

WEP Banded Peak Ranches Tour – August 7, 2020

Attendees: Tim Haarmann, Aaron Kimple, Justin Ramsey, Aaron Burns (PAWSD), Tobi Rohwer, James Dickhoff, Mely Whiting, Robin Young, Pratyosh Kashyap (CSU Ext Intern), Al Pfister, Nick Olson (Catspaw Ranch manager)

The Banded Peak Ranches are 3 separate ranches totaling 52,000 acres owned by members of the same family, located off of Highway 84, southeast of Pagosa Springs.

All attendees met next to the house that Steering Committee member, Tobi Rohwer, grew up in at the gate to the Ranches. After Tobi treated us to stories about childhood adventures, we went on explore the ranches. Things and views only got better from there. After introductions and Tobi's childhood revisited, Tim led the group on an awesome tour of the ranches and different management activities occurring on the ranches.

First stop was at the stream gauge on the Navajo River (photo 1). Discussions focused on data gathered at the gauge, its purpose, and how data was relayed to the different agencies. The gauge is just upstream of the Oso Diversion, a Bureau of Reclamation facility, that sends approximately 100,000 acre feet of water through a transmountain diversion to supply Albuquerque residents with water via the Rio Grande River.





The second stop was next to the ponds holding San Juan cutthroat trout (Photo 2), a recently re-discovered rare trout that the Banded Peak Ranches are working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to enhance its distribution. The group also visited a rehabilitated stream (Photo 3) inhabited by San Juan Cut with an engineered fish barrier typical of barriers to keep out non-native trout.



We also stopped at ranch headquarters to discuss the fire modelling and conservation easements for the ranches. The FARSITE based models are used to help guide the forest treatments on the ranch and prioritize the work being done and monitor the effectiveness.

Next stop was an irrigated hay pasture that had previously served as an oil production field. The downslope portion of the pasture had some head-cuts that the ranches are working on to rehabilitate. We also discussed typical irrigation structures and systems used on ranches. After a stop in the headquarters, discussing the prescriptions and viewing their applications on a map, we moved to one of the sites where prescriptions were being applied using mastication. At the forested site we reviewed and discussed the forest management activities being conducted, the cooperating entities, and the goals of those activities.

After a nice drive through all 3 ranches, the day was culminated with views of a spectacular waterfall (Photo 4).





Many thanks to all the WEP Steering Committee members who participated, helped organize and follow COVID-19 guidelines. Special thanks to Tim Haarmann for hosting this event for the WEP!