



## Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative General Membership Meeting Summary May 19, 2017

### **FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:**

1. Schedule a field trip to visit reforestation sites.
2. VC to meet with Mr. Koepele regarding possible grant opportunities.
3. FS and VC to put together joint press release regarding road closures that may affect hunters.
4. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of authoring article on SNC & WCB projects.
5. USFS to provide presentation of projects still in need of funding.
6. Set up meeting with YSS representatives, Ms. Benech, and the PSWRS to further discuss reforestation monitoring/research. (on hold pending application for funding by research partners)
7. Continue efforts to promote LLPP through Senator Feinstein's office.
8. Investigate grant opportunity as suggested by Mr. Brink.

### **MEETING GOALS:**

- To hear presentations/updates on current forest-related issues & NDRC
- Discussion and possible next steps regarding LLPP

### **SUMMARY:**

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Chair Trott opened the meeting and welcomed all.

#### **Current and Potential Grant Status:**

Mr. Seth Connolly reported on behalf of TRT and distributed an update of the current grants. He said the two current NFF grants are concluding. TRT will be reapplying for NFF grants. The NFF funded volunteer program planted approximately 200 acres of trees with about 20,000 trees. They were planted using a variety of planting techniques.

Regarding the implementation grant through SNC, Ms. Maria Benech said there definitely are some road issues so personnel will have to walk into some areas. Some of the meadows identified for restoration last fall have extreme erosion damage from this winter. The Wildlife Conservation Board grant will mainly involve planning this year, but there are some implementation pieces, as well. This grant ends in 2020. Under the WCB there are projects for meadow restoration, deer habitat, culvert replacements, aspen thinning, guzzlers, and owl structures. There was a proposal to the Mule Deer Foundation for \$300,000 to increase acreage of deer habitat that should be announced in August.

The Chair noted new requirements for biomass requiring increasing percentages of High Hazard Zone materials. Through efforts by Acting Supervisor Scott Tangenberg, the Forest got more of the Rim Fire footprint added to the High Hazard Zone.

Chair Trott noted through the RAC grant YSS was successful in getting \$5,000 for facilitation services and the FS identified another \$5,000 to add to it. Chair Trott worked with Ms. Ann Denton to get the long form completed and the grant agreement sent to TRT for signature.

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

A few other grants were applied for. YSS/TRT submitted a 1,000-acre concept proposal utilizing GTR-220 practices under the Cal Fire GGRF grant program, but it was not invited for second round consideration. Mr. Marty Gmelin said it was going to focus on an area called Looney as part of the 2 Mile NEPA. The proposal was for 1,000 acres for a crew to do early wildlife surveys, a road package, prepping, selling, and administering the sale. It was reported the application scored very high, but the funder wanted a larger area project. The FS said there was no way to accomplish a larger project within the 24-month period the grant money had to be spent by. AS Tangenberg suggested Mr. Patrick Koepele should let CAL FIRE know the timeframe is not practical for larger project acres. Mr. Mike Albrecht said, in the future, the FS should talk to timber operators as they would like to mobilize more operators. An opportunity like 3,000 acres would give folks a chance to expand operations.

Ms. Benech said the FS also submitted a Rim Fire reforestation concept proposal to the Cal Fire GGRF grant program and was invited to the next round. The request was for \$3.9M for about 2,000 acres.

Vice-Chair Nathan Graveline said the CDFW Prop One Grant might be a place to apply for a project. Mr. Michael Pickard suggested putting in for a SNC Forest Health grant. SNC can award up to \$500,000.

The Chair asked VC Graveline to meet with Mr. Koepele to determine what grant/s to apply for. Mr. Pickard said SNC can do the CEQA. SNC also has \$75,000 grants for planning.

Mr. Steve Brinkley said every national forest has at least 10,000 acres of backlogged burning. He suggested considering a Good Neighbor Agreement with CAL FIRE and applying for a grant. AS Tangenberg said staff is not the limitation, rather the burning windows. Mr. John Buckley said he attended a meeting in Sonoma and there was a presentation highlighting burn windows are not fully utilized. AS Tangenberg said it is not just the air window, but moisture and temperature windows, as well.

### **Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition Project – Locations for Watershed Resilience Pillar:**

Mr. Elliot VanderKolk said there has been a formal kickoff. They are working towards getting feedback on locations for reforestation projects. The biomass removal and reforestation have more flexibility on location of projects. Public meetings are scheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup> at the Forest Headquarters in Sonoma and June 14<sup>th</sup> at the Groveland Community Center. Ms. Benech added there are a number of opportunities to choose where to locate projects, but they need to be guided by the four different reforestation methods outlined in the EIS.

Mr. Buckley said the FS has so many conditions and specifications they must juggle for successful reforestation. He recommended YSS defer to the judgement of the forest staff for project locations.

Chair Trott said it would be helpful if the FS brought back suggested locations for feedback from YSS.

AS Tangenberg asked if YSS still wants the FS to proceed with the four prescriptions. Mr. Albrecht said the FS should find Site 1A ground first to assure projects are successful. Mr. Buckley added there is not a simple answer, but high site areas should be the first consideration. He said YSS and the FS did not assume equal acreage in each alternative in each year. However, there is a legal commitment from the ROD to give fair and equal effort to the four alternatives. YSS also wanted to determine what could be learned from the four

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

different planting types. He added the non-chemical options are less likely to work because of how long it is taking to get the planting done. Considering everything, though, YSS needs the FS to follow their legal commitments. Originally there was herbicide use in the preferred planting alternative (Alternative C), but Supervisor Jeanne Higgins thought there should be a non-herbicide alternative so it was changed. If there are areas that can go forward earlier without herbicide, then those should be done as soon as possible.

Mr. Brink said there is a site specific EIS on 25,000 acres and HUD is only funding 4,500 acres. He questioned why HUD is requiring any more environmental work. Mr. VanderKolk said HUD is adopting the full EIS along with a new public noticing process. The public notice is out and available for the 30-day comment period. NEPA should be done by mid-July.

Mr. Albrecht wondered why the FS is using one-year-old stock when planting instead of using two-year-old stock. Mr. Gmelin said using older stock doubles planting costs and tree costs. Ms. Benech said success of planning is really, about vegetation control.

The Chair asked if anyone would like to visit planted acres, perhaps during the July meeting time. He said YSS should look at what YSS has advocated. Members agreed this would be useful.

Mr. VanderKolk said SNC is still working out interagency agreements for approximately \$40M in funding. They are also working to get the first feasibility study consultant on board for biomass. NEPA and CEQA issues are being worked on and HUD still must adopt the NEPA. They hope to get a waiver from the state.

Ms. Benech said approximately 25,000 acres are targeted and they hope the public and YSS can help determine locations. They cannot spend HUD money where other funds are being spent because of accounting rules, and those will be the only locations excluded from choice.

Ms. Benech said it is more expensive to plant in clumps and groups than in rows and explained why. Additional planning is needed to address the planting schemes and additional crew costs to set up the planting.

Approximately 1000 acres were planted this year, 2,000 acres are planned for next year, and 3-4,000 acres the following year. The desire is to plant 7,000-8,000 acres over the next four years. There is an opportunity for YSS to help find funding for additional reforestation. She noted the weather has been impacting site prep and adds to the costs.

### **Tree Mortality and Salvage Plans:**

Mr. Dave Horak said the FS started green sale logging and are still fighting wet conditions. "Designation by Prescription" (DxP) is a new treatment mechanism where trees are not marked in advance of the thinning operation. (At a recent NFF conference, a silviculturist said this is a method of designating trees for removal by describing the desired result of the treatment; for example, retain 60 percent basal area. Benefits – This method is far more efficient and saves a great deal of time and money that would be used on the preparatory work of designating individual trees for removal. Concerns - This method relies heavily on subjective decisions made by the contractor. If a contractor is experienced with the landscape and familiar with the project goals, this may be a good option. The more complex a treatment goal is, the less likely a designation by prescription will offer specific enough guidance.) The FS is trying this on the Tommy Wright sale which was approved under a Farm Bill CE.

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

There is a salvage sale on McKay's Road that Poston Logging is merchandising as firewood. On Ferretti Road, there is a project with the county to remove trees and send them to the County sort yard in Chinese Camp for use by Ultrapower.

AS Tangenberg said FS funds are supposed to be obligated by June 1<sup>st</sup> or funds can be moved to other regions. They are hoping funds will become available from other regions. Mr. Horak added they are still trying to get Ultrapower to buy more cull wood. The FS is going to meet with Ultrapower. Mr. Horak said some unmarketable materials are getting chipped and some get left. They have been leaving a lot more piles unburned for Ultrapower.

The Arnold CE is almost complete and the FS will be attempting to do a cooperative biochar demonstration. (Biochar is charcoal used as a soil amendment. Biochar is a stable solid, rich in carbon, and can endure in soil for thousands of years.) The chips will go into side dump trailers to be made into biochar and then will come back in bags. They will spread the biochar as a soil amendment on about 40 acres and evaluate the results. They are also finishing a salvage operation along Highway 4.

Mr. Horak said one of things that has slowed them down recently is they received a Freedom of Information ACT request from the Center for Biodiversity. They requested anything the FS has on file regarding tree mortality. AS Tangenberg said the Center's issue is they say the FS did not do a significant amount of new NEPA to address the significant amount of emergency hazard tree removal. The FS said, the reason is, this is an emergency. The Center is concerned the FS is logging the whole forest in the name of tree mortality and public safety. The order is also for the Sierra Forest. The Center requested expedited processing.

Mr. Buckley said from mortality there were 50M board feet produced last year, but new major pulses this year have not yet been observed. The FS said the Reynolds sale this year produced 9M board feet and was the biggest green offering. There have been 11M board feet in salvage. There is a definite slowdown of the biggest mortality patches. The FS is going to prep Wolf Borough on the Calaveras District. They are trying to work on some Good Neighbor Agreements on county road projects with CAL FIRE.

### **Forest Plan Revision:**

AS Tangenberg said the Forest has not heard they are to stop work on the Forest Plan Revision, but they have not been told to start work. They are doing pre-assessment work on Wild and Scenic Rivers, for example, and data clean-up. They are also formulating a public engagement strategy for the public at large. They are still waiting for permission from the DC office to formally start the revision process. The Forest Plan revision usually is good until the next plan is completed. It is supposed to be 10-15 years, but the current plan has been in place since 1991.

### **Bark Beetle Epidemic Outlook:**

AS Tangenberg said although this was a record water year, the FS does not expect beetle mortality to end although they do expect smaller areas of increased mortality. Severe cold can kill the beetles, but that did not happen. There needs to be sustained periods of below -20 degrees and that is not usual at the lower elevations in any year. The vigor of the trees should improve with the increased moisture, but when thousands of beetles attack a single tree, no tree can survive. The trees starting to fade were dying months ago and now it is the surface expression of roots that died.

Some people say there is some success with pheromone treatments and/or splat treatment. (According to Foothill-Sierra Pest Company, Splat Verbenone is not effective as a stand-alone

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

treatment against the Western Pine Beetle. It has been shown to be ineffective against this species of beetle, over a three-year period, and its effectiveness against even the Mountain Pine Beetle is inconsistent.) The FS is not treating trees, but individual homeowners can try. Watering can help.

Some prescribed burns have been authorized and some extra precautions are in place to help protect green trees. CAL FIRE is still enforcing standing dead trees. Ms. Pauline Turski said in Groveland there are more Ponderosa Pines and an expert from Berkeley said splat does not work on Ponderosa Pines. Carbaryl is what is sprayed on Ponderosas according to Mr. Gmelin. (According to Colorado State Forest Service, based on the tested residual of materials registered for preventive bark beetle spraying, treatment needs to be done between May 1 and July 15 on an annual basis during years when the risk of beetles is high.)

Mr. Brink asked if the FS can direct resources to fallen trees on trails. AS Tangenberg said trails are in the third tier. However, trailheads are a higher priority.

Mr. Brink said during the Gap Fire last year, fire crews did backfire burns. However, even though the burns were low intensity burns, they still killed the trees. He said it seems the FS should cut into some trees after prescribed burn to see if trees survived the burn.

Chair Trott said he has been observing cedar trees dying from the base of the crown up. Mr. Gmelin said the Cypress Beetle and fungus could be the problems. The Cypress Beetle is taking out already drought-weakened trees. Mr. Buckley said there may be a pathogen at work, as well, as not all dying cedars are in drought conditions. Mr. Gmelin said the Cedar Beetle does not have the ability to kill trees in the absence of drought.

### **Forest Road Closure Update:**

Ms. Benech said the FS is not sure how many roads are damaged as they have not been able to get to all of them yet to assess them. They have closed several roads. Some recreation sites are closed if the access roads are closed. They did re-establish administrative access on Cottonwood Road. They are meeting to try to establish more access. There are 1,300 road damage sites identified to date on the Stanislaus.

Mr. Brink asked if the region got instructed to buy down their trust fund accounts. AS Tangenberg said this forest has very few trust fund dollars and he does not know if funds can be used for road repair. He noted Ms. Jeanne Higgins, and her boss Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon, are visiting next week to assess storm damage.

Current road closure orders say no access of any kind is permitted on the roadway. VC Graveline said he is concerned about hunters' access. AS Tangenberg said orders will change as improvements are made. VC Graveline said he would like a joint press release to alert hunters who are getting tags.

Mr. Joe Meyers said the federal Torque Claims Act holds federal government responsible for federal roads whether the public is driving, walking, or biking, on them.

### **Other:**

Mr. Meyers said in Yosemite Park there are some roads opening and closing based on weather. There is no estimate on when Tioga Road will open. In 1982-83 Tioga Road opened on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Some areas such as Tuolumne Meadows has the highest snowpack recorded. Mariposa Grove will be closed until fall. Roads are supposed to be finished with repairs before Memorial Day.

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

AS Tangenberg suggested having Mr. Gyant meet with YSS in conjunction with a field trip. He will let the chair know his availability.

Chair Trott presented Ms. Lott with a gift to acknowledge her provision of refreshments at meetings.

Mr. Mike Damaso requested a flag salute to open YSS meetings. Ms. Lott said she will add that to future agendas.

### **Next YSS General Meeting:**

**Tentatively July 21, 2017 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. It may be a field mtg with Bernie Gyant, Deputy Regional Forester.**

### MEETING ATTENDANCE

#### Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	
Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	
Jeff Redoutey	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	Present
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Julia Stephens	CSERC/Alternate	
	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
Scott Gelfand	Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp	
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	
Karl Dambacher	DC/Alternate	
Dwight Follien	Groveland Trail Heads	
Dusty Vaughn	GTH/Alternate	
Michael Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/ Stanislaus Trail Bike Association/4x4 in Motion	Present
Alisha Lomeli	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Stuart Crook	Permitee/Landowner	
Bob Brennan	PL/Alternate	
Pauline Turski	Pine Mountain Lake Association Board of Directors	Present
Joe Powell	PMLA/Alternate	
Mike Horvath	SFPUC/Natural Resources	
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	
Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Jon Sturtevant	Sierra Club – Tuolumne Group	Present

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

	SCTG/Alternate	
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	
Jeb Brooks	SPI Alternate	Present
Bailey Hunter	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	
Willie Dutra	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	Present
John Gray	TC/Alternate	
Mike Albrecht	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	Present
Vicki Albrecht	TuCARE/Alternate	
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	
Sasha Farkas	TCFB/Alternate	
Lindsay Mattos	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	Present
Jim Phelan	Tuolumne County Sportsmen	
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	
Patrick Koepele	TRT/Alternate	
Seth Connolly	TRT/Alternate	Present
Jim Maddox	Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	

### LIASON MEMBERS

Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	Present
	NPSYNP/Alternate	
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Present
Randi Jorgensen	SNC/Alternate	
Allen Johnson	SouthWest InterFace Team	
Scott Tangenberg	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Ann Denton	USFS/Alternate	
Marty Gmelin	USFS/Alternate	Present
Maria Benech	USFS/Alternate	Present

### COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	
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### OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
Kevin Moss	TRT
Matt Waverly	PG&E
Elliott VanderKolk	SNC