



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
Collaborative General Membership
Meeting Summary
May 19, 2023
Forest Supervisor's Conference Rooms**

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

(The following were brought up as possible options for field trips.)

1. Consider if there is sufficient interest for organizing a YSS field trip to see the SNC and WCB project sites.
2. Consider incorporating forest thinning projects and fuelbreaks into a tour in 2023
3. TRT to develop a map showing completed projects and their connectivity

MEETING GOALS:

- Update on funding and project status
- Learn about this season's projects and other USFS updates
- Hear about latest USFS plans for projects including SERAL 2.0

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening, Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Liz Peterson opened the meeting and introductions were made. She recognized two new members - the National Forest Foundation and Forest Landowners of California.

Project Updates TC/TRT/YSS:

Mr. Patrick Koepele reported Ms. Julia Stephens has managed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) grant for deer habitat improvements. Four hundred acres were masticated (Jawbone Ridge), herbicide was sprayed, 609 acres were reforested in the Rim footprint, and 565 acres were treated with prescribed fire with additional acres to be burned. She is also managing planning work for several meadow restoration projects in anticipation of funding.

19,000 acres of SERAL1.0 surveys are being done. They are also restoring trails in the Tuolumne Trails area and riparian vegetation along the Tuolumne River. CDFW, Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), the Fish & Wildlife Board, and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) are all contributing to meadow restoration and trail work.

Mr. Ben Campbell also reported on behalf of Tuolumne River Trust (TRT). TRT is subcontracted with the County for YSS projects and handles much of the contract management and some of the implementation and supervision of the contracts through the Master Stewardship Agreement. To date they have raised approximately \$25M of state funding and an additional \$7M of state funding was just awarded. In partnership with Tuolumne County, they received \$17M from Cal FIRE. \$10M was awarded to create defensible space on private land in Cedar Ridge, Mi-Wuk Village, and Yankee Hill. \$500,000 will be used near Yankee Hill on a BLM fuelbreak that will connect to the tail end of the Cedar Ridge fuelbreak.

The spring push for Rim reforestation is ending. 420,000 seedlings will have been planted. In SERAL 1.0, 55 acres of fuelbreaks are completed. Phase 2 will include 500 acres of fuels reduction above Pinecrest and will start soon. Phase 3 includes the SW corner of SERAL 1.0 and will include major road improvements and delineating units.

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Cold Springs and Cabin Tracts are new projects for this spring. Cedar Ridge will be finished this week and includes much hand treatment. A lot of survey work is underway.

Work continues on private property to increase the continuity of fuelbreaks, and TRT will be hiring a forester soon as a full-time employee.

5,421.9 acres total have been treated. TRT is working with TC to create a dashboard which integrates with daily operations in real time for ongoing work and displays completed work. The dashboard is still in draft form but will be finalized soon.

Mr. Campbell noted contractors are experiencing significant issues with equipment vandalism and theft. There are also safety issues because of members of the public interfering with work. As far as resistance from members of the public regarding work on private land, when they understand it is fuels reduction work that is going on they are more receptive. TRT is contemplating holding town halls.

ACCG Project Update:

Vice-chair Buckley is part of the ACCG consensus group. ACCG has several successful projects going on. They have a vision of a Phase 2 project of 220,000 acres in and around the Mokelumne Watershed. The effort is being led by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Association (UMRWA). They are currently implementing the Phase 1 project of over 20,000 acres.

USFS Updates:

Regarding the status of main roads there is still a huge amount of snow in some areas so many roads are still closed and listed in Order One. Order Two includes closures from damage. There are 30+ road segments or whole roads that are affected. The FS is prioritizing recreational access roads. Their other focus is to get vegetation program work done. The FS is open to road maintenance work done by contractors and have agreements available. The most heavily used roads with considerable damage are Cherry Lake, Cottonwood, Sand Bar Flat, and Lumsden Roads.

There are several approved projects for 2023 implementation in the YSS region. Product removal sales are coordinated by Mr. Brian McCrory. There are two Integrated Resource Service Contracts for the Spillway and Boundary projects for timber removal on 2,000 acres. The projects are in the Spring Gap to Beardsley Road area. The Tunnel Project is another 2,000-acre fuel reduction project that will go out in July. The G to Z pre-solicitation may be out Monday. They will be looking at utilizing a new innovative market. The Rock Creek roads portion of that large project will be going out when the area is accessible. The Integrated Resources Services Contract will go out after the roads are completed.

An Integrated Resources Service Contract (IRSC) is used when the value of the timber is less than the cost of the work. An Integrated Resources Timber Contract (IRTC) is used when the value of the timber is more than the cost of the work.

Rock Creek has an estimated 100K green tons of biomass in addition to a significant amount of sawtimber.

The Forest Service completed planting 1.2M tree seedlings this year on 5,000-6,000 acres. They have about 50,000 more trees to plant. All this is in the Rim Fire footprint. The FS is coordinating herbicide application on the north side of the river with Hetch Hetchy Water and Power. Road repair is also going on in Groveland.

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There is no good data on survival rates for different alternatives used within the Rim reforestation areas. The FS does know hand grubbing has not been as successful in maximizing seedling survival as chemical treatments.

Supervisor Jason Kuiken said he is trying to be very aggressive this year with prescribed burning. He is looking for crews outside the area, to include archeologists and crews for prep work. The Forest will burn on weekends if the weather is conducive, so they must make sure they are doing a very good job with informational outreach. They are hoping to complete thousands of acres of broadcast burning during 2023.

Mr. Jim Junette said the FS will start ignitions in the Highway 108 corridor next Thursday. The FS will have some viewing points along the burning areas with Public Outreach and Information Officers to educate the public. TC will coordinate with Mr. Ben Cossel from USFS for public outreach.

Regarding the Hazard Tree Project the FS had done a new NEPA planning approach for forestwide hazard tree removal. There were a lot of comments questioning NEPA adequacy in response to the document, so the FS has chosen to shift from using a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) planning process. DNA allows the FS to take the analysis from a comparable project and explain how the analysis is similar or different for the new project. Mr. Michael Jow said they held the scoping period concurrent with the comment period. They will now be reopening public comment for the Hazard Tree EA. Hopefully they will have a decision by this fall. The EA covers trees that qualify as hazards, and the purpose is to have them removed as expeditiously as possible.

Supervisor Kuiken said they have initiated a team for SERAL 2.0 and have people looking at individual forest stands this time in the planning process. This means actual treatment units will be the focus rather than computer derived units. They are using a new authority granted by Congress last year called the Western Firehazard Emergency Action Determination (WFEAD). It is a proactive approach labeling fires and fuels issues as an emergency in the US and a hazard to communities and critical infrastructure. The EAD approach was authorized for high risk firehazards. Utilizing the WFEAD means the FS only must prepare an action alternative and a no-action alternative. There will not be an objection period.

SERAL 2.0 may include approximately 160,000 acres with 120,000 of those acres being USFS land. It extends from the south side of Highway 108 from Pinecrest to the Clavey River joining with the Tuolumne River and then back to the west. It is called SERAL 2.0 as the FS is trying to apply what was used in SERAL 1.0. They are staying narrowly focused on the SERAL 1.0 types of treatments. The YSS Leadership Team worked with the USFS dialoguing about this new large landscape footprint. This area was selected as best for protecting communities – which is a top YSS objective.

The FS shared that one main lesson learned to date through SERAL 1.0 is the need to change to stands instead of model derived units. This should better ensure areas identified for a particular treatment are suitable for that treatment.

Supervisor Kuiken noted Forestry Challenge held their statewide competition at Camp Sylvester and it was extremely successful and well-participated in.

Sacramento Update:

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Mr. Koepele reported for Mr. John Amodio. He said Governor Newsome proposed to retain expending almost \$2.7 billion over three years for all facets of the State wildfire and forest health crisis.

California is still far short of the state-federal goal of treating 1 million acres per year. Last year's estimate was 250,000 acres treated. The 2022 Air Resources Board scoping document indicates more like 2.3M acres per year should be treated for the goals of public health and GHG reduction.

A new planning tool, Planscape, can enable regions or community efforts to determine landscape priorities and plans of action more quickly. A climate bond for approximately \$15B will likely be placed on the 2024 ballot.

Mr. Amodio put together a group of 15 public funding experts to identify the most appropriate and feasible dedicated revenue streams for landscape level block grants.

Chair Peterson shared that AB338, requiring all fuel reduction projects to be considered a public works project, is currently in the suspense file but the author wants to reword and revisit it. The county met with the author. There is a misconception that what contractors are paying is not a livable wage. The county has data they shared that they are paying through their contracts, not including benefits, about 15-30% higher rates than median household income. The author is operating under the assumption that there is a labor shortage and higher wages would attract more people to this field. The county shared their list of qualified contractors which includes about 30 contractors. She added they know globally there is a shortage of certain types of specialties, but overall, there is not the kind of shortage the author is portraying. It was also noted there are new programs starting at places like Columbia College so training does not need it to be legislated.

Potential Field Trips and Final Comments:

Supervisor Goldemberg mentioned the road to Kennedy Meadows is open and trout is being planted. He complimented the YSS collaborative on the efforts that have been made.

There was a discussion about whether it was positive or negative to include media and legislative folks in a trip to see the fuelbreaks that have been implemented and the new burning off H108.

It was noted that this is the ten-year anniversary of the Rim Fire. A trip for the general membership could include reforestation in the Rim and the Cottonwood Road fuelbreaks being constructed with HUD funds. Someone also mentioned viewing thinned plantations. Ms. Lott will work with TRT on the July Rim tour. Mr. Cossel will lead the USFS efforts for a media/legislative field trip.

TC is working with the Tuolumne Band on workforce development.

Mr. Junette said YSS has helped accomplish more than any single national forest or group of national forests have addressed in the same amount of time.

Next YSS Meeting: July 21, 2023

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	Present

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Dave Pickett	AMA36/Alternate	
Mike Albrecht	Associated California Loggers	
Vicki Albrecht	ACL	
John Sulkowski	Blue Mountain Minerals	
Lauren Mitchell	BMM/Alternate	
Steve Brink	CA Forestry Assoc., American Forest Resource Council	
Walt Kruse	Central Sierra Audubon Society	
Linda Millspaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Stan Dodson	CSERC/Alternate	
Joanna Prtillo-HSU	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of MeWuk Indians	
Chris Trott	CT Bioenergy Consulting	Present
Jody Trott	CTBC/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	Dambacher Construction/Landowner	
Karl Dambacher	DC/Alternate	
James Maddox	Fish and Game Preservation Commission	Present
Jerry Jensen	Forest Landowners of California	Present
Scott Gelfand	Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp	
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	
Gary Donnell	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	
Karen Caldwell	H108FSC/Alternate	
Jeb Brooks	Left Coast Land Clearing	Present
Sasha Farkas	LCLC/Alternate	
Mike Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/Stanislaus Trail Bike Association, 4x4 in Motion	Present
Jim Phelan	Mule Deer Foundation	Present
Sara Vaughn	National Forest 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	Present
	SOS – CUSD/Alternate	
Brian Wayland	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Hannah Grabowski	SPI Alternate	Present

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Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
Robert Wells	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Etienne Patenaude	Tuolumne BioEnergy	
David Goldemberg	Tuolumne County	Present
Jaron Brandon	TC/Alternate	
Randy Hanvelt	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	Present
Lindsay Mattos	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Amodio	TRT/Alternate	
Ben Campbell	TRT/Alternate	Present
Kristina Rylands	Upper Merced River Watershed Council	
	UMRWC/Alternate	

LIASON MEMBERS

Jerry Martinez	Bureau of Land Management	
Jason Schroeder	BLM/Alternate	
Mark Abraham	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	
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	
Michael Jow	USFS/Alternate	Present
Jim Junette	USFS/Alternate	Present
Brian McCrory	USFS/Alternate	Present
Ray Cablayan	USFS/Alternate	

PARTICIPANTS

Keith Martin	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club	
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COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	Present
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Liz Peterson	Tuolumne County
Corinne Hume	"
Thomas Meyer	USFS
Jose Hernandez	USFS
Leonel Solorio	TRT
Cailey Bauer	TRT

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Cindy Chen	University of California Cooperative Extension
Chelsea Lowandowski	CSERC