

South Lassen Watersheds Group Meeting

Tuesday, January 28, 2020 1:00 - 4:00pm

Almanor Recreation Center, 451 Brook Loop, Chester, CA

Meeting Synopsis

The South Lassen Watershed Group met at the Almanor Recreation Center in Chester, California to discuss updates of the West Shore and Robbers Creek projects, review the collaborative proposal submitted to CalFire's California Climate Investment Forest Health grant, and share preliminary mapping analysis from Deer Creek Resources.

Attendees

Paul Lackovic – Deer Creek Resources

Jim Richardson – LVNP

Jason Mateljak – LVNP

Mike Klimek – LVNP

Jake Blaufuss – Sierra Pacific Industries

Nick Bunch – Lassen National Forest

Russell Nickerson – Lassen National Forest

Mila Bock – Sierra Institute

Kyle Rogers – Sierra Institute

Bennie Johnson – Collins Pine

Rob Rianda – Tehama RCD

Arnold Trippel – Susanville Indian rancheria

Coye Burnett – Lassen National Forest

Mike Mitzel – Sierra Pacific Industries

Dale Knutsen – AWCC Firewise

Kristy Hoffman – Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Lorena Gorbet – Maidu Summit Consortium

Carl Felts – Lake Almanor Watershed Group

Ron Lunder – Mountain Meadows Conservancy

Ken Roby – Trout Unlimited

Trish Puterbaugh – Lassen Forest Preservation Group

Wolfy Rougle – Butte County RCD

Danielle Berry – Sierra Institute

Amanda Sweeney – LVNP

Will Johnson – Honey Lake Valley RCD

Susan Padilla Riney – Lake Almanor Watershed Group

Andrea Craig – The Nature Conservancy

Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute

Dov Weinman – Sierra Institute

Action Items

- **Dov to coordinate with partners to improve public engagement and outreach.**
- **SRWDP and 34 North to update the SLWG on CCI grant at the next meeting.**
- **Dov to send out call for participation in the strategic planning subcommittee.**
- **Dov to reach out to strategic planning subcommittee about the Strategic Growth Council's Climate Change Research Project opportunity.**

Meeting Opening

Jonathan mentioned that one purpose of the meeting is to try and get everyone back up to speed. Ken asked if we might briefly cover updates to the strategic plan, and then Carl motion to approve the agenda. Trish seconded and the group approved the agenda. Dale then motioned to approve the meeting minutes from October 29th; Ken seconded and the minutes were approved.

Kyle shared West Shore updates, including that the Lassen National Forest held a public field tour in the fall and was still aiming for a decision in the fourth quarter of the year. The project is mostly on schedule. Sierra Institute has been active on the private land side of West Almanor and has also been working with Lorena and other members of the Maidu Summit Consortium to advance efforts for environmental compliance on their Maidu Forest Parcel. Russell emphasized that the project partnership has worked well, and project leads look forward to strengthening community engagement through the second phase of the projects. Russell reminded members that the comment period will be at the end of March and into April. Bennie mentioned that their THPs at Childs Meadow were completed, but the THP for Rock Creek was slightly held up because although it's in CalFire's system there's too much snow out there to finish the field assessment.

Coye mentioned that Robbers Creek is staggered a little bit behind West Shore, but generally it's at a similar juncture in the process, meaning specialist reports and EA development with the EA out to the public in the March-to-April timeframe. The comment period will be 30 days and the objection period will be 45. Jonathan asked if they expected much in the way of objection, and Russell replied that negative feedback was limited during scoping. Their teams worked to address those items in the analysis period. Most comments have been positive. One of the biggest concerns was scoping for only 14 days – most likely because the public isn't used to seeing that type of timeframe. Jim offered an additional avenue for the collaborative to support these projects, emphasizing the robust social media presence of Lassen Volcanic National Park. Trish mentioned that the collaborative's involvement was written into the EA and that individual organizations could write letters and comments to reinforce the collaborative's support.

West Lassen Headwaters Project Area

Dov characterized the strategic planning meetings in October and November of 2019 when subcommittee members developed the West Lassen Headwaters Project. The proposal for CalFire's California Climate Investment Forest Health grant had two themes – transitioning the collaborative's planning projects toward implementation and then taking steps toward landscape scale work in the planning of the West Lassen Headwaters area. Russell and his staff committed to getting surveys done, but partners acknowledged it will certainly be a large group effort. Collins Pine is already working in the Childs Meadow area and the Lassen National Forest and Lassen Volcanic National Park hope to work towards cross-boundary burning. Ken mentioned the importance of this headwaters area for salmon recovery in the central valley. The group acknowledged this area represents an important geographical space but also a very institutionally complex area with different landowners and stakeholders. Nick mentioned that from a fire management perspective it's good to see the group moving toward more complex projects. Our fires are often wind-driven and fast-moving, so there's an opportunity to develop strategic windbreaks and other treatments.

Will mentioned that the Honey Lake Valley RCD is working with small property owners to advance more efficient methods for pile burning. Relatedly, Jonathan mentioned Sierra Institute is working on establishing a biomass facility in Crescent Mills and that they'd be very interested in continuing the discussion of efficient burning. Plumas County is often out of compliance with regards to critical pollutants.

Deer Creek Resources

Jonathan introduced Paul from Deer Creek Resources who shared some of their preliminary mapping analysis within the SLWG boundary area. They've used runs from the Humbug weather station, and they hope to incorporate more information, such as fuel breaks from the USFS, to support their ongoing analyses. The fuel models incorporate previous fire information from the Department of Interior from 2014 (information from 2016 will soon be available). When you're using the 97th percentile you're factoring in a bunch of wind. It's valuable because it gives a magnitude and a direction for the fire, rather than just modeling based on what you've seen in the past. Paul mentioned that if the percentage is dialed up too high then everything identifies at a priority, but models weight steeper, denser, south facing slopes. Participants noted that the Wolf Creek area, previously under discussion to be a part of the SLWG footprint, appears as an area of concern under some of this analysis.

34 North's Geospatial Platform Development

Dov shared that Amye Osti and 34 North included the SLWG in their Northern California CCI grant for the Sacramento River Watershed Group Data Program along with Shasta, Plumas and Tehama Counties. The effort will give the SLWG access to local and statewide data, project support, risk analysis, and LiDAR assessments. CalFire and SNC wanted the program to focus on improving capacity

for all of Northern California. The SRWDP and 34 North will attend the next meeting to introduce the effort. They will keep our group updated when they hear back from CalFire.

Strategic Planning Subcommittee

Jonathan reiterated that after some conversations with CalFire, their agency may be shifting toward offering non-competitive funding. Jim mentioned that they've seen something similar with SNC as well, who has gone out and funded to expand projects when there's proven success. Dov will send out a call to the full group to see who might want to participate in future strategic planning meetings, and group members are hoping to set up more regular meetings to provide some consistency.

Butte County RCD Project Updates

Wolfy presented the Colby Recreation and Forest Health Vision, on behalf of members of the "Colby Collaborative". Their project focuses on developing an economy based on recreation and healthy forests, and she emphasized the importance of the Jonesville Sno-Park area as the headwaters for Butte County. Their collaborative will focus on infrastructure, non-motorized and motorized use, forest and meadow health, and education. They're looking into identifying funding sources as well as what agreements might be most appropriate. Trish emphasized the importance of Butte Creek to people in the Chico area, and expressed her hopes for the Butte County RCD and the SLWG to continue cross-pollination and future collaboration.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Kristy provided an update from the SNC board meeting in December, where SNC announce awards, including one for Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship. They're currently planning their March meeting and plan to release awards for several forest health grants. One will be for the Sierra Institute which would advance community-scale wood energy in Plumas County. Jonathan added that it would also support a pole barn structure to cover the chips and a chip truck dump as part of the build out of the Crescent Mills site under the Resilient Communities Directed Grant Funding program. Kristy also mentioned that for the next year of funding the SNC board allocated \$3 million to forest health, \$1 million for recreation and tourism, and \$1 million for resilient communities – these directed funding programs will be more of an exchange and back and forth with SNC area representatives.

Participants discussed other conservation opportunities including: acquiring property from either the bankruptcy of PG&E or in collaboration with the Feather River Land Trust, partnering with major California universities or academic institutions, advancing conversations with Chico State and Professor Don Hankin with regards to native burning, or working through UC Davis on biomass research. These potential opportunities to engage different organizations and institutions can elevate the work of SLWG and expand options for on-the-ground projects and research.

Tehama RCD and Mineral Firewise CCI Grant

Jim mentioned that leaders of the Mineral and Mill Creek Firewise groups, two very forested communities, put in for approximately \$800,000 for fuels reduction work to be done within the community – property to property. There's a CEQA exemption within 100 feet of structures. They hope to implement a one-two punch of conducting fuels reduction in the community as well as the greater landscape, both of which are rated as high fire risk. Rob mentioned that the CWPP passed through the board.

Strategic Growth Council – Climate Change Research Program

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy had introduced the idea of integrating mapping information and socioeconomic assessments to benefit rural, forested communities. Sierra Institute is in discussions with researchers at the University of Washington to prepare a proposal to integrate analysis of LiDAR information with identification of disadvantaged communities in the Sierra Nevada to promote better-

informed strategic planning and project prioritization in order to mitigate catastrophic wildfire and the effects of climate change. Jonathan believes that this integration can be utilized by collaborative groups and will build off of the efforts of SCALE. Other participants believe that this work compliments the ongoing work of 34 North and Deer Creek Resources. Jonathan asked whether or not SLWG members would be interested in the project, and members agreed that incorporating this type of analysis would benefit current strategic planning processes. Dov will develop a proposal briefing and reach out to strategic planning subcommittee members with regards to a letter of support from the collaborative.

Members suggested including CalFire CCI updates on the next agenda.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 31st from 1:00-4:00pm at the Chester Public Utility District.