



chYosemite Stanislaus Solutions
General Membership Collaborative Meeting
Meeting Summary
May 15, 2026

MEETING GOALS

Projects Update
USFS Updates
Forestry Challenge Presentation

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

- Quarry and Peak Fires Field Trip
- Presentation by CHIPS
- G-Z Field Trip
- Presentation by CDFW (Mark Abraham)

Meeting Opening, Welcome, and Introductions

Chair Patrick Koepele welcomed those attending. He opened the meeting and asked for self-introductions. He also announced that the Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD) had rejoined as a member of YSS, and he welcomed Jeff Hollis who was present as the TUD representative.

Projects Update

Dr. Ande Meyers, Yosemite Rivers Alliance (YRA), provided a Forest Projects update with a slide presentation. She shared various treatments being implemented as part of the SERAL and SERAL 2.0 projects. For SERAL Phase 3, 269 acres have been completed near Jupiter. The late spring rains have created some complications for work needing to pause and then re-start again due to weather and conditions. For Excelsior in the SERAL 2.0 project, two contracts are under operation with roughly 200 acres in process.

Dr. Meyers explained that significant amount of success has been achieved with site preparation and reforestation work. In the Rim Fire burn area, counting both newly planted acres and interplanting in past reforested areas with inadequate stocking a total of 2,744 acres overall have been planted this year so far, with 601,000 trees put into the ground. YRA is currently looking to release another site-preparation contract shortly. She reviewed survival data for reforestation done in 2025. Overall, the first-year survival for the planted conifers was 42%.

By species, bareroot Ponderosa pine had 45% survival, incense cedar had 74%, sugar pine had 71%, giant Sequoia seedlings had 50%, and Douglas firs had only 28% survival due (Dr. Meyers surmised) to poor quality stock. She distinguished between a stocking exam (which

looks at how much of a unit is adequately stocked) in contrast to survival exams (which simply count whether trees are alive or dead).

She concluded by sharing that along with all the work being done, when YRA staff discover new archeological sites, those are being carefully documented, and their location is shared with the USFS.

Ms. Caitlin Henry reported for the County about forest projects and accomplishments. The County put out a contract for 1,800 acres of treatments for the Westside project. She noted that the County is currently handling 26 separate active projects such as timber sales, boundary surveys, stand exams, etc. She shared that the County will be applying for a major CAL FIRE grant to do prescribed burning and other work. The County is currently implementing a fuel break grant project in the Groveland area near Wagner Ridge.

Ms. Rose Day reported on several training courses that have been taking place - including logging truck drivers and operators of heavy equipment. Mother Lode Job Training is prescreening for positions to be filled by contractors and companies. On the job training is also being coordinated between Mother Lode Job Training and the County, and truck drivers are getting certified.

In closing out the reports, Ms. Henry shared that CA Forest Health grants are being applied for to hopefully connect fuel breaks on adjacent private lands to make the fuel breaks more effective and to expand the fuel break system.

Forest Service Updates

Forest Supervisor Jason Kuiken began his update report by describing the basics of the recently released national level plan for reorganization by the Forest Service. The shift of the agency's headquarters from Washington, DC to Salt Lake City is already in progress. The Chief will move there, and only a small percentage of the national level staff currently working in Washington, DC will remain there to interact with Congress. All other national level USFS staff will be shifted to Salt Lake City.

A large percentage of existing USFS research facilities will be closed although research will continue. When questioned, Supervisor Kuiken acknowledged that the Administration's budget showed zero dollars to be allocated to research, but he noted that Congress will make the actual determination on budget decisions, including for research.

Once the Forest Service reorganizational transition is complete, there will be no remaining Regional Offices. Instead, there will be State USFS offices (some of which will be for several closely adjacent states). The Regional Office now located at Vallejo, California, will become a national training center, and the administration of USFS units and activities within California will be shifted to Placerville, California. There will be 15 State Directors who will likely be selected in the next 4 to 8 months. The State Directors will each have 6-8 staff in contrast to the hundreds of USFS now employed at the already scaled down staffing level at Vallejo.

Supervisor Kuiken also shared that in general the agency will not be doing much hiring this year outside of fire crews, although there will be seasonals hired to bolster staffing for recreation.

Mr. Michael Jow shared the Stanislaus Forest projects. In terms of reducing the backlog of burn piles, he noted that between last October and now forest crews have burned 15,000 piles.

In terms of timber outputs, in this fiscal year so far, the Forest has sold 21,000,000 board feet. The very large Bumblebee timber sale, fuels reduction project has been posted and will generally provide about 12,000,000 board feet of timber. The Forest staff is hoping to put out the Punchbowl IRTC timber sale contract late in the summer or this fall. It also is a very large project of 12-14,000,000 board feet of timber.

For the next fiscal year, the Forest staff is already planning to do large scale sale preparation for two timber sales in the MAC Project area that includes the Calaveras District of the Stanislaus Forest and the Amador District in the Eldorado Forest. Utilizing the Good Neighbor Authority Agreement process, the Forest Service is coordinating with the County for work in the Two Dog Project and the Rose Creek Project and potentially additional project sites. This use of the Good Neighbor Authority will enable the projects to be put out by the County rather than by the Forest Service.

Mr. Brian McCrory added that the Good Neighbor Authority has recently been approved for use by the County rather than just by the State, so receipts can be applied to connected recreation projects or other associated treatments needed in the general project area. He also pointed out that under that Good Neighbor Authority, projects can extend across property boundaries.

Mr. Andy Welsh reported for his district (which he shared is now formally approved to be officially called the Sugar Pine District rather than the MiWok or Summit District). He noted that the District staff plans to do some prescribed burn treatments in the Experimental Forest later this month. In terms of preparedness for the fire season, the District will have 4 fire engines staffed (and 2 engines not staffed). There will be one hand crew. The Hotshot crew is now under the supervision of the Superintendent's Office (SO). The helicopter will be staffed.

Mr. Welsh also noted the Pinecrest Basin Plan is ending the public comment period. It will enable commercial uses to be assessed and approved for the old school site. Plans are also in the works for a Pinecrest Campground re-do sometime soon.

A report from the Groveland District staff noted their District also has crews ready for fire season, with 3 engines, one Hotshot crew, and another hand crew. The biggest news to be shared is the long-closed Lumsden Road is now open, which is important for river rafting companies and recreational users desiring to access the Tuolumne River.

An assortment of Forest Service staff addressed the challenge of dealing with all the demands of recreation on the Forest, and they noted this year the Sugar Pine District will have at least 3 seasonal recreation employees. The Groveland District has already hired 5 seasonal recreation staff so far, and the Calaveras District may have as many as 10 seasonal recreational staff members on the District.

Supervisor Kuiken added that the Forest is focusing on recreation this year which may lead to plans and projects tied to recreation.

Possible Field Trip

Chair Koepele reminded those attending that there had been two unsuccessful attempts to hold a forest field trip last year, both of which were canceled due to stormy weather. Mr. John Buckley of the YSS Leadership Team explained that last year Burnbot had graciously prepared to co-host such a field trip at their “G to Z” forest project area north of Pinecrest, but that the saturated roads and rain forecasts had caused the cancellation of both field trip attempts. Mr. Buckley shared that it would be helpful to know how many members of YSS clearly felt committed to attending a field trip if their schedules allow, versus how many members of YSS would probably not feel that a field trip would be of value because they already are well-aware of the various forest treatments that might be the focus of a field trip.

Ms. Henry, from the County, requested that facilitator Carolyn Lott be asked to do a poll of YSS members to get a more accurate sense of whether there is strong interest in scheduling such a field trip. If interest is high, Mr. Buckley and Chair Koepele will do outreach to Burnbot, local Forest staff, and County staff to consider which project areas and which forest treatments might be worth a field visit. If sufficient interest is likely, a tentative date could be shared for feedback.

Biomass Update

Mr. Jeremy Diede of Tuolumne Bioenergy described various expansion projects that are now underway at the facility, ranging from the construction of a small mill to development of power production operations. He shared that when everything is completed, they may be hiring as many as 17 more employees.

Forestry Challenge Presentation

Ms. Dianne Dealey Neill summarized the recent very successful Forestry Challenge that took place at Camp Sylvester April 22-24. She introduced the top presentation team from Oak Ridge High School. The three students re-enacted their presentation about “Perpetuating Variable Diversity Forest Structure” and the different challenges that they identified as being related to the topic. YSS participants applauded enthusiastically at the conclusion of the students’ presentation. The presentation can be found here: [2026 Forestry Challenge Presentation](#)

Adjournment

Chair Koepele thanked those attending for their participation.

Next Meeting

Meeting of the Wildfire Task Force on July 17, 2026.

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	
Tom Parrington	CSAS/Alternate	
John Buckley	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	Present
Stan Dodson	CSERC/Alternate	
Joanna Portillo-HSU	Chicken Ranch Rancheria of MeWuk Indians	
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	
Dave Holland	FP/Alternate	
Terrance Rodgers	Golden State Natural Resources	
Sarah Bolnik	GSNR/Alternate	
Dwight Follien	Groveland Trail Heads	
Dusty Vaughn	GTH/Alternate	
	Heartwood Biomass	
Cody Dunlap	Heartwood Biomass	
Ethan Billigmeier	Hetch Hetchy Water and Power	
Joy Meller	HHWP/Alternate	
Jim Dambacher	James R. Dambacher Construction/Landowner	Present
Jon Donais	Jamestown Energy	
Dennis Serpa	JE/Alternate	
	Mason, Bruce, & Girard Natural Resource Consultants	
Chris Shull	MB&G NRC/Alternate	Present
Rubie Teffeteller	MB&G NRC/Alternate	
Mike Damaso	Merced Dirt Riders/Stanslaus Trail Bike Association, 4x4 in Motion	
Jim Phelan	Mule Deer Foundation	Present

Elise Sawa/Benji Weaver	National Forest Foundation	Present
Dave Evans	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Matthew Waverly	Pacific Gas & Electric	
Wes Whited	PGE/Alternate	
Rees Warne	Sierra Outdoor School – Clovis Unified School District	
	SOS – CUSD/Alternate	
Hannah Grabowski	Sierra Pacific Industries	Present
Rian Jurado	SPI/Alternate	
Richard Gaiser	SNF Grazing Permittees Association	
Robert Wells	TBM-WTC/Alternate	
Etienne Patenaude	Tuolumne BioEnergy	
Jaron Brandon	Tuolumne County	
Anaiah Kirk	TC/Alternate	
Liz Peterson	TC/Alternate	Present
Randy Hanvelt	Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment	
Shaun Crook	Tuolumne County Farm Bureau	
Jerry McGowan	Tuolumne County Fire Safe Council	Present
Karen Caldwell	TCFSC/Alternate	
Matthew Lun/Tricia Peller	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District	Present
Lindsay Mattos	TCRCD/Alternate	
Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Me-Wuk Tribal Council	
Laura Hiler	TMWTC/Alternate	Present
Patrick Koepele	Tuolumne River Trust	Present
Ande Meyers	TRT/Alternate	Present
Jeff Hollis	Tuolumne Utilities District	Present
Jeff Kerns	TUD/Alternate	
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	
David Miyako	NPS, Yosemite National Park	
Rob Grasso	NPSYNP/Alternate	
Michael Pickard	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	
Jason Kuiken	USFS Stanislaus NF	Present
Andy Welsh	USFS/Alternate	Present

Michael Jow	USFS/Alternate	Present
Katie Wilkinson	USFS/Alternate	Present
Brian McCrory	USFS/Alternate	Present
Marcie Easter	USFS/Alternate	
Ray Cablayan	USFS/Alternate	
Ryan Murdoff	USFS/Alternate	Present
Thomas Meyer	USFS/Alternate	Present
Dan Guse	USFS/Alternate	Present
Denny Hayes	USFS/Alternate	Present

PARTICIPANTS

Keith Martin	Tuolumne Group Sierra Club	Present
Joanne McCullough	TGSC/Alternate	

COLLABORATIVE STAFF

Carolyn Lott	Executive Director	
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OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization
Caitlin Henry	Tuolumne County
Sara Daniel	Tuolumne County
Jeremy Diede	Tuolumne Bioenergy
Sherri Brennan	Sierra Forest Works
Beck Johnson	USFS
Rose Day	Mother Lode Job Training/Columbia College-
Dianne Dealey Neill	Forestry Challenge