



Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative General Membership Meeting Summary September 15, 2017

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of authoring article on SNC & WCB projects.
2. USFS to provide presentation of projects still in need of funding.
3. 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)
4. Continue efforts to promote LLPP through Senator Feinstein's office.
5. Investigate CAL FIRE Greenhouse Grant opportunity suggested by Mr. Brink.

MEETING GOALS:

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

SUMMARY:

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Trott opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He introduced Mr. Kevin Zeman who specializes in Master Stewardship Agreements (MSA). Also introduced was Mr. Todd Ellsworth who is assigned to the Mi-Wok District.

Current and Potential Grant Status:

Mr. Patrick Koepele said work is being done on the fourth of a series of SNC grants. The SNC grant for restoration is wrapping up this summer with the majority of it completed. The Wildlife Conservation Board should be mostly completed next year. Basically, all this work has been done in the Rim Fire footprint. The RAC grant for facilitation was renewed. There is a proposal in with NFF for planting 20,000 trees and trails

Review of 8/14 Field Trip Outcome Including Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA)

Overview and Opportunities:

Chair Trott said participants came away from the field trip with the idea of using a MSA as a vehicle for funding additional work on the forest. Co-Chair Nathan Graveline said the field trip provided a chance to look at the green forest that can be treated. There was broad agreement that viewed areas, that have been treated, are the goal of how the forest should look. Chair Trott said participants looked at areas that were overgrown and in great need of treatment, as well. He said regional staff was frank with YSS that the goal is to get more work done. It was suggested YSS utilize the MSA as a vehicle. Chair Trott said the most intriguing part of the conversation was the concept of a pilot project and secondly increasing pace and scale. Chair Trott said he was surprised by Mr. Bernie Gyant asking how would YSS would like it if the FS just turn part of the forest to YSS to manage? Mr. Gyant said the MSA is a way this could sort of happen. YSS could take on a portion of the forest and do the planning and hire private contractors to supplement forest service employees.

Chair Trott said Mr. Kevin Zeman is an expert on MSAs located on the Calaveras District. Mr. Patrick Koepele said there is a difference between MSA and stewardship work. Mr. Zeman works for the Enterprise Department of the Forest Service out of the Washington office. Enterprise is an entrepreneurial office of the Forest Service.

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An MSA is not a contract. The partner functions as the “contractor” and can perform quality control. The agreement lasts for ten years. All aspects are negotiable and there are no hidden costs. It is used to complete restoration activities on FS lands. The current ten-year life of the agreement is being examined and the FS is considering an increase to 15 to 20 years. Mr. Randy Hanvelt suggested 20-year investments to attract private investment. Mr. Steve Brink said they are advocating for 20 years in the 2018 Farm Bill.

The partner has the ultimate responsibility for timber sales, for example. An MSA is more flexible than a Stewardship Contract. For liability, the partner needs to follow whatever rules govern their particular liability exposure. It is recommended the partner should involve a lawyer. A partner can walk away at any time and the FS closes the MSA out. The FS oversees the project. The FS assigns a project manager.

The FS and the partner can identify high priority project areas. The partner can use state grants to apply as match to federal dollars. Volunteers can also be involved. The partner can use receipts for on-the-ground work in the MSA area. There is a 20% match when the book is closed. Match can be in-kind and/or cash. The agreement is negotiated between the FS and partner.

All types of restoration are allowable. For more information there is a handbook for reference. The Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) is the nuts and bolts of the MSA. A standalone SA contains both, but if there is a decision to add any projects there is a need to do another standalone SA.

Mr. Zeman said there are some great templates available at the Washington Office (WO). All project elements are negotiable. The partner needs a PM, ED, fuels specialist, wildlife biologist, engineer, and agreement administrator. The Forest Service needs the same, plus the District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, and Grants Management Specialist. Once the MSA is signed the partner can develop the SPA and the SPA runs the life of the MSA.

The Wyden Authority can be inserted into a MSA. The WA allows the partner to cross boundaries, for example, from FS to private land. The partner must get approval of the work from the state. The WA allows spending federal money on private land because there is a benefit to FS land.

A Project Proposal must be drafted, and this is usually done by the FS. It is important to make sure the priority level is established. The partner should clearly identify who will be responsible for what and identify gaps. The Project Proposal should be big and estimate acreage. One can go as small as a few acres and as big as a forest. There can be a large area and multiple SPAs. The Project Proposal is used to inform grant applications.

SPA creation includes both Project Managers and the WO and use of the WO template. If there are goods for services included, then one needs to include time for the Contracting Officer (CO) as there is a to go out for bid.

Appendices include the Technical Proposal which is tracked during the ten years. This helps track grants within the MSA. Also included are maps of the forest and project specific maps. This is what the partner uses to go out for subcontracting. One cannot use receipts for funding NEPA. However, a grant or FS appropriated dollars can be used for NEPA.

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Financial plans are the meat of the MSA. The financial plan establishes who pays for what. Project Managers on both sides need to keep this updated. Initially estimates are put in the plan. Product value should also be estimated. In an MSA, multiple subcontractors can be used. There is also an indirect overhead of 10% on some items and none on in-kind tracking.

Mr. Michael Pickard asked about FS match. Mr. Zeman said a 100% contribution can be made by the Partner. The Partner must provide a minimum of a 20% match.

Mr. Buckley observed this is extremely complicated and it will be challenging to take on something at the scope desired. This worked well on the Calaveras as they did something the FS already had on the shelf. YSS wants to do something extra.

Mr. Koepele said YSS is interested in a range of things, some that generate money and some that do not. The goal is to go above and beyond FS baseline work. Mr. Zeman advised starting with a small SPA within a large MSA. Mr. Mike Albrecht asked if the FS wants YSS to do a MSA. Acting Supervisor Tangenberg said yes. A.S. Tangenberg said there are “surprise gifts” bestowed upon the Forest (when other areas don’t use appropriated money within the fiscal year) and the Stanislaus was not prepared to utilize all the offered funds. If there is a MSA in place, the MSA can be modified to use the money in conjunction with the Partner.

The chair asked Mr. Ellsworth to speak to the **Cold Springs Project**. Mr. Ellsworth described the Cold Springs project. He said the impetus for this project is related to mortality and proximity to roads and structures. The FS used the Farm Bill CE. The analysis is done. The CE took approximately 3 months for 2,500 acres. He cited Wright’s Creek as taking six months, so noted the FS has learned how to do the CE faster. The ballpark figure for the Cold Springs project is \$2M.

In response to a question, A.S. Tangenberg said just because there is habitat in the area, that does not disqualify the area from a CE if there is no effect on the habitat. Depending on the complexity of the project, the FS might be comfortable with the two-page form. They check with their specialists to determine if there is anything significant to be concerned about. They can list some minor mitigation tasks. For Farm Bill CEs, there must be collaborative support.

Mr. Buckley asked, if the FS can do this, why isn’t the project approved and being implemented? A.S. Tangenberg said they have already done a number of these projects. However, more than the simplified document will be needed to authorize work on green forest areas. They will need additional surveys and analysis for green forests. There are no FS funds now, but “bluebird” money (referred to earlier as a surprise gift) would more likely be able to be received if there is a vehicle, partner, and projects. Also, if YSS can receive grant funding, YSS could subcontract out the work through the MSA if the FS does not have capacity.

Mr. Albrecht asked what the next steps would be. A.S. Tangenberg said YSS needs to decide if entering into an MSA is desired. Then more specifics will need to be determined. Initial projects would need to be identified.

The chair asked Mr. Marty Gmelin to speak to the **Looney Project**. Mr. Gmelin provided a detailed list of costs for Looney Project. If submitting for Greenhouse Gas money, he said YSS should include all projects the FS has underway and the projects on shelf.

Mr. Hanvelt suggested meeting with the Leadership Team.

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Chair Trott summarized what was discussed. He posed the question as to whether an MSA sounds like a good way to go. He asked if YSS wants to pursue an MSA, and if so, how does YSS want to go about it? Mr. Albrecht said this is the way to go because he doesn't see another way to go. Mr. Junette said there must be a decision about who the partner will be.

Discussion followed and Mr. Jim Dambacher said there is no contract so there is no risk. Mr. Junette suggested thinking about all of Tuolumne County. Mr. Hanvelt supported the MSA. Mr. Dwight Follien said he supports moving forward with the MSA. Mr. Jerry Jensen supports moving forward with the MSA.

Mr. Buckley said there are questions that are complex. There must be a decision as to whether TRT or the county is the Partner. Mr. Buckley said he is struggling about the amount of work that is going to be involved. There is no one being paid to do this work. The LT has been devoting a considerable time, but CSERC does not have the time to take this on. He said we are still talking about doing the Looney Project that was ready to implement in 2012. He added it doesn't feel like YSS is helping the FS increase pace and scale, but rather YSS is helping fund work the FS should be funding. Regarding overlapping ACCG, YSS wouldn't want ACCG coming over into YSS to tell YSS what to do in their area. YSS needs to respect ACCG interests.

Mr. Junette said the money goes into a pot and the fiduciary handles the contracting. NEPA must be followed, but contracting is up to the Partner. The Timber CO would have to administer any timber sale contract.

Mr. Koepele supports moving forward with the MSA. It is complicated, but still a good avenue to pursue. TRT has seed money to pursue seed money.

Ms. Carolyn Lott noted there are enough projects within the YSS boundary without going into another collaborative area. Also, she emphasized the importance of assuring YSS involvement moving forward.

Mr. Brink said YSS should pursue a CAL FIRE greenhouse gas grant such as was done in the Tahoe Basin.

Mr. Buckley noted people at the table today may not be at the table in a few years. It is important YSS does not rely solely on commitments from the people at the table today.

Chair Trott said he is in favor of pursuing a MSA. There are still things that must be sorted out. Whoever the Partner is must make a serious commitment.

Agreement: There was consensus to include all the YSS area and move forward with an MSA, but the Partner needs to be determined.

Mr. Buckley recommended acting to allow the LT, with others who wish to participate, to determine who the Partner should be. It was determined the meeting would be October 2, from 3-5 p.m. at the county building.

USFS Reports:

It was announced Mr. Jason Keikend from the Okanagan Wenatchee Forest will be the new Stanislaus Forest Supervisor. He officially starts October 30th. The Forest Plan Revision is still on the back burner. The FS will probably not start any formal assessments until next spring, but will work on pre-assessment. Rainfall has taken care of much of the fires. The fires have taken

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care of overgrowth with minimal staff. The FS would like to discuss how they address fires at a future YSS meeting.

Ms. Maria Benech said there is a signed agreement with HUD. The FS can now start charging against the HUD grant. The CEQA exemption for the reforestation EIS and RODs should go out early next week.

Chair Trott asked about a field trip to look at the five reforestation alternatives. Ms. Benech said next month will be a good time. Ms. Lott will send out a Doodle poll to help refine dates. Ms. Benech said she can talk about the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) next time. The CCC received \$3M to do work on the Stanislaus starting along the 120 Corridor.

Sacramento Update:

Chair Trott spoke on behalf of Mr. John Amodio who was unable to attend. He reported the State Responsibility Act funding act was cancelled. The agreement was that funding for the SRA would come out of Cap and Trade funds. CALFIRE will be given \$200M for healthy forests. This year the funds mostly go to urban forests and education with a small portion for reforestation.

The Little Hoover Commission develops reports for the governor's office. They have been investigating tree mortality and forest management. The LT have a conference call with the Chair of the Commission on Monday. They are hoping they will be able to make specific recommendations that go onto the governor's office. Mr. Koepele said a new water bond was approved and will be on the ballot in June in the amount of \$7B and may have some funding for watersheds.

SNC Strategic Plan:

Mr. Pickard said SNC is updating its strategic plan. They are working on reassessing the needs of the region. Currently, they are collecting data and divided the effort into different tracks. The first track is looking at stakeholders outside the region. Track Two will focus on in-region partners. Stakeholders can participate via the Wind Tunnel application in early November. There will also be individual meetings likely in January. Stakeholders can also submit comments on the draft SP. Mr. Buckley and Mr. Koepele volunteered to participate via the app.

YSS Boundary/Other:

Mr. Koepele utilized maps to illustrate the current boundary and potential boundaries. Mr. Buckley said realistically if YSS is going to expand to include part of Calaveras County, then YSS should engage with Calaveras County. Mr. Koepele said the extension only adds to the North Fork which includes a little bit of Alpine County. Mr. Graveline suggested cutting out the Alpine County piece.

Agreement: There was consensus to expand the YSS boundary excluding Alpine County. Mr. Seth Connolly will send out a revised boundary map.

Next YSS General Meeting:

Friday, November 17th, 10-2.

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MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
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 Millsbaugh	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	Present
Karl Dambacher	DC/Alternate	
Dwight Follien	Groveland Trail Heads	Present
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	
Mike Horvath	SFPUC/Natural Resources	
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	
Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Jon Sturtevant	Sierra Club – Tuolumne Group	Present
	SCTG/Alternate	
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Jeb Brooks	SPI Alternate	Present
Bailey Hunter	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
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	
Jim Phelan	Tuolumne County Sportsmen	
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	

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Patrick Koepele	TRT/Alternate	Present
Seth Connolly	TRT/Alternate	Present
Jim Maddox	Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	Present

LIASON MEMBERS

Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	Present
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Linda Mazzu	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	Present
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
Randy Hanvelt	TC BOS
Jim Junette	USFS
Todd Ellsworth	USFS
Liz Gregg	CSERC
Kevin Zeman	USFS