



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
Collaborative General Membership
Meeting Summary
September 16, 2022
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 about projects that have been funded by SNC & WCB projects and perhaps visit a MSA project site.
2. Consider if there is sufficient interest for organizing a YSS field trip to see the SNC and WCB project sites.

MEETING GOALS:

- Update on funding and project status
- Hear presentation by Merritt Jenkins
- USFS updates

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening, Welcome and Introductions:

YSS Chair Brian Wayland opened the meeting, welcomed those attending, and led the group through introductions.

Project Updates and Potential Funding Opportunities:

Mr. Ben Campbell, Mr. Patrick Koepele, and Ms. Liz Peterson provided a detailed YSS/MSA projects update. Ms. Peterson shared to date YSS has expended \$50 million for projects and associated actions. Roughly 24,000 acres have been treated, plus YSS and the County through the MSA have helped fund prep work for 58,000 acres. There is still a need for hiring more TRT project managers to keep up with the work.

Reforestation and restoration needs vs funding in Rim Fire – Mr. Byron Kremple, from TRT, has recently successfully negotiated with Regional USFS staff to plan 1,000-1,400 acres of site prep for reforestation in the Rim Fire burn area to be done in 2023, plus actual tree planting of up to 2,000 acres planted by the FS, and likely a similar amount by YSS and the County. Mr. Koepele shared at least 10,000 additional acres need plantation thinning.

Other forest projects – Mr. Campbell, of TRT, showed a map of projects, treatments completed, and challenges. Roughly 60% of Cedar Ridge treatments are done, plus Ms. Peterson said the County has a list of 22 pre-approved contractors, and perhaps half are local.

Ms. Julia Stephens explained in her project update that TRT was applying grants for YSS that include \$3.2 million from CDFW, including 400 acres of mastication, 500 acres of burning, 600 acres of reforestation, and 800-900 acres of plantation thinning. She shared there is another large grant to do restoration at three meadows and one creek area. There was a lot of discussion of the various projects, treatments, challenges, and overall success.

Presentation – Kodama Systems (Forest Restoration Tools):

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Kodama presentation

Mr. Merritt Jenkins explained that he is a co-founder of Kodama Systems, and he is looking to use technology to increase efficiency of forest operations in forests both here and in Nevada. Currently his top focus is analyzing and gaining real time data about machine uptime, about cost tracking, and about site connectivity – the ability for a work site to connect digitally. The goal of his work is to eventually develop semi-autonomous heavy equipment that can do forest work without project operators.

USFS Updates:

Acting Forest Supervisor Beth Martinez reported on SERAL, the three different Records of Decision, the differences in each ROD, and what each ROD authorizes. Mr. Michael Jow discussed SERAL as well, describing how most of the fuelbreak work in PODs 1-5 and at recreation sites is being completed or is under contract. Fuelbreaks in PODs 6-17 are being evaluated with the FS prioritizing which 3,000 acres should be done next in 2023. He also talked about mechanical treatments such as mastication, and Chair Wayland and Mr. Jow discussed that perhaps 2,400 acres of thinning logging and biomass removal treatments may get contracted next year. Mr. Jow is also hopeful the Forest staff will get 1,000 acres or more done with broadcast burning this fall/winter.

Mr. Jow and AS Martinez also went into more detail about how the \$55,000,000 for forest treatments is intended to be applied over 3 years in the Stanislaus Landscape project area (which includes the SERAL project area).

Most funding for the Stanislaus Landscape program of work includes funding for treating PODs and roads along with funding for surveys being done by the Institute for Bird Populations and by the Great Basin Institute. Most of their work is doing various surveys needed in the SERAL project area or in the broader Stanislaus Landscape project area.

Prescribed fire program no longer “paused”

AS Martinez updated the group on the resumption of prescribed fire use nationally by the Forest Service that will only be allowed if/when 7 key requirements are all met for all national forests and for all burn projects and when sufficient staff training has been done to meet requirements. All existing burn plans must be newly reviewed and meet new criteria. Burn plans must be targeted to individual days and no longer to burn-windows of multiple days. And responsible Forest officials must now be present on site for burns.

While there was enthusiasm voiced for getting far more burning done, there was acknowledgement that some inside the agency see more restrictions and delays as simply adding additional challenges to an already challenged program.

Stanislaus Forest hiring and filling of positions

AS Martinez shared this is a unique time when the Forest has funding and support to hire more employees and to fill more positions. Unfortunately, many open positions have few applicants, and AS Martinez acknowledged perhaps only 60% of positions on the Stanislaus Forest are filled.

Forest infrastructure update report

Ms. Kat Baker and Ms. Nicole Thompson of the Forest staff reported on a wide variety of construction and upgrade projects, with many being tied to replacement of toilets or improvement of restroom facilities or the replacement of water lines to serve campgrounds, etc. Projects are being done at Rainbow Pool, Cherry Lake campground, Highland Lakes, Lake Alpine, Big Meadow campground, Column of the Giants, and other locations.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

New workforce training program possibly evolving at Columbia College:

Mr. John Buckley and several other members of the YSS Leadership Team reported on an effort by YSS and the County to grow the forest workforce training program at Columbia Community College. The Leadership Team met with Mr. Tom Hofstra at the College. YSS has done extensive outreach to other colleges and potential major funders to help gain resources to allow for heavy equipment operator training at the college and to otherwise train skilled operators to run heavy equipment through completing high level certification training courses at the college. The goal is to grow the local workforce rather than to have the County and YSS need to hire crews or prospective employees from out of state. Shasta College is one California college that already has such a heavy equipment course and certificate training program.

State Block Grant Status:

Mr. Koepele explained how Mr. John Amodio has been working at the Sacramento level to press for large block grants to become a major source of funding for groups such as YSS. Mr. Amodio has been strategizing with the Sierra Institute to press for a more efficient and timely funding process for groups such as YSS.

Meeting wrap-up:

Mr. Mike Albrecht reminded the group how far YSS has come in its evolution to be a productive and innovative forest stakeholder group.

Mr. Glenn Gottschall requested that on the next agenda he be provided with time to provide an update on the Fire Safe Council's community wildfire planning process for which the Fire Safe Council received a recent grant to develop the plan.

Finally, Mr. Michael Pickard, Mr. Buckley, Mr. Koepele, and others briefly discussed an upcoming State/Federal Task Force workshop session that will be held at Grass Valley in two weeks. It will address issues tied to stakeholder groups and potential directives or strategies for groups to have State-designed toolkits to justify multiple project benefits that might be a criterion for any stakeholder group desiring to get block grant funding.

Next YSS General Meeting:

The next regularly scheduled YSS General Membership meeting will be Friday, November 18, 2022.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Jensen	American Forest Resource Council	Present
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	
Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	
Mike Albrecht	Associated California Loggers	Present
Vicki Albrecht	ACL	
John Sulkowski	Blue Mountain Minerals	Present
Lauren Mitchell	BMM/Alternate	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Association	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	Present
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Tatiana Altman	CSERC/Alternate	Present
Joanna Prtillo-HSU	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of MeWuk Indians	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	Present
Karl Dambacher	DC/Alternate	
James Maddox	Fish and Game Preservation Commission	Present
Scott Gelfand	Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp	
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	
Michael Beckman	Friends of Pinecrest	
Douglas Wiele	FP/Alternate	
Dave Holland	FP/Alternate	
Greg Norton	Golden State Natural Resources	
Kevin Cann	GSNR/Alternate	
Dwight Follien	Groveland Trail Heads	
Dusty Vaughn	GTH/Alternate	
Ethan Billigmeier	Hetch Hetchy Water and Power	
Michael Esposito	HHWP/Alternate	
Glenn Gottschall	Highway 108 Fire Safe Council	Present
Karen Caldwell	H108FSC/Alternate	
Jeb Brooks	Left Coast Land Clearing	
Sasha Farkas	LCLC/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	
Rees Warne	Sierra Outdoor School – Clovis Unified School District	
Brandy Lively	SOS – CUSD/Alternate	
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Hannah Grabowski	SPI Alternate	Present
Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	
Erik Juncker	TBM-WTC/Alternate	Present
Etienne Patenaude	Tuolumne BioEnergy	Present
David Goldemberg	Tuolumne County	
Kathleen Haff	TC/Alternate	
Randy Hanvelt	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	Present
Lindsay Mattos	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Amodio	TRT/Alternate	
Byron Krempf	TRT/Alternate	
Kristina Rylands	Upper Merced River Watershed Council	
Holly Warner	UMRWC/Alternate	

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

LIASON MEMBERS

Jerry Martinez	Bureau of Land Management	
Jason Schroeder	BLM/Alternate	
Mark Abraham	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Present
Nathan Graveline	CDFW/Alternate	
Greg Gerstenberg	CDFW/Alternate	
Joe Meyer	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Rob Grasso	NPSYNP/Alternate	
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	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	

PARTICIPANTS

Keith Martin	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club	
Kevin Rice	TGSC	

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlton Consulting	Present
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
Merritt Jenkins	Kodama Systems
Ellyse Varone	TRT
Madelyn Guillaene	TRT
Ben Campbell	TRT
Julia Stephens	TRT
Crispin Holland	USFS
Nicole Thompson	USFS
Kat Baker	USFS
Gary Whitson	CALFIRE
Cindy Chen	UC Agriculture and Natural Resources
Manny Eichholz	CSERC