

Difficult to use the W word. Important, though, to find the areas where browsing has been reduced with the presence of wolves.

Wendell Gilgert:

A conundrum for NRCS on private lands: The aspen are small acreages; disproportionate use by livestock. Sometimes not practical to limit summer use, or to have an aspen pasture. Can use livestock surgically if can control timing and intensity. Requires active herding to mimic native ungulates. Always tricky to move for springs, meadows, riparian, aspen.

Repellants haven't been found that work to deter browsing at a landscape scale.

Steve Kilpatrick:

A summary: **Absolutely critical before aspen treatments to work with all partners** to get a harvest strategy to insure acceptable regeneration and stand establishment.

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One thing that really can be done is strategy to move elk.

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Bigger picture planning effort, to include livestock. We don't educate publics well enough about what is being attempted.

Steve Kilpatrick:

Most successful communications: When sit at the table and demonstrate with photos, etc. that there will be clear benefits for moving cattle.

Mark Fowden:

We do not know what the sustainable browsing level by elk is in our aspen communities. Until we get that, we can't make these plans work.

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Issue of regulating elk numbers is the biggest challenge to aspen regeneration. As we get more and more people less dependent on the land being productive, harder and harder to generate support for reducing elk populations. We have political challenges in WY getting enough elk killed. The return of elk is not a problem.

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In NM public in support of increasing harvest, but the wildlife agency doesn't want a large harvest, because then the tags wouldn't have the high value. 30,000 elk on \_\_\_\_\_; aspen maybe only 5,000 acres. The aspen trunks are black from stripping. Only 20 wolves in NM.

Mary O'Brien:

Need all critical stakeholders in the same room looking at the same data, maps, photos, etc.

Ronald Wilson:

On the Dixie we have been getting herd objectives with permittees, FS, sportsmen working together. Has worked well.

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Have been effectively using portable fencing on Sawtooth NF with sheep. Five-15 acre plots; feasible on 100-200 acres. Aspen has responded fairly well. Net fences - plastic, wire.

Channing Swan:

There's a tubular, steel A-frame fence that's portable. Spends up front. Only 6' tall.

Wendell Gilgert:

Under Farm Bill, can make 50% cost share for fences.

Joshua \_\_\_:

Exclosures?

#### Summary:

Essentiality of users, wildlife reps, agencies meeting together to plan.

The need for guidelines for management of aspen herbivory, fire, understory. We have relatively few choices for treatment approaches, but for those approaches we don't have objective-driven guidelines.

Need objectives for understory as well as regen stems/acre. What do you want this stand to look like? Politically difficult to address because of implications for long-term reduction of forage acreage/herd size.

Need for feasible fencing options at various scales.

The ongoing need for ongoing hands-on, on-site education esp. with younger audience.

Perhaps a half-day session next year on the implications of beaver for riparian aspen. Fire, beaver, aspen, cutthroat...

The essentiality of collaboration when planning for restoration of aspen.

Scale: Some projects may work at 100 acres; we need to address thousands and thousands of acres, with maps of condition of aspen (e.g., wildland fire use). Extensive coordination is needed for larger scale treatments. The wildlife, watershed BENEFITS of fire need to be articulated.

Smaller fencing projects may have particular value at urban interface or where some small pockets of aspen.

Research:

- For guidelines
- The potential of behavioral changes in ungulates to reach objectives even with the same density