



Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group Full-Group Meeting

Wednesday, September 22 10:00am-1:00pm
Zoom

Meeting Synopsis:

The Burney Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group met virtually on Wednesday, September 22, to provide project and partner updates, discuss next steps and current statuses regarding the Dixie Fire, and overview proposed objectives and metrics for the ForSys model.

Attendees:

Amye Osti- 34 North	Robin Wall- District Ranger, Hat Creek Ranger District
Sharmie Stevenson- Fall River RCD	Sarah Oldson- Cascade Resource Consultants
Andrew Fullerton- Sierra Pacific Industries	Michelle Coppoletta- Lassen National Forest
Pete Johnson- Retired Timber Lands Manager	Jeffrey Oldson- Cascade Resource Consultants
Alex Carter- McConnell Foundation	Jason Mateljak- Lassen Volcanic National Park
Greg Mayer- Lassen National Forest	Bella Bledsoe- Sierra Institute
Tuli Potts- Sierra Nevada Conservancy	Jonathan Kusel- Sierra Institute
Todd Sloat- Fall River RCD	Corrinne Scieszka- Sierra Institute
Jason Moghaddas- Spatial Informatics Group	

Approvals, Modifications, and Meeting Objectives:

Jonathan led collaborative members through introductions and entertained a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Todd motioned, and Greg seconded. Jonathan then entertained a motion to approve the notes from the June 2021 meeting, and Tuli motioned and Sharmie seconded.

Dixie Fire Discussion:

The group went around and detailed their experiences and current statuses in the wake of the Dixie Fire.

Robin and Greg: provided an update regarding containment of the fire, expecting full containment within a few weeks. They are mopping up lines and not seeing a lot of growth, especially on the North side.

Jonathan: The Sierra Institute had been evacuated for about 7 weeks, and some employees lost their homes. SI previously conducted interviews and research regarding impacts of the 2020 wildfire season, and while these were already real and palpable, SI is now, in a sense, living its research.

Todd: The fire highlights a continued sense of urgency with projects, but there is the continuing challenge of balancing following good process with also getting work done quickly enough. This is a delicate balance, and can be frustrating.

Jason: While these fires are destructive, they also create new levels of support and momentum that need to be capitalized on for projects. Additionally, there needs to be consideration of whether or not we are beyond reforestation. Wouldn't be surprised if Sierra loses 30-40% of forest cover, regardless of what we

do. There is a need to focus on towns and watersheds, and then decide where we can keep forests. There needs to be prioritization and there was a lack of support for evacuation, and a current lack of housing for people that lost homes.

Greg: took a drive around the fire on Monday to look at the fire, and he and Pete took a short tour through the Plum project. There are green patches, and these represent projects done in the past. There was a lot of high-intensity fire, but not everything burned, and the pockets that made it through represent peoples' hard work over the last 30 years. One of the biggest things that he has been worried about is Collins Pine, as he has a lot of history with this area. We can't lose another mill, as this would be tragic, and we need it for the work that we do. One positive is that mixed conifer forest in the west side of Badger, where owls and other wildlife are, got spared. He is also looking into making Badger a salvage project, in conjunction with continued restoration treatments.

Alex: Had a similar experience with Northern CA fires- some structures were lost, uncontained burnout operations on red flag days increased spread and intensity, the wilderness area was wiped out in a lot of places, and old growth forest was lost.

Michelle: It was a rough couple of months. Personally hard, but professionally devastating. Projects implemented for years, including research and monitoring plots from the last 18 years, have been touched by the Dixie fire. There will be a lot of people that say that treatments work and also those that say they don't work- there is evidence for both. There is the question of what we are talking about when we consider fire effectiveness. Is this moderating fire severity and behavior? Maintaining conifer forest on the landscape? Scale and continuity of these treatments need to be ramped up in order to see effectiveness. These conversations need to be clarified and they are nuanced.

Tuli: Exhaustion and stress that people are speaking to is very real. It is affecting the ability to do work and move forward. Potential loss of a mill and folks' endurance to push forward with work done on the ground is something that we need to take care of moving forward. We need to scale up work that is being done in these collaboratives. There are minor silver linings to these treatments that may not be measurable, but this lens of treatment effectiveness is temporal and might not be recognized as meaningful now. She also shared thanks for good work being done on the ground.

Jeffrey: There was anger after the Camp Fire, and sitting here today, we are not even close to the pace and scale that is needed to protect towns and the people who live there. What we are doing is not working.

Andrew: It will be an uphill battle in increasing the amount of acres treated- this needs to be the path that we will go down. They treated an area in Shasta T, and what was left was nicely spaced pine- but the Bradley fire went through and scorched through it. This contributes to a sense of hopelessness that we are treating stuff and it is not working. There is the question of what we have to do for this to work.

Sharmie: A big concern during the Dixie fire was bringing dozer operators on due to lack of resources- when a lot of these guys are not skilled. Watching and supervising these people is scary, and something different needs to be done here.

Sarah: It has been hard for projects that they have spent so long working on. We need to look at this differently. If this is the future, we need to be able to get more done. This echoes what everyone else has been saying.

Project Updates:

Badger: Moving forward. There is discussion of continuing the project with both a green and salvage component. They will hopefully have funding to do restoration treatments and plant trees, or whatever the team wants to do after harvesting gets done. Roughly 50% of acres on sale got hit by the fire. Pine stands were what burned, but a lot of mixed conifer stands are still standing. If you take out the old Redding fire scar, then probably about a third of the project burned.

Backbone: Scoping will go out in October, with a revised timeline. The RCD is trying to take a larger role in Backbone. They are keeping scoping broad as they don't have common stand data, but it will cover most of the intent. Arc surveys are done and field work is getting done-they got permits to work during forest closures.

Crossroads: Robin is working with the forest NEPA coordinator to help define language around the removal of oaks. The goal is to make it more succinct on wildlife protection rather than fuels reduction. The project was pulled back for a short period of time due to concern of the tribe and forest supervisor around the treatment of pine. Robin noted that the intent is to use the Crossroads project to clear the way for other projects in the queue with oak removal components, like Soldier Mt. The project was reportedly not initially clear regarding the intent of oak removal for anything other than fuels reduction, though the group questioned why fuels reduction is not sufficient intent. The goal is to make it clear that the removal of oaks is for protection against disease and insects, and also for habitat restoration.

Sharmie commented that they need to ensure that timelines are met for grants, and Robin responded that the intent is that this will straighten things out for other projects in queue and establish a baseline so that they can move forward quickly.

Todd raised the issue that there is a chain of command process, and that if a decision is made at the forest level that is not agreed with, the issue can be bumped up to the region. This issue potentially needs to be discussed by the group in a subcommittee meeting. Jonathan noted that the creation of a timeline might negate the need to do this. Robin responded that the goal is to have more clarity on the timeline by the first few weeks in October, so the group decided to reassess the issue in a subcommittee meeting in the middle of October.

Whittington: Up for sale as SBA, and will see if this sells or not

North 49: Hopefully will sell, slated for the first quarter of next year, start Oct. 1. This was the plan, but with fire salvage, that may get pulled out to spring.

Manzanita Chutes- Should be moving forward with RCD. Todd updated that the region came in with some small additional funds to move the project out. The region made this a workable bid, and they hope to get started on this this fall

CCI Projects: All projects are on track except NW Gateway. They requested an extension for Crossroads and NW Gateway, and have secured 5 million in new funds for new work, including more treatments on Manzanita, finishing up treating Backbone, acreage on Whittinginton, and augmenting a prescribed burn team for federal partners. Awesome work with 34 North in data and planning for grant assistance and bald and eiler reforestation.

Jackrabbit: Sharmie and Sarah are working on getting out final bid

THP: Andrew reported that they should be pretty close to wrapping up toward the end of the year

Discussion: Next Steps/Courses of Action

Jeffrey raised the question of reforestation plans for Badger. Greg responded that the burnout went from Badger to South Station to Plum and then Hat Creek Rim, so they are looking at 4 different areas. His initial thoughts moving forward: everything on Hat Creek Rim can be done with a 350 acre CE. For the Plum project, unfortunately 2 completely marked timber sales got burned. They would like to lay units out and sell them designated by damage class. For South Station, this will take more time, and will probably only get to do initial units. Badger and South Station will hopefully go out next year. They might get logs off of Hat Creek Rim and Plum, and get these out this fall. The fire burned 1.8 million board feet across the landscape, which is not even close to what the mills can digest.

They have tree orders in for 11000 acres for next year, which is basically for Bald and Eiler. Jeffrey commented that he would encourage getting speculative trees ordered this fall, as these would have a shot to get through brush established on the site.

Sharmie raised the question of whether there is anything that the RCD or collaborative can do to move Plum salvage forward more quickly and Sarah asked about doing something in regard to the federal appraisal process. Todd commented that the RCD has funds to tackle the appraisal process, but there is needed clarity on if appraisal is needed. In regard to whether partners can help districts with road packages, this would need forest supervisor or district ranger support. Robin noted that a discussion around assistance would be welcome, and the group agreed to cover these topics in an upcoming subcommittee meeting. An additional area of clarity is around timeline, maps, and proposed action on salvage to move this forward before logs are valueless, as well as what assistance would be needed.

Michelle also noted that their ecology program came out with a new GTR- a conceptual framework for ecological restoration which they are doing quick enough to inform salvage and restoration. It is taking a look beyond the most severe effects, and figuring out where fire might have done some good, and not gotten us all the way there. They would love to get input once further along, and could do a presentation. Regarding the question of mill capacity, she has been an advocate in rethinking why we do salvage and setting up sales to be both economically viable, with ecological value. In doing planning and NEPA, it is important to recognize this work as an important treatment beyond just economic recovery. Todd commented that this could be an opportunity to advocate for a forest wide reforestation project, and could potentially get outside funding for this NEPA process. It is a big enough footprint that it should be tackled

in one large NEPA document. Greg added that a bigger project can create a bigger target. This was identified as another topic to expand in the subcommittee meeting.

Partner Updates

Tuli: SNC has details on the budget for the fiscal year from the state. There is 50 million for forest resilience, and the group should expect the first round of RFPs out in January. Next round will be similar to the last round, meaning that it is implementation based. Next rounds will hopefully be more based in planning. There is also 11 million in climate resilience funding. Additionally, SB 208 was signed by the Governor, which expanded the jurisdiction for SNC. They are working on building partnerships in these areas, and might lean on the collaborative group to build connections.

They are looking to collaborate with the Modoc County RCD. Specifically, it was proposed that they attend one of the collaborative group meetings, and any additional thoughts from the group on mentorship in this area would be welcomed.

Todd: Regarding a bioenergy facility and cluster update, Hat Creek is very near a financial close, though identifying an investment tax credit person was challenging. The Tubit site in Burney is progressing well.

ForSys Objectives and Metrics Overview

Bella presented on the process surrounding the ForSys model, which involves developing proposed objectives to prioritize landscape planning, and then inputting metrics to suit this data. Where this data comes from is variable, but it is based on data that is already available within the group. If there is data that we really need, we can work on figuring out how to get that, but it is largely based on modeling that the group has already done. Previous models can be used as inputs, but it is not meant to replicate previous models. This will be used to help inform Alan Ager with the Rocky Mountain Forest Research Station and his process surrounding the model.

Jason added that someone from the Modoc RCD should sit through this process as a way to help get up to speed as a region. It is difficult to process down the abundant data that is currently available. Sarah added that they have been asked to do common stand exams on CEs and so they have geospatial data, it is just a question of what can be used on the project level, but also at a broader scale.