

## Spring Creek Fire Remediation Project

April 13, 2023

Since the last meeting I have had the chance make site visits on Indian Creek, Oak Creek, the Dahmer meadows on upper South Middle Creek, as well as the outlet of Middle Creek canyon.

Considering our stated goals of sediment capture, rebuilding and reconnecting floodplains, and reduction of further channel and head cuts, the Middle Creek canyon site has proved to be the best candidate for treatment. Additionally, the site combines the mutual interest of the greatest number of stakeholders, to include the Town of La Veta, the State Land Board, Huerfano County, NRCS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and adjacent and downstream water users.

One of the biggest factors to consider is the protection of the stream gauge. Last year the county cleaned woody debris off the frame and rechanneled the flow back to the gauge. However, there is still significant amounts of cobble rock and small to medium sized boulders along the low flow stream channel directly upstream. Even a moderate surge could bring this material down and quickly clog the gauge frame. The good news is the rocky material could be used on site for adjacent projects.

In the summer of 2019 we used the Department of Corrections Heavy Equipment crew to do hand cleaning of the stream channel in this area. The materials were either chipped on site or hauled to the county pit of CR450. The result was that this stretch remained fairly clean and unclogged for the first several flood surges. Subsequent surges brought woody debris from further up basin.

Another positive aspect of the site is that it is entirely on State Land Board property. I have worked with their land stewardship trust manager and conservation services manager. Involving them and getting input as to what we could do to help achieve any of their recovery objectives would be mutually beneficial to all affected by the project.

The restoration of the diversion for the Toll Gate Ditch is another factor to consider. The land owner had invested in a new weir to bring the diversion into compliance just before the fire. The diversion channel could be restored in conjunction with channel work and the construction of an off channel basin or floodplain rebuild.

Over the last two years Colorado Parks and Wildlife has invested in the establishment of a Hayden Pass cutthroat trout fishery in the South Middle Creek basin. We saw minor mortality from the August 2022 flood stage, with a few trout getting stranded out of the channel when the waters receded. Those that have survived have grown well, and if the sediment situation is not too bad, hopefully will be able to spawn in the next couple of seasons, thus establishing a viable population. One of the requests of CPW is that a fish barrier waterfall be built downstream to prevent the potential future invasion of non-native species such as brook trout. Such a structure could be incorporated in the project.

NRCS has expressed a desire to see areas reseeded with appropriate native grass mixes. This could be done to stabilize the area after the construction is done. Their additional objective of erosion control can be realized in this project.



Emergency  
warning for La Veta