



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

Friday, July 1st, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Zoom

### Attendees

Alex Carter - The McConnell Foundation  
Andrew Fullerton - SPI  
Bella Bledsoe – Sierra Institute  
Dan Ostmann - Lassen Volcanic National Park  
Deb Bumpus- Lassen National Forest  
Gregory Wolfen - Pit River Tribe  
Jason Moghaddas – Spatial Informatics Group  
Jeffrey Oldson - Cascade Resource Consultants  
Jim Richardson - Lassen Volcanic National Park  
Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute

Michelle Coppoletta - Forest Service  
Pete Johnson - Retired Timber Land Manager  
Robin Wall - Hat Creek Ranger District  
Sarah Oldson – Cascade Resource Consultants  
Sharmie Stevenson – Fall River RCD  
Theresa Laughlin - Pit River Tribe  
Todd Sloat – Fall River RCD  
Trish Puterbaugh - Yahi Group Sierra Club  
Tuli Potts - Sierra Nevada Conservancy

### Approvals, Modifications, and Meeting Objectives

Jonathan led collaborative members through introductions and entertained a motion to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by the group. Jonathan then entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March, and the group approved the meeting minutes. Jonathan informed the group that Corrinne is leaving Sierra Institute to go to graduate school; Bella will assist in coordinating BHC.

### Project Updates

#### *Badger & Backbone*

- Robin updated the group that the Forest is working through the analysis for these projects, and they are working on getting the Proposed Action out.

#### *North 49*

- Robin said the Forest is continuing to look at potential timber sales for this project.
- Andrew asked a question about Badger. Given that the project was partially burned by Dixie, what part is the Forest working on? The green side or the salvage side? Robin responded that the burned side was clumped into the Forest-wide Dixie work.
- Trish asked if there was any data on the radial thinning treatment that was done around pine and oaks in the North 49 project. Trish is interested in research on how the big trees reacted to the radial thins. Michelle responded that a graduate student looked at the individual response of trees to thinning. The results showed a pretty positive response. Michelle said she would put the research brief in the Zoom chat.
- Robin added that in the green, unburned part of Badger, Wildlife and Arc surveys are continuing, and the analysis is continuing.

#### *Plum*

- The Supplemental Environmental Review (SER) is on Robin's desk for review and is pending signature.

#### *Soldier Mountain*

- The decision memo was signed on the 23rd of June.

#### *Hat Creek Recreation Project*

- The project is nearly complete. Public comments have been addressed. The Forest just needs to finish it up once they get the Plum SER done. Hat Creek is next in the queue.

#### *Backbone*

- Robin said the Forest is working pretty hard on Backbone. Backbone is a complex project. The project is critical for fuels reduction. But, there is still discussion about how they are going to treat it. It takes time to work out these issues.
- Sarah added that she thought it was important to share the Proposed Actions with the group. Sarah mentioned that the YSS collaborative was a big help in a recent project that received some pushback. The judge sided with the collaborative, and collaborative engagement was used to justify cross-interest and support for the project. The YSS group is very engaged, and they have been for years. Sarah hopes the collaborative (BHC) can serve as support for Backbone and finds it important to get everyone on the same page on the prescription.
- Sarah explained that the wildlife habitat resilience treatments include hand treatments in Northern Goshawk PACs, which is standard. Of the 4 owl PACs, they are only proposing to treat 2. Fisher has a 700-acre buffer of no treatment. There is one in the project area. There are no identified Marten dens, but we have seen them in the area. This is a thin narrow project, but it is packed full of wildlife.
- Jason commented that no treatment areas would probably burn with high severity. We see it all the time, untreated stream zones burn at high severity. It is important to disclose some of the possible impacts of not treating.
- Sharmie agreed with Jason. She mentioned that most of the ID team is supportive of treating wildlife habitat because if we do nothing, it might all go up in flames. Sharmie hopes the team can move through future meetings with less friction. The wildlife biologist on the team is fairly opposed to treatment.
- Robin added that Badger is a very complex project; it is challenging to balance fuels reduction needs with wildlife. We have to work with the wildlife biologist and other specialists to make sure the treatments are appropriate.
- Trish mentioned that these are complex issues. Do we risk affecting wildlife because we do thinning, or because the habitat burns up? We have been trying to mess with this for decades. How do we help these species that are really struggling? Especially with climate change, it is really important to listen to everyone and let everyone on the team make the decision about the best path forward. If Whittington and North 49 were fully implemented, we would know how these projects affect species.
- Deb said uncomfortable meetings happen all the time. She is sorry those are rolling over into meetings with partners. We had an unprecedented fire, and we do not know its impacts on many species. There are lots of folks that are frustrated and worried about making the wrong decision.
- Michelle highlighted the importance of moving forward with monitoring. She encourages the treatment of PACs in Badger, where a lot of data has been collected. PACs in Badger can serve as a demonstration, what is the impact of mechanical thinning on PACs? This is a rare opportunity to learn.
- Jonathan asked if there is something more the collaborative group can provide to support the agency.
- Robin responded that the collaborative and partners have been extremely instrumental to how the Forest moves forward with projects. Partners are very strong in the ID Team meetings, and support from the collaborative is important. It does make a difference.
- Jeff said he is still surprised that a restoration approach to managing our public lands is controversial. We have good data and good information; why is it controversial to restore it to that state? I am just surprised that we are having these discussions in 2022, when we burn up town after town and PAC after PAC, every year. There is no accountability for how these protected areas have led us to where we are today.
- Robin said that the Forest hopes to have a draft EA by the first week of August for Backbone.
- Tuli asked if there is an alternative where PACs could be treated. An alternative action?
- Robin said the decision to treat or not treat has not been made. It is still being reviewed and wrestled with.

- Jonathan asked if the collaborative's views can be weighed in the decision process. At what point should the collaborative provide input?
- Todd asked if there is an alternative in the draft currently, that proposes to treat to the maximum amount legally within the PACs.
- Sarah responded that there is a no-action alternative. The proposed action is the compromise right now. After the EA is out, we want to share it with the collaborative. We should discuss it again and try to support it as a collaborative group.
- Trish mentioned that we have had this discussion before about supporting projects before the EA comes out. She finds that challenging because she does not know what the EA will come out with. She does not know what the biologists have said. It is tough for her, as a member of the public, to be able to support the project until she has seen the EA or analysis.
- Deb commented that there has been litigation about thinning in PACs in the past. Big fires usually help support the point that doing something is essential.
- The Forest is moving forward with Thousands Springs, Soldier Mountain, and Crossroads. They are waiting to be completed with Grants and Agreements. Grants and Agreements are backed up, but the projects are in queue for review. The Forest is working as quickly as we can.
- Jeffrey asked what we can do to move things forward. Call Grants and Agreements?
- Todd asked if leadership at Region 5 is aware of the Grants and Agreements bottleneck.
- The Region is aware.
- Todd asked what the project prioritization process is internally for the Forest. It would be good to understand, so we can strategically try to be efficient in moving projects forward quicker.

#### *Manzanita*

- They did 100 acres of mastication in July. They need to identify 300 acres more to get to the CCI targets.

#### *Whittington*

- No activities

#### *Thousand Springs*

- In Grants and Agreements.

#### *Bald and Eiler Reforestation*

- They planted in April, a little under 1000 acres. They are trying to figure out if they can spray to target brush on Eiler. Then they will wait two winters and plant again. There were about 25,000 trees planted this year.

#### Grant Discussion (Joint Chiefs, BLM)

- Deb reached out to Todd to ask if BHC had any interest in Joint Chiefs. They had attempted last year with no success. They are not going to reapply this year.
- There was a new BLM grant that was just released. The RCD submitted, and they think they have a fairly good chance because no one really seemed to know about the grant opportunity.

#### Partner Updates

- SNC has another Wildfire and Forest Resilience opportunity; concept proposals are due July 29th. Full proposals are due in October. Todd thinks Soldier Mountain would be a good project to put forward. The SNC September board meeting is in Shasta County. The location has not been determined yet, but the meeting is on the 7th and 8th.
- Pit River Tribe said they are working on feasibility studies for biomass-related projects. Other than that, they have no projects to report.
- Lassen Volcanic National Park has a lot going on in the Southern part of the Park, related to Dixie. On the North half, they are putting forward a solicitation for Northwest Gateway Phase 2. They hope to have a solicitation out in July, with work starting in mid to late September. They are also working on compliance for fuel reduction on the Hat Creek Inholder road. They hope to use

the road as a future defensible feature for prescribed fire. They are looking at all options for biomass. Worst case, they burn it in place.

- Jonathan updated the group that SCALE and Sierra Institute (SI) are having discussions about block grants with Patrick Wright. SNC is working on a regional strategy that outlines how they would channel funding down to local entities. Through the SCALE process, Sierra Institute and SNC are hosting a workshop to discuss the draft document being shared by the Conservancy. The workshop is on July 29th. If you are interested and want to participate, let Bella know.
- SI is putting in a CERF proposal, attempting to put more economic development activities on the ground. These are \$5 million planning grants. The proposal is due July 25th.

#### Forest-wide NEPA, Partners A-Z for WUI, Fuel Breaks, and Plantations

- Forest-wide NEPA: The RCD provided a letter to the Lassen National Forest, offering funds to lead the Forest Wide NEPA, focusing on plantations, WUI, and fuel breaks. They are working on moving forward with something. This would also help emerging biomass facilities secure more long-term feedstock supplies.
- OPR: The RCD is trying to figure out if it is a good idea to fly a proposal for a qualified feasibility study for a biomass-to-energy facility for the region.

#### Open- Topics from the last meeting

- Partnership Coordinator Position: Robin has no information on it. She will look into it.
- Todd is still interested in learning more about the project prioritization process for the Forest. Can we revive that discussion?
- Forest-wide NEPA. The group would like to hear from the Forest's Dixie Fire team lead. Robin will send Bella the right contact information for that person; they can possibly attend the September meeting.
- The group discussed the next meeting being in the field in September. The group could look at a plantation or fuel break project to discuss the next steps for the Dixie Fire response. Manzanita Lake may be another good spot. A wood utilization site may also be a good idea. The Agenda Subcommittee (Todd, Pete, Robin, Dan, Bella, and Jonathan) will start working on this.

#### Adjourn