

South Lassen Watersheds Group Meeting

Tuesday, May 25th 2021 1:00-3:30 pm

Zoom

Meeting Synopsis:

In the South Lassen Watersheds Group's May meeting, collaborative members listened to a presentation from Alan Ager at the Rocky Mountain Research Station about a fire planning modeling opportunity to inform landscape prioritization work. The group then discussed the West Lassen Headwaters Project (WLHP), including possible subgroups for project planning, and broke out into breakout rooms to share landscape-level goals for the project, project concerns, and input on the collaborative process in general. The group concluded with a brief discussion about creating guidelines for projects to receive support from the SLWG.

Attendees:

Alan Ager – Rocky Mountain Research Station
Antonio Jimenez – Lassen National Forest
Bella Bledsoe – Sierra Institute
Bennie Johnson – Collins Pine
Brandy Ramirez – PG&E
Chantz Joyce – American Forest Foundation
Jake Blaufuss – Sierra Pacific Industries
Jason Mateljak – Lassen Volcanic National Park
Jessica McMullen – Lassen National Forest
Jim Early – US Fish and Wildlife Service
Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute
Kathleen Moore – Lassen National Forest
Kelly Mosinski – Lassen National Forest
Ken Roby – Feather River Trout Unlimited
Kyle Rodgers – Sierra Institute
Laura Corral – Lassen National Forest

Laura Read – Community member
Lorena Gorbet – Maidu Summit Consortium
Nick Bunch – Lassen National Forest
Peggy Fulder – LAWG
Russell Nickerson – Lassen National Forest
Ron Lunder – MMC
Sheli Wingo – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Sherrie Thrall – Plumas County Board of Supervisors
Sophie Castleton – Sierra Institute
Tom McCubbins – RCD of Tehama County
Trish Puterbaugh – Lassen Forest Preservation Group
Tuli Potts – Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Wolfy Rougle – Butte County RCD

Meeting Opening:

There were no comments on previous meeting notes. The group entertained a motion to approve the March meeting minutes, and the minutes were approved. The group considered a motion to approve the agenda, and the agenda was approved. Bella Bledsoe, the new Watershed Coordinator, briefly introduced herself; SLWG members also introduced themselves and identified their positions and affiliated organizations.

Project Updates:

West Shore Community Wildfire Protection Project: The Draft DN and FONSI went out to the public on May 13th, starting the 45-day objection period. If there are no objections, the decision can be signed.

Robber's Creek Watershed Restoration Project: The decision was signed on Friday, May 21st. The Wildlife Conservation Board officially approved the funding for about 1,400 acres of work at Robber's Creek.

Rock Creek Field Trip: A group of locals, CAL FIRE, and others toured Rock Creek on May 6th to see past and present work that is being done, including streamside tree removal and

meadow treatment. The group talked about low water levels in Rock Creek and generally got a chance to see the recovering ecosystem.

Presentation by Alan Ager from the Rocky Mountain Research Station:

- Alan presented a modeling resource (ForSys), useful for fire/scenario planning. He has done fire analysis for the region and work in California at various scales.
- Alan has been particularly interested in understanding fire transmission to communities in the Western U.S. It is important to know the source areas for fire so that treatment can be targeted more effectively. ForSys helps identify priority treatment areas and can be used at varying scales.
- Alan also presented the Fireshed Registry, a geospatial platform built to organize information about fire transmission to communities. The goal of the registry is to identify the source of risk rather than what specific areas are AT risk. Firesheds in the registry are approximately 250,000-acres.
- The Fireshed Registry will be a public resource and will provide information about past treatments, risk and exposure maps, and future plans.
- Moving back to the model, Alan's team has performed a series of multi-scale case studies with various groups using the modeling tool-- ForSys.
- When working with an organization/entity to produce a case study, Alan's team asks the organization to outline and define its management goals. Using management goals and existing assessments, ForSys can model realistic projects, find appropriate treatments, find priority planning areas, and predict outcomes over time. The purpose is to prioritize treatment areas, understand tradeoffs, and predict costs and revenues.
 - Model Input→ Assessments, Management Goals, Possible Types of Treatment
 - Model Output→ Priority Areas
- Alan finishes his presentation, and Jonathan opens it up for questions and discussion.
- Jonathan asks Alan how these resources might be adapted in the South Lassen Watersheds Group landscape.
- Alan responds that the model helps with prioritization. It can simulate ecological, economic, and social trade-offs and predict outcomes.
- Jonathan describes that tools like this are helpful for prioritizing and making decisions about planning scales.
- Alan states that it is essential to start with goals and objectives rather than data. The model is most useful when project goals and objectives drive it.
- Jonathan asks if there is a potential opportunity for the SLWG to be a case-study.
- Alan states that as long as SLWG has an interesting problem that fits the model's domain, the group would be a good candidate for a case-study. He envisions that SLWG outlines goals, including a risk component, an ecological restoration component, a social dimension, and an economic dimension. Then SLWG would collect data and assessments that speak to/ complement its goals. From there, Alan and his team would help SLWG move into the spatial element by matching our data with our objectives. Alan's team would help SLWG uncover the data, explain how to use the data, and assist us in being self-sufficient.
- Kyle feels like we have an interesting problem with the West Lassen Headwaters Project. He thinks the model could help SLWG tackle questions regarding how to prioritize implementation and how to work our way across a large landscape from an

implementation standpoint. It might also be interesting to think about where in South Lassen to go next.

- Nick mentioned that it is important to think about places where a fire starts and then moves toward communities. We tend to look at communities in danger by looking at areas in direct proximity to communities. It is essential to look at the greater landscape and ultimately make decisions that change the trajectory of a fire starting far away.
- Jonathan closes the conversation by mentioning that we will move forward with Alan Ager by thinking about how this model might be used to do landscape-scale NEPA and inform implementation.

West Lassen Headwaters Project (WLHP) Planning

- Kyle and Sophie briefly presented on the project area. Kyle reminded the group of the importance of not just doing what the SLWG is already doing well, but doing things differently to get to the scale of the problem.
- The West Lassen Headwaters project area is diverse. There is diversity in elevation, accessibility, species, ecosystems, and features.
- Kyle updated the group on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife funding and said he has not heard back yet, but this is an opportunity to continue planning and moving forward while we wait to hear.
- Sophie discussed the collaborative process for the project and asked Russell (the Forest Service) and Jason (the Park Service) to reflect on the role of the collaborative process in this work.
- Russell responded that the collaborative process would give more people in the group a voice in the decision-making process, but that the decision space is ultimately with the lead agency (LNF).
- Jason responded that the collaborative process will allow people to share their input early on and before the Park Service starts its process. Early input makes NEPA stronger. The collaborative process also helps us work across boundaries (forest service, private landowners, etc.).
- Sophie discussed setting up planning subgroups to aid in West Lassen Headwaters project planning. Subgroups will provide a space of focused collaboration and will be themed (Aspen, Meadow, & Riparian Zones; Upland Forest; Communities & Built Environment; Fire). TEK will be incorporated into each subgroup.
- At this point, the larger group broke up into breakout rooms to discuss the West Lassen Headwaters Project from a different angle. There were four breakout rooms. Each breakout room attempted to answer three questions in 25 minutes.
 - What are your landscape-level goals for this project?
 - What are your biggest concerns about a project at this scale?
 - What needs to happen to enable you to engage in the collaborative process?

Collective Goals:

1. Examine and define needs at a landscape level.
2. Longevity: maintain areas, and treat areas more than once.
3. Work across boundaries, both public and private.
4. Treat where fire begins.
5. Improve forest health.

6. Promote habitat restoration and diversity.
7. Reduce road-related impacts.
8. Improve aquatic connectivity.
9. Create a more diverse forest that incorporates traditional values: more aspens, oaks, wild food, and medicinal plants.
10. Protect wildlife when thinking about large-scale treatments; do not harm wildlife in the process of landscape-level work.
11. Develop small projects so we can get things done, not just large-scale projects.
12. Focus on desired conditions, not just treatment.
13. Return fire to the landscape, including in areas that are difficult to access.
14. Promote economic and social health.
15. Cultivate a stable funding source for the project.

Discussed Concerns:

1. Small hang-ups will slow down the process.
2. The process moves too quickly.
3. The collaborative group is strained or falls apart because of the timeline or scale of the project.
4. One group or collaborator becomes self-serving.
5. The project does not have enough implementation capacity after the planning process is finished.
6. The group misses small details while focusing on a big goal.
7. Partners and collaborators disengage.
8. The project negatively impacts wildlife.

Needs for the Collaborative Process (not every group got to this question):

1. Continued support from supervisors and staff (from an agency perspective).
2. Active support for stakeholders with fewer resources so they can remain engaged.
3. Space for people to identify concerns and have continued discussions; provide a channel for people to feel heard.

SLWG Participation/Prioritization

- We are exploring guidelines for a project to receive support from the SLWG.
- Background: Spencer was tasked with making a list of all SLWG projects. This promoted a series of questions, including, what exactly defines a SLWG project? When is it a SLWG project vs. a partner project?
- This led to a conversation around creating guidelines to gauge collaborative support from the SLWG for a project. MOU principles should likely be incorporated into SLWG projects.
- A formal process may also help us characterize the type of work occurring within the collaborative.
- At the next meeting in July, the strategic planning subcommittee will attempt to draft guidelines to present to the larger group.

Partner Updates

Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Likely will have another \$50 million starting in July. The recently submitted proposals were well written and thoughtful, and SNC is hopeful to have more money to fund projects soon. SNC will keep us posted as they learn more about future funding.

Maidu Summit Consortium: Did some planting over the last two weeks, including oak seedlings and elderberry plants. The campground is opening this coming Friday, May 28th, for Memorial Day weekend. On September 26th, there is an event at the Yellow Creek campground to celebrate the deeds for all the property from PG&E. MSC also recently submitted a proposal to purchase 7,000 acres around Mountain Meadows.

Sierra Institute: The SCALE Meeting is coming up on Thursday, June 10th.

Next meeting – July 27