

## Meeting Synopsis

The BHCCFWG met for a full-group meeting on December 13th, 2017. New funding, forest research, and partnership opportunities discussed at the Fall 2018 Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement workshop were presented. The group discussed new approaches to streamlining the NEPA process for USFS projects. Comments and issues regarding the Plum Restoration Project proposal were discussed, as well as a tentative timeline for an official decision. Group members called for a strategic planning meeting in the new year to revisit collaborative visions, values, and goals.

## Attendees

Janine Book  
Steve Buckley  
Michelle Coppoletta  
Don Curtis  
Pete Johnson

Jonathan Kusel  
Trish Ladd  
Doug Lindgren  
Dean Lofthus  
Greg Mayer

John Owen  
Patricia Puterbaugh  
Todd Sloat

## Action Items

- **Sierra Institute** to schedule strategic planning meeting for January/February date
- **G. Mayer** to distribute the CFLR annual report when finalized
- **M. Coppoletta** to contact Spring Rivers regarding citizen science/student monitoring
- **Sierra Institute, S. Buckley, and M. Coppoletta** to develop a template for collaborative write ups
- **G. Mayer** to invite new district staff to the meeting and introduce the collaborative and discuss the website

## Meeting Notes

### Approval/modifications/facilitator notes

- The meeting notes from October 10<sup>th</sup> were approved by group members.
- The agenda for the current meeting (12/13/17) was approved by group members.

### SCALE Workshop Outcomes / Forest Unit Planning

- Sierra Institute hosted the Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) workshop on November 2-3 in Sacramento, CA. Notable attendees included Bernie Gyant, Deputy Regional Forester (USFS Region 5), and Helge Eng, Deputy Director of Resource Management at CAL FIRE.
- Hugh Safford, USFS Regional Ecologist, presented on the state of California's forests. Some main takeaways included:

- Land managers are “in a race” against a changing climate and increased frequency and severity of wildfires.
- There is ultimately not enough of the right fire (low to moderate severity) and too much high severity, stand-replacing wildfire.
- A number of upcoming funding opportunities were also discussed at the SCALE workshop. CAL FIRE, for example, has an additional \$200 million in the agency budget, a portion of which will fund a forest health grant program in 2018. SCALE participants stressed the importance of preparing, managing, and implementing forest health projects effectively to realize the full benefit of new funding.
- Notes for the SCALE workshop are available on Sierra Institute’s [website](#).
- G. Mayer discussed a new directive from USFS Region 5. The region has been subdivided into units or “provinces”, with each unit sharing resources internally. Lassen National Forest is included in the northern forests unit, which is comprised of six forests in total (Klamath, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Shasta-Trinity, and Six Rivers NFs).
- The unit system is intended to utilize resources across the forests to more effectively plan and implement priority projects. Each forest supervisor will present and justify the priority projects on their respective forests.
- Group members expressed some concern over the potential loss of LNF staff to other forests’ projects. Additionally, there is no guarantee that LNF will receive additional support when it is most needed.
  - J. Book believes LNF leadership will need to be diligent in communicating priorities to receive resources when needed.

#### Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) / Contracting Mechanisms

- T. Sloat spoke with Kevin Zeman, a USFS contracting/agreements specialist, about supplementing the USFS workforce. There are some innovative approaches being implemented elsewhere that could apply to the CFLR. For example, a private entity can partner with the USFS and pay for a project’s NEPA analyses. The NEPA cost is later reimbursed through the value of forest products resulting from project work.
- T. Sloat envisioned this process benefiting salvage work. There are numerous examples of the USFS lacking the capacity to implement salvage operations in a timely manner. If a private entity funds the NEPA, the timeline for a CE or EA will be much improved.
  - There is a recent court case that set a precedent for the legality of this process.
- J. Book discussed a chronic issue with the USFS NEPA process. There is a trend in California to produce “bulletproof” NEPA to avoid litigation. However, not every project

requires that level of analysis. It will be important to shift the mindset among line officers and treat each project individually and plan for issues accordingly.

- J. Kusel noted that collaborative support can be useful in avoiding litigation.
- G. Mayer mentioned that in addition to private funding, private data is underutilized for planning purposes. For example, in the Backbone project area, there are adjacent private lands that have conducted wildlife/botanical surveys. Tapping into those resources could expedite planning.
- The concept of using contractors to conduct NEPA analyses was discussed. This process will likely require some adjustments initially. However, even accomplishing project scoping in a timely manner will be a significant advantage for project planning.
- M. Coppoletta followed the contracting conversation with a note about monitoring. The approach can be beneficial, but there needs to be a process in place to document which components are working/not working.
- S. Buckley inquired about a needs assessment for the CFLR area. It would be beneficial to discuss what needs to be done over the next ten years, including where capacity is limited and what resources (staff, funding, etc.) are required. **Future Meeting Topic**
- G. Mayer completed a “futuring” document that describes the outlook for Burney-Hat Creek Basins CFLR projects beyond the life of the federal program (CFLRP to sunset in 2019); the projects could potentially see completion by 2028.
- J. Kusel asked group members if there is value in holding a strategic planning meeting in the near future.
  - Group members supported the idea of a strategic planning meeting to revisit the CFLR proposal. **Future Meeting Topic**
  - **Action Item: Sierra Institute** to schedule strategic planning meeting for January/February date

#### SNC Proposition 1 Grant Program Proposals

- The Fall River RCD submitted two SNC Proposition 1 grant proposals including:
  - Manzanita Chutes (implementation)
  - Crossroads (planning)
- The Crossroads proposal is requesting funding for the NEPA process.
- J. Kusel mentioned the effort of Sierra Institute and others to develop a NEPA team of local/regional contractors. This model would not subvert the USFS authority to identify

and plan projects, but rather contribute to the efficiency of developing NEPA documents.

- If a NEPA team is created, there will need to be a project manager or coordinator to assign tasks based on project needs. This could be USFS staff or it could be open to other individuals who can confidently navigate the private and public processes. **Future Meeting Topic:** Interagency coordinator for projects

#### CFLR Annual Report

- G. Mayer has been steadily working on the CFLR annual report. **Action Item:** G. Mayer to distribute the CFLR annual report when finalized.
- G. Mayer described the CFLR accomplishments from the USFS perspective. There was a significant shortage in staff in 2017, which contributed to low numbers. In total, approximately 3,600 acres of treatment took place on the CFLR. There were no green timber sales; this was in large part due to a lack of engineering staff.
- There were multiple instances of USFS numbers being under or over reported. For example, specialists in the field are required to mark a checkbox when inside the CFLR boundary; this did not always happen and those acres were not reported. Also, range allotments were altered and that acreage was considered a treatment, however, this was taken out of the report.
- From the partnership side, the CFLR report has some key highlights from throughout the year. For instance, the LVNP/NASA partnership contributed significant data on tree mortality and fuel loading in the northern end of the CFLR. Also, there has been an ongoing effort to advance the Master Stewardship Agreement with the Pit River Tribe.

#### Plum Restoration Project

- The Plum Restoration Project is advancing, although, there are still some concerns over the hydrology section of the proposal. The main issues are removing a dam and ponds from the Coyote Springs area.
- USFS staff have proposed to install a reservoir tank to maintain the utility of the area for cattle grazing. There was concern about using spring water for the tank year-round, so staff may suggest not filling the tank during dry months.
- J. Book described the timeline for the Plum project.
  - USFS will produce a new scoping document that is more robust than the original version.

- The draft proposal should be released in early January, 2018. After this release, there will be an official public scoping period until March. **Future Meeting Topic**
- Ideally, a draft EA will go out in August, followed by a comment period. A final EA will be released in December. Any substantive objections may delay the ultimate record of decision.
- J. Book asked group members if there should be a separate review process for the collaborative.
  - T. Sloat recommended maintaining the standard process and not adding complexity to the timeline. Group members agreed.

### Monitoring Funding Opportunity

- M. Coppoletta spoke about a potential funding opportunity to engage local citizen scientists or youth in monitoring activities.
- The [Citizen Science Competitive Funding](#) program is open nationally and proposals can request up to \$25,000. The proposal must identify a USFS project lead and a “cooperator” – most likely a nonprofit organization.
- T. Sloat suggested utilizing the funds for socioeconomic monitoring.
  - J. Kusel agreed that a proposal for socioeconomic monitoring may stand out in a national competitive program; however, the investment in training volunteers or students to do the work could be challenging/time intensive.
- G. Mayer suggested looking at Burney Creek for a monitoring program. The creek flows through State Parks and Fruit Growers Supply property as well, so there is potential for multi-party involvement.
- The district has an ongoing relationship with advanced biology classes at Fall River HS; they have done some monitoring on Hat Creek already. Spring Rivers was identified as a potential nonprofit cooperator for purposes of this grant. They have a strong foundation with local teachers and students.
- G. Mayer believes Burney Creek has been somewhat neglected. If this grant program can lead the way to substantial partnerships with schools or universities, that would benefit to the community and district.
- **Action Item:** **M. Coppoletta** to contact Spring Rivers regarding citizen science/student monitoring.
- T. Ladd mentioned California Rapid Assessment Methods (CRAM) as a method for citizen science monitoring. CRAM speeds up the assessment of different habitats and is suitable for citizen scientists to apply.

- The question was raised of local commitment or participation in citizen science. Is there a resource issue that local residents would organize around? In Lassen Park, for example, there are opportunities for visitors to record data on trail conditions.
  - Recreation or invasive species might be topics of interest locally.
- The group was ultimately skeptical of the investment in the grant program, considering it is open nationally and only \$100k total are available.

### Bioenergy Update

- Hat Creek Bioenergy is one of a few SB-1122 projects to lock in the price of approximately \$.20/kWh. There is a Power Purchase Agreement under development with PG&E for that price; it is considered a relatively high price.
- Fall River RCD had a kickoff meeting recently for the \$5 million California Energy Commission grant they received earlier in the year.
- J. Kusel expanded on the prices and contracts for bioenergy production. The reason that the auction was at a favorable price (around \$.20) was because PG&E was giving estimates for interconnection fees far higher than was reasonable; as a result, projects were not accepting the auction prices, so they continued to climb. However, the California Public Utilities Commission called out PG&E for the inflated estimates and now projects are beginning to accept prices and develop PPAs.
- In other news, Sierra Institute has overseen the construction of a Cross Laminated Timber building in Quincy to house a biomass boiler. The boiler will serve to heat the Plumas County Health and Human Services building.
- Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) is comprised of lumber stacked in alternating directions to create a thick structural panel. The material is resistant to fire and performs well in seismic events.

### Outreach, Closing Remarks

- S. Buckley offered to share resources to create a collaborative template for informative materials. M. Coppoletta has been working on monitoring updates independently, but could assist with creating a template for the collaborative. **Action Item:** Sierra Institute, S. Buckley, and M. Coppoletta to develop a template for collaborative write-ups.
- G. Mayer indicated that new interns at the Hat Creek District might be able to assist with posting information on the district website. **Action Item:** G. Mayer to invite new district staff to the meeting and introduce the collaborative and discuss the website.

- J. Kusel again stated the next meeting will center on strategic planning.
  - G. Mayer said the group might be able to use the Hat Creek Work Center for overnight accommodations.