



Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Rim Fire Field Trip August 15, 2014 9:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. The chair and vice-chair to work with Ms. Lott to draft YSS objectives and goals in relationship to what YSS hopes to accomplish to help inform development of workplan.
2. USFS to report on progress of RAC agreement, meadow projects and meadow assessment.
3. Project Workgroup to continue work on projects that may be matches for SNC funding.
4. Project Workgroup to provide an updated project spreadsheet to be distributed for use during the next steering committee meeting.
5. Mr. Trott to draft a YSS letter in support of funding from the 2014 Farm Bill Biomass Crop Assistance Program for consideration by the SC.
6. Mr. Graveline to provide update on CWB funding.
7. Reforestation Workgroup to provide recommendations during the September SC meeting.
8. TRT to report out on research efforts of models. (October)
9. Update on website consultant selection and construction.
10. TRT to report on status of NFF/Wilkinson/TRT volunteer project.
11. TRT to report on efforts to investigate Volunteer Stewardship.
12. Media update-highlighting publicity YSS received since last meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Objectives and Goals
2. Workplan

MEETING GOAL:

- Visit sample sites within the Rim Fire burn and discuss issues relevant to recovery and reforestation

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening:

Members of Full Frame Productions were introduced and it was noted they would be filming during the trip for possible use in an upcoming documentary on the Rim Fire. Safety instructions were provided for participants and the USFS volunteer form was signed.

II. Process Items:

Ms. Carolyn Lott asked for approval of the May YSS General Meeting Summary.

Agreement: There was agreement to accept the meeting summary as emailed.

III. Travel to Overlook:

FS staff stated the high severity burn took place in approximately 7-10% of the fire footprint in terms of soil impact, while 30% of the vegetation burned at high severity. Most members of the public have never seen an area such as this where there are no young trees, where much of the soil is denuded,, and where no cones survived to seed new young trees.

Chair Albrecht noted the timber is rapidly deteriorating. By next spring, much of the smaller material will be without saw-log value. He said the FS has done an outstanding job trying to get the timber to market.

Groveland District Ranger Jim Junette spoke about the hazard tree sale. He said a tree is considered a hazard if it threatens any facility – a road, infrastructure, or operations.

Ms. Mary Moore, FS, said the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) treatment was completed before the first damaging storm. It was used to protect sensitive areas. However, because the winter was quite dry and mild, the treatment was not fully put to a test. She indicated a recent concern was generated by lightning storms that brought and high impact raindrops. She noted that the group would see evidence of the intense rainfall's effect on some of the drainage areas that would be crossed during the field trip.

Rice straw was applied in a matrix pattern that helped to capture raindrops so they slowly infiltrate the ground instead of washing off. Helicopter applications were used in areas where ground-based application was not practical. The Hazard Tree Environmental Assessment requires a lot of woody material to be left on the ground to help to hold soil and reduce erosion.

IV. Travel to Active Logging Site:

The group moved on to an area being logged by the Tanner Brothers operation. They were logging based on marking done by USFS staff that judged whether or not dead trees (or even a green tree) posed a safety hazard due to that trees' proximity to the road. They were removing trees within a distance of approximately two tree lengths or 200 feet above the road or 150' downslope from the road. They noted that safety is a challenge for everyone involved in their operations.

V. Travel to Corral Creek:

It was noted this area is a great example of the core burn area. Ms. Rachele Condon was introduced as the USFS Timber Sales Administrator. Mr. Mike Horvath, Hetch Hetchy, and Mr. Dave Horak of the FS were also introduced. It was noted hazard trees are being harvested along service level 3 and 4 roads. There are 1,400 miles of level 3 and 4 roads that have already been or are currently being harvested, with the potential for an additional 300 miles of hazard tree removal to be approved along Level 1 and 2 roads as part of the Rim Fire Salvage Recovery Project EIS.

That EIS will also determine what should be removed in the broader burn areas on beyond the hazard tree strips along the roads. In regards to positions on the EIS, a small number of groups believe nothing should be done and nature should take its course. Others are advocates for the Blackback Woodpecker and are supportive of thick, snag forest landscape being left untouched for habitat. It was noted at some point when everything that has not fallen to date falls, it will cause a huge amount of fuel loading. Some groups think the landscape should be treated like private land in regards to tree planting. Then there are many variations of viewpoints. If a lawsuit is filed, the judge will determine whether there is merit to a restraining order if one is requested.

Because there is an Emergency Situation Determination, the FS can begin operations as soon as the Record of Decision is signed by Supervisor Susan Skalski. Vice-chair John Buckley said the FS deserves credit as they are not only speeding up the process, but also continuing to try and address concerns as they are raised. Some examples of this are the plan's proposal for masticating prior to dropping trees to help protect the ground and "drop and lop" treatments for small trees to hold the soil to help protect riparian corridors.

It was mentioned that if nothing is done to treat areas such as the Corral Creek area and especially the Jawbone Flat area to the southwest, the amount of dead trees that fall can

become a barrier to migratory animals and also create a huge fuel load. Dense thickets of fallen trees also can make it difficult for cattle to graze and for campers and hikers to access areas for recreational uses.

It was noted that riparian zones, stream courses, and meadows are generally flagged to protect them from intrusion by heavy equipment during logging operations. In some areas, it will be many years until there is enough of a vegetative canopy and sufficiently recovered root system of deep-rooted plants that is adequate to protect riparian areas.

VI. Travel to Jawbone Creek:

The topic of reforestation was brought up and District Ranger Junette said the FS will look for the most productive sites for the conifer replanting effort. There are challenges with heavy equipment damaging young seedlings and in determining how to plant when there are so many fallen trees.

Mr. Jim Maddox spoke about the tremendous botanical diversity that existed pre-fire. He said seedlings that were currently visible in the field trip location are examples of surviving seeds that came from Douglas Fir cones that were scorched, but not damaged. He noted that there were also Dogwoods, Hazelnut, and Sierra Plum just to name a few other species that are vigorously re-sprouting from their roots. It was noted a lot of oaks that look dead are also re-sprouting, but they will have little to no acorn-producing capacity for decades to come.

Conversation returned to the position of letting nature take its course such as in the national parks versus active fire recovery treatments. It was explained that the primary focus of the national parks is allowing natural processes to take place in a manner that is consistent with recreational experiences. However, national forests are guided by a multi-use policy. Also, in some of the burn areas, what is now growing will not hold soil in place due to minimal roots. There is also a danger of invasive noxious weeds such as Bull Thistle and Star Thistle multiplying and taking over.

Mr. Nathan Graveline, CA Fish and Wildlife, discussed deer research that he and others have been doing. He noted the difference between resident deer and migratory deer. He said the health and presence of migratory deer are great indicators of forest health. Fifteen different species of animals have been documented to feed on deer carcasses. The deer counts that were done in the fall and spring show 19 fawns per 100 does in the burn area. Normal counts would show approximately 150 fawns born per 100 does. This means that essentially an entire age class has been lost. Another age class may be lost because the weather has been so dry and there has been minimal resprouting of vegetation in some areas. This has caused the deer to struggle to find nutritious foods, and some may have survived by eating the rice straw. In the high intensity burn area about 80% of the deer population was lost.

In the two herds outside the burn area that he is following, the fawns have numbered 40 per 100 does. The production rate is down, but far better than in the burn area. It is believed selenium is one factor in the decline outside the burn area.

Ms. Moore said the emergency for the watershed is not over. It takes 3-5 years for vegetation to get to a point where there is a sufficient root system capable of holding soil. Often the most watershed threat issues are seen 5-7 years after a significant burn. Significant sedimentation will continue. In the moderate soil burn areas, light rain has helped because it was not heavy enough to cause erosion.

The Sierras have a natural amount of hydrophobic layers, but hydrophobic soil can cause significant problems until it eventually breaks down. In a severe burn area, a significant rainfall can cause raindrops to slick off of the hydrophobic waxy layer, which means soil, seeds, and new roots slide off along with the raindrops. In the high intensity burn area, there may be as little as 10-20% vegetation coverage, and much of it is single stalk. In the moderate burn area, there is more generally 30-40% coverage and some needle coverage.

VII. Travel to Cherry Lake Fire Station:

Mr. Matt Waverly from Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) spoke about the operations on company land. He said they began cutting damaged trees last September and continue to send the timber to the Sonora mill and send small diameter Pine to Lincoln and Chinese Camp. They are harvesting Ponderosa, Sugar Pine, white fir, Douglas Fir, incense cedar, and some very minimal amount of giant Sequoia.

With the discussion focusing back on national forest land, it was noted there will likely only be reforestation on 30,000-40,000 acres of Stanislaus Forest land within the Fire. The goal will be to establish trees where they would be unlikely to come back without active reforestation. In addition to the reforestation planning effort that is just being launched, there currently are two Rim Fire resource assessments being conducted – one on meadows and one on springs. These will help identify and prioritize future restoration projects.

VIII. Travel Back To USFS Headquarters:

Members thanked all those who contributed to the day.

XIII. Date of Next General Meeting/Steering Committee Meeting/Additional Agenda Items:

YSS General Meeting: Friday, November 21, 2014 9:30am-3:30pm

YSS Steering Committee Meeting: Friday, September 19, 1:00pm-4:00pm

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	
Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	
Todd Miller	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Jeff Redoutey	BMM/Alternate	Present
John Romena	Buena Vista Biomass Power	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	Present
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	Present
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Julia Stephens	CSERC/Alternate	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	Present
Karl Dambacher	Gold Rush News	
Michael Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/ Stanislaus Trail Bike Association	Present
Kamran Rasheed	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	Present

Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Brain Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	
Matt Waverly	SPI Alternate	Present
Allen Johnson	SouthWest InterFace Team	
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	
John Gray	TC/Alternate	Present
Mike Albrecht	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	Present
Vicki Albrecht	TuCARE/Alternate	
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	Present
Sasha Farkas	TCFB/Alternate	
Stuart Crook	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	Present
Jim Phelan	Tuolumne County Sportsmen/Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	Present
Jon Sturtevant	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club	Present
Rick Delvin	TGSC/Alternate	Present
Jim Roehl	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
Willie Dutra	TMWTC/Alternate	
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
Patrick Koepele	TRT/Alternate	
Jim Maddox	Tuolumne-Mariposa Resources Advisory Council	Present

LIASON MEMBERS

Name	Organization	Attendance
Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Greg Gerstenberg	CDFW/Alternate	
Joe Meyer	National Park Service, Yosemite National Park	Present
Linda Mazzu	NPSYNP	
Mandy Vance	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	
Chris Dallas	SNC/Alternate	Present
Scott Tangenberg	US Forest Service	
Ann Denton	USFS/Alternate	
Marty Gmelin	USFS/Alternate	

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Name	Organization	Attendance
Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting/Facilitator	Present

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Frank Oyung	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club
Randy Hanvelt	Tuolumne County

Kevin White	Full Frame Production
David Donnerfield	FFP
Steve Daxy	FFP
Jim Junette	US Forest Service
Mary Moore	USFS
Michael Jow	USFS
Mike Horvath	SFPUC/Hetch Hetchy