



South Lassen Watersheds Group Planning Meeting IX
 Thursday, September 20th; Chester Fire Department, 13:00 - 16:00

Meeting Synopsis

The South Lassen Watersheds Group (SLWG) met in Chester, CA to discuss the group’s Memorandum of Understanding, strategic planning progress, efforts to better incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into project development, SLWG planning boundaries, and grant updates.

Attendees

Steve Buckley	Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP)	Dale Knutsen	West Almanor Fire
Coye Burnett	Lassen National Forest (LNF)	Ron Lunder	Mountain Meadows Conservancy (MMC)
Ryan Burnett	Point Blue Conservation Science (PBCS)	Nils Lunder	Feather River Land Trust (FRLT), MMC, Feather River Resource Conservation District
Lynn Campbell	Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)	Mike Mitzel	Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI)
Laura Corral	LNF	Charlie Plopper	MMC/LAWG
Crystal Danheiser	LNF	Garry Pritchard	Mt. Lassen Power/MMC
Carlos Espana	Lake Almanor Country Club Firewise/Almanor Recreation and Park District (ARPD)	Trish Puterbaugh	Butte County Forest Advisory Committee
Carl Felts	Upper Feather River Integrated Regional Water Management (UFR IRWM); Lake Almanor Watershed Group (LAWG)	Ken Roby	Feather River Trout Unlimited (TU)
Lorena Gorbet	Maidu Summit Consortium (MSC)	Aaron Seandel	LAWG
Ryan Hilburn	W.M. Beaty & Associates	Sherrie Thrall	Plumas County Board of Supervisors/UFR IRWM
Bennie Johnson	Collins Pine Company	Alisha Wilson	MSC

Action Items

The Sierra Institute will:

- Revise the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and re-circulate for signature
- Track the upcoming UFR IRWM meeting for outcomes relevant to SLWG
- Send a draft scoring matrix and SNC grant updates to the group
- With MSC, explore including areas of cultural significance in strategic planning analysis
- Consult with MSC re: TEK integration; facilitate a formal presentation and/or field tour
- Convene a boundary subcommittee to evaluate potential areas of inclusion

Meeting Opening

Previous meeting notes (April, 2018) and the meeting’s agenda were accepted by a vote.

Memorandum of Understanding

The most recent version of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was presented to the group, with the objective of finalizing the document and facilitating organizational signature at the next SLWG meeting. Minor edits were made to the document, as suggested and agreed upon by the group. **The Sierra Institute will send a revised document for SLWG members to present to their respective organizations for approval.** Wet signatures will be collected at the following meeting. Both organizational representatives and unaffiliated individuals may sign on.

Strategic Planning Update

The Sierra Institute provided an update on the group's strategic planning process. Since the subcommittee's formation, four strategic planning meetings have been held, defining guiding principles, desired outcomes, approaches, resources of concern, and a strategic plan outline.

The structure and format of the strategic plan were reviewed. The document will contain minimal text and will rely heavily on maps of resources and their condition to identify priority areas on the landscape and strategic recommendations for the group. The strategic plan will thus begin integrating *available* data within the planning footprint (i.e., data collection efforts will not be exhaustive). Aggregating information is a first step toward maintaining and ground truthing data over time, allowing for adaptive management.

M. Mitzel (SPI) shared the progress of a similar treatment database currently in development at SPI. As part of an MOU between SPI, USFS, Cal Fire, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to protect California Spotted Owl (CSO) habitat, SPI has mapped all CSO Protected Activity Centers (PACs) on theirs and adjoining USFS properties. All existing, in progress, and planned fuelbreaks are also being mapped. These data will be utilized in treatment planning to protect PACs from catastrophic wildfires. SPI held a meeting this month with adjoining industrial landowners to coordinate treatments on the landscape.

Concerns were raised regarding the identification of priority areas on private lands. Outcomes of the strategic plan do not constitute a commitment for participating landowner(s). Rather, the purpose is to orient the group as it moves forward in identifying potential project areas. Furthermore, it is intended that the plan set the framework for strategic - and collaborative - project development, rather than resulting in a suite of projects, per se.

J. Kusel (Sierra Institute) reminded the group that there is growing interest in investing in this upper watershed and the strategic plan will be a means of communicating the work already underway, attracting funders. Furthermore, the power of this document will be to increase the scope of treatments to the landscape scale. K. Roby (TU) indicated that the plan may also be shared with regulatory agencies to solicit their input early on in project development.

Various edits were made to the "resources of concern" section. Suggested inclusions are: fire dependent forest types, medicinal and wildlife values, rare habitats, and consideration of natural range of variability with regards to forest structure and composition (i.e., including historical aerial imagery and vegetation mapping). Deer Creek Resources (DCR) will be contracted to

conduct overlay analysis and to investigate fuels and fire in greater depth. Their staff will attend SLWG meetings to garner input and inform their scope of work.

L. Weissberg (Sierra Institute) presented the group a draft scoring matrix, developed in cooperation with the strategic planning subcommittee as a means of moving from priorities to projects. **The Sierra Institute will distribute the scoring matrix for more detailed input.**

L. Campbell (SNC) asked how the projects being identified via the strategic planning process will be incorporated into the IRWM plan. J. Kusel indicated that this question has not yet been considered in the strategic planning process but that IRWM members within the SLWG group may assist in integrating. S. Thrall (BOS/IRWM) noted that the SLWG group is still forming and that, as the group progresses, there will likely be the opportunity to bring SLWG projects into the IRWM portfolio and vice versa. R. Burnett (PBCS) suggested that the IRWM's criteria for project development may be a helpful means of verifying the SLWG's approach. **J. Kusel suggested this conversation as an agenda item for a subsequent meeting. Sierra Institute will track the IRWM's November meeting and resulting outcomes.**

Traditional Ecological Knowledge Incorporation

L. Gorbet (MSC) relayed key points from a strategic planning conversation regarding Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and its incorporation into SLWG projects. Though TEK has become a buzzword, follow through is critical. This requires consulting the MSC and getting them involved early on in project planning and implementation. Lorena reminded the group that TEK is not activity based (i.e., use of prescribed fire), rather it requires direct human engagement with the land and everything on it. The Maidu Cultural and Development Group utilized TEK practices to expand beargrass habitat from ¼ acre to 2 acres while managing National Forest System lands under a ten-year stewardship contract.

N. Lunder (FRLT) shared that the FRLT and MSC are working closely on five properties involving TEK practice and that these would be fitting case studies for project implementation. The MSC will own thousands of acres in the coming years, enhancing opportunities for study and understanding. This outcome is unique within our watershed and could be documented as a model of Tribal ownership and management in other locations (R. Burnett). **C. Danheiser (LNF) suggested that areas of cultural significance be added to the strategic plan analysis. The Sierra Institute will explore this possibility with the MSC.**

Members requested that MSC give a more formal presentation on TEK to help group members understand and address integration. The Sierra Institute will work to flesh out next steps and facilitate a conversation. This work will be achieved, in part, through Cal Fire California Climate Investments funding to consult with the MSC on the use of TEK in future SLWG projects (*pending scope of work approval*).

S. Buckley (LVNP) asked about the appropriateness of including funds for Maidu time and information sharing in future proposals. L. Gorbet indicated that these funds go to Tribal elders, who can often benefit from financial assistance. A. Wilson (MSC) asked that interested parties contact her to begin these conversations. The MSC is also currently addressing the question of integrating traditional, spiritual practices with scientific approaches to resource management.

SLWG Boundary Discussion

Based on strategic planning session conversations, the Sierra Institute presented a map of the SLWG boundary depicting the Almanor Ranger District (USFS) boundary as an addendum. Incentives to consider expanding parts of the boundary are to include the community of Mineral and to align with a Tehama-Glenn Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Mineral is of the same vegetation composition as the rest of the planning boundary and is attempting to manage with the same approaches. Including the southern portion of the Almanor RD boundary would also increase availability of Storrie Fire funds. L. Campbell (SNC) indicated that these areas fit within the organization's region and funding area (Mineral and Battle Creek).

The ensuing discussion raised concerns about bringing in new stakeholders, necessitating revisions of founding documents and renewed stakeholder analysis efforts. Differences in vegetation composition and resources would also complicate resource analysis, scope, and project development. Adding significant acreage may also impact the group's ability to meet stated objectives in a reasonable timeframe.

Members indicated that existing boundaries may already be somewhat arbitrary with respect to watershed and jurisdiction, and that reevaluation may be useful. J. Kusel suggested the creation of a subcommittee to evaluate the boundary and possible zones of inclusion. S. Buckley, C. Burnett, and L. Weissberg will head up this effort.

Grant Funding Updates

The Sierra Institute provided updates on two recently awarded grants. Cal Fire awarded \$3 mn to SI on behalf of SLWG, pending approval of a revised scope of work and budget. Funded activities will include NEPA/CEQA completion for the Federal lands in the West Shore project area, as well as NEPA/CEQA and meadow restoration design for Robbers Creek. Implementation will occur on private lands on the Collins Almanor Forest and mixed private ownership within the larger West Shore project area. All work must be completed by 03/2022. Additional dollars will support consultation with the MSC to identify opportunities for incorporating TEK into future project planning.

The Sierra Institute received a \$99,669 Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to continue ongoing projects (i.e., stakeholder analysis, strategic planning), and to contract geospatial analysis of the SLWG footprint, specifically fuels and fire mapping and modeling via Deer Creek Resources.

A number of projects have been funded through the SNC, with dollars from Prop. 1 and 84, involving SLWG participants. The Sierra Institute will forward a grants summary to the group.

Closing Remarks

It is expected that the MOU will be signed at the next meeting and that the group will be updated on strategic planning activities. The group will also revisit discussions regarding the SLWG boundary and TEK after fleshing out concrete steps (MSC and Sierra Institute).