



Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative General Membership Meeting Summary November 16, 2018

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of authoring article on SNC & WCB projects and visiting first MSA project.
2. Organize a field trip to see the SNC and WCB projects
3. FS to provide update on beetle infestation and continued damage.
4. Agendize a discussion about 30+” tree diameter felling.
5. Sup. Kuiken to provide small group presentations on priorities and weighting of priorities.

MEETING GOALS:

- Discuss potential projects for funding
- Receive updates on ongoing activities
- Hear presentation on USFS large landscape planning effort

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening, Welcome, Pledge and Introductions:

Chair Graveline led the pledge and then asked for self-introductions.

SPA (Supplemental Project Agreement) Update:

Two Mile will start next spring.

Separately a CAL FIRE grant was awarded and included funding for LIDAR (a detection system that works on the principle of radar but uses light from a laser). The contract has been awarded to buy LIDAR for the entire STF and all of Tuolumne County. The cost of the service in the awarded contract was much lower than anticipated at \$.32 per acre. They are flying the region now. CAL FIRE said if the cost of LIDAR comes in lower than assumed in the grant (\$1 per acre), the remaining funds can be moved to other projects. University of Reno will ground-truth the data. The only part of the forest not included is YNP. Mr. Rob Grasso, YNP, said to be sure check that the contract gives ownership of the data to the awarder.

The other projects funded with the CAL FIRE grant include Granite reforestation, thinning, biomass, burn, and Strawberry Phase Two prescribed burn.

Mr. Chris Trott asked what will be done with all the LIDAR data. The estimate is \$100,000 - \$200,000 for processing and putting the data into a useable format. It is hoped this will be done through the USFS's Remote Sensing Applications Center (RSAC) which is in Salt Lake City. Comments praised YSS's work and the speed at which new funds are being utilized.

CAL FIRE Round Two Initial Report:

Mr. Trott provided a SPA Committee report on projects ideas that have surfaced to date. He said CA SB901 designates funds for forest health projects. This is the same funding source as the \$5M that was awarded from the first round. CAL FIRE wants to see projects that include multiple ownerships. The awards will range from \$750,000-\$10M and awardees have until 2022 to complete the projects. Environmental documentation must be done in the first year.

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On the MSA (Master Stewardship Agreement) side, there are 1,000 acres of Granite reforestation that did not get funded in the first round. There are 250 acres of non-commercial thinning in the Granite plantation. Mr. Trott reported the LT (Leadership Team) discussed the idea of selecting a main road and doing thinning. For example, this could be done along 3NO1 from Long Barn to Cherry Lake. There was discussion regarding whether there could be a categorical exclusion where there are PACs (Protected Activity Center). More research needs to be done to understand where and how categorical exclusions can be used when there are PACs.

Mr. Trott said there are also thinning opportunities within the Rim and Granite footprints. The committee is looking for an additional project that could produce products and money. Regarding the requirement of multiple ownerships, three other groups are interested in partnering in this grant application. One area is Murphy Ranch where the Me-Wuk Tribe has 120 acres of prescribed fire and recently purchased another 80 acres that needs to be cleared of brush and reforested. There are some plantations Sierra Pacific has that need fuel breaks and thinning, biomass removal, and mastication. It was suggested to look for USFS plantations in the same general area. Another potential area is where the Fire Safe Council has put in fuel breaks from Columbia to behind Cedar Ridge to Twain Harte. There are 1,900 acres that need to be retreated to include dead tree removal at the Sierra Outdoor School. The final application is due in January 29th.

Mr. John Buckley said there is a challenge in telling the story of how all these different ideas/projects connect. There is also a need to understand the capacity to get CEQA done. Mr. Trott said they should be finalizing the proposed project package by the end of November.

USFS Large Scale Planning Effort:

Supervisor Jason Kuiken said the questions driving this effort are, "How do we create a resilient landscape on almost 900,000 acres of the STF? How do we increase the pace and scale? How do we prioritize the landscape? What are the new authorities we can use?"

Regarding prioritizing the landscape, one must consider private lands within the forest. Also, which areas have the highest value for the watershed need to be determined. Other considerations are locations of WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) areas, the highest priority wildlife areas, and the highest risks for loss from fire. Sup. Kuiken has small groups working on these issues.

Sup. Kuiken said, about 12-13 years ago, some forests recognized treatment/management of under 10,000 acres is not going to change the world. There have been forest decisions that have planned for hundreds of thousands of acres. What he is proposing is to look at the whole forest, with treatments that include pre-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, prescribed fire and burning. There are about 600,000 acres under 6,000 feet in elevation where most problem areas for fire historically exist. Naturally, fire would occur every 7-20 years on average. This fire interval of an average of 15 years may be different as it is affected by climate change. Low intensity fire would have historically touched every acre below 6,000 ft. However, that has not been happening.

He is suggesting looking at all this area and using a "POD" (Potential Operational Delineations) concept to prioritize. He said there is a need to continue to find grants and figure out how to make new markets for products. PODS use watershed boundaries and are around 3,000-5,000 acres each in size. Sup. Kuiken said the 30" restriction on felling trees needs to be considered and he wants to have a dialogue around this issue. The essence of this discussion would not be an "across the board" lifting of the restriction, but rather an "as needed" or "targeted" lifting.

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All four counties of the STF have recreation and tourism as their largest industries. Also, the forest provides watershed benefits downstream. He wants to complete a NEPA decision that covers 15 years. He said specifics would be addressed through an implementation guide that covers work post-decision and pre-implementation.

Sup. Kuiken said efficiencies come through tools like the MSA. Another tool is the IRSC (Integrated Resource Stewardship Contract) which is used when the services of a contract costs more than the timber value. An IRTC can also be used when the timber value is higher than the cost of service. He said LIDAR data will dramatically increase baseline information.

Members commented that there needs to be more monitoring. It was also noted by Mr. Buckley when there are high wind situations, treatment does not really matter. However, it does matter in the other 90% of the fires. He added YSS has been successful, in part, because they have focused on the areas where there is agreement. Tree diameter and short-cutting NEPA may add delays.

Sup. Kuiken said he wants YSS to weigh in on prioritization of the landscape and the criteria and weighting for prioritizing, the implementation guide, and surveys on the first project areas. Vice Chair Patrick Koepele said the FS should be simultaneously looking at SRAs (State Responsibility Areas). He suggested building in a cost component that would be even with receipts. Sup. Kuiken said that will be a component and will drive what the forest requests in funding. He said this effort is a pre-cursor to the Forest Plan Revision.

Mr. Trott noted YSS wants to do projects through the MSA while this new plan is being developed. Sup. Kuiken said there are projects under their current program of work for commercial and significant pre-commercial work that can be done.

Mr. Scott Gelfand thanked YSS and USFS staff on behalf of the Friends of the Berkeley Camp for all the work done in the Rim Fire area to date. He said members experienced healing by putting new trees in the ground.

Mr. Mike Albrecht said, speaking as a professional forester, there is a compelling reason for a dialog about felling some 30" diameter trees. He referenced "designation of tree cutting by prescription." He said there are many of the trees that cannot be cut because they are over 30". Prohibiting this is resulting in creating a parklike setting with large trees that have interlocking crowns causing the trees to compete. He said he is not talking about felling 200-250-year-old trees, but rather 50-60-year-old trees, where it would add to the health of the forest.

Mr. Kevin Rice said he understands it is important to recreate the structure of the forest, but there needs to be a sensitivity to political reality.

Mr. Jim Maddox added there is a need to explain why larger trees would be felled. He noted the focus of cutting larger trees would be within plantations. VC Koepele noted the objectives for including larger trees needs to be very clear.

Financial Report:

VC Koepele circulated a summary sheet for the current funds. He noted contributions made by individual members to continue facilitation/administration support.

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Communication Protocol:

Ms. Carolyn Lott presented an update to the communication protocol which addresses when YSS will send comment letters.

Agreement: No objections to the added language were heard so the protocol will be amended as presented.

WCB (Wildlife Conservation Board)/SNC (Sierra Nevada Conservancy)/NFF (National Forest Foundation) Grant Presentations:

Mr. Seth Connolly provided an overview stating these grants focused on Rim Forestation. SNC provided \$1M to restore meadows, springs, culverts, and do forest thinning. TRT (Tuolumne River Trust) performs grant administration and management for the grants.

The WCB grant was for \$3.5M and is 85% complete. Work has come in under budget. TRT is in a support role and performs some co-management. There are about 70 different project sites that include 2 wildlife guzzlers, 11 water troughs, 4 Aspen stands, 20 Great Grey Owl nests, deer migration habitat improvement, 2 culvert replacements, and 17 meadows. Since the award, some of the projects have been modified. They installed the first solar powered water trough. They have also collected about 90 pounds of seeds.

NFF included about five grants which were mostly for volunteer partnerships. 100,000 trees have been planted, 50 miles of trails restored, and public and private campgrounds have been restored.

Mr. Gelfand noted the Friends of Berkeley Camp just received a UC Berkeley Chancellor's grant to do reforestation in the Rim.

Ms. Marcie Baumbach shared information about the Wildlife Restoration Program work done in the Rim area. Below is a summary:

Deer Habitat Restoration Funding – South of Lake Eleanor and Cherry Lake
DA (Dept. of Agriculture) Grant- Masticate shrubs to protect food source for deer
SNC – deer fuels reduction project - pile and burn to preserve traditional migration routes
WCB – guzzlers, fuels reduction on critical winter range
WCB – fuels reduction all dead conifers up to 24" hand felled and either hand or machine piled for burning
HUD (Dept. of Housing and Urban Development) Funding – Noxious weed treatment (weeds like Medusa Head) using burning to pre-treat before using herbicide
WCB - Great Grey Owl structures – 20 nest structures across 7 meadows
WCB – Aspen restoration – removed competing conifers and shrubs

The Mule Deer Foundation submitted a grant proposal for green forest work close to the Rim surrounding Jawbone Lava Flat. This will be implemented through a SPA and will release owls and increase forage for deer.

Wildlife Habitat Committee Update:

Chair Graveline and VC Koepele met with the committee to consider new projects for a Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Prop One grant. They discussed reforestation in Corral Creek, deer and wildlife habitat restoration, route decommissioning, and meadow restoration. The grant is due in December. The USFS provided input on what works with their needs, as well. All the proposed projects are in the Rim. All are NEPA ready.

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Agreement: No objections to submitting the grant for these projects was heard.

SNC Report on HUD Grant:

Mr. Elliott VanderKolk said \$28M was awarded for forest health projects. Biomass and fuels contracts are going out on 4,400 acres with reforestation on 1,300 acres next year of the total of 4,500. 630 acres of biomass removal will be completed with the product going to Ultra Power. 1,100 acres on Jawbone will be treated for noxious weeds. NEPA/CEQA is done on the rangeland and a contract is out for 3.5 miles of fencing. The fuelbreak system has 85% approval from landowners for a total of about 2,000 acres.

Regarding the Biomass Utilization Facility/ies, they are halfway through phase one which is a feasibility report. They have released a Request for Information. This will help them refine how to fund the project. The economic feasibility report should be completed the end of this year. The study Mr. Trott completed, showed there will be a challenge securing enough biomass that can be removed and transported to this new facility.

SI (Sierra Institute for Community Environment) Presentation on SCALE

Mr. Kyle Rogers, from SI, presented on the Sierra Cascades All Lands Enhancement (SCALE) project. This is focused on bringing together forest collaboratives, so they can learn from one another and common challenges can be identified. Currently they have 12-14 collaboratives that have participated. Some of the topics they have discussed include local contracting, use of receipts, and how collaboratives can add capacity by doing work that FS does not have staff to do. They have organized two workshops per year in Sacramento. The mission is really focused on how communities engage in natural resources and help get work done.

Other:

An announcement was made about a current opportunity to fund a Forest Watershed Coordinator through the Dept. Of Conservation.

Mr. Rob Grasso, YNP, shared updates on the park to include they are flying LIDAR for the whole park so this will cover the part of the STF the YSS effort is not covering. They are also coordinating work on the Ackerman Great Grey Owl.

Ms. Ann Denton reported the RAC (Resource Advisory Committee) nomination results were sent to D.C. over a year ago. Legislation has passed that is supposed to fund RACs again, but it is not yet chartered. The charter is still sitting on the Secretary of Agriculture's desk. She is not sure when money will be available. RAC funds have funded facilitation and field trips in the past.

Next YSS General Meeting:

The next regularly scheduled YSS General Membership meeting will be Friday, January 18th.

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MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	Present
Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	
Jeff Redoutey	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	Present
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	Present
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	Present
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
Dave Evans	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Alisha Lomeli	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Rick Carter	Pacific Ultra Power Chinese Station	
Dennis Serpa	PUPCS/Alternate	Present
Stuart Crook	Permitee/Landowner	
Bob Brennan	PL/Alternate	
Michael Vroman	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	
Peter Dean	PUC/HH Alternate	
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Jeb Brooks	SPI Alternate	
Dore Bietz	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	
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	Present
Keith Martin	Sierra Club – Tuolumne Group	

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Kevin Rice	SCTG/Alternate	Present
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	
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	
Nathan Graveline	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Rob Grasso	NPSYNP/Alternate	Present
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Present
Randi Jorgensen	SNC/Alternate	
Allen Johnson	South West Inter Face Team	Present
David Evans	USDA	Present
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Scott Tangenberg	USFS/Alternate	Present
Ann Denton	USFS/Alternate	Present
Marty Gmelin	USFS/Alternate	Present
Maria Benech	USFS/Alternate	Present

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	Present
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Heidi Beswick	CSERC
Hillary Sanders	Sierra Institute
Kyle Rodger	Sierra Institute
Marcie Baumbach	USFS
Beck Johnson	USFS
Elliott VanderKolk	SNC