



Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative General Meeting Summary for January 17, 2014

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Ms. Carolyn Lott will send out an email on behalf of the Steering Committee with the agenda for the SC meeting on Monday, February 3, from 1 pm-4pm.
2. Ms. Lott will confirm the conference room for the SC meeting and the tentative YSS Collaborative meeting on February 21st.
3. FS to post timeline of activities related to Rim Fire on the STF website.
4. FS to follow-up with Butch Blazer.
5. FS to report on lessons learned through locations within the Rim Fire area they found earlier treatment to be successful in fire protection.

MEETING GOALS:

1. To review the existing structure, focus, and charter of YSS in light of the Rim Fire.
 2. To determine modifications necessary to necessary to better align the mission and deliverables of YSS with current conditions.
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SUMMARY:

Welcome and Introductions:

Mrs. Lott, Facilitator, opened the meeting. Forest Supervisor Susan Skalski welcomed the attendees. She reminded the group they were initially formed to work on the southern part of the forest including plantations from the 1987 fires. What they will be considering today will be the third iteration of this group.

Mr. Mike Albrecht and Mr. John Buckley offered comments of appreciation to retired District Ranger Margaret Dowd. They presented her with a certificate on behalf of YSS.

Update on Rim Fire Activities:

Mr. Rob Griffith, Forest Service, reported that immediate post fire watershed and erosion activities are mostly complete. Patrol and monitoring is ongoing. Range permit holders are concerned with fence lines and water sources. The FS will also be addressing recreational opportunities as they look at the overall economic effects of the fire.

The FS is working to expedite efforts. There is an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) underway. Roads, culverts, ditches, etc. have to be addressed. The FS has received approval from the President's Council on Environmental Quality to move the NEPA process forward more quickly. They will continue to enhance public awareness and encourage participation from the public. The final EIS and the Record of Decision (ROD) will happen in concert and will be posted on the FS website as soon as released. The net effect of the shortened process is a gain of 90 days.

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Hazard tree removal has come first. In addition there will be the effort of reforestation and natural regeneration. Insects, forest pathogens and storm issues can affect progress. Hundreds of miles of roads need to be addressed.

Supervisor Skalski underscored the Rim Fire is a national priority. They are receiving a lot of support to get the job done. However, there is always a window of time for assistance.

Assessment Results and Framework for Today's Discussion:

Ms. Lott introduced the discussion about the YSS collaborative moving forward. Mr. Gary Severson was started the conversation. He explained he is under contract with the FS to assist with public outreach efforts. He retired as the Executive Director of the Northwest Colorado Association of Government.

He began by saying the YSS charter is one of the best he has ever seen. However, it will have to be tweaked in order for it to align with where YSS needs to go. He said he was asked to look at YSS and see if it is the kind of group that can be of assistance to the FS. He said he believes YSS is very well positioned to serve in this capacity. He said the focus of the collaborative transcends NEPA as they have a long-term interest in the future of the forest. He also observed that YSS is an interest-based group. He shared with the group the results of the assessment he did in December. He said interviewees offered the following recommendations:

- Decide if YSS is to be an independent, self-governing organization
- Decide if YSS works at the policy or project levels or both
- Focus on action, not just information sharing

Focus areas offered during the interviews included:

- Identify and remove administrative & policy barriers
- Identify and secure sources of funding
- Provide collaboratively derived information to FS for decision-making
- Provide unified input into local, state, & federal legislative processes
- Maintain strong public outreach regarding issues
- Keep FS focused on task and timeline
- Identify and promote actions to increase the resilience of the forest and communities to future wildfire threats

Mr. Severson shared general information about collaboration and then spoke to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) that was passed in October of 1972. He said YSS meets all three of the conditions under which FACA must be applied as it is a group:

- ✓ With non-federal (or non-exempted) members
- ✓ Is established and utilized by the federal government
- ✓ With the purpose of providing consensus advice and recommendations to the federal government

He went on to say that FACA applies when the FS creates and manages the group, sponsors and/or funds the group, controls or dictates the group's agenda, and other things which all seemed to apply to YSS. The ways in which YSS can become compliant with FACA are to:

1. Disband
2. Apply to the Office of Management and Budget for FACA designation
3. Modify the existing YSS charter to become an independent organization

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Because of the aforementioned, Mr. Severson said he advised the FS that YSS must become an independent organization if they wish to continue to exist. Applying for FACA designation is a very tedious process and results in an organization that is constantly under scrutiny for compliance.

Confirmation of YSS Boundaries – Discussion of Short-term and Long-term Focus and Relationship with the Stanislaus National Forest:

Mr. Severson said the first issue for the group to consider is whether they should keep the same boundaries and scale or modify it to focus on the Rim Fire burn area. He asked Ms. Lott to guide the discussion.

It was agreed the Rim Fire will likely be the primary focus for a while, but the other areas within the YSS boundaries also need attention. It was suggested the group consider expanding the area to Highway 108 and the Stanislaus River. A member said YSS transcends the Rim Fire.

The question of whether to keep Yosemite within the boundaries was resolved as it was determined it is important to do so, even though the park's personnel limitations make it difficult for them to participate on a regular basis.

A member said he wanted to return to the question of YSS becoming an independent group as he felt somewhat blindsided by the concept. Ms. Lott asked Mr. Severson to address the concerns.

Mr. Severson said it is his recommendation that the group become independent because of the concerns regarding FACA. Even though some of the "when does FACA not apply" thresholds seem to be met by YSS, there is no question that the thresholds for FACA applying are clearly met by YSS.

Strategic Deliverables-Organization, Governance Structure, and Fiscal Responsibilities:

Mr. Severson said the group really needs a Steering Committee.

Supervisor Skalski was asked if the FS was backing out of participation in YSS. She said the FS will be involved, but will have to distance themselves from the governance of the group, especially in light of the NEPA process, but also because of FACA. She agreed to let YSS continue to use the FS facilities.

Ms. Severson said a group like YSS needs to establish funding for the organization. Ms. Lott said some initial funding can come through the National Forest Foundation grant being administered through the Tuolumne River Trust. Mr. Severson said he met with Mr. Butch Blazer the USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. He would like to come out and meet with YSS and the Tribes and might be willing to identify some funds to assist YSS. YSS and the FS need to follow-up with this connection.

Ms. Lott asked members what direction the group would like to take the structure of the organization. Tuolumne River Trust volunteered to be the fiscal agent.

Mr. Severson shared the kind of things a Steering Committee might be involved in such as:

- Setting agendas
- Managing meeting content
- Working with subcommittees

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- Approving expenditures and working with the fiscal agent
- Identifying a contact point for the organization

Ms. Lott said a workplan has to be developed and members need to agree on priorities they wish to address at least for the first year.

A member asked what size is recommended for a Steering Committee. Mr. Severson said about twelve is good, but he has seen up to 22 in a larger geographical area. There should be enough people to represent diverse interests.

Ms. Lott said one thing that is important is that the larger group believes the Steering Committee is representing their interests. A member asked what the process would be for selecting a Steering Committee. Ms. Lott responded that it can be done in a variety of ways, but hopefully if members volunteer they will be offering a long term commitment. The FS agreed to provide teleconferencing if it is needed by YSS.

Member who volunteered to serve on the Steering Committee included:

Mike Albrecht
Jerry Jensen
Nathan Graveline
John Buckley
Allen Johnson
John Amodio
Mike Vroman
Jennifer Sorensen
Sherri Brennan
Bill Haigh
Scott Tangenberg
Jim Phelan
Jim Maddox
Jim Dambacher

Mr. Severson said he would be available to assist with the first meeting. He mentioned that they should identify what can be done with in-kind and what type of support they wish to pay for. He added they should not be shy about asking for resources. He said they will probably want some facilitation and project coordination.

The group talked about applying for grants. Mr. Severson urged them to think outside-the-box, especially while the Rim Fire has the attention nationally. Ms. Lott urged that members are careful as they look for funds that they do not compete for the same funds for YSS that other members may be trying to acquire for their own organizations.

Mr. Buckley offered a maximum donation of \$1,000 from CSERC to assist with initial costs that will form the groundwork for soliciting more funds.

Ms. Lott mentioned the need to update the YSS charter. She noted while some may not see the importance of the charter, it is the document that is designed to keep the group on course. It is also a resource for non-members to understand what YSS is and what the group's mission and goals are.

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Mr. Severson noted that Ms. Lott has agreed to continue facilitation and coordination, as desired by YSS. He also said there will be times when representatives of the group may need to travel to get the message across and ask for resources. He cautioned the group that the window of opportunity is probably no more than 3-4 years for rallying resources in response to the Rim Fire.

A member noted it will be important moving forward to be able to identify what the FS sees as needs so these needs can be communicated when YSS looks for funding. Needs for SPI and Hetch Hetchy should also be identified. Mr. Tangenberg was asked to gather the needs from the FS and provide it for use by YSS.

A member said it will be important for the group to vocalize their support of the EIA. He continued that YSS should build a strong case that they support what the FS proposes. Composing a letter supporting FS efforts was discussed. It was noted there should also be a focus on lessons learned in regards to successful treatment demonstrated within the burn area.

Marketing and public relations efforts were raised as important concerns. The idea of tracking “progress” rather than “success” was mentioned. Mr. Severson underscored the importance of making sure the process is solid. He said that is why the charter is so important. He said the charter should be fluid and should be reviewed annually.

The group returned to the conversation about the geographic scope of YSS. A member noted if the group expands into Calaveras County they will have to think about how to benefit that portion of the region, as well. He said it may make things more complicated than is beneficial at this time.

Ms. Lott summarized some of the activities she heard members suggest that could be considered moving forward such as:

- Seeking funding for Rim Fire specific uses
- Providing pro-active support through things such as “letters of support”
- Organizational activities to help with the functioning of YSS
- Internal financing issues such as developing an operational budget, workplan, and identifying resources
- Developing marketing and public relations-type tools to increase awareness and standing
- Identifying ways to apply proactive defensive measures to non-burned areas

Timing – Meeting Calendar:

The group decided it would be best to convene the Steering Committee as soon as possible. The date of Monday, February 3rd from 1pm-4pm, was chosen. The meeting will be held at the FS Supervisor’s Office Conference Room. Mr. Buckley volunteered to coordinate putting together an agenda with the rest of the Steering Committee. Ms. Lott will assimilate the materials and distribute them.

Ms. Lott called for a formal motion to reorganize YSS as an independent organization.

Motion: A motion and a second were heard to reorganize YSS as an independent organization. The motion passed unanimously.

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It was suggested the 3rd Friday of February be held as a tentative date for a meeting of the larger YSS Collaborative.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Discussion:

Supervisor Skalski introduced Mr. Jim Branham of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the other guests to collaborative members. Mr. Branham said the SNC board authorized one million dollars of Prop 84 funding for Rim Fire recovery efforts. He shared information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). He said their goal is to move the money into projects as soon as possible. The next board meeting is in March and he would like to have project ideas ready to present at that time.

Additional potential funders were introduced. Mr. Peter Perrine was noted there are CA Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission funds that may be able to be utilized to support restoration efforts. One of the things they are looking at are riparian corridors and efforts that go forward long-term. There may also be support from the California Conservation Corp. It was noted their labor efforts have been used in the past to build fencing. Mr. Vance Russell said the National Forest Foundation may also be able to provide support and may help leverage/match other funds. It was noted they do not get a lot of proposals from California and they are very supportive of collaborative efforts. There are possibilities of matching funds up to \$100,000. Projects must benefit a national forest.

Mr. Branham continued that the Prop 84 funds must be used for public benefit and improvement of watershed health. Use of these funds triggers CEQA. However, because this is considered an emergency, it may provide greater latitude to work under CEQA exemption.

A member asked whether funds might be available to fund NEPA and/or CEQA activities. Mr. Branham said there are funds available. He noted if there are very good projects that need this work there are ways to work this in to the funding opportunities. However, SNC's goal is to move the money into actual projects as soon as possible. He said SNC's board meets quarterly and the next meeting is in March, followed by a meeting in June. SNC will be working closely with the FS, the county, and they are really looking forward to input from YSS. The point of contact for YSS is Mr. Chris Dallas. Funds can be awarded to public agencies, Tribes, and 501c3 organizations.

Concerns were raised by a member about inadequate access to water to help mitigate dust from roads while work is being done. Supervisor Skalski said this issue is being addressed within the EIS. Another member noted the fire is a poster child for portraying the need for watershed protection and the effect of the current sedimentation.

Mr. Branham responded to a member's belief that money should be put toward biomass efforts by saying that is something SNC would have interest in, as well.

A member said he would like SNC to better define the restrictions on what the funds can be used for. Mr. Branham said SNC does not want to be so specific as to limit the thinking that goes into this. He gave some possible examples such as restoration of roads and culverts, reforestation efforts, grazing issues around sensitive areas, and terrestrial and aquatic habitat restoration.

Members gave additional suggestions such as replacing fencing that was existing pre-fire and restoring the ditch system used for both cattle and wildlife. Another member noted stream restoration and recovery efforts as important as there are so many miles of denuded stream

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banks. Also suggested were biomass efforts to reduce fuel and produce products. It was noted the focus should be to save what is left and restore the rest.

A member observed that unmaintained plantations are not the long-term answer. Supervisor Skalski said the FS is looking at lessons learned through this fire and are working with their scientists to develop better pathways for the future.

Mr. Branham said there will need to be an application for the SNC funds. However, it is important for concepts to be discussed with SNC first. They would like it to be a very collaborative process. The funds generally need to be encumbered within two years and expended by 2017.

It was noted CA State Parks may have funding available for Off Highway Vehicle recreation efforts.

A question was asked regarding NEPA. Mr. Branham said because the projects will be on FS land, NEPA has to be a component of the process. For SNC purposes, CEQA must also be done.

A concern was raised about how funds would be received for projects and if expenses had to be submitted to SNC for reimbursement. Mr. Branham said they have some ability to provide some funds in advance.

A member asked if the EIS goes into an appeal process if that would be problematic for SNC funds. Mr. Branham said that would constitute a real challenge.

The group thanked all of the potential funders and committed to working on project ideas.

Conclusion:

Ms. Lott noted that YSS is a very committed group and they are very grateful for the opportunity to work with potential funders. Supervisor Skalski thanked the YSS members for their commitment and offered special thanks to those who stepped up to participate in the Steering Committee.

Next YSS General Meeting:

Tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 21, 2014

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Allen Johnson	SouthWest InterFace Team	Present
Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	Present
Bob Brennan	PL/Alternate	
Brain Wayland	SPI Alternate	
Brandon Sanders	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Present
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	Present
Jeff Redoutey	BMM/Alternate	
Jennifer Sorensen	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians	Present

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Stephanie Suess	CRRMWI/Alternate	
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	Present
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	Present
Jim Maddox	Tuolumne County Sportsmen/Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	Present
Jim Phelan	Tuolumne-Mariposa Resources Advisory Council	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
John Gray	TC/Alternate	
John Romena	Buena Vista Biomass Power	
Jon Sturtevant	Sierra Club – Tuolumne Group	Present
Kamran Rasheed	PG&E Alternate	
Karl Dambacher	DC Alternate	Present
Kelly Bearden	SWIFT Alternate	
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
Lindsay Mattos	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	
Lindsey Meyers	CSERC Alternate	
Mandy Vance	SNC Alternate	Present
Matt Waverly	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Michael Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/ Stanislaus Trail Bike Association	Present
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	Present
Mike Albrecht	TuCARE	Present
Mike Horvath	SFPUC/Natural Resources	Present
Missy Marino	TCRCD Alternate	
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
Paul Maben	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Sasha Farkas	TCFB Alternate	
Scott Tangenberg	USFS Alternate	Present
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	Present
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	Present
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	Present
Stuart Crook	Permitee/Landowner	
Susan Skalski	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Todd Miller	Blue Mountain Minerals	Present
Vicki Albrecht	TC/Alternate	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	Present

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	Present
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Pam Baltimore	USFS
Gary Severson	High Point Resources LLC
Mike Krol	AWF
Gary Severson	High Point Resources, LLC
Jerry Martinez	BLM
Jim Roehl	Tuolumne Me-Wuk Tribal Council
Will Dutra	TMWTC
Chris Dallas	SNC
Bev Shane	TC
Maria Benech	USFS
Margaret Dowd	Mariposa County Resident
Marty Gmelin	USFS
Rob Griffith	USFS