



## Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative General Membership Meeting Summary November 15, 2019

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

1. Develop 18-19 YSS accomplishments document.
2. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of authoring article on SNC & WCB projects and visiting first MSA project.
3. Schedule a YSS field trip to see Cedar Ridge prior to beginning of implementation.
4. Organize a field trip to see the SNC and WCB projects and a field trip to revisit various planting method areas within the Rim.

### **MEETING GOALS:**

- Discuss MOTOR M2K and consider YSS alternative
- Receive updates on ongoing activities

### **SUMMARY:**

#### **Meeting Opening, Welcome, Pledge and Introductions:**

Chair Patrick Koepele led the pledge and asked for self-introductions.

Mr. Jim Phelan provided an update on the Mule Deer Foundation Project, Jawbone Plantation Thin. There are 300 acres of thinning. Cutting is complete and they are now piling and making fuelbreaks. Piles will be burned in the future. This is part of several projects on Jawbone Ridge.

#### **MOTOR M2K – Summary and YSS Alternative:**

Chair Koepele said there was a meeting organized by the FS for Deputy Regional Forester Bernie Gyant to talk with the three collaboratives, Dinkey, ACCG, and YSS. Chair Koepele said MOTOR M2K was a large landscape plan proposed by the FS. DRF Gyant decided, at the end of the meeting, to set aside the LLP 15-year plan. Each stakeholder group was asked to look at their landscape and identify “Areas of Focus” and the FS will determine the best way to move forward.

Shortly later, the YSS Leadership Team met. YSS is motivated to move something forward rapidly. YSS sees importance in getting enough wood supply to ensure viability of the local wood products industries.

There are ongoing projects the FS has planned. The LT discussed the challenge of a single giant LLP as it poses a target for litigation. The LT discussed replicating the Two-Mile Project but biting off a larger area with quicker NEPA. Tentatively, the LT proposes developing what they are calling a “Bridge Project” of approximately 40,000-80,000 acres to bring projects through the NEPA process and have them ready to go. It would contain some noncontroversial condition-based elements that could build trust around condition-based processes. If successful, this would bridge to a larger LLP.

YSS needs to identify priority “Areas of Focus.” The LT will meet to develop some boundary recommendations and then meet with FS staff to determine how to move this along as quickly as possible, but two years at the longest. Getting ideas from the membership, and ultimately agreement on the scope and priority of projects is important.

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Mr. Michael Jow, USFS, agrees with Mr. Buckley's summary. Mr. Jow said the FS is committed to a planning effort to increase the pace and scale. MOTOR M2K is dead in name but the FS is committed to its purpose.

He said PODS, Potential Operational Delineations, look at the logical geographic breaks in respect to how wildfire would travel and will likely be used to label and help define project areas. This is a look at risk based on potential fire behavior. The ranking is not worked out, but the structure has been. The Rocky Mountain Resource Group will be coming out in January or February to assist with this process.

YSS is looking at geographically prioritizing "Areas of Focus" rather than using a thematic approach.

Mr. Randy Hanvelt said YSS should be proud of themselves as they are focused on how to get things done. He complimented Mr. John Buckley on his comments at the meeting. He added YSS proposed an alternative which is helpful to progress.

### **LT Response to B. Gyant's Request for YSS Landscape:**

Chair Koepele said short-term it is hoped there are three CEs lined up. Middle term there is a hope to do a large EA of 60,000-80,000 acres. The FS would determine which analysis to use so this could be accomplished as quickly as possible. Long-term the plan would be some other form of larger NEPA analysis. Mr. Jow said YSS needs to figure out the where and the what.

Mr. Buckley said the LT is looking at projects that would produce a significant amount of wood products, meadow restoration, prescribed burning, roads, etc. With approved environmental documents, there could be shelf-ready projects to pull as grant opportunities come along. Communities at risk are of concern, as well.

Chair Koepele said YSS needs to be additive to regular FS work, especially in short-term projects. There are grant applications submitted to conduct projects at Mt. Provo/Mt. Lewis (N. Fork Tuolumne Watershed), and Middle Fork Stanislaus (Beardsley Reservoir-Strawberry Peak). YSS will hire contractors and consultants to do most of the technical analysis. The second area for YSS to work is helping to identify "Areas of Focus." Third, YSS may be able to help bring additional resources to the FS so they can implement the Bridge Plan, maybe in parallel to developing the LLP.

### **Discussion of Possible "Areas of Focus":**

The Chair asked members what areas they think would be worth looking at, noting in a subsequent meeting they will drill down into more specifics. Mr. Byron Krempf brought GIS maps for members to work from.

Mr. Buckley said the LT has identified three "Areas of Focus" to begin the conversation. One area is the Middle Fork Stanislaus, where on the eastern edge there is green forest at the lower elevation of the Stanislaus. This area hasn't had any treatments to speak of. It runs from the Highway 108 corridor all the way to Beardsley.

The next highest risk area is in the Groveland District including the southernmost portion which contains scattered parcels. The Kinsley/McDermott region has a vast amount of area that has timber and biomass.

The third area is the belt from behind Long Barn to Reynolds Creek to the perimeter of the Rim Fire. There is a huge amount of wood volume within overly dense woods. It would provide the economic leg and fuelbreak from a broadly treated swath.

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Mr. Phelan said the South Fork of the Stanislaus canyon could have fire that jeopardizes communities. Wildland Urban Interface (WUIs) are a high priority.

Mr. Jim Dambacher asked why YSS would not try for more than 80,000 acres of treatment. Mr. Buckley said the FS is supposed to do site-specific studies so there is not staff capacity to do more. Once YSS gets the general areas mapped, then the FS can provide information about what recently has been done, what is approved to be done, and what is remaining.

Ms. Liz Peterson said LIDAR will be processed by the end of December, but then it must go to remote sensing lab for processing. There should be some useable products in early 2020. The Digital Elevation Model provides information at the submeter level. The first levels of LIDAR data to be delivered will include total tree heights and canopy connectivity.

A member said the FS should look at what rules need to change to accomplish LLPs with implementable projects. YSS should look at what could help streamline existing processes and then work to get the necessary changes implemented.

Mr. Kevin Rice said he appreciates the efforts of the FS and LT. The initial approach of MOTOR M2K was litigation ready. He is working on developing trust within the Sierra Club. He said it is critical YSS has again worked to make the proposals more palatable, so it is possible for the Sierra Club to buy in.

Mr. Allen Johnson said the Southwest Interface area is important. He reminded the groups there are still pockets in the southern area where there are residences.

Mr. Buckley asked Mr. Marty Gmelin, as it relates to the Two-Mile Project two-year plan, does he see any barriers to a larger project area with speedy NEPA. Mr. Gmelin said the biggest time consumption is scaling up to different surveys such as archeology, owl surveys, etc. He added he would rather have those answers at the front end than when the FS is ready to implement a project. He thinks 20-30,000 acres is more of a sweet spot.

Mr. Jow said the FS can get smaller projects out in a year to year and a half. They scaled up to Rim which was 45,000 acres of focus with 22 staff members on the ID team. In order to scale up, the FS needs to be more efficient on the analysis part rather than just throwing more resources at it.

Chair Koepele said the LT will work on getting ideas on maps for consideration by the membership.

It was noted YSS may need to go to the Regional Office and Washington office to get abbreviated time periods to demonstrate what can be done with expedited NEPA.

### **County School Defensible Space:**

Mr. Joe Silva said a group of school-focused people were reflecting on what happened to the schools during the Paradise Fire. They looked for a grant to provide defensible space around the Tuolumne County schools. They put together an advisory committee and met with Mr. Buckley. They received money from the Sonora Area Foundation to hire a grant writer. The goal is 500' of defensible space around each campus. The land is public and private and there are 19 schools. In the Phase One grant they are applying for nine schools. There are 605 acres surrounding those schools. They also want to put in shaded fuelbreaks. The plan is to

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send biomass and small logs to local industries. They submitted an initial proposal to SNC. The cost is an average of \$3000 per acre. Mr. Silva came today to ask YSS for a letter of support.

Ms. Peterson said there are a lot of needs, but not a lot of people who step up to do the work and apply for the grants. The membership agreed to send a letter of support and Mr. Silva will get a draft letter to Ms. Carolyn Lott for composition and signature.

### **Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA) Update:**

A full spreadsheet was sent out in advance of the meeting. Ms. Peterson provided more details. Granite Reforestation has begun. Granite Thin has been awarded to Integrated Resource Management out of Oregon. The Strawberry archeology has been done and the FS is putting together hand crews. The county hired an archeologist so that added capacity. They are also trying to get county sheriff crews to do some of the hand work which extends the funds.

Chair Koepele said the proposal to the Wildlife Conservation Board has been recommended for award. It includes reforestation work in the Rim for up to 2,000 acres. The WCB will consider the award in February or May.

On the habitat side, the SNC series of grants have concluded. The WCB grant has been going very well and is focusing on meadow restoration. TRT has worked with FS crews. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife grant is underway. SNAPs will help flag projects. There is plantation thinning and reforestation mostly on Jawbone Ridge.

There is a pending proposal with SNC for a CE project planning process. The Cal FIRE proposal, submitted today, asked for additional units of Granite Reforestation and thinning in the Complex area. There is also an ask for additional funding for a CE for Mount Provo and an additional CE. If YSS gets a no to the non-competitive process, YSS will have to do the full-blown request. It is for approximately \$5M.

Mr. Byron Krempl, TRT Watershed Coordinator, said he will be working with the Tuolumne-Stanislaus Integrated Regional Water Management Authority to develop a drop-in section for the IRWM Plan. He will use the SPIT framework to identify PODS.

### **NDRC Update:**

Mr. Elliot VanderKolk, SNC, said SNC is not party to the litigation filed to stop work through the HUD grant. Work is continuing. Natural regeneration is complementing reforestation. YSS is why SNC is so committed to this project. It was noted the Sierra Club voted against joining the lawsuit.

Chair Koepele said the YSS LT has been involved in responding to the lawsuit. At the last YSS General Meeting, the LT received approval to submit a letter which was done. The attorney asked for YSS to file an Amicus Brief and Mr. Buckley drafted it and it has been submitted. The initial request for a stay was denied and the case was transferred from San Francisco to Fresno Federal Court. Mr. Rice helped explain the benefits of thinning, reforestation, etc. to the Sierra Club. Mr. Buckley will be scheduling a field trip for Sierra Club leadership.

Mr. VanderKolk said RCAC is a financial assistance partner in the biomass portion of the HUD grant. The goal is to set up a revolving loan fund with the first recipient being Tuolumne County. Accompanying this effort is a marketing campaign. The goal within the biomass project is to utilize as much woody biomass as possible and develop employment opportunities.

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### **YSS External Support:**

Chair Koepele said there was a document entitled “Call to Action” developed by Cal Forward that was sent out with the agenda. This document was formally presented at the CA Economic Summit and the document was influenced by YSS. Within the document there is a recognition of the economic benefits of biomass. YSS is the only collaborative recognized for its pioneering work. YSS endorsed the “Call to Action” document

Sierra to California All Lands Enhancement (SCALE) is an effort by Sierra Institute that is focused on forest collaboratives sharing issues, challenges, and opportunities. YSS provided an update at their last meeting and Mr. John Amodio was on a panel. Several representatives from the CA Resources Agency attended and YSS will be meeting with them soon. They seemed to be receptive to being more supportive of community-based efforts. Mr. Krempel said his observation was YSS is on the cutting edge and the premier collaborative in the Sierra Nevada.

### **USFS Update:**

Cedar Ridge is a fuels reduction project on 3,000 acres with an expedited CE planned through SNC funding. The ID team has finalized the proposed action. The approach includes a little condition based NEPA. There should be a decision by mid-December. YSS should go on a field trip before treatments begin next summer.

Rock Creek has an award for layout. Sale prep for Rock Creek West should be the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of FY 21 and Rock Creek East should be prepped the final quarter of FY 21.

Prather Madusa is on the portion of the YSS area in the Calaveras District, south of the North Fork of the Stanislaus River. The scoping letter was signed this week. The project is expanded to include fuelbreaks and an additional 1,100 acres. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation had money to put towards planning and awarded a contract for most of the NEPA. The FS should have decision in the spring.

Schimke, also south of the North Fork of the Stanislaus, is about 7,200+ acres and will be coming up in the future. Access is difficult.

Mr. Johnson said Wagner Ridge separates the Merced and Tuolumne watersheds. The Fire Safe Council received a grant for planning and NEPA/CEQA on the Mariposa side. They are looking for implementation funding from SNC.

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

The next regularly scheduled YSS General Membership meeting will be Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **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	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	

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Linda Millsbaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
	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	
Dusty Vaughn	GTH/Alternate	
Michael Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/ Stanislaus Trail Bike Association/4x4 in Motion	
Dave Evans	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Alisha Lomeli	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Rick Carter	Pacific Ultra Power Chinese Station	
Dennis Serpa	PUPCS/Alternate	
Stuart Crook	Permittee/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	Present
Dore Bietz	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	
	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Sherri Brennan	Tuolumne County	
John Gray	TC/Alternate	
Mike Albrecht	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	
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	Present
Kevin Rice	SCTG/Alternate	Present
John Amodio	Tuolumne River Trust	
Patrick Koepfle	TRT/Alternate	Present
Seth Connolly	TRT/Alternate	Present
Jim Maddox	Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	Present

### LIASON MEMBERS

Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	

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Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Rob Grasso	NPSYNP/Alternate	
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Present
	SNC/Alternate	
Allen Johnson	South West Inter Face Team	Present
David Evans	USDA	
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	
Michael Jow	USFS/Alternate	Present
Sarah LaPlante	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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Randy Hanvelt	Consultant ACL
Jason Smith	TRT
Anthony Burson-Thomas	Boy Scouts of America
Joe Silva	TC Schools Defensible Space Project
Reese Warne	Sierra Outdoor School
Kathleen Huff	Candidate for TCBOS, District 4
Jaron Brandon	Candidate for TCBOS, District 5
Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
Caitlyn Rven	TRT
Jenna Levy	TRT
Ray Cablayan	TRT