

South Lassen Watersheds Group Meeting

Tuesday September 29, 1:00 - 3:15pm

Zoom

Meeting Synopsis

The South Lassen Watersheds Group met virtually via Zoom on September 29th to discuss the mapping analysis from Deer Creek Resource, share West Shore and Robbers Creek Project updates, and

Attendees

Bennie Johnston – Collins Pine Co.	Tom McCubbins – Tehama County RCD
Ken Roby – Trout Unlimited	Lindsay Wood – Plumas Audubon Society
Jake Blaufuss – Sierra Pacific Industries	Deb Bumpus – Lassen National Forest
Kristy Hoffman – Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Lorena Gorbet – Maidu Summit Consortium
Rob Rianda – Tehama County RCD	Laura Corral – Lassen National Forest
Dan Martynn – Natural Resource Conservation Service	Ron Fulder – Mountain Meadows Conservancy
Jim Richardson – Lassen Volcanic National Park	Janie Ackley – Lassen National Forest
Wolfy Rougle – Butte County RCD	Jason Mateljak – Lassen Volcanic National Park
Alisha Wilson – Maidu Summit Consortium	Trish Puterbaugh – Lassen Forest Preservation Group
Ryan Burnett – Point Blue Conservation Science	Anne Stephens
Zeke Lunder – Deer Creek Resources	Kyle Rodgers – Sierra Institute
Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute	Dov Weinman – Sierra Institute

Action Items

- **Dov to set up a call to discuss collaborative processes and comment opportunities.**
- **Return to conversation about SLWG boundary area with respect to Wolf Creek and Antelope Creek.**

Meeting Opening

Jonathan opened the meeting shortly after 1:00pm. Jim motioned to approved the meeting minutes and Ken seconded. The group approved July's meeting minutes. Kristy made a motion to approved the agenda, Bennie seconded, and the group approved the agenda.

Deer Creek Resources

Zeke described analyzed the patterns for the recent Hog, Sheep, and Bear fires. He's been looking at contiguous areas that have dense canopy cover in order to help identify prescriptions and cross boundary projects. Whole he spoke to the limitations that come with fire modeling, he emphasized that modeling helps to tell stories and frame options. Jonathan mentioned that although the group cannot effectively deal with fires during 70mph winds, they can try to better understand the dynamics and develop plans based on the group's strategic priorities. Jim mentioned that Lassen Volcanic National park has its own fire management plan, and when there's a fire on the ground they have to decide what strategy to take with regards to their long-term fire program. As a superintendent, Jim wants to have enough information and a break-up of the landscape to give decision space for fire management – if the landscape is homogenous, you'd never decide to let a fire burn but with diversity you have a bit more confidence. The group acknowledged that from a fire standpoint, agencies and partners are dealing with things they've never dealt with before and at times that's come along with instruction to put out everything possible to get on top of fires.

Jake emphasized that from the industry's standpoint they're seeing the ability for foresters and landowners to return fire as a tool whether it's even or uneven aged management. He went on to suggest that limiting ourselves to thinning on certain slopes will limit our ability to treat the landscapes as a whole. How can we increase the amount of land that we can treat and potentially follow that up with prescribed fire? He went on to say that they have a large backlog of prescribed fires because of short burn

windows. There's not much in the way of a shoulder season off the main operating season to carry those out. Trish suggest that the group shouldn't make assumptions about the type of treatments (i.e. clearcuts) on steep slopes and Jonathan suggested that as a worthwhile conversation to be picked up at a later time.

South Lassen Watersheds Group Boundary (decisional item)

Zeke brought up the current SLWG boundary and spotlighted the Wolf Creek and Antelope Creek areas for possible inclusion. There was a bit of back and forth about the jurisdictional and geographic justification for these inclusions. The decision was tabled for a future meeting.

Strategic Planning Update

Dov provided a brief update about the development of the SLWG Draft Strategic Plan. Subcommittee members will support Sierra Institute in leading workshops for each of the Resource Sections. These workshops will allow member to discuss the goals and objectives of each section and allow subcommittee members to wade further into the sections' details after group members reach alignment on the broader concepts.

Project Updates

Bennie shared an update about the Rock Creek Meadow Restoration Project, and project leads have discussed the possibility of getting SLWG members out to the project for a field tour. *This field tour has been postponed until spring 2021.

Kyle shared that the West Shore draft EA went out for public comment last week. It will be a 30-day comment period. On the non-federal side of the project, Sierra Institute has been working closely with Alisha and Maidu Summit Consortium to advance work on the Maidu Forest Parcel. Alisha added her excitement about getting the inventory done and hopes to get some Maidu community members out in the field.

Trish brought up a concern with the percentage of canopy cover in PACs in the West Shore project. She expressed disappointment that previous comments weren't addressed and felt it undermined the collaborative nature of the project. Ryan offered an explanation of canopy cover and the difference between protecting nesting stands and the rest of the area where owls are foraging and Laura mentioned their use of variable thinning in owl PACs. Additionally, Ryan stressed the importance of making space and time to hold these conversations as a collaborative. Besides the existing structures that exist to make comments on these projects, our collaborative can work together to address these issues. Dov will work to coordinate a call to discuss this type of issue.

Ryan shared that the Robbers Creek biological assessment work is almost done, Coye is finalizing work coming from Sierra Institute, and Todd Sloat and contractors are working on the EA.

Wildlife Conservation Board

Kyle shared that the Wildlife Conservation Board will award the Sierra Institute, on behalf of the SLWG, support for service work on 1,200 acres of the Robbers Creek Watershed Project. Though it likely won't be awarded until the spring, project leads now need to make sure to move implementation forward. Ryan expressed enthusiasm for the project's focus on landscape scale aspen and uplands that have been 17 years in the making.

Wolfy shared that the Butte County RCD received funding for the Upper Butte Creek Forest Health Initiative, a 15,800-acre planning grant surrounding the Community of Jonesville. The funding will include NEPA and CEQA for restoration within a meadow complex and eventually prepare the area for prescribed fire. Wolfy mentioned the project will include networks of new, non-motorized trails and some maintenance on existing trails. Additionally, the Butte County RCD received funding for CEQA and

NEPA for the Concow Pyrodiversity Project (where the Bear Fire is about to hop the feather river canyon). A collaborative project including both the Forest Service and Sierra Pacific Industries, this grant is set to get underway later this year. Expressly to collaborate between FS and SPI, prescribed fire on acres that SPI is considered long-term vegetation management. Jonathan emphasized that part of the Department of Conservation coordinator responsibilities is to cross-pollinate and coordinate with other Watershed Coordinators and that projects like these make sense with regards to connecting with other projects on the landscape and with the SLWG.

Dov and Kyle provided an overview of the South Lassen Watersheds Group Community Forest and Fuels Management Program Proposal that Sierra Institute will submit to Western Forestry Leadership Coalition on behalf of the SLWG. The Project will develop and implement a replicable private landowner engagement model in the West Lassen Headwaters, and collaborative members emphasized that the work from RCDs, the NRCS, and agencies can complement each other. Trish made a motion to approve the proposal concept and Dan seconded.

Partner Updates

Sierra Institute hosted the bi-annual Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) Meeting on September 24, 2020. Over 83 participants representing 14 collaboratives and other groups attended, in addition to multiple representatives from USFS, state agencies, and other partners. Following collaborative updates from SLWG and Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions, speakers presented on large-scale project planning, USFS Programs of Work, and developing and sustaining biomass businesses. At a higher level, Deputy Regional Forester Bernie Gyant spoke about the role of collaboratives in California's new Shared Stewardship Agreement, and Sarah Bittleman, Deputy Chief of Staff and Policy Director for U.S. Ron Wyden (D-OR) outlined proposed federal support for collaboratives. In light of the unprecedented fire season, the meeting concluded with a listening session about the impacts of this year's fires on collaborative projects and communities.

Kristy shared that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will be teaming up with Sierra Institute on a Grant Writing Workshop November 17-19 that will priorities collaborative members from SLWG, BHCCFWG, and the Intermountain Recreation Collaborative.

Alisha mentioned the upcoming Tasmam Koyom Workshop that will include participants from the Tribal community as well as some of our Western Science experts. The Maidu Summit Consortium will share more later.

Jim announced that the Sierra Institute received the NPS National Wilderness Award for the work done in the Flatiron Project.

The next meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, December 1st.