



## Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Steering Committee Meeting Summary July 18, 2014 1:00p.m. – 4:00p.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.
9. Update on website consultant selection and construction.
10. TRT to report on result of NFF ask for match for Wilkinson/TRT funds.
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 GOALS:**

- Approve website RFP for distribution
- Hear Restoration Workgroup update report & Presentation by Dr. Peter Stine
- Receive Project Workgroup update

### **SUMMARY:**

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

Chair Albrecht initiated self-introductions and recognized Dr. Stine and Ms. Maggie Dowd. Comments from the Chair were heard and recognition of the youngest participant and oldest participant were given. The Chair shared that YSS is an entity going somewhere and that where it goes is dependent upon those whom are steering the effort.

#### **II. Process Items:**

Chair Albrecht asked if there were any changes to the June 13, 2014 meeting summary. None were heard.

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

Chair Albrecht called attention to the proposed amendment to the YSS Communication Protocol.

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**Agreement:** There was agreement to amend the protocol as proposed.

### **III. Follow-up Items:**

Mr. Rob Griffith reported on the June 16th field visit service day with the “number two person” on the President’s Council on Environmental Quality, Mr. Greczmiel. He was the person responsible for the expedited Environmental Assessment. Mr. Griffith said Mr. Greczmiel appreciated conversations with YSS members and the insights they provided.

Chair Albrecht said the bus held 45 people. Mr. Chad Hanson was said to advocate for not cutting down any trees. Stanislaus Forest Fire Chief Chris Schow provided a rebuttal in regards to firefighting safety. The Chair said while there was a good exchange, there was never a vetting of the position that there is no good ecological reason for removing burned trees. VC Buckley clarified that there is only a limited amount of scientific study that has focused on salvage. He noted there have not been enough studies about fuel loading and funding for that type of research has not been available. However, there are studies that show there are varying ranges of damage from heavy equipment. He said the level of scientific literature is not equal for both positions.

Dr. Stine said Mr. Hanson is coming from a wildlife and snag retention perspective and certain habitat require big stands of snags and burned landscape. He said it is more complicated as some of these forests have had 5-10 times as many trees as should be there and therefore there are that many more snags that lead to fuel loading. He added some research is going on studying Yosemite Park and FS landscape treatment. There is also a set of research on the table that researchers hope will get some funding.

### **IV. Restoration Workgroup Update and Presentation by Dr. Peter Stine:**

Finance Officer John Amodio said Dr. Stine was asked to present to the SC as part of the work of the restoration workgroup. He said YSS has been successful in getting small amounts of funding, but still need to focus on significant funding. There needs to be a broad-based proposal to have our delegation’s support. He credited Mr. Steve Brink as introducing Dr. Stine to the group. The workgroup is putting together an approach for landscape restoration.

Dr. Stine provided an extensive presentation entitled, “Landscape Management Demonstration Areas. The entire presentation will be sent as a pdf with the meeting summary.

It was noted there are faculty at UCM who are interested in forests as related to water. Mr. Chris Trott observed the management strategy could easily be applied to green natural stands, but wondered how it would be applied to the Rim Fire landscape. Dr. Stine responded that the focus was on green forests, but there is no reason why burned forests could not utilize the strategy. He said it would be an approach with heterogeneity as to which snags are left, where planting begins and where there will be no planting.

Dr. Stine posed the question of what to do with reforestation efforts. He said it is an interesting challenge as some of the landscape may not come back to conifer forest without intervention. He suggested looking at it as a landscape whether the trees are alive or dead.

FO Amodio said the regional forest is interested in a landscape approach. One of the biggest impediments is that forests are understaffed so to take on something like this, there needs to be a collaborative ready to engage and then seek supplemental funding. Dr. Stine commented that there has to be some dispensation relieving the FS of some of the existing requirements. He

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said he and his colleagues are exploring places to do this as we speak. He noted Mr. Brink is in the forefront of recommending something like this be done.

VC Buckley said YSS was talking about landscape management before the fire, noting the pace and scale need to be stepped up. He said the Stanislaus Watershed between Highway 108 and Highway 4 would be a great place for a demonstration landscape.

Chair Albrecht said there is an experimental forest on the Stanislaus, but it is only 200-300 acres. This needs to be done on a larger scale. He wondered where the Sierra Nevada Framework fits in with what Dr. Stine envisions.

Dr. Stine said he does not speak for the national forests, but he thinks the framework has outlived its usefulness. He said it is time for a new approach. He does not know if there will ever be a Sierra-wide concept again. He opined that each forest will learn from others and plan for each particular forest. The Sierra Nevada Framework was based on science that is 15 years old or older. It was the best it could be at the time. He said there is a lot more insight into the complexity of forests than before.

Ms. Ann Denton said during reforestation, the FS has excluded fire from the picture. However, now there are deep, dark and dense fuel spots everywhere. Dr. Stine said the approach he presented is different as it looks at the whole landscape, however that is designed. He said one still has to keep in mind what needs to be done for fishers and spotted owls, but at a landscape level. The biggest challenge for the fisher is the lack of rest areas. Foresters mark those trees to remove. Chair Albrecht interjected that they have, but they do it a lot less than before. Dr. Stine said there has been a tendency to remove those trees, but really more of those trees need to be kept in the system.

A member said he has heard about resting trees, but wonders how long a fisher rests. Dr. Stine said they move around daily over large areas and need a new place each day.

Another member noted that reforestation experiments have been done on small areas in other places, but what about at the size of the Rim Fire? Dr. Stine said there is a need for a variety of sizes of areas. Naturally, there would be blow-outs from a few acres to hundreds of acres. He said one should look at the features of the landscape and what those features suggest the area would support and then add a lot of variability to it.

Ms. Dowd said Dr. Stine's group is just one research station. She said there must be other research areas that YSS can connect with. She asked Dr. Stine if he could be the liaison to the other research stations. Dr. Stine said a core research team needs to be built, but there is also a need to reach out into specialty research areas. He said his team can be a conduit.

FO Amodio noted that it is his belief that if one looks at management on a larger scale there are a lot more options than when you focus on a small scale. He said the thing that came home to him is if you are talking about reforestation, there is very little money available for a large number of forests. He said the workgroup will be coming back in September with some recommendations. He also encouraged members to contact the workgroup with comments.

### **V. Approval of Website RFP for Distribution/Action:**

Ms. Lott noted the RFP had been developed and with approval from the SC, it will be circulated with response dates.

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**Agreement:** The SC approved the RFP and a thirty day turn-around around for circulation and responses.

### **VI. Report on Reforestation Workshop:**

VC Buckley reported on a reforestation technical workshop sponsored by the FS Regional Office and SNC. Presentations were given on what has been done historically. There were discussions regarding opportunities and options and some issues such as climate stresses were highlighted. UC Davis, for example, is now able to model a Ponderosa Pine experiencing a water deficit over decades. The monitoring shows the older trees can survive, but with the prediction of up to three months of drier than historical years young trees will have trouble surviving.

He said there is going to be another workshop in August during which reforestation proposals will be discussed and ultimately a determination made as to which ones might be included in the Reforestation EIS. There is a desire to receive proposals from groups where there is collaboration. It was stated that YSS should put forward a proposal.

VC Buckley said he has put together some ideas and communicated with Mr. Brink, Mr. Nathan Graveline, and others. The question for the SC is whether YSS wants to submit a proposal that aims for a sweet spot. There are going to be groups for no reforestation or the most minimal level. They are going to be putting forward proposals. YSS needs to determine how to provide support for significant reforestation tied to areas that are incinerated. VC Buckley said if there is no planting regime, there is no seed base so there will not be regeneration. Here offered some general concepts as examples:

- Not planting on sites where there are volunteer seedlings
- Restricting planting to low numbers identified for corridors where forage is important
- Reflecting GTR 220 concepts with more seedlings in the bottom of slopes
- Where extensive planting is done, aiming for heterogeneity
- If looking at units or stand, leave one quarter without any seedlings, but make those strategic; plant a quarter of the unit with 3 seedlings in clumps that are 25 feet apart. This results in a variety of survival successes
- Plant a quarter with scattered seedlings 15-25 feet apart. Plant a quarter that is well stocked, making sure there is diversity
- Fire may not come through for a while. Open patchy areas give the opportunity for fire to come through
- Shift from firs to pines and cedars to address shift in climate
- Strategically select class 1 and class 2 sites for priority planting
- There is going to be a lot of debate over herbicides. It is almost certain a reforestation EIS it will be litigated if it includes widespread herbicide. Be strategic in applying spot specific treatment around seedlings where the FS believes it is needed for seedlings to survive
- If there is treatment, wait to do it until the year before prescribed burning so small trees are protected from the burn

VC Buckley said the alternative is, YSS doesn't need to submit a proposal. It could be left to individual groups to do it. However, if YSS puts forward an alternative, it is likely the FS would give it credibility. He posed the question, "If there is a YSS proposal, how is it developed and how does YSS get consensus for it?"

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The deadline for submittal is August 8<sup>th</sup>. The next step after the proposals are submitted on the 8<sup>th</sup> is the workshop on the 18-19 of August. During the workshop, the group will learn about all the proposals and talk about them.

A member said this process should not take the place of YSS putting together a position letter on the alternatives. VC Buckley noted this request is for very technical proposals. The FS will take all the input and compile it and then put it out for public reaction.

There was additional discussion regarding whether YSS should conform to this schedule or develop a proposal on their own schedule for submission to the FS. Concern was expressed about the timeline.

A member said if YSS can pull this off in the timeframe allowed, it would demonstrate a lot to the regional office about the capacity of YSS.

Ms. Lott offered that the SC did not have to consider this as an either or situation, but rather consider doing both things. Submitting a proposal through this technical group does not preclude YSS commenting on alternatives later.

**Agreement:** The SC agreed to review and comment on a proposal developed by VC Buckley, Mr. Graveline, and Mr. Brink. The proposal will be sent to Ms. Lott for distribution with a timeline for comments. A revised draft will be recirculated for final comments and then submitted to VC Buckley for submission on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

### **VII. Project Workgroup Report & Project Funding Status:**

- Discussion on NFF/TRT/Wilkinson Grant – FO Amodio said the Wilkinson family donated the \$12,200 from Rim Fire tee-shirt sales and that money is now held by TRT. TRT developed and submitted a grant to NFF. TRT will contribute \$8,000 and the request to NFF is to match the local funds. This money will be used to support community engagement and volunteer work. TRT should hear in August whether the request is granted. He added that stewardship tourism has been pioneered in San Louis Obispo. There is an advertising campaign encouraging an experience in visiting and volunteering. TRT will be funding exploration of this idea.
- Report on SNC Funding-funding the spring assessment. Experts are coming out for two, two week field times to be funded at \$40,000 by SNC.
- Report on WCB Funding – Mr. Graveline said the big development is TRT has agreed to be the lead group for the grant. CSERC is also going to help. The first activity is to start putting together a list of potential projects. No match is required, but there are CEQA implications in cases where it is determined CEQA is necessary. Things that are clear wildlife benefits should not need CEQA. There will be requests for categorical exclusions for a number of the projects.
- RAC – Ms. Denton said they are working on the agreement with help from TRT. The latest the agreement should be completed is Sept. 30th.
- Report on Spinning Wheel Project Status – Ms. Lott reported on behalf of Mr. Jim Maddox. She said it had been determined a relatively easy and inexpensive solution would address the issues.
- Meadow restoration – Ms. Denton said two meadows at Two Mile, 2N55 and Fahey South, will be contracted for \$80,000. Ms. Mary Moore will be working on Reynolds Meadow. The FS is working on a partnership opportunity through the regional office for eight meadows. There may still be a need for funding from SNC. Separately, the meadow assessment is going to take place in August. The assessment should help determine the highest priorities which

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may mean reprioritization. She said the trickier thing is getting 401 and 404 permitting done. The state is getting more demanding about CEQA rather than just NEPA.

### **VIII. Discuss New Forest Supervisor Orientation:**

Chair Albrecht said a new supervisor has been appointed. Her name is Jeanne Higgins. He will invite her to a meeting.

### **IX. Discuss Rim Fire Anniversary Piece:**

Ms. Lott noted that the Union Democrat will be printing a Rim Fire anniversary piece and that YSS has been asked to provide information for it. Members were asked to email Chair Albrecht with any suggestions.

### **X. Consideration of Draft CA Farm Bill Biomass Grant Letter/Action:**

Mr. Trott said the group talked about this last during the last SC meeting. The BOS sent a letter to Congressman McClintock and Senator Feinstein requesting help in getting some of the money for biomass directed to fires in the west. Part of the money is to establish energy crops on private land. Part is to bring crop residues from the forest or agriculture to make energy. The granting source was funded this year. The matching payment program will give a contractor or owner of biomass assistance to get materials to an energy facility. The date when the work has to be done is problematic. He said one cannot apply for the money until next week, but fuels need to be removed by the end of September. He said he was able to talk Ultrapower into applying to be a qualified facility. They submitted the application last week.

Ms. Sherri Brennan said she spoke with the congressman a couple of times regarding the problem with the timing. He does understand the biofuels will be coming off the land after the deadline. She is expecting to hear a response any day.

There was discussion regarding requesting a specific amount of funding for the Rim Fire area. Ms. Brennan suggested keeping the request focused on catastrophic fires and keep the percentage at 50% so it is more likely the senator can support it.

VC Buckley said he has been following how congress works and he believes YSS does not have lobbyist strength to change the overarching decision. If the FS approves the EIS there is a component of biomass. Somebody needs to remove it and take it to a biomass facility. He continued by posing the question, "How can YSS best assist the local biomass market?" The time for that may not be until there is a decision that references what biomass is targeted.

Chair Albrecht asked if it would be appropriate to write a letter for next year. Mr. Trott offered to draft a letter. It was noted there is also a lot of opportunity for biomass in green forests.

VC Buckley said whatever is drafted needs to be reviewed by everyone to determine if there is anyone who cannot live with it. He added there is a time a letter matters more than others.

**Agreement:** Mr. Trott will draft a letter and Ms. Lott will circulate to the SC for comments.

### **XI. Information about YSS General Membership Field Trip:**

Ms. Lott indicated she will be communicating with YSS members regarding attendance and transportation.

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### **XII. Other:**

Mr. Jerry Fouts commented that there is a unique opportunity for YSS to make a difference as the Rim Fire is still a big deal. This fire was a unique event in the world of fire and YSS is a unique group. He would like to see YSS position themselves by doing a really big demonstration project. The money is not going to come from the FS. He said if YSS is unique enough, political enough, and has the best idea, it might be possible to obtain the money. A demonstration forest would be a great deal, especially in regards how it could help other efforts through documentation of results.

Chair Albrecht commended Mr. Fouts' vision. It was also noted that Mr. Jim Junette and VC Buckley were part of a network piece. Ms. Lott will send out the link.

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

YSS General Meeting: Friday, August 15, 9:30am-3:30pm, Field Trip

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

### **MEETING ATTENDANCE Steering Committee Members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	
Todd Miller	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Jeff Redoutey	BMM/Alternate	
Walter Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon	
Linda Millsbaugh	CSA/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Julia Stephens	CSERC/Alternate	
Jennifer Sorensen	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians of CA	
Stephanie Suess	CRRMWIC/Alternate	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	
Karl Dambacher	GoldRushNews.com	Present
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	
Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Allen Johnson	SouthWest InterFace Team	Present
Kelly Bearden	SWIFT Alternate	
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	Present
John Gray	TC/Alternate	
Mike Albrecht	TuCare	Present
Vicki Albrecht	TuCare/Alternate	
Jim Phelan	Tuolumne County Sportsmen, Inc.	
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
Patrick Koepfle	TRT/Alternate	
Jim Maddox	Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	

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### LIASON MEMBERS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Scott Tangenberg	US Forest Service	
Ann Denton	USFS/Alternate	Present
Marty Gmelin	USFS/Alternate	Present

### COLLABORATIVE STAFF

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting/Facilitator	Present

### OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Rob Griffith	USFS
Jim Junette	US Forest Service
Matt Waverly	Sierra Pacific Industries
Maggie Dowd	Private Citizen/Volunteer
Peter Stine	USFS
Rosemarie Smallcombe	Mariposa Biomass
Steve Smallcombe	Mariposa Biomass
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcycle Association, District 36