



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions  
Collaborative General Membership  
Meeting Summary  
March 19, 2021  
Video Conference**

**FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:**

(The following were brought up as possible options for field trips if the pandemic situation improves sufficiently and field trip opportunities end up being timely.)

1. Invite media to visit some project sites for purpose of raising public awareness on SNC & WCB projects and visiting first MSA project.
2. Schedule a YSS field trip to see Cedar Ridge area prior to beginning of implementation.
3. 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:**

- Share Leadership Team Activities Since Last Meeting
- Receive Grant and Forest Updates

**SUMMARY:**

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

Chair Brian Wayland opened the Zoom video meeting and roll was taken. Ms. Carolyn Lott shared the USFS Regional Award to YSS for their role in the SERAL Project.

**Consideration of Friends of Pinecrest for Membership:**

Friends of Pinecrest were considered for membership in YSS.

**Action:** Friends of Pinecrest were accepted for membership.

**Project Update:**

Mr. Byron Krempel said next week will kick off project season and there will be thousands of acres of restoration across the landscape. Planting will take place on about 1,100 acres in the next few weeks. The RFP, through Tuolumne County, will open for about 2,000 acres of reforestation. The hope is to start this field season along the Highway 120 corridor.

Numerous forest health and thinning projects will be undertaken. 1,500 acres by Cherry Lake is currently being advertised. There is a small Mt. Lewis project of about 123 acres near a communication tower. All the handlines, approximately 45 miles, around the Strawberry unit will be done in preparation for fall burning. The Cedar Ridge project, a forest health and fuels reduction project, has flagging and archeological and botanical surveys underway. Tuolumne County is preparing to have an open house Wed. March 31 from 6-7 to share information about this project. A letter has been sent to all residents. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, there will also be a small tree planting volunteer effort.

**HUD Update:**

Mr. Bob Kingman presented on behalf of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The loan program through the Rural County Assistance Corporation (RCAC.org) has been launched and currently there are three projects being considered for participation in the loan program. The environmental impact work is underway.

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

There are five activities worth about \$26 million under the forest health pillar. Fuel break expansion is the only activity of the five that has not started, but it will start this year in July. The FS has either awarded or expended about \$14 million. Many reforestation efforts were put on hold because of COVID. Currently there are 3,250 acres of replanting that should be done by April. About 2,700 acres of noxious weed abatement has been completed and another 450 acres are planned for this year. Fencing will also be worked on this season. The HUD grant was extended for an additional year projects can be completed up until September of 2023. There is some discussion, at the federal level, of further extending the timeline.

Regarding bioenergy facilities, four entities showed interest. Currently the RCAC is working with three of the four. Tuolumne Bio Energy is the furthest ahead. The core committee has bought off on this project. Tuolumne Biomass is building on a model they are operating in Oregon, BioChar is still some ways off in their process. For more information, people can contact Mr. Stan Kiesling at RCAC.

Of the acres approved for reforestation in the Rim Fire area, 3,254 acres are ready for planting this season. Of the 22,000 acres approved for reforestation within the ROD, about 7,000 acres have been planted or have funding approved through HUD. An additional 3,000 acres are funded through partners and the USFS.

### **Leadership Team Update:**

Mr. Patrick Koepele said the LT participated in a meeting in early January with the state Forest Management Task Force, led by Mr. Patrick Wright. The Task Force sets strategy for pace and scale of treatment and wildland management. The state plan calls for achieving these goals largely through local strategies.

The second update is the Governor's statewide wildfire and forest resiliency plan may spend up to \$20M in the Sierra Nevada region. The LT met with Ms. Angela Avery from SNC and brought up a key priority of subsidizing the removal of biomass piles from the forest to chip the material at a cogeneration facility. SNC is putting everything in place now to move forward with distributing funding as soon as the legislature approves the budget. Reducing the risk of wildfire is a primary lens for considering early project funding.

There is also a pot of money for longer term efforts. The total is about \$50M and guidelines for distributing these funds should be to the SNC Board by September. The Dept. of Conservation will oversee the Regional Fire and Forest Capacity Program. They will be an important player in distributing the \$1B in the state budget.

Ms. Avery invited the YSS LT to a subsequent meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>. They spoke about SERAL and the history behind it, as well as the tools the USFS is utilizing. The LT shared the YSS high level goals with Ms. Avery. The SNC staff were particularly interested in how YSS goals compare to the work in the Tahoe area. The Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) is built on eight pillars of resilience. The SNC was reassured to see that YSS goals overlap substantially with the TCSI pillars. Of note, even though TCSI has had a lot of funding and attention, Ms. Avery said YSS is ahead of TCSI in terms of planning.

The LT also met with Mr. Wright on March 4<sup>th</sup>. He directed the development of the State Action Plan and is now working on how to implement it. The state is stepping up in a significant way through a billion-dollar investment with a goal of treating 500,000 acres of state lands per year. The state is going to heavily rely on regional and local collaboratives and wants to build on local priorities. The state is also looking at which tools and strategies local groups are using. Mr. Wright was interested in the ForSys tool. He added the state is looking for a common set of metrics to understand progress across state. They want to see a common language and

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

common metrics across the state. (Mr. Koepele said YSS needs to put some work into thinking this through.) Mr. Wright was impressed with the efforts of the USFS and Tuolumne County. He said these are strong groups that are set up to be a conduit for state funding.

Next, Mr. Koepele said Mr. Kremple and he met with the Dept. of Conservation. This is the agency that funded the Watershed Coordinator Grant awarded to TRT/YSS. They updated the agency on progress to date.

YSS and their partners currently have a \$5M CAL FIRE grant. CAL FIRE contacted Ms. Liz Peterson about left over funds they want to award to the partnership. They mentioned the last partner grant application missed the cutoff by one point. They stated they wish to send \$5M for additional work. The LT, TC, and the USFS agreed to allocate the funds with \$300K going to the Tuolumne Band of Mewuk Indians (TBMI) for a project near Murphy Ranch, \$1M for removal of biomass piles, and the remainder for fuelbreaks and strategic and fire management efforts in the SERAL area, minus the funds for grant administration and management. Ms. Peterson said CalFire received the proposal for \$5M and will get back to her in a of couple weeks with their response. It has to go through a legislative process for final approval but will be recommended by CAL FIRE for funding.

Mr. Albrecht said YSS was formed eleven years ago. The first several meetings focused on naming the collaborative and then finding enough funds to fund Ms. Lott for facilitation. Now YSS is receiving funding from multiple funders.

### **Update on SERAL and ForSys:**

Supervisor Jason Kuiken said a lot of collaboration and shared stewardship has been ongoing. The FS is moving forward, as quickly as possible, with the SERAL Project and they are using new technology in modeling through the PODs tool and ForSys model which is a scenario planning tool. An Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) is what the FS is looking to use to speed up the early work. He explained that in his view there is a high hazard on the landscape and the ESD would be used for roadside clearing and fuelbreaks on PODs one through five on around 6,000 acres near Highway 108 communities. This is a new way to use ESDs. How much the FS can accomplish using the ESD depends on when snow and rain conditions constrain work in the fall. September is when the FS is looking at publishing the Record of Decision (ROD) for fire management features.

Mr. John Buckley noted ESD cuts off the ability of the public to have input in the normal way. However, the YSS LT has supported the FS's desire to get work done along the Highway 108 corridor to protect communities.

Supervisor Kuiken said the Washington Office is supportive of the use of the ESD because of the recognition of the threat to the landscape from wildfire and because of YSS's support. Mr. Michael Jow said the Draft EIS will be out prior to the ESD and provides the opportunity for the FS to get feedback from YSS and the public. He added that through the CAL FIRE award the FS will have the contract worked out with Tuolumne County. Internally the FS will do the same with any additional funds they are to receive.

Supervisor Kuiken said the FS has analyzed sub-watersheds for fire risk, potential placement of fuelbreaks, and suppression options as part of a planning process called Potential Operational Delineations (PODs). They are using tools and technologies, in addition to on-the-ground expertise, to determine where they can best apply the strategy, so they are ready to apply fire or to fight wildfire. Ms. Peterson said the survey and flagging is up and running within SERAL and contractors have been directed to have this completed by the end of August. The county will be ready to hire contractors and begin work in September. Mr. Jow said the FS has

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

been in communication with TRT and the County about utilizing the Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA).

Mr. Allen Johnson said it might be worth reaching out to Caltrans to determine how they can participate in the Highway 108 work. Contact information for Ms. Lisa Worthington is [lisaworthington@dot.ca.gov](mailto:lisaworthington@dot.ca.gov). S. Kuiken said he will reach out to her.

### **Other USFS Updates:**

On the personnel side, S. Kuiken said Mr. Andy Welsh is acting in place of Ms. Sarah LaPlante as she is on special assignment at the WO. Two new district permanent resource management staff officers have started work. Ms. Corinna Robertson is overseeing forest projects on the Calaveras District such as the Prather-Medusa Forest Resilience Project. This is 7,000 acres and focuses on habitat and protected species within the forest. The environmental period has concluded, and the FS will be moving on to implementation. Mr. Kevin Rice offered thanks from the Sierra Club as he said the FS was responsive to the Club's comments.

There are also two new engineers on the forest. Mr. Bernie Gyant went to the WO serving as the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System. Ms. Liz Berger is his replacement at the Regional Office.

S. Kuiken said he believes the Stanislaus is on a short list for additional dollars for the SERAL landscape. They are continuing to seek other funding options through partners and private companies who finance conservation through their corporations.

Mr. Buckley said the Regional Office said the region is still about 30% short of filling all positions. It was also stated that some of the staff capacity has been diminished as people shifted to fire. Mr. Buckley requested that S. Kuiken come back to the next YSS meeting with information about how many positions are still open on the forest so that YSS can understand the Forest staff's capacity.

For fire crew, S. Kuiken said they are amid permanent and seasonal fire hire. They continue to struggle to fill certain positions. PG&E has continued to hire, and their pay is so good it competes with the FS hiring process. He knows the FS will not be able to staff all twelve engines and will be down 3-4 unless they are able to hire more staff.

Ms. Karen Caldwell, the Highway 108 Fire Safe Council/Firewise Coordinator, is working with communities across the county to get more engagement. They currently have seven communities involved and two more in the application phase.

### **Other:**

TRT has a job posted for a forestry project manager. The job description is on the TRT website.

Mr. Dwight Follien asked if there was an update on Great Outdoor Grant. S. Kuiken said they are supposed to find out any day, but by the end of March for Round 2. The timeframe for developing Round 3 projects is that they will start in May and go through late June. Round 3 will have more emphasis on engaging partners. March 31 there will be a meeting with partners and the FS would like to engage a YSS representative. For future projects, funding seems to be going to a little broader area such as the Pinecrest campground, the trail around it, and perhaps vegetation around the Pinecrest Basin that contributes to the health of Pinecrest.

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

The next regularly scheduled YSS General Membership meeting will be Friday, May 21, 2021.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

**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	
Randy Hanvelt	Associated California Loggers	Present
Jeff Redoutey	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Catilyn Rich	CSERC/Alternate	Present
Bailey Hunter	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of MeWuk Indians	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
James Maddox	Fish and Game Preservation Committee	Present
Scott Gelfand	Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp	
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	
Dwight Follien	Groveland Trail Heads	Present
Dusty Vaughn	GTH/Alternate	
Ethan Billigmeier	Hetch Hetchy Water and Power	
Michael Esposito	HHWP/Alternate	
Glenn Gottschall	Highway 108 Fire Safe Council	
Karen Caldwell	H108FSC/Alternate	Present
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	
Karl Dambacher	DC/Alternate	
Michael Beckman	Friends of Pinecrest	
Douglas Wiele	FOP/Alternate	Present
Dave Holland	FOP/Alternate	
Mike Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/Stanislaus Trail Bike Association, 4x4 in Motion	Present
Jim Phelan	Mule Deer Foundation	Present
Dave Evans	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Matthew Waverly	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Rick Carter	Pacific Ultra Power Chinese Station	
Dennis Serpa	PUPCS/Alternate	
Stuart Crook	Permitee/Landowner	
Bob Brennan	PL/Alternate	
Rees Warne	Sierra Outdoor School – Clovis Unified School District	
Brandy Lively	SOS – CUSD/Alternate	Present
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
	SPI Alternate	

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
Eric Juncker	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
David Goldemberg	Tuolumne County	Present
Kathleen Haff	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	
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Amodio	TRT/Alternate	Present
Byron Krempf	TRT/Alternate	Present

### LIASON MEMBERS

Bill Haigh	Bureau of Land Management	
Mark Abraham	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Nathan Graveline	CDFW/Alternate	
Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Rob Grasso	NPSYNP/Alternate	
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Present
Allen Johnson	South West Interface Team	Present
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Beth Martinez	USFS/Alternate	Present
Michael Jow	USFS/Alternate	Present
Jim Junette	USFS/Alternate	
Sarah LaPlante	USFS/Alternate	
Ray Cablayan	USFS/Alternate	
Maria Benech	USFS/Alternate	

### 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
Julia Stephens	TRT
Sara Husby	CSERC
Todd Newberger	USFS
Andy Welsh	USFS
Julia Stephens	TRT
Dore Bietz	Tuolumne County
James Hart	TRT

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
James Hart	TRT
Etienne Patenau	Bio Energy
Corinna Robertson	USFS
Bob Kingman	SNC
Robert Heim	USFS
Karen Caldwell	Highway 108 Fire Safe Council