

Meeting Synopsis

The Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group held a teleconference meeting on January 25th. Due to the government shutdown, several furloughed federal partners were unable to attend the meeting. Topics discussed include: updates on the Crossroads and Manzanita Chutes projects, the CAL FIRE Prescribed Fire program, the Fall River RCD's application to the California Climate Investments (CCI) Forest Health Program, Stewardship Agreements on the Lassen and Modoc, project prioritization, programmatic NEPA, herbicide use, and bioenergy projects.

Attendees

Dan Bell	Kristy Hoffman	Jeff Oldson
Kaily Bourg	Pete Johnson	Todd Sloat
Garrett Costello	Dean Lofthus	
Max Haney	Jonathan Kusel	

Action Items

- K. Bourg to send a survey of the logo designs to the group electronically to gather comments and input.
- Sierra Institute to set next meeting for a March date.
- Sierra Institute to share A to Z case study with BHC group once it is finalized.
- J. Oldson to share report regarding reforestation efforts on federal lands. DONE

Meeting Notes

Introduction/Approvals

- October meeting notes were approved with the modification to correct the spelling of Tamarack.
- The October meeting agenda was approved with the following additions: CalFire prescribed fire program and programmatic documenting regarding fire salvage.

Crossroads and Manzanita Chutes Updates

Archaeology surveys were contracted through Fall River RCD and funded under a Master Stewardship Agreement for the Crossroads project. The Proposed Action Purpose Need (PAPN) is currently being drafted with the intent to use a Categorical Exclusion (CE). Manzanita Chutes is being included in the California Climate Investments (CCI) program.

- T. Sloat clarified that approval for the archaeology permit was held up but was resolved as a result of conversations with Region 5. There is discussion to pursue a forest-wide archaeology permit to increase efficiency and fill future survey requirements.
- J. Kusel commented that the Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) effort helps improve the responsiveness of the Region.

CalFire Prescribed Fire Program

K. Hoffman shared that CalFire is developing crews to implement prescribed fire across the state. Sierra Nevada Conservancy is working to recommend projects that are fire and NEPA ready to CalFire. **Future Meeting Topic:** Are there BHC projects that could qualify for CalFire's prescribed fire program?

Fall River RCD Update

Burney Gardens was approved by Stewardship Council to be donated to Fall River RCD. T. Sloat thanked everyone who wrote letters of support.

California Climate Investments (CCI) Application

Since the group last met, M. Coppoletta recommended a consulting firm, Spatial Informatics Group (SIG) to do carbon modeling. SIG agreed to do modeling for free.

- T. Sloat shared about some of the projects included in the proposal. Treatment projects include: Eiler replantation, Manzanita Chutes and Crossroads fuels reduction, wildlife surveys for Backbone, Northwest Gateway fuels reduction, fuels reduction project in Burney Basins under a new Timber Harvest Plan (THP), and fuels break project on from Tamarack to Whitmore area (3200 acres).
 - Though Lassen Volcanic National Park Northwest Gateway fuels reduction project (900 acres) is not technically a group project, it is consistent with the group's larger landscape approach.
- Other projects include: data aggregation with 34 North and Spatial Informatics Group to identify high value access and a work training program with Shasta College.
 - According to the industry, there is great need for truck drivers. Shasta College has a training program including an element of training for formerly incarcerated individuals. They put together a \$5 million proposal to award 250-500 certificates to students in the next 2 years, including equipment. The \$5 million was added to the CCI proposal, making it an \$11 million ask.
 - There is some fear for asking too much; however, if the proposal is good, CAL FIRE has the flexibility to narrow it down in scope and cost.
 - D. Lofthus and M. Haney commented that there is a shortage of workers and a need for workforce training.
 - T. Sloat expressed gratitude for the support of private partners, and in general, all those who contributed letters and other support to the application. It has been a team effort.
 - K. Hoffman mentioned there might also be opportunity for Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to provide community dollars for workforce training.
- G. Costello discussed an article Fall River RCD submitted to the newspaper that announced the CCI application. He also mentioned sharing to the Burney Firesafe Council Facebook page as a useful tool for public and community involvement; however, no comments have been received yet. **Future Meeting Topic:** How can we most effectively reach people via social media and other outlets?

Strategic Planning

The CCI proposal incorporates approaches that utilize money from green sales or other nonfederal dollars to infuse into the process to increase pace and scale. The Stewardship Agreements with the Lassen and Modoc have not yet been signed, but T. Sloat remains optimistic they will be approved.

- P. Johnson inquired about specific lessons learned on the RCD and Federal side of things. For the Cove project, contractors were hired through the RCD to assist in the process. Funds expended are being paid back to distribute to partners, and estimated to be financially whole in April or May.

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- There was disagreement on the Federal side on how to interpret stewardship authority. J. Kusel helped with his connections in Washington. J. Kusel noted that the last interpretation is likely as definitive as its going to get.
 - Some interpretations concurred that the forest could not use the sale of trees to pay staff or do more NEPA work. This would have been an incentive to cut big trees. The latest interpretation is that you can't cut and pay staff but you can pay contractors.

Project prioritization timeline

- The hope is to secure funds through CCI to have some extra dollars for NEPA planning work. A desired next step would be to identify projects that can go into a model.
- One key objective with the group is to advance a process for project prioritization. With CCI funding there is opportunity to implement work and increase pace and scale. The projects included in the CCI proposal are tightly linked.
- K. Hoffman and T. Sloat discussed planning for the Backbone project. T. Sloat is hopeful to initiate surveys (e.g., archaeology, wildlife, and silviculture) this year.
- In light of the CalFire grants, SNC has long offered a planning grant program. SNC is working to consider projects that need funding beyond CCI dollars. The planning grants now fund up to \$100,000. Implementation grants are now \$1 million.

Institutionalizing NEPA

- T. Sloat and J. Oldson discussed instituting NEPA at a programmatic level for larger landscapes that encompass more or larger projects. Programmatic NEPA may also respond to prep and salvage work, and to address issues such as: herbicide use, and why does it take so long to salvage timber after a burn?
 - This conversation is becoming increasingly relevant at forest and statewide levels. Some forests are using Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) as a large level. It's a model worth considering in our region.
 - J. Kusel proposed that thinking about landscape scale NEPA as a two-phased process may be useful.
- T. Sloat is curious if there is a programmatic document regarding salvage and reforestation on private lands. J. Oldson mentioned that Hearst Timberland uses a Programmatic Timberland Environmental Impact Report (PTEIR). D. Loftus noted that Fruit Growers Association has a large-scale Master Streambed Alteration Agreement.
- The group agreed this warrants more discussion considering its combined implications of policy, a specific landscape, and a collaborative group. There is also possibility to develop a hybrid model involving fish and wildlife and habitat conservation plans. **Future Meeting Topic:** How do we advance the conversation on large-scale NEPA? What are the "to-dos"? Where are there opportunities for combined efforts, addressing both timber and wildlife objectives?
- T. Sloat asked about any documentation or lessons learned from a programmatic NEPA. J. Kusel mentioned Sierra Institute's case study on the A to Z project in Washington that is being developed. **Action Item:** Sierra Institute to share A to Z case study with BHC group once it is finalized.

Specific Elements

- T. Sloat would like to see a programmatic EIR for herbicide use in large burn areas. Developing general first concepts with the collaborative would be a first step. M. Coppoletta may be able to provide data from burn areas.

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- From the moonlight fire in Indian Valley, 60% of the area experienced high severity burn with 42% of that area converted. That is the lead story in the herbicide point; it needs to be focused on burn areas initially. J. Oldson added that according to a study with the University of California, the Moonlight scenario is happening across the state.
 - The study can be found at the following link:
https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/r5/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=fsbdev3_047156&width=full

Update on Bioenergy Projects

- T. Sloat provided an update on the Hat Creek Bioenergy project. As part of the CCI, they are trying to get a hook into the proposal for some form of subsidy for a year or two of supplies to help secure financing. In the proposal, it's characterized as, the Hat Creek Bioenergy Facility will contribute funds to an MSA with no determination on how funds will be spent.
 - There will be a meeting in about a week to go over numbers from vendors. If favorable, it will be full speed ahead to finalize financing and build the facility. Two years ago it seemed it would never happen, and now it will.
- J. Oldson provided a brief update on the SB 1122 project. He expressed some uncertainty but commented on the positive progress with the 901 bill contract extensions from borrowing facilities. Additionally, Shasta County responded well to placement on county lands.

Concluding Items

- The group reviewed a few logo templates designed by G. Costello and offered comments. **Action Item:** K. Bourg to send a survey to the group electronically to gather comments and input.
- **Action Item:** Sierra Institute to set next meeting date sometime in March.
- J. Kusel and K. Bourg announced that this will likely be Kaily's last meeting, as she will be leaving Sierra Institute in February.