

South Lassen Watersheds Group Meeting

Tuesday January 26th, 1:00 - 3:30pm

Zoom

Meeting Synopsis:

In the South Lassen Watersheds Group's first meeting of the year, collaborative members discussed updating the MOU, shared project updates, viewed a preliminary map of all projects, and divided into three virtual breakout rooms and spent 20 minutes sharing their own 2021 resolutions for the group.

Attendees:

Alisha Wilson – Maidu Summit Consortium
Bennie Johnson – Collins Pine
Brad Graevs – Feather River RCD
Carl Felts – Lake Almanor Watershed Group
Crystal Danheiser – Lassen National Forest
Dov Weinman – Sierra Institute
Jake Blaufuss – Sierra Pacific Industries
Jason Mateljak – Lassen Volcanic National Park
Jim Early – US Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Richardson – Lassen Volcanic National Park
Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute
Ken Roby – Feather River Trout Unlimited
Kristy Hoffman – Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Kyle Rodgers – Sierra Institute
Laura Corral – Lassen National Forest
Lorena Gorbet – Maidu Summit Consortium
Rob Rianda – RCD of Tehama County
Ron Lunder – Mountain Meadows Conservancy
Russell Nickerson – Lassen National Forest
Spencer Lachman – Sierra Institute
Steve Buckley – Lassen Volcanic National Park
Tom McCubbins – RCD of Tehama County
Trish Puterbaugh – Lassen Forest Preservation Gp.
Tuli Potts – Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Virginia Pritchard – Sierra Institute
Wolfy Rougle – Butte County RCD

Meeting Opening:

There were no comments on previous meeting notes. The group entertained a motion to approve the minutes. Alisha motioned, Ken seconded, and the minutes were approved. Jake made a motion to approve the agenda, Russell seconded, and the agenda was approved.

Updating the MOU:

There was a discussion about adding Upper Battle Creek to grant funders, and updating the locations to make sure we're consistent. It is important to reach out to new areas (i.e. Antelope Creek, Upper Butte) to get geographic representation. Russell and Jim commented that the West Lassen Headwaters Project (WLHP) that the group is moving ahead with includes Battle Creek, and we agreed to include the entire Almanor district. Tom brought up the concern of bringing the MOU to conservancies without consultation instead of conducting discussions with them and developing an MOU with their input. It would be prudent to bring them along in the process, and we should reach out to these groups as soon as possible.

There was a motion to include language in the MOU that reflects the geography as depicted by our current SLWG boundary; Upper Butte, Battle, and Antelope creek more specifically. Russell made the motion, Jim seconded. Jonathan asked for further discussion. Jim Early and Tom McCubbins brought up issues of outreach and engagement.

Sierra Institute: to do outreach and engagement with relevant conservancies in Battle, Deer, and Mill Creeks.

Project Updates

West Shore Community Wildfire Protection Project: Kyle summarized that the project is in a similar place to where it was at the December meeting. The Objection period for West Shore is getting going.

Robbers Creek Watershed Restoration Project: Ryan's main update was that the EA went out for the 30-day public comment in the first week of January; the comment period will close near the end of the month.

Childs Meadow, Rock Creek, and others: Bennie updated that they are still working on Rock Creek as of mid-January, but with the snow coming in, work will pretty much stop until spring. Childs Meadow is slated to be worked on this year.

All-Projects Map

Spencer (SI) shared a preliminary version of the All-Projects map. **Spencer to connect with Tom McCubbins and TC RCD.**

West Lassen Headwaters Project

In a discussion of the Project boundary, the biggest driver was identified to be putting fire back on the ground, and where it makes the most sense to do that from. Kyle shared three different project boundaries. Russell emphasized this was the preliminary take of going to scale, pushing more from a standpoint of where we can burn and hold from, and looking for those specific features. In that way it wasn't just meant to be a timber focus. There is also an effort to tie into Lassen National Park, so they've been working with Jim and others to see what they can achieve with regards to cross-boundary work between the Forest and the Park. Steve emphasized the need to get fire on the ground, and the importance of looking at the FRAP maps or fire history maps. Integration with SPI and Collins can magnify the work being done on public lands, and so it really can take a crack at what we're always talking about in increasing pace and scale.

Jim mentioned that we are looking at a large and reasonable block in which we can put fire on the ground, but private land owners might look at this and could feel alarmed. Kyle pointed out that we are trying not to focus our conversation specifically on which roads we'll use and orient against. Steve noted that when we first discussed this project, one of the things we talked about was looking at the process of environmental compliance. We took a step back and looked at the boundaries of the ecosystem. If you're going to get to scale, you need to get to that higher level when looking at the landscape's ecology. Also, how can we effectively approach environmental compliance at that scale? Tom mentioned that we might consider how to protect certain areas; perhaps looking at the chaparral areas in order to preserve those resources long enough to make them resilient. Steve responded that if we start going downslope we start going away from the central focus of the SLWG of mixed conifer. Point well taken given the flashiness and frequency of the chaparral, but we do get into a whole different set of circumstances.

Tehama County RCD and Sierra Institute Discussions of Collaborative Work

Tom and Jonathan shared the outcome of their discussions, which cleared up a lot of different things – Tom emphasized the feeling of this new group (SLWG) showing up and working in the same area of the RCD. More conversations will be necessary so that efforts aren't duplicated and to determine the capacities of the various entities to do certain work; there is certainly enough work to do! Dov shared the preliminary results from the remote collaboration survey.

SLWG 2021 Resolutions

Collaborative members divided into three virtual breakout rooms and spent 20 minutes sharing and discussing their own 2021 resolutions for the group. Below is a summary of the ideas generated:

Capacity Development

- Develop a better understanding for what all the different partners can contribute to the collaborative; how do we better understand and leverage each other's strengths?
- How do we increase capacity? Finding enough people and more people "in the woods" doing the work. Take stock of our "potluck" to understand what everyone is bringing to the table.
- Have multiple partners submit grants to the state funding opportunity.

Communication, Outreach, and Engagement

- How do we engage all the parties regarding the collaborative and what does feedback look like?
- Develop at least one collaborative outreach element each quarter.
- Increase SLWG membership by some percentage.
- More outreach related to the WUI and non-WUI.
- More landowner engagement – recognizing it is difficult to have these discussions over the computer. Visit some spots in the WLHP.
- Have a virtual platform where everyone can follow project progress (All-Projects Map).

Implementation and Cross Boundary Work

- Develop a cross-boundary survey workforce.
- What can we do with fire this year?
- Work towards collaborative/cross boundary EA and project work.
- What can we accomplish towards getting fire back on the landscape this year?
- Expand Robbers Creek/long term to include Duck Lake and Goodrich Springs.
- Complete a lot of work on the West Shore Project this year.
- Discuss how to do more broadcast burning and treatments—we need to do more documentation and research.

Planning

- Work toward complete environmental compliance of the WLHP – how do we look at all the pieces and pick areas to focus on? What can the agencies do in-house?
- From a planning perspective use maps collectively through a process to plan work that leverages one thing with another (i.e. projects on the boundary).
- Get a WLHP base map completed.
- Develop a project pipeline and start stacking up projects. Build the list of projects that are ready to go for grant funding (e.g. NEPA and CEQA done). Is it time to start thinking about programmatic NEPA?
- Incorporate more individual forest health metrics into project planning.
- Get a survey crew that works across multiple landowners. Get at that sort of total compliance, moving toward large landscape level compliance document.
- Discuss a list of projects ready to go for submissions.

- Large-scale map 80,000-150,000 acres for a more complete analysis to help us break some of these projects up so that they are feasible and meet our objectives.
- Conduct more project-specific meetings. Hold more field trips.
- Pursue programmatic planning and evaluations and drill down on specific treatments.
- Develop plan to establish priorities for fish passage in the SLWG
- For anadromous fisheries, have a plan/ability to address potential damage from fires and associated runoff.
- Partner to advance a fire response plan, immediate and long-term. Develop a pre-fire response plan.
- Develop a plan for road improvements in West Lassen Headwaters Project.

Partner Updates

Sierra Nevada Conservancy: SNC introduced Tuli Potts, the new North Area Representative. The governor's office released a budget - looking for projects that are CEQA and NEPA ready and working on grant guidelines right now. Please talk to either Kristy or Tuli for more information. Need projects to be wrapped by January 1, 2024.

Maidu Summit Consortium: Work continues on the Maidu Forest Parcel, fieldwork to start up in May. The Land Management Plan in the review process; the MSC board will review before they share with the Feather River Land Trust.

SCALE meeting: February 25th. Topics include assessing fire impacts, and Tribal involvement in landscape stewardship. Randy Moore and Patrick Wright will also be speaking.

Next SLWG meeting: March 30th