



TREMBLINGS

NEWSLETTER & BULLETIN BOARD

Vol. 14(2), May 2023

Partnering to preserve and restore healthy aspen ecosystems

MEMBER PARTICIPATION: The WAA is a virtual science-based community. Send us aspen-related publications, management plans, and media mentions and we'll help spread the word. Contact Paul Rogers, Director: p.rogers@usu.edu.

Share *Tremblings* with your friends and colleagues.

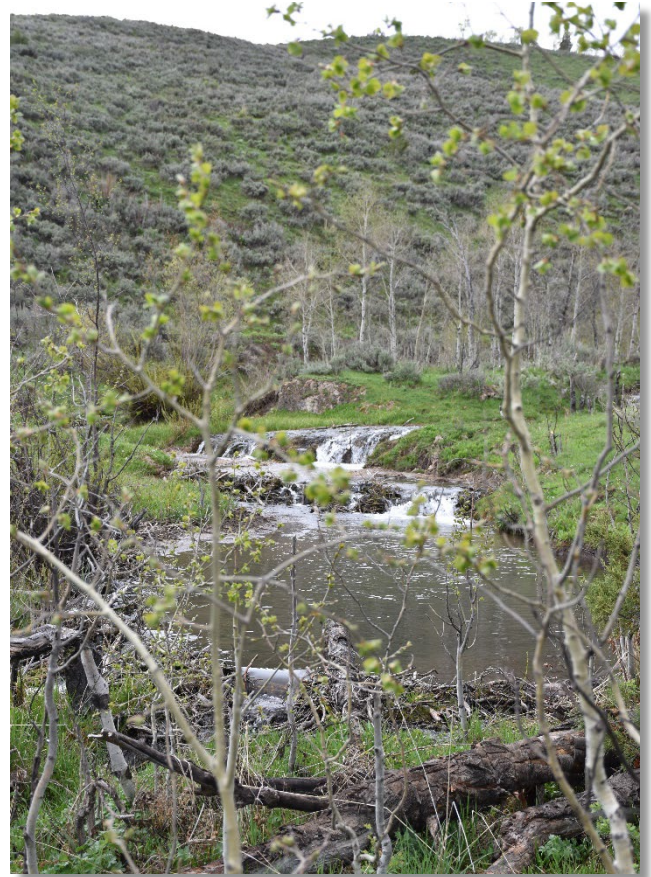
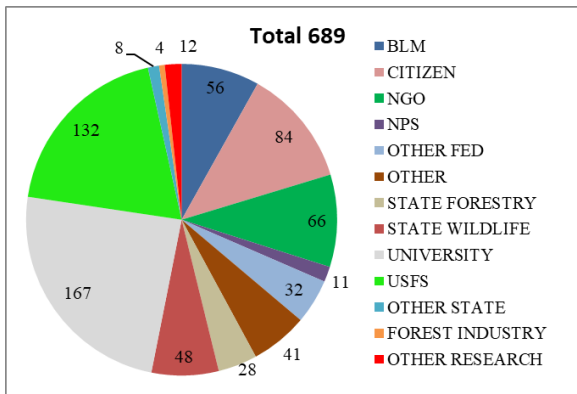
New members welcome! [Sign up here](#)

Utah Legislature Promotes ‘Roller Felling’—A controversial technique to encourage aspen regeneration and reduce conifer cover has undergone some trial applications on private land in Utah’s Book Cliffs region. The *Salt Lake Tribune* wrote a [March 21 exposé](#) on the efficacy of this practice—somewhat akin to “chaining” at high elevation—and \$1M in state funds garnered by a private group to advocate broader use of roller felling on public lands around the state.

WAA HAPPENINGS

WAA Spring Fund Drive: It’s the time of year when we gently request your financial support. In our member survey of 2021, users overwhelmingly told us they preferred monetary, rather than time/effort, backing of this organization. This year our need is greater. Having lost a significant federal grant, the WAA is seeking all opportunities to bolster our diminished operating budget. That includes federal grants, philanthropic funding, and member backing. If you value up-to-date aspen science news and management practices, please consider giving within your means as a [tax deductible donation here](#). If you are in touch with donors interested in supporting aspen science/education/outreach, please reach out to [WAA Director Paul Rogers](#).

Status of WAA Member Make-up—Our membership is strong and diverse. We are foresters, wildlife biologists, ecologists, geographers, hydrologists, range scientists, botanists, policymakers, artists, interested citizens, and more! Here’s a breakdown by institution:



With epic spring runoff in the West, 2023 is likely to test watershed capacity for retention and distribution of ‘our most valued resource.’ This photo depicts the dynamic linkages between beaver and aspen in the Bear River Range of northern Utah. How will such ecosystems fare when the torrents arrive, and for years after, versus riparian aspen forests without beaver present? Time and research will tell. (Photo: Paul Rogers).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Idaho Volunteer Opportunity—Working for Wildlife North Idaho Aspen Enhancement, will take place in Bonners Ferry, Idaho Saturday July 29, 2023. Hand tools will be used to remove young conifers from aspen stands as part of an ongoing landscape restoration project. National Deer Association has partnered with USFS, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, and MeatEater to bring this event together. Pre-registration required: [RegisterHere](#) or contact [Brad French](#) for more details.

Aspen Biodiversity in Mongolia—WAA Director Paul Rogers will be taking off for Mongolia in late June/early July 2023. There are many objectives to this trip including guest lectures, broad national forest monitoring/planning, research opportunities, and international networking. However, my highest priority is understanding conservation of biodiversity at the global scale in aspen systems. Previous work in this realm solidified a network of circumboreal scientists to explore ongoing ‘[mega-conservation](#)’ initiatives using aspen as model systems.

Summer 2023 Aspen Workshops:

- The WAA will co-host its first Washington summer workshop July 17-19, 2023. The location will be northeast Washington, near Cusick. Contact [Katherine Napier-Janž](#) (Alpine Forestry) for more information.
- Colorado Aspen Summit II will take place near Pagosa Springs July 31-Aug. 2. We will be discussing climate, fire, herbivory, and invasive insects, among other topics. Contact [Gloria Edwards](#) (Southern Rockies Fire Science Network) to learn more.
- The Sierra Nevada Aspen Workshop, west slope Sierras edition, is being planned for Sept/Oct. 2023 (TBD). If you are interested in attending or contributing to this event please contact [Becky Estes](#) (USFS R5 Regional Ecologist).

We’re open to future proposals for aspen workshops in your area! Please contact [WAA Director](#) Paul Rogers.

COMMENTARY

The WAA: Fifteen Year Status

Paul C. Rogers, Director, Western Aspen Alliance, Department of Environment & Society, Ecology Center Associate, Utah State University, Logan, Utah



Aspen, the species, unites our member community. We reach out, connect, sprout new growth, and respond to ever-present change like a hidden root web supporting an above-ground grove of swaying pale stems and flickering foliage. Carbohydrates, stored subterranean, represent the future of such networks; linkages unseen nourish future forests, enrich ecosystems, and fuel organizations like ours. After 15 years, the Western Aspen Alliance has flourished following disturbance, but faces an uncertain outlook given uncertain funding prospects. The good news is that this WAA community, buried junctures and all, represents a resilience in diversity and numbers spanning institutional, disciplinary, and political boundaries.

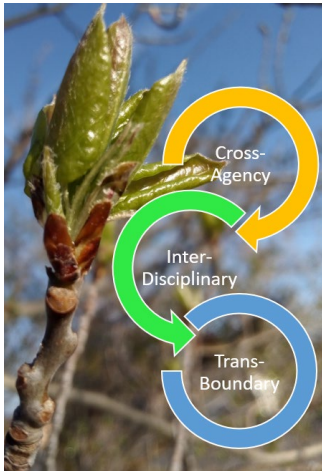
The WAA originally intended to replicate past federal aspen research with a leaner, agile model capitalizing on improved technology to counter declining research budgets. Knowing aspen science was dynamic—that management issues were actually mounting—we envisioned a cooperative lattice of researchers across multiple state and federal institutions. The response has been a steady building toward the nearly 700 members today. Along the way, the WAA has participated in numerous virtual seminars, collaborated on research publications and grant applications, co-hosted 35 workshops, produced 44 quarterly *Tremblings* newsletters, and promoted countless technical publications, events, artists, and aspen media products. [WAA Briefs](#), offering state-of-the-science overviews on discreet aspen topics, are distributed at in-person events and downloaded internationally. The [Aspen Bibliography](#), a global resource housed at Utah State University, provides a database of +6,000 records and has

totaled 13,173 downloads in the past year (92,625 since inception!).

By these measures and others, the WAA has exhibited steady expansion and consistent recruitment. But a resilient community must respond to changing conditions. For instance, shifting funding landscapes and emerging research necessitates new partnerships and refocused prioritizations. Climate warming, the ecological function of new seeding events, water conservation, biodiversity enumeration, chemical defense, and human/policy decision-making are underexplored topics with significant conservation ramifications.

Understanding the influence of these issues with devoted research and technology transfer will define future directions in aspen ecology. Further, the WAA intends to continue fostering cross-agency, interdisciplinary, and transboundary communication. Complex problems are sure to require concerted collaborations. Modelling ourselves after an organism that is a community is intentional: it's 'all-hands-on-deck' time!

This is where you, the WAA members, come in. This organization is at a crossroads. After a decade and a half of carrying out the mission to "improve management of aspen by linking ecological, social, and economic sciences through collaboration and information sharing" by cobbling together modest budgets, we are seeking new funding mechanisms to sustain the WAA. While we're proud of our record, all aspen roots possess primordial buds primed to respond to above-ground disturbance. Of course, aspen clones regenerate within the existing stand *and* outside established perimeters. As we look to the next fifteen years, will the WAA, like aspen communities globally, contract as roots desiccate? Or will it thrive (alongside myriad codependents) as individual members unite their resources, let their collective light shine, and reach for that piercing blue sky of opportunity that awaits?



WAA Creates

"WAA Creates" requests diverse artistic aspen-related contributions from across our membership. We encourage fiction, folklore, poetry, drawings, paintings, photography, and other artistic expressions. [Send your stuff](#) to Tremblings.

The Grove

a squirrel runs from branch to branch
through young aspen
several dozen stand together
reaching toward a silver sky

they shiver in rusty gold
sky-silver trunks becoming bare
as autumn now descends

beneath their skin, a river runs
drawing food
up from the soil
liquid light
down from the sky

salamanders nestle at their feet
the color of midnight
star-studded in blue

this gathering of saplings
has turned a field into a forest
(it did not take them long)

beneath the grass
beneath the soil
their roots reveal their secret:
one cohesive lattice
shoots forth this host of trees
(truly, they are one)

one being
(bursting open toward the light)
can grow a world

Krissy Kludt
Pleasant Hill, California

From the artist: *Aspen are an inspiring symbol for community and connectedness, from large to small scales. As a Midwest transplant to the West Coast, I appreciate that aspen are present in both places I call home.*

Poet Krissy Kludt is the creator of [Writing the Wild](#) and other nature-focused writing experiences. Learn more about her work at KrissyKludt.com.

RECENT ASPEN PUBLICATIONS

A word on Open Access: The Western Aspen Alliance strongly supports open access publishing (CC-BY). Articles with hyperlinks below are available for download and sharing following [Creative Commons](#) rules for attribution.

- Beschta, R. L., L. E. Painter, and W. J. Ripple. 2023. Revisiting trophic cascades and aspen recovery in northern Yellowstone. *Food Webs*:[e00276](#).
- Braziunas, K. H., N. G. Kiel, and M. G. Turner. 2023. Less fuel for the next fire? Short-interval fire delays forest recovery and interacting drivers amplify effects. *Ecology*:[e4042](#).
- Cappaert, J. 2023. Happy or sad? Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) on Cedar Mountain, Southern Utah. Utah State University, Logan, Utah. [MS Thesis.]
- Carson, M. T., J. M. Zobel, D. R. Bronson, A. M. McGraw, C. W. Woodall, and C. C. Kern. 2023. The case for stand management guidelines as dynamic as global change: Aspen forest stockings of the western Great Lakes. *Forest Ecology and Management* 536:120905.
- Escamez, S., K. M. Robinson, M. Luomaranta, M. L. Gandla, N. Mähler, Z. Yassin, T. Grahn, G. Scheepers, L.-G. Stener, S. Jansson, L. J. Jönsson, N. R. Street, and H. Tuominen. 2023. Genetic markers and tree properties predicting wood biorefining potential in aspen (*Populus tremula*) bioenergy feedstock. *Biotechnology for Biofuels and Bioproducts* 16:65.
- Kauffman, J. B., D. L. Cummings, C. Kauffman, R. L. Beschta, J. Brooks, K. MacNeill, and W. J. Ripple. 2023. Bison influences on composition and diversity of riparian plant communities in Yellowstone National Park. *Ecosphere* 14:[e4406](#).
- Nesbit, K. 2023. Evaluating quaking aspen's influence on fire behavior. Utah State University, Logan, Utah. [MS Thesis.]
- Palmroos, I., V. Norros, S. Keski-Saari, J. Mäyrä, T. Tanhuanpää, S. Kivinen, J. Pykälä, P. Kullberg, T. Kumpula, and P. Vihervaara. 2023. Remote sensing in mapping biodiversity—A case study of epiphytic lichen

- communities. *Forest Ecology and Management* 538:120993.
- Ramiadantsoa, T., Z. Ratajczak, and M. G. Turner. 2023. Regeneration strategies and forest resilience to changing fire regimes: Insights from a Goldilocks model. *Ecology*:[e4041](#).
- Reikowski, E. S., T. Refsland, and J. H. Cushman. 2022. Ungulate herbivores as drivers of aspen recruitment and understory composition throughout arid montane landscapes. *Ecosphere* 13:[e4225](#).
- Rudnew, S. B., E. Galeano, and B. R. Thomas. 2023. Effect of soil warming on growth and physiology of aspen seedlings from Alberta, Canada. *The Forestry Chronicle* 99:[67-79](#).
- Russell, M. B., and J. Desprez. 2023. Assessing White-Tailed Deer Impacts to Tree Seedling Growth using Citizen Science Data in Minnesota, USA. *Forest Science* 69:115-119.
- Trudgeon, A. M. 2023. Regeneration of Quaking Aspen and Understory Vegetation Change After Fire Risk Reduction Treatment. Utah State University, Logan, Utah. [MS Thesis.]
- Vais, A. A., V. V. Popova, A. A. Andronova, V. N. Nemich, A. G. Nepovinnikh, and P. V. Mikhaylov. 2023. Assessment of Carbon Productivity Dynamics in Aspen Stands under Climate Change Based on Forest Inventories in Central Siberia. *Forests* [14:109](#).
- Velioglu, E., Ş. T. Güner, H. Karakurt, Y. Taştan, Z. Yavuz, and D. Tuğrul. 2023. Relationships between site index and ecological variables of trembling poplar forests (*Populus tremula* L.) in Türkiye. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* [195:308](#).

CONTACT WAA:

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Website: <http://www.western-aspen-alliance.org/>



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