



**Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
Collaborative General Membership
Meeting Summary
November 17, 2023
Forest Supervisor's Conference Rooms**

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

- Presentation of 2023 MSA Achievements
- Prescribed Fire Field Trip

MEETING GOALS:

- Update on Projects – TRT and TC
- Overview of SERAL 1.0 Status
- Presentation on SERAL 2.0 Scoping and Timeline
- Explanation of Natural Range of Variation (NRV) and Application to SERAL 2.0

SUMMARY:

Meeting Opening, Welcome and Introductions:

Vice-Chair John Buckley opened the meeting. Mr. Jerry Day, from Access Tuolumne County, was introduced. He noted ATC is filming a mini documentary on the SERAL project and how the County and YSS have partnered to successfully achieve successes for treatments in the Stanislaus Forest. The documentary is projected to be completed in the spring. He will be returning to YSS in January to take some video clips. He can be reached at:

jerry@accesstuolumne.org

VC Buckley shared that Ms. Liz Peterson will continue as chair of YSS in 2024, and he has agreed to continue as vice-chair.

Project Updates County/YSS:

Mr. Ben Campbell, TRT, said 600 acres of fuels reduction have been implemented which included Cold Springs. Significant progress has been made on SERAL 1.0 Potential Operational Delineation (POD) 6. The SERAL 1.0 Phase 3 planning process is underway which will do treatments in the general area around the community of Jupiter. This phase includes invasive species work.

Rim Reforestation work is kicking off and TRT has been in conversation with the USFS about best practices. They are looking at what is viable to treat. The Region's current large funding source aiming to support reforestation projects must be expended by 2029. In SERAL, the County/TRT/Forest Service have jointly completed 6,000 acres of fuelbreaks which are about 500' in total width with 300' of more intensive treatment and 100' on each side of light treatment. 420,000 seedlings were planted in the Groveland District. The RFQ is open for fuelbreak work utilizing heavy equipment.

Prevailing wage requirements begin in 2026 for work funded through the County and YSS/TRT and doesn't apply to contracts already signed. The County is working to try to get potential amendments to the legislation, and the state is still defining what constitutes fuels reduction work. The County is advocating for comparing rural areas with other rural areas for wage comparisons. Mr. Campbell said his main concern is the potential for increases in costs and the

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

predicted reduction in available grants. The YSS Leadership Team (LT) would like regular updates from county on costs and grants.

Mr. Patrick Koepele said YSS applied for a \$5M SNC grant but did not receive it. SNC had \$32M to award and \$72M in requests.

Yosemite Clean Energy:

Mr. Tom Hobby gave a detailed presentation, beginning with explaining that the goal of YCE is to take wood waste and find a second-generation biofuel that will have more value. The goal is to upcycle 90,000 bone dry tons per year. YCE intends to produce hydrogen to replace diesel fuel. Their vision is to create value from biowaste taken off the landscape. He recommended a report by the PPIC that can be found at: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/the-benefits-of-headwater-forest-management/> As a side note, the USFS owns about 53% of headwaters land.

Mr. Hobby stated 90% of Western US Forests are threatened to burn by 2050 without fuels management. \$1.2B in planning dollars was just awarded to CA for development of hydrogen fuels. He refers to the YCE process stump to pump. He predicted that almost all rail transportation in CA will be fueled by hydrogen within ten years.

Their first YCE project is planned for Oroville. They are hoping to be at a decision point for a plant in Tuolumne County by 2025 with production envisioned to be beginning in 2027. They have secured a long-term lease in Chinese Camp. They need to do a feedstock analysis and an economic analysis.

The full presentation can be found at: <https://yosemitestanislaussolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/20231006-Sonora-YCE-Presentation.pdf>

USFS Updates:

SERAL 1.0 Status – Mr. Brian McCrory shared the FS internal dashboard which shows accomplishments on the Stanislaus Landscape which includes SERAL 1.0 with SERAL 2.0 making up the remainder of FS land in the Landscape. The stats he shared included:

- ✓ 10,000 acres of mechanical treatment completed.
- ✓ 6,392 acres of prescribed fire completed.
- ✓ 15,528 acres prescribed fire planned.
- ✓ 15,489 acres of mechanical treatment awarded.
- ✓ 42,200 acres mechanical treatment planned.

The County is working on a publicly accessible storyboard that will show landscape accomplishments. It will be shared with the Board of Supervisors on 12/5.

SERAL 1.0 – The accomplishments include ~3,200 acres of fuelbreaks, 3,757 acres of mechanical fuels treatment completed, 11,811 acres are planned, 4,071 acres of prescribed fire have been completed, and 18,083 acres of additional fire treatments are planned. These numbers encompass USFS and partner work.

Rim – They are starting unit recon for a \$7M CCI 2023 grant covering 3,200 acres.

SERAL 2.0 – The scoping period for the new Large Landscape forest treatments project has begun. Scoping is the initial announcement of the project and is the time when the FS seeks input that may be considered as the Forest staff does the environmental analysis. This period will run for 30 days with the end of the comment period on December 18, 2023.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

The Wildfire Strategy that covers the Stanislaus Landscape can be found at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/stanislaus/fire>. These publications are designed to help tell the story to the public.

The Scoping Package for SERAL 2.0 can be found at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/stanislaus/?project=63557>. This project has qualified to use emergency authorities which enable the FS to utilize an Emergency Action Determination (EAD) instead of planning the large project through the normal NEPA process. The EAD provides for a 45-day comment period on the draft EIS. The EAD also allows the FS to only analyze the proposed action and a no action alternative. Additionally, after the comment period on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the FS will issue an EIS and a Record of Decision (ROD) without providing for any appeal objection period. The only option for those with concerns about the project is litigation.

It was noted the YSS Leadership Team has been meeting with the FS to discuss the project. The LT represents a diverse group of interests in YSS and aims to reduce significant points of controversy to get proposed FS projects approved and implemented without legal delays.

The proposed boundary for the SERAL 2.0 project was expanded to extend to the Clavey River, but the Stanislaus Landscape focus area created by the Forest Service for national funding opportunities has not been extended to mirror this. Forest staff noted that it takes an act of Congress to change the boundaries of the nationally approved Stanislaus Landscape area.

The scoping package for SERAL 2.0 is one of the largest scoping packages ever put out on this Forest and probably in the Region. It is very comprehensive and includes a lot of detail, but the project overall is generally very similar to SERAL 1.0. Two key differences described by the Forest staff are a proposal to apply herbicides on fuelbreaks for maintenance and targeted grazing by sheep and goats for concentrated consumption of edible fuels within fuelbreaks.

Mr. Chris Trott shared with the Forest staff that he believes that the YSS LT wants to see an increase in the size range of trees left at the end of forest thinning logging treatments so there are next generations of younger trees remaining and that forest stands are opened up more. There should be more transparency about the Forest's technical prescriptions that set objectives for the thinning treatments so everyone gets an understanding of what the forest will look like.

Mr. Michael Jow said the FS probably won't have prescription details for specific units until site specific stand exams are done. Once developed, such treatment prescriptions lay out what will be left after all the treatment is done.

Mr. Jow explained that the concept of replicating a Natural Range of Variation (NRV) in the SERAL 2.0 project is addressed in the Appendices. NRV is based on what best estimates have assessed as the general forest conditions prior to forest management. Today there are different climatic conditions which have been considered in developing what might be resilient now. Charts portraying the NRV for different vegetation types are in the scoping document. For the assessment the FS looked at pre-settlement conditions versus existing conditions. They found that the SERAL 2.0 project area is calculated by modeling to be deficient in the mid-open younger stands which should be at about 20%. Currently these stands are overly dense. There is also not a lot of open old growth forest, for example. The Forest staff used this information to target which vegetation types and size classes deviate significantly from the estimated historic NRV and therefore should be targeted for treatment if the goal is to replicate that historic condition.

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

The FS looks at the landscape at two scales to develop the NRV prescriptions. They look at the landscape level and then at the stand level to refine prescriptions.

There are already several non-SERAL projects that are under contract as well as some fuels reduction projects that have been recently completed within the boundaries of the new proposed SERAL 2.0 project. The goal is to make the landscape resilient to insects, fire, and drought. The FS did not specifically get into plans to implement reforestation or regeneration in the SERAL 2.0 project because they are focusing on stabilizing the forest to be resilient to the threat of catastrophic wildfires and extreme insects and drought.

There is a possibility that the FS may start a Stanislaus Forest Management Plan revision in 2025 and will look at sustained yield and other major planning topics during that process. Mr. Jow shared that the SERAL 1.0 and SERAL 2.0 project areas combined account for about 40% of overall acreage of the Forest.

Sacramento Update:

Mr. Koepele reported for Mr. John Amodio. He said the overall Sacramento focus has been on influencing stakeholder group funding. There is \$200M per year for state grants available from the Cap-and-Trade Program and this is the only funding for the future currently. There is growing uncertainty regarding whether there will be a new climate bond next year because of state indebtedness and the lack of big fires during last two fire seasons. Mr. Amodio, along with others, is working on research efforts and building a coalition that includes urban and suburban areas.

VC Buckley noted the state is now using a highly detailed data analysis process to show exactly where state funds have been implemented to achieve forest health and wildfire resilience treatments as well as to determine where there are multiple benefits for state investment. Key state decisionmakers are potentially revising the state's action plan to base funding on where the state gets the most benefits from funded projects, not just fuel reduction and community protection benefits.

Mr. Koepele added that the County is still working on the local Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Next YSS Meeting: January 19, 2024

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 | Present |
| Linda Millspaugh | CSAS/Alternate | |
| John Buckley | Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center | Present |

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---------|
| 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 | Present |
| 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 | |
| Terrance Rodgers | Golden State Natural Resources | |
| Sarah Bolnik | GSNR/Alternate | |
| Dwight Follien | Groveland Trail Heads | |
| Dusty Vaughn | GTH/Alternate | |
| Ethan Billigmeier | Hetch Hetchy Water and Power | |
| Michael Esposito | HHWP/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 | |
| Sara Vaughn | National Forest Foundation | Present |
| Dave Evans | Natural Resources Conservation Service | |
| Matthew Waverly | Pacific Gas & Electric | |
| Jeremy Diede | 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 | Present |
| Richard Gaiser | SNF Grazing Permittees Association | Present |
| Diana Beasley | Tuolumne Band Me-Wuk Tribal Council | |
| Robert Wells | TBM-WTC/Alternate | |
| Etienne Patenaude | Tuolumne BioEnergy | Present |
| David Goldemberg | Tuolumne County | |
| Jaron Brandon | TC/Alternate | Present |
| Liz Peterson | TC/Alternate | |
| Randy Hanvelt | Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment | |
| Shaun Crook | Tuolumne County Farm Bureau | |
| Glenn Gottschall | Tuolumne County Fire Safe Council | |
| Karen Caldwell | TCFSC/Alternate | |
| Matthew Lun | Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District | |

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| 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 |

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 | |
| Jason Kuiken | USFS Stanislaus NF | |
| Beth Martinez | USFS/Alternate | |
| Michael Jow | USFS/Alternate | Present |
| Jim Junette | USFS/Alternate | Present |
| Brian McCrory | USFS/Alternate | Present |
| Ray Cablayan | USFS/Alternate | |
| Jose Hernandez | USFS/Alternate | |
| Shawn Winstead | USFS/Alternate | Present |

PARTICIPANTS

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|--|
| Keith Martin | Tuolumne Group Sierra Club | |
|--------------|----------------------------|--|

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

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

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

| Name | Organization |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Corinne Hume | Tuolumne County |
| Caitlin Henry | " |
| Sean Hembre | " |
| Anna Fagioli | " |
| Tom Hobby | Yosemite Clean Energy |
| Sherri Brennan | " |
| Thomas Meyer | USFS |
| Vincent Campa | " |
| Becc Johnson | " |
| Garrett Grebe | Tuolumne River Trust |

Summary: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions General Meeting

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Theo Boettcher | “ |
| Lauren Smith | “ |
| Jackson Brooke | “ |
| Chelsea Lewandoski | CSERC |
| Gary Whitson | Cal FIRE |
| Tricia Peller | TC Resource Conservation District |
| Charis Hernandez | High Sierra Timber Management |
| Dana Jorgensen | Senator Marie Alvarado Gil |