

South Lassen Watersheds Group Meeting

Tuesday, June 25th, 2019 1:00 - 4:00pm

Almanor Recreation Center, 451 Brook Loop, Chester, CA 96020

Meeting Synopsis

The South Lassen Watersheds Group (SWLG) met in Chester, CA to discuss the benefits of creating a group charter, further define the group's boundary, update each other on California Climate Investment (CCI) projects, and to re-engage with subcommittees and objectives moving forward.

Attendees

Ryan Burnett	Point Blue Conservation Science	Dale Knutsen	AWCC FireWise Communities
Steve Buckley	Lassen Volcanic National Park	Jonathan Kusel	Sierra Institute
Carl Felts	Lake Almanor Watershed Group	Mike Mitzel	Sierra Pacific Industries
Ivan Hauser	CALFIRE	Russell Nickerson	Lassen National Forest
Bennie Johnson	Collins Pine	Kyle Rogers	Sierra Institute
Trish Puterbaugh	Lassen Forest Preservation Group	Aaron Seandel	Lake Almanor Watershed Group
Ken Roby	Trout Unlimited	Thadd Walker	Butte County RCD
Alisha Wilson	Maidu Summit Consortium	Ron Lunder	Mountain Meadows Conservancy
Dov Weinman	Sierra Institute		

Action Items

- Coordinate Strategic Planning Meeting (July 30th) – Sierra Institute
- Provide Charter Templates/Options – Sierra Institute
- Review Charter Options – Carl Felts & Charter Development Subcommittee
- Follow up with DOC about shared area with BCRCD – Sierra Institute
- Present Scope for Robbers and West Shore (next meeting) – Kyle Rogers, Ryan Burnett
- Initial steps toward and consultations for integrating TEK – Dov Weinman, Kyle Rogers, Ryan Burnett, Russell Nickerson, Alisha Wilson.

Meeting Opening

The meeting was called to order at 1:09pm. Jonathan Kusel introduced the new Watershed Coordinator (WC) Dov Weinman, who briefly shared about himself and recapped the Department of Conservation (DOC) Watershed Coordinator Orientation and Training held in Sacramento on June 14th. The WC will also support the Lake Almanor Watershed Group, enhancing information sharing and communication between different stakeholders, participants, Tribes, and other collaborative groups.

Steve Buckley moved to approve the previous meeting's minutes; Aaron Seandel seconded. The group approved the notes. An announcement period was added after the scheduled break. Carl Felts made motion to approve the agenda; Ryan Burnett seconded. Group approved the modified agenda.

Jonathan Kusel covered the following meeting objectives with the participants:

- Discuss Charter, decision process, voting, membership, etc.
- Review boundary discussions/decisions/comprehensiveness
- Review California Climate Investment (CCI) work
- Review other grant work
- Re-engage subcommittee work and objectives; determine timelines
- Discuss future grant applications and related

SLWG Charter Discussion

In past meetings, SLWG participants have pursued discussion and reached group decisions fairly smoothly; consensus has been regularly attainable. Jonathan suggested that a time of smooth decision-making is perhaps the best opportunity to develop a charter. Decision-making has been organic, but with the potential for trickier conversations down the road participants agreed that clarity is important and charter development would establish consistent protocols. During the meeting in April, participants voted in agreement to include new areas in the SLWG footprint, however, participants weren't necessarily notified of a vote taking place beforehand, despite this issue being discussed at the group's February meeting. It was suggested that participants be notified of votes beforehand so they are clear when issues may be voted upon. One way of making this clear is to identify "action items" on the agenda. This would allow absent members to review meeting notes and then attend the following meeting with the full opportunity to participate in a vote. The group acknowledges that new protocols could increase timeframes for group decision-making, with final decision rules to be part of a charter.

The group discussed the importance of establishing guidelines for voting and decision-making and brought up the following questions:

- How many representatives from any single entity will be allowed to vote?
- Is there a limit to the number of voting members from any single organization?
- How can the group account for different participating representatives from a respective entity?
- How can SLWG make note of who votes, who abstains, and who can't vote?
- Is a vote restricted to a person or an organization (or both)?
- Do we need to make a charter subcommittee?
- What exactly is the difference between an MOU and a Charter? One description of this is that the Charter consists of operational guidelines with the MOU constituting agreed upon desired landscape and social objectives.
- Who is or isn't a member of SLWG?
- If someone disagrees with the group, should they be obligated to counter with an alternative option?

The Watershed Coordinator will provide various charter templates and options for a small subcommittee to discuss before bringing synthesized options to the full group at the next meeting. The principals of agreement should be 1-2 pages, specifying who votes and how agreements are resolved. Ryan Burnett will connect Dov Weinman with Marian Vernon. Carl Felts will help review options.

Boundary Discussion (Continued)

Sierra Institute staff reengaged group members with the recent additions of the full Almanor District, Mineral Area, and Collin's Wolf Creek tract to the SLWG area. There is concern with leaving "orphaned" sites near the Wolf Creek area and perhaps ecological justification for extending the boundary to the North Bank of the Feather River. Participants expressed desire to be intentional about when the boundary is amended for jurisdictional and/or ecological reasons; in the past the boundary has changed in a somewhat unsystematic way. Additionally, the WC for Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) reached out with concerns about SLWG's extension into the BCRCD area. Jonathan elaborated that BCRCD was concerned DOC wouldn't want WC boundaries overlapping, but also that part of the DOC proposal suggests increased connection and alignment between coordinators and collaboratives.

Participants stated that if the goal is fire protection, it's reasonable to include the entire watershed. SLWG members wanted to clarify to BCRC D representative Thadd Walker that the boundary was extended with an eye for project opportunities, not as a claim of the collaborative's "territory." BCRC D reiterated their desire for cross-boundary collaboration and their focus on prescribed fire and recovery projects. BCRC D's boundary concerns are related to DOC's perspective of funding coordinators without overlapping focus areas Thadd reiterated that they look forward to actively participating in SLWG and for the cross-pollination of information and future projects; the intention is to maintain an organic process and ultimately implement more projects. *Thadd passed around boundary maps.* Jonathan requested a motion be made that if there's a DOC concern with the boundary overlap, SLWG would back off the boundary where it overlaps the BCRC D DOC delimited area. Ryan Burnett made a motion; Steve Buckley seconded. The group agreed.

The group debated the Wolf Creek/Collins Pine area and participants mentioned that the area could continue to be managed regardless of its inclusion in the SLWG footprint. Participants agreed the area wasn't a source of discontent, but there's a desire to be more intentional and not leave small pockets unmanaged due to boundary delineation. Another participant raised concerns about implementation in that specific area with regards to the attitudes and feelings of local residents, and it was acknowledged that cultural dynamics are a consideration for future projects and boundary inclusion. Acknowledging the earlier conversation about voting, one participant raised the question if this should be put to vote in the next meeting. There is some sentiment to include the whole watershed, or none of it, including Indian Valley. Sierra Institute commented that the WC grant proposes engagement with residents in Indian Valley; they will conduct interviews to ascertain the level of interest in participating with the collaborative. One participant suggested these considerations could be included in Strategic Planning Subcommittee discussions. The group agreed the first decision made (with regards to DOC guidance and BCRC D boundary overlap) will stand, but that other boundary decisions will be tabled until there's more information.

SLWG Grant Updates

California Climate Investment

Kyle Rogers and Ryan Burnett informed participants about interdisciplinary team meetings, finalizing roles and responsibilities, and hiring staff to help FS specialists with planning, silviculture, wildlife, hydrology, and recreation. They are working toward a Proposed Action Purpose and Needs within an August timeframe and plan to report out on the work at the next SLWG meeting. The FS is hoping to scope the West Shore project in September with the goal of having a draft document by the end of the year. Robbers Creek has a similar timeframe, perhaps slightly behind West Shore, and they are aiming for a draft in January. They emphasized that Robbers is a bit more complicated than West Shore, containing elements of meadow hydrology and thinning. The goal is to have a clear project prepared for when CCI proposals are requested. Participants reiterated the projects' ambitious timeline and the novel process of building relationships, meeting with team members, and integrating outside perspectives. They are interested in increased input and knowing that people want to hear and provide input earlier before projects are more fully developed. This process means more coordination and cooperation while still maintaining sight of the work. Critical obstacles or stumbling blocks include the need to collect all the data or risk being pushed back another year, the general complicated nature of the project, and the potential for public objection.

Ryan Burnett shared that Point Blue Conservation submitted a grant proposal for Childs Meadow to be funded as a headwaters restoration project. They've also submitted a proposal to do more coordinating of the Rock Creek group. Bennie Johnson explained that some project areas continue to be very wet, and

work will depend on what streams do and how quickly the landscape dries out. It may mean implementation next year.

The group discussed how to collectively bring Traditional Ecological Knowledge and related activities into projects; it's built into funding and shouldn't be left until late in the project. Ryan Burnett said they're trying to find a good time to attend a Maidu Summit Consortium meeting to begin discussions about TEK integration. There's a desire to wait until they have something more concrete to present and are looking at August or September when all the data is collected. They will reach out to Alisha Wilson and the Maidu Summit Consortium.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Steve Buckley shared with participants about work being done by their eight-person crew, the drafting process of a burn plan, and the finalization of surveys for goshawks and spotted owls in August. They were encouraged by SNC to put in for more implementation grants; an additional 27,000 acres. They're leveraging Park Service money for a full review of owls; attempting to understand animal locations, behavior, and dynamics. There are plans to submit multiple grants for planning and implementation, and the group also discussed extensive effort for a comprehensive communication plan. They're working to communicate the value of projects, especially in light of cultural shifts from fires being negative to acknowledging the benefits of fire. The University Reserve System, of which the Lassen Volcanic National Park is now a part, allows for more research and access to research, and Steve Buckley emphasized the increased potential for utilizing this as an opportunity. It was suggested that the WC engage the public through a similar type of communication effort.

Announcements

Collins Pine's efforts along Clifford Drive exhibit a timber harvesting plan to thin out forests for more exits in case of fire. *Map of exit roads shared.* Collins Pine is beginning to branch into forestry services, and the group collectively affirmed that the WUI is a major focus. Small parcels may be an important spot for collaboration, with organizations such as Plumas Firesafe Council also looking into this issue. SPI continues to collaborate with the FS on related projects and is finishing a fuel break along Juniper Lake Road. Participants and their organizations continue to identify gaps on private tracks of land in WUI areas. A participant suggested looking into County records with regards to land purchases, and GIS could also be used to locate strategic WUI areas. These projects may potentially be addressed by the strategic plan. Depending on short term opportunities it may be worthwhile identifying priority areas in the interim.

Bureau of Reclamation

Jonathan shared that he's never experienced a grant to take 14 months to be contracted; he hopes to share something more in the coming weeks.

Department of Conservation

DOC WC grant is expected to be finalized in the coming weeks.

Announcements

Aaron Seandel mentioned LAWG's desire to look into another community forum to attract more community members; State of the Lake/Watershed will be on the agenda for their July 10th meeting. He added that Lake Almanor is very full, less than a foot under maximum, and LAWG has alerted homeowners about high water level and water craft safety. He added that fireworks for July 4th are being postponed because of high water levels.

Ryan Burnett shared brief updates about Story Fire restoration; prioritized 20 meadows out of 90, then identified 5 meadows for restoration.

Alisha Wilson was pleased to announce the finished transactional agreement for the Maidu Forest Site. There is no update on the Maidu cemetery site. Updates forthcoming on a possible celebration.

Ron Lunder shared about June 1st celebration, had 35 canoes and kayaks out paddling on Mountain Meadow's Walker Lake. He mentioned the P-CREW working out at the Gateway Property as well as consultations with the Maidu with regards to trail development.

New Grant Opportunities

Participants discussed upcoming funding opportunities coming out within the next weeks and months. Participants will continue to keep an eye on the next round of CCI funding. The challenge is to pursue funding sources for current priorities while continuing to develop the SLWG strategic plan.

Wildlife Conservation Board – Forest Conservation Program

Sierra Nevada Conservancy - Watershed Improvement Program Forest Health Grant Program (Pre-App Aug 5)

CDFW – Wetlands Restoration for Greenhouse Gas Reductions (Pre-App Aug 13)

Western Forestry Leadership Coalition - Landscape Scale Restoration Competitive Process (Proposal Sep 27)

Subcommittee Updates and Planning

The Plant Propagation/Restoration Materials/Seed Banking Subcommittee has met obstacles with Plumas County permitting for greenhouses but have been in conversation with external funders.

Strategic Planning Committee plans to meet July 30th 3-5pm in Chester. Dov will send out past strategic planning materials for committee members to review.