



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions  
Collaborative General Membership  
Meeting Summary  
September 15, 2023  
Forest Supervisor's Conference Rooms**

**FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:**

**MEETING GOALS:**

- Hear presentation on the Rim 10 years later
- Hear USFS reports

**SUMMARY:**

**Meeting Opening, Welcome and Introductions:**

Chair Liz Peterson opened the meeting and introductions were made. She recognized a new member, Stanislaus National Forest Grazing Permittees Association represented by Richard Gaiser.

**Watershed Monitoring SERAL 2.0:**

Mr. Sean Hembree provided an overview of a WaterSmart grant application that includes UC Merced, Stanislaus National Forest (STF), and Turlock Irrigation District. The purpose of this initial grant is to capture pre-existing conditions in the SERAL 2.0 project area. Long-term additional grants will need to be pursued to track treatment and post-treatment conditions. The current grant has a two-year implementation period.

UC Merced will design the technical proposal and perform the monitoring. Vice-chair John Buckley suggested they review the Upper Tuolumne River Ecosystem Program and the studies already done for that watershed.

**Project Updates – County/YSS:**

TRT and the County are wrapping up the SERAL 1.0 implementation season. Some project highlights include completed fuelbreaks, Cold Springs defensive space, Cabin Tracks, and recreation sites. They finished 20,000 acres of botanical surveys. They also signed the documents for a \$7M grant for Rim reforestation efforts. Site prep will need to be done first and then planting will take place in 2025-26.

**Rim Fire and YSS:**

VC Buckley provided a history of YSS involvement. He described the original amount of controversy over the level of salvage logging proposed after the fire. Mr. Mike Albrecht and VC Buckley worked with a variety of forest stakeholders to find a common ground solution. The FS agreed to the resulting YSS proposal.

The following year the Rim Fire reforestation plan was proposed and again was controversial. YSS developed a “mixture of strategies” plan that included high intensity, moderate intensity, founders’ planting, and no herbicides alternatives. Eventually, this became the reforestation plan with the addition of a “no action” alternative. It was intended that the results from the four action alternatives would be monitored and analyzed. This has not happened. VC Buckley noted when

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

YSS focuses on areas of agreement, funding is often successfully acquired, and work gets done.

Mr. Patrick Koepele said without YSS, the salvage EIS would potentially have ended up in a long court battle. He noted the Reforestation EIS could have ended up the same way. YSS was able to weigh in on lawsuits and support the plan.

Mr. Ben Campbell presented information about the overall Rim Fire restoration and recovery work that has been done. The first focus was wildlife habitat and meadow and spring restoration projects. Work was done on 24 meadows with 96 treatments. Ten springs were restored, and ten acres of Aspen stands were improved. 24 Great Grey Owl nesting structures were built, and wildlife guzzlers and troughs were installed. Culverts were put in at four locations and recreation projects were completed on 15+ miles of trails.

He noted that 712,500 trees have been planted across 3,881 acres. Recent work has been contractor implemented, but early on 109,000 trees were planted by volunteers. Thinning and biomass removal have been done. Prepping for prescription burning has been done and over 500 acres have been burned. \$27M has been raised to work on the Rim footprint.

You can find Mr. Campbell's full presentation at: <https://yosemitestanislaussolutions.com/wp-admin/post.php?post=2417&action=us-builder> An interactive map is available at: <https://www.tuolumne.org/habitat>

### **USFS Updates:**

Rim Footprint - Mr. Michael Jow said funding sources for Rim restoration have been diverse and have supported a lot of projects beyond salvage logging. Initially projects helped stabilize the area.

The FS and TRT just finished a planning grant for additional meadow restoration. Most of the high priority meadows have completed NEPA, but funding is needed for implementation. A handful of meadows still need design and permitting.

Hazard tree recovery was initially slated for 15,000 acres, but it ended up being a little over 10,000 acres because of operational and feasibility issues. There were 22 separate contracts, and 155 million board feet were cut and removed.

The focus moving forward is on reforestation. The Record of Decision (ROD) authorized 24,000 acres of conifer planting and 12,000+ acres of plantation thinning. 10,300 acres have been planted to date. There were 1,800 acres of replanting in areas where there were massive failures. About 13,000 acres remain to be planted across the four alternatives.

Congress passed a replanting act that aims to clear the replanting backlog within 10 years. Currently a regional reforestation strategy is being completed. The American Forest Foundation is partnering with the FS to develop specific strategies and outline ten-year plan for reforestation. The FS anticipates additional funds to accomplish the work over the next ten years.

Through the HUD grant, 750 acres of fuelbreaks, primarily on NF and BLM land, were completed. 3,500 acres of plantation thinning has been completed and there are about 10,000 acres left to thin.

SERAL 1.0 - 2023 has been a year of completing fuelbreaks and awarding contracts for thinning logging. By the end of the field season there should be around 3,500 to 4,000 of fuelbreaks

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

done. A total of 5,000 acres of fuelbreaks have been done, but not all of them are in the SERAL project area.

About 1,500 acres of selective logging and thinning are in contract. The G-Z large stewardship contract is in review with an expected completion date in 2029. (A G-Z project is a large landscape project taken on by one contractor. They do everything but NEPA.) G-Z is a pilot project. If it is successful, the FS will try to use it in SERAL 2.0.

The first five PODS along the highway received the highest priority for work as they are near communities. A number of additional fuelbreak and fuels reduction projects should be in contract by the end of this calendar year.

The FS has obligated about \$42M for SERAL 1.0 and they estimate that they will need another \$160M to implement all the projects for SERAL 1.0

Hazard Tree Project – The FS is going through comments and finalizing changes to the EA prior to the objection period. They hope to have a draft decision notice and final EA in November. This project was originally published with a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) relying on another decision (Region 5 EA). The FS received detailed comment letters expressing concern about a DNA not being the appropriate process to use since the “similar” project previously analyzed was a high-severity fire salvage project far from the local area that only took burned trees. This Hazard Tree Project has a suite of reasons for taking trees.

SERAL 2.0 – The FS will be preparing an EIS and using a scenario planning tool and gathering a full data set soon. They should be running scenarios for approximately 4-6 weeks starting by the end of the month. They are using the Mapping and Remote Sensing Lab (MARS). The FS is optimistic that a decision can be signed in the spring of 2024. They are using an Emergency Action (EAD) Determination which allows analyzing proposed and no action alternatives without an objection period which is one reason why they are staying proposed treatment prescriptions very similar to the original SERAL 1.0.

The Scoping Period will hopefully begin in early November. After the comment period, they will finalize the draft EIS and hold the 45-day comment period. The FS, within the 150 western fireheds identified in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, have been directed that they must have justification not to use EADs and other expediting authorities.

Prescribed Burning – The FS had a great year using wildfire as a tool, along with prescribed burning. As of now, they have applied fire as a management tool on 11,254 acres. Of those acres, 4,154 were acres of broadcast burning, 6,100 acres were pile burning, and 900 acres were wildfire (Bone Fire). Resources came from across the West to help. Along with implementing prescribed burns, the fire crews successfully prepped about 3,000 acres. They completed an additional two units in the Dry Meadow area for a total of 114 acres. They are currently managing 40 lightning strike fires on the forest. They may do additional burning in the fall.

The FS does not yet plan for a salvage sale of trees damaged in prescribed burns. There has been green growth since the burn so they will assess the condition of the trees in the spring. There are also snag objectives.

The country is potentially only a few days out from a federal shutdown. If that occurs, only emergency work will be funded, but the Forest is not sure what will be considered emergency work. The STF put in for a five-year funding plan. They anticipate some additional funds for special projects. Standard funding won't see an increase.

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Staffing – There are tremendous opportunities to hire staff currently. They have approval to increase positions by 20%. However, because of retirements, transfers, and promotions they have not even kept up with filling vacancies. There are some critical key vacant positions on the forest.

Status of Non-Rim, Non-SERAL Projects/vegetation Management – The Forest has initiated work on Two-Mile, Gooseberry, Cold Springs, the EI Portal fire recovery and resilience, the Great America Outdoor projects (seven are in the YSS footprint), initiation of a non-motorized trail plan for mountain bikes, and the Ackerson Meadow Restoration project.

### **Sacramento Update:**

Mr. Koepele reported for Mr. John Amodio. Mr. Amodio has focused his efforts on funding methodologies. State dedicated funding is coming to an end. Going forward Cap and Trade is the only dedicated funding currently available. There are discussions about floating climate bonds during the 2024 elections. These would provide funds, but bonds are usually for capital costs rather than ongoing operational costs. Mr. Amodio is working with groups that are evaluating opportunities for other types of resources.

He suggested people look at work being done by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation which estimates there has been in recent years a \$117 billion impact for Californians because of extreme wildfires. You can find more information at: <https://www.moore.org/initiative-strategy-detail?initiativeld=wildfire-resilience-initiative>

**Next YSS Meeting: November 15, 2023**

### MEETING ATTENDANCE Members

Name	Organization	Attendance
Jerry Fouts	American Motorcyclist Association, District 36	
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 Millsbaugh	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Stan Dodson	CSERC/Alternate	Present
Joanna Portillo-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	
Jerry Jensen	Forest Landowners of California	

## Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

Diedre Bryant	FLOC/Alternate	
Scott Gelfand	Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp	
Phil Coffin	FBTC/Alternate	
Gary Donnell	Friends of Pinecrest	
Douglas Wiele	FP/Alternate	
Dave Holland	FP/Alternate	
	Golden State Natural Resources	
	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	
Jim Phelan	Mule Deer Foundation	Present
Sara Vaughn	National Forest Foundation	
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	
Hannah Grabowski	Sierra Pacific Industries	
Richard Gaiser	SNF Grazing Permittees Association	Present
Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council	Present
Robert Wells	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Etienne Patenaude	Tuolumne BioEnergy	Present
David Goldemberg	Tuolumne County	
Jaron Brandon	TC/Alternate	
Liz Peterson	TC/Alternate	Present
Randy Hanvelt	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	Present
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	
Lindsay Mattos	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	Present
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
John Amodio	TRT/Alternate	
Ben Campbell	TRT/Alternate	Present
Kristina Rylands	Upper Merced River Watershed Council	
	UMRWC/Alternate	
Brain Wayland	Wayland Forestry	Present

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	
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	
Beth Martinez	USFS/Alternate	Present
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	Present
--------------	----------------------------	---------

**COLLABORATIVE STAFF**

Carolyn Lott	Carlson Consulting	Present
--------------	--------------------	---------

**OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Corinne Hume	Tuolumne County
Sean Hembree	"
Sherri Brennan	
Safeeq Khan	UC Merced