



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
Collaborative General Membership
Meeting Summary
July 17, 2020
Video Conference**

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. Develop 18-19 YSS accomplishments document.
2. Mr. Connolly to write up press release with photos for NFF grant.
3. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of authoring article on SNC & WCB projects and visiting first MSA project.
4. Schedule a YSS field trip to see Cedar Ridge prior to beginning of implementation.
5. 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:

- Presentation and discussion of SERAL Project Scoping Documents
- Presentation by Blue Forest Conservation on “Financing for Forest Health”

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening, Welcome, Pledge and Introductions:

Chair Patrick Koepele opened the Zoom video meeting and asked for self-introductions.

SERAL Scoping Document Presentation & Discussion:

SERAL stands for Social and Ecological Resiliency Across the Landscape. Members of the YSS Leadership Team (LT) explained their role in the development of the scoping documents.

The Scoping Phase is an opportunity for the public to review the documents. The scoping public comment period started yesterday, July 16th.

The boundary area of the YSS Bridge Project is about 117,000 acres. The SERAL project includes STF land which is about 92,000 acres. Half the project area is populated with Yellow Pine and dry-mixed conifer, 25% is Oak and the remainder is a mix of other tree types.

The purpose of the project is to conduct landscape-scale forest planning and active management using new science and new tools, some which are currently being developed. It also includes the “Conservation Strategy for the California Spotted Owl in the Sierra Nevada,” large scale planning, and incorporates new science (including through Forest Plan amendments).

The Range of Natural Variations (NRV) is the general range of historic conditions of a region. It is the point the project aims to get the SERAL area back to. Currently in the project area, 79% is “highly departed” from pre-settlement fire frequencies and 14% of the SERAL landscape is “moderately departed.” There is also a risk to human communities, resources, and infrastructure. Another goal is to achieve Social Resilience in the project area. Social Resilience is the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances because of social, political, and environmental change. The region is heavily dependent on wood industries and tourism.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Six Purposes:

1. Conduct landscape-scale planning and active management
2. Restore fire regimes
3. Restore forest conditions to a range of natural conditions to promote resilience and reduce threats to habitat from disturbances such as drought, insects, and disease, and wildfire
4. Reduce risks to human communities, resources, and infrastructure
5. Provide for increased economic sustainability
6. Increase the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses

Three Needs in the Project Area:

1. Vegetation Management
2. Strategic Fire Management Features
3. Forest Plan Amendments

Proposed Actions:

1. Vegetation Management
2. Strategic Fire Management Features
3. Forest Plan Amendments – The project will incorporate the Spotted Owl Strategy which recommends more fuel reduction even in Protected Activity Centers (PACs). Since this is different than what is in the current Forest Plan, it will require an amendment. This will be the first project to adopt the new recommendations from the strategy.

There are 60 individual plan component amendments that are proposed. They are all found in Appendix B, Table B.1 of the Scoping Documents. They are all project specific versus forest-wide meaning the amendments can only apply to the SERAL project.

If one is developing scoping comments, it is necessary that supporting reasons be considered and included in the submission. The comments need to be signed, or the identity of the submitter verified, to have standing. There are links on the project website to a comment form and the ability to upload a document. Comments will be considered if they address a significant concern, violations of law, regulation, or policy, suggest modifications to proposed actions, or address any opposition if a detailed explanation of the issue/s is included. The FS would like comments to provide a suggestion for how to remedy the expressed concern. The comment period ends on August 15, 2020. (The next comment period will be on the draft EIS which should be out in March 2021.)

From 9/2-10/2, the SERAL team will work with the YSS LT to finalize alternatives. Significant issues are used to formulate alternatives, prescribe mitigation measures, or analyze environmental effects.

There will be a virtual open house on August 5, 2020. A field trip is TBD and there is a desire to work with YSS on this.

Mr. John Buckley said the YSS LT wants to minimize conflict wherever possible. So, for example, within the Spotted Owl Strategy some of the language is nebulous. So, the LT, in conjunction with the SERAL Team, came up with what is believed to be palatable. The goal is to produce something that is middle ground. At this point, there is no site-specific information as this is a large landscape plan without information about exactly where treatments are going to go.

Mr. Kevin Rice said prescribed burning is generally supported by the Sierra Club. He asked where the money is going to come from for the project as there is no product to help offset the

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

cost. He also noted the Sierra Club does not like roads in the forest. So, if there are going to be new roads, he wondered if they will truly be temporary and how they will be funded.

Ms. Carol Ewell said the FS is looking for help with funding. Supervisor Jason Kuiken added funding is always an issue but partnering with Cal FIRE the FS can address prescribed fire. STF is one of the only forests in the country to do spring burning this year. He said they have excellent fire managers on the forest. They will look at other partnerships such as from Blue Forest Conservation presenting later today. This fireshed is one of the top firesheds in CA, and the country, and that classification should bring funding. He said it is because of YSS the forest is rising in its ability to do projects. The \$2M for planning will make grant proposals for implementation projects more successful.

Mr. Jacob Baker spoke to temporary roads. He said the FS is working to limit temp roads by keeping them under 500 feet. It is a management requirement to make them temporary and they must be restored and blocked off after their specific project use. They are typically worked into the timber sale contract, so the contractors are required to decommission the roads.

In regard to Decision Support Tools, the next step is to evaluate the draft Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment (QRA) as compared to the draft/renewed Potential Wildfire Operational Delineations (PODs). These drafts will be shared with collaborators such as YSS, Yosemite NF, Sierra and Eldorado NFs, Cal FIRE, and others.

The Forest System Scenario Planning Platform (ForSysX) integrates existing FS models and data into a simulation framework, explores system-wide management scenarios and associated tradeoffs, optimizes treatments at the stand scale to meet objectives and constraints at the watershed, forest, or regional scale. 95% of the time and effort to operate this tool is devoted to data preparation. Data will include LIDAR. Mr. Michael Jow acknowledged the expertise of FS staff on the ground and including it in the modeling.

Please see <https://yosemitestanislausolutions.com/meetings-events/collaborative-documents/> to view the full Scoping document.

USFS Updates:

Mr. Ray Cablayan said they have been working on the draft EA for the Prather-Medusa Project which is just south of H4 on the Tuolumne side. Ms. Sarah LaPlante said a deputy district ranger was hired. A lot of attention has gone to recreation sites throughout the region. Mr. Jim Junette said they just completed 4,000 acres of planting within the Rim, are doing ongoing biomass removal, and completing scoping work for Ackerson Meadow.

Project Financing for Forest Health:

Mr. Zach Knight and Mr. Peter Wyrsh provided a presentation. Blue Forest Conservation is a non-profit that has been in existence for about five years and has a combination of USDA, foundation, and investment dollars. The group provides resources to support collaboration, accelerate pace and scale of restoration, and support public land management. \$424 million is the USFS 2017 Restoration Budget, but there is \$3.1B in undeployed capital for conservation.

Utilizing a Forest Resilience Bond, they connect investor capital to conservation. They work with beneficiaries to identify a project in need of funding. The metrics of success are determined, the beneficiaries sign contracts, investors provide upfront capital, implementation partners carry out restoration, independent evaluators measure success, beneficiaries make payments, and investors are repaid. They do an economic analysis in partnership with the stakeholders.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

The North Yuba Project is a current example of the type of work they do. The goal of the project is to restore the entire watershed. They are doing Aspen work, prescribed burning and thinning and meadow restoration. Investors include AAA, Moore Foundation, Calvert Impact Capital, and the Rockefeller Foundation and there is a loan agreement at 0% interest. The loans are to offset the invoicing time involved in CA grant opportunities. They contracted with Yuba Water Agency who provide funding to pay the interest to the investors. They have grant agreements with the USFS and National Forest Foundation. The foundations receive 1% and the businesses receive 4%.

Mr. Jim Junette showed slides of areas, that need funding for restoration, within the Rim 26,000 acres under NEPA. Blue Forest Conservation is working on finding funding for these projects.

Mr. Knight said it is not legal to loan money to the FS. There is a master stewardship agreement and the partner in the agreement is who the money is loaned to. They would like to speak with the LT to see who other stakeholders are. Part of the analysis is understanding water benefits so the benefit to the water district offsets the funds they are contributing for the project. The calculations also base the benefit of fire reduction to the water district on Dr. Roger Bales work.

MSA, Wildlife & Watershed Updates:

Mr. Byron Krempl showed a spreadsheet with updates on the projects. Granite Reforestation, Granite Thin Phase 1, Granite Thin Phase 2, Rim Fire Restoration Phase 3, Mt. Lewis Plantation Thinning, all have work done since the last meeting. Pending proposals/projects include WCB Meadows Planning Project and they should hear back in about two months. They also submitted a grant to plant 10,000 trees next year through NFF.

A lot of LIDAR data has been received. The Remote Sensing Lab is working on integrating data into useable modeling tools.

Mr. Krempl said, through a grant from SNC, they are using a drone to photograph various areas. The drone can photograph very quickly at about 40 acres in an hour. This can help with project planning and monitoring. It also provides the ability to look at an area in 3D. It helps quantify what is out there and monitor progress.

Ms. Maria Benech said culvert replacement has been awarded. The WCB grant is wrapping up and they have managed to get several hundred additional acres done through this grant. Through SNC funding, they have been working on noxious weed abatement. The CCC has done an amazing job building fences. They will be doing about 11 miles of additional fencing. The fuelbreak project NEPA is done.

Ms. Liz Peterson said the economic modeling Blue Forest Conservation provides could help convince downstream users and insurance companies about the benefits of investing in forest health projects.

Next YSS General Meeting:

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

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

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
Sara Husby	CSERC/Alternate	Present
	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	
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	
Ethan Billigmeier	San Francisco PUC-Hetch Hetchy	
Michael Esposito	PUC/HH Alternate	
Rees Warne	Sierra Outdoor School – Clovis Unified School District	Present
Brandy Lively	SOS – CUSD/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
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Amodio	TRT/Alternate	Present

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Seth Connolly	TRT/Alternate	Present
Jeff Kerns	Tuolumne Utility District	Present
Ron Kopf	TUD/Alternate	
Jim Maddox	Yosemite Deer Herd Advisory Council	Present

LIASON MEMBERS

Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	
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	
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Beth Martinez	USFS/Alternate	Present
Michael Jow	USFS/Alternate	Present
Sarah LaPlante	USFS/Alternate	
Maria Benech	USFS/Alternate	Present

PARTICIPANTS

Keith Martin	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club	Present
Kevin Rice	TGSC	Present

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	Present
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Katie Wilkinson	USFS
Byron Krempl	TRT
Randy Hanvelt	Association of CA Loggers
Ray Cablayan	USFS
Adam Rich	USFS
Zach Knight	Blue Forest Conservation
Peter Wyrsh	BFC
Carol Ewell	
Rich Gordon	CA Forestry Association
Jad Kurdi	Tuolumne County
Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
Jacob Baker	USFS
Jim Junette	USFS
Lisa Westbrook	TUD