

## Meeting Synopsis

The Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group met for a full-group meeting on Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Fall River RCD representatives presented two grant proposals for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Proposition 1 Grant Program and collaborative members agreed to support the effort. The Good Neighbor Authority was discussed and how the mechanism could benefit a state/federal partnership between CAL FIRE and Lassen National Forest; a subcommittee was formed to further explore this partnership. A team from the NASA DEVELOP program presented on their work with Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP) analyzing tree mortality and fuel loading with earth observations. Collaborative members reviewed a list of proposed improvement projects for recreational sites throughout the Hat Creek District.

## Attendees

Janine Book  
Steve Buckley  
John Dilger  
Andrea Ferrer  
Ryan Hadley  
Kristy Hoffman

Pete Johnson  
Lori Martin  
Greg Mayer  
Anna McGarrigle  
Heather Myers  
Peter Norton

Jeff Oldson  
Todd Sloat  
Tamera Taylor  
Amber Wittner

## Action Items

- **Sierra Institute** to schedule a Good Neighbor Authority Subcommittee meeting in November, 2017. **DONE**
- **G. Mayer and Hat Creek budget officer** to review the CFLR budget allocation.

## Meeting Notes

### Approval/modifications/facilitator notes

- Group members approved both the meeting notes from August 22<sup>nd</sup> and the October agenda as written.

### Introductions

- J. Kusel welcomed guests to the meeting including the NASA DEVELOP representatives who are working with Lassen Volcanic National Park on fuels and tree mortality analysis.
- A NASA representative asked if the collaborative had ever utilized Earth Observations (satellite imagery) in project development?
  - G. Mayer said that LNF has collected LIDAR data on a large portion of the district.

- Another general question, how has the Reading Fire impacted the work of the USFS/collaborative?
  - G. Mayer described the Reading Fire burning a large portion of the Badger project area; consequently, work has been delayed to allow for recovery. Many of the protected activity centers (PACs) were impacted as well. Furthermore, the USFS is unable to retain the value (receipts) of salvaged material in the same way as green wood.

### Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Proposals

- T. Sloat discussed two Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Proposition 1 grant proposals out of the Fall River Resource Conservation District (FRRCD).
- The first proposal is an implementation project for Manzanita Chutes.
  - The project area is around 370 acres of federal land in the headwaters of the Battle Creek Watershed. Some of the plantations in the project area are part of the N49 project.
- FRRCD is requesting funding to assist the USFS implement biomass thinning and brush removal treatments.
- The project is NEPA ready and the RCD is requesting SNC to complete the CEQA component.
- Are the plantations in Manzanita Chutes part of the Tier 1 High Hazard Zone?
  - Yes, they are.
- FRRCD's second proposal is for Crossroads planning. The funding will help the USFS complete surveys and the necessary scoping documents to reach a NEPA decision.
- K. Hoffman talked about the status of proposals for the Prop 1 grant program. At this point, there are 34 projects that have made it through the first round of applications. Ultimately, there is \$8 million available to award. Funding will likely occur in March 2018, with CEQA preparation to follow.
- J. Kusel mentioned other proposals that are going forward from Sierra Institute and Lassen Volcanic National Park. These proposals are tied to a new collaborative group, the South Lassen Watersheds Group. The projects will provide an anchor for continued use of prescribed and managed fire in Lassen Park, particularly the wilderness areas.
- When does the grant money need to be spent?
  - December, 2021 – three field seasons essentially.
- T. Sloat distributed draft letters of support for collaborative members to review/sign for both the Manzanita Chutes project and the Crossroads planning grant.

Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), CAL FIRE funding opportunities

- Part of the ongoing Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) conversations within the collaborative have included the opportunities to supplement USFS staff with external contractors to complete environmental review. Ideally, there would be a local project team that could be utilized for priority projects to get analysis completed.
- J. Kusel has been speaking with Barney Gyant, USFS Deputy Regional Forester, and Helge Eng, CAL FIRE Deputy Director of Resource Management, about this process. Both individuals are supportive of instituting local teams through GNA to move projects forward.
- USFS staff mentioned a regional team within the agency that will be doing similar work, as in, assisting with priority projects across the northern forests.
- B. Rowe, a CAL FIRE and LaTour Demonstration State Forest representative, discussed the heavy fuel loading on the border of LaTour and Lassen National Forest. The southern end of LaTour abuts the N49 project area and there is heavy fuel loading along this boundary - approximately 60-80 tons of fuel/acre according to ground estimates. This boundary could be treated with a GNA agreement, allowing fuels treatments across the boundary line.
- The boundary area is referred to as “Backbone” by the USFS. Ideally, Backbone could be tied together with Snow Mountain, a larger project. That said, analysis on Backbone could go forward independently to expedite treatment; it may fall under an HFRA Categorical Exclusion (CE).
- A group member asked why a CE would apply to Backbone, but not the Crossroads project.
  - The difference between Backbone and Crossroads is the value in the woods. Because thinning Backbone would benefit the remaining stand, the HFRA CE may be applied.
- J. Kusel proposed setting up a subcommittee to discuss the GNA possibilities with LNF and LaTour State Forest/CAL FIRE. **Action Item: Sierra InSTITUTE** to schedule a GNA subcommittee meeting in October.
- To B. Rowe, are you looking for funding to treat the LaTour units?
  - LaTour has funding to prepare harvest units adjacent to LNF and that work will go forward. The federal property is in need of funding/treatment to benefit the state lands.

#### NASA DEVELOP Team presentation

- [View the presentation](#) (dropbox)
- NASA DEVELOP presenters include John Dilger, Andrea Ferrer, Anna McGarrigle, Heather Myers, Peter Norton.
- John Dilger introduced the NASA DEVELOP program. The program “addresses environmental and public policy issues through interdisciplinary research projects that apply the lens of NASA Earth observations to community concerns around the globe” (<http://develop.larc.nasa.gov>).

- The NASA team started working with LVNP in Summer, 2017. The objectives of this first term included mapping historical and present-day tree mortality, as well as examining the feasibility of using LiDAR data for fuel load characteristics.
- The team has created different products including Simple Analysis of Vegetative Trends in Earth Engine (SAVeTrEE). This product maps trends in tree mortality.
  - This tool is not currently available for public use, but once approved, can be used for analysis throughout the forest.
- P. Norton developed an algorithm that identifies individual trees from the LiDAR data. The algorithm is currently underestimating the number of trees, based on ground truth data.
- It was noted that the algorithms used for analysis on LVNP are new and unique to this project. As the dataset expands, the tools will become more effective.
- T. Sloat asked if there are other groups doing similar earth observation assessments.
  - USGS is implementing an extensive LiDAR program currently.
  - A. Wittner mentioned that Carlos Ramirez, vegetation mapping and inventory lead for R5, is working on a project with the University of Nevada – Reno. There may be an opportunity for collaboration in the future. **Future Meeting Topic**
- The NASA team has started working on a second round of analysis for LVNP and will incorporate areas of Lassen National Forest as well. It was logical to expand the analysis to a watershed scale that extended beyond the national park boundaries.
- Objectives for the second term include:
  - Identifying ladder fuels and biomass from LiDAR data in the USFS Badger planning unit.
  - Mapping recovery from the Reading Fire
  - Expanding the capabilities of the SAvETrEE tool to analyze historic tree mortality
- D. Mayer asked about using the technology to assess surface fuels.
  - This technology is less effective in determining biomass and surface fuels.

#### Data collection and communication

- J. Kusel mentioned a conversation that arose previously regarding private land and LiDAR data. Typically, that land is not included in the public data, however, if there is a discussion up front with private landowners, that data could be used for mutual benefits.
- Todd Sloat asked if the technology can identify the trunk diameters.
  - No, however, there is 360 degree LiDAR that can more accurately represent the surface and tree diameter from the ground.
- G. Mayer said there are opportunities to obtain more LiDAR data on the forest. The main champion of LNF's LiDAR program has passed away, but there is still a strong interest in pursuing the data collection. The main cost of collection is for the airplane and pilot.

- J. Kusel believes that ultimately, whether private landowners sign an agreement or some other mechanism giving permission for data collection, it is better to have these conversations up front to prevent any conflicts or missed opportunities.

### Plum Restoration Project

- G. Mayer said the USFS is still working on stand data for the Plum project. More details are needed on what kind of treatments need to be done and where.
  - The timeline to complete this phase is early November.
- There are two main things the USFS is working on regarding Plum including:
  - Individual stand prescriptions
  - The Hydrology section of the draft proposal
- The hydrology section, in particular, is adding complexity to the project. There is concern from ranchers about meadow restoration that will potentially affect their operations. Specifically, there are three ponds that would be removed through the restoration process.
- The Plum project is essentially a forest treatment project. The issues with grazing allotments and meadow restoration are a separate issue. However, when there are opportunities to restore meadows within a project area, the USFS will typically take that on.
- Hat Creek staff are planning another field tour with ranchers to discuss the meadow restoration and potential alternatives. For example, water tanks will be proposed to account for the loss of ponds.

### FY 2018 Budget Report / CFLR Annual Report

- CFLR program administrators asked the Hat Creek District to prepare a “futuring document” to assess the outlook for the initially stated CFLR objectives.
- G. Mayer said a reasonable target is 63k acres. Originally, the CFLR target was 100k acres. G. Mayer estimates the new target could be completed by 2028.
- The futuring document includes a tally of beneficial wildfire acres. G. Mayer recorded zero, citing the Bald, Eiler, and Reading Fires, which burned at high severity, replaced stands, and had little to no benefit to the CFLR landscape.
- The CFLR annual report will be completed by December 10<sup>th</sup>. There is some frustration internally with the report process as there is a very small window of time to complete, review, and submit the report.
- The CFLR budget has approximately \$622k allocated for Fiscal Year '18 but will likely increase some after accounting for matching dollars. USFS staff described this budget as “very abbreviated” compared to previous years.
- J. Kusel asked if the USFS regional office had commented on the reduced budget for CFLR.

- There has not been an official correspondence with the regional office on this matter; however, G. Mayer and the district budget officer will review the situation more thoroughly. **Action Item: G. Mayer and Hat Creek budget officer** to review the CFLR budget allocation.

#### Hat Creek Recreation Corridor Updates

- Tamera Taylor, Recreation Officer on the Hat Creek District, discussed a list of potential recreation investments throughout the district. See [this link](#) for a detailed list and descriptions.
- Subway Cave is a popular attraction on the district and has over 50,000 visitors each year. T. Taylor proposes acquiring a mobile trailer that can house interpretive materials for the cave. Also, the trailer would be staffed and offer lantern rentals for visitors exploring the cave.
- Trash and recycling containers should be updated at most recreation sites. Currently, no recycling bins are available and there are issues with residential trash dumping in the existing bins.
- Are CFLR funds available for the recreation improvement projects?
  - Most of the improvement projects, the mobile trailer for example, will likely require grant funding.
  - Janine mentioned that she has put some of the proposed improvements in the existing budget for FY 18.
- L. Martin mentioned a possible solution to reduce vandalism of interpretive signs. Burney Falls State Park has been using QR codes (bar codes that can be scanned with a cell phone) to link to interpretive materials. This approach is dependent on cell service, however.

#### Future meeting topics, scheduling, closing remarks

- J. Kusel announced the upcoming Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) meeting in Sacramento. SCALE Meeting notes are [available here](#).
- J. Book noted that the Hat Creek District conference room will be unavailable for an indefinite period. G. Mayer suggested holding meetings at the Hat Creek Observatory in the meantime.
- The group agreed to hold a GNA subcommittee meeting in November. **Action Item: Sierra Institute** to schedule the subcommittee meeting.