



Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group
Friday, June 30th, 2023; 9:00 am - 11:30 pm

Attendees

Agnes Gonzalez - Pit River Tribe
Andrew Fullerton- Sierra Pacific Industries
Bella Bledsoe-Sierra Institute
Doug Lindgren - Tubit Enterprises
Gregory Wolfin- Pit River Tribe
Jason Moghaddas- Spatial Informatics Group
Jeffrey Oldson- Burney Forest Products
Jennifer Norton - Lassen National Forest

Jonathan Kusel- Sierra Institute
Lejon Hamann - Lassen National Forest
Pete Johnson - Retired Timber Land Manager
Roberta Romm - Big Bend Community Land Trust
Sarah Oldson- Cascade Resource Consultants
Stephaney Cox-Lassen National Forest
Todd Sloat- Fall River RCD
Tuli Potts- SNC

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 entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from April, and the group approved the meeting minutes. Roberta joined the meeting for the first time; she is part of the Big Bend Community Land Trust and is looking at collaborative efforts for fire planning and community development in her area.

New Acting Hat Creek District Ranger

- The group heard introductions from the new acting District Ranger, Lejon Hamann.
- Lejon has spent 10 years in federal service and has been with the military and USGS. He has been with the Forest Service for about 3 years. Lejon has a background in hydrology. He has been a field tech, a specialist, and is now in the administrative field. He was the Partnership Coordinator for the Shasha Trinity. Lejon also worked on the Six Rivers National Forest, and has worked with the Trinity County Collaborative, as well as the Trinity County RCD. He has a lot of experience with collaborative groups.
- Lejon wants to continue to build relationships and see the collaborative grow. He wants to get other entities to join and bring them in. He wants to increase the amount of money on this district to implement the maximum amount of work. I do not want to exceed what the requirements are for NEPA. I want to operate as though there is one Forest, and one program of work. I hope to use resources across the Forest to accomplish planning across all districts.
- SI has been facilitating BHC for 10-12 years. Jonathan commented that Lejon is moving into and is part of a group that has been together for over a dozen years. Agreement is a hallmark of the group.
- Jason commented that he is happy to talk with Lejon about how to move more quickly. In the NEPA industrial complex, most of the work is cut and paste. We should work on templates for hazard tree removal, fuels reduction, prescribed fire, etc. That would help so much. New contractors are trying to develop these templates.

- Todd echoed what Jason said. There are Forest staff that are all on board with partnership; they are engaged and trusting. We need to bring some of those folks along that are not ready yet. Lejon commented that he has not seen too many folks who are anti-partnership. Todd added that we need to add partners that maximize community benefits and make sure that they are needed. Jonathan added that the important thing is effective work together rather than looking for more partners.
- Jonathan commented that the group has had a lot of turnover in District Rangers-- maybe 6-7 District Rangers. There are concerns and frustrations from the group about the inconsistency in leadership. Lejon responded that he understands the frustration. He is not sure if they will offer him a permanent position. But if he is here, he will be a point of consistency. There is also staff with institutional knowledge. Lejon hopes to try to set up a situation where there is a better handoff if needed.

Region SPAs to Deploy Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Funds

- Discussion framing: the Fall River RCD took on the beginning portions of the work at Crossroads. Mule Deer approached the FS about more money for mastication. The FS made the decision to work with Mule Deer on mastication. Mule Deer has 2 million dollars and an MSA with the National office.
- Lejon added that more partners, and the right partners are crucial to success. The FS is excited to have them coming on board. IRA funds are earmarked for National Priority Landscape projects. The FS hopes the collaborative will bring Mule Deer along.
- Andrew said his understanding was that the mastication work was going to Doug. Is he dropping that? Or is more work than what was awarded to Doug being done?
- Sarah provided some more context to the group that SNC helped fund the NEPA. Then, Fall River RCD received a CCI grant to push it through. NEPA took a long time. The RCD put it out to bid, and the lowest bidder was Peterson timber. We planned to make \$50k off of sawlogs and put those funds back on the ground. \$300K from CCI was also going towards mastication. But then there were delays, and the SPA was not signed till this July. The market had totally changed, and Peterson could not do it within the timeline. Tubit Enterprise was the only one able to do it. The \$300K went to cut, skid, and deck, and there was no mastication associated with the agreement for Doug. Deb basically said she would find funding for the RCD to be able to do the mastication on the project and continue treatment.
- LNF did commit to finding funds, but not necessarily for the RCD.
- Todd commented that he is excited that there is money to do work.
- Jonathan added that there is a lot of time that has gone into this project. Crossroads was frustrating. There was nothing quick about the CE.
- Todd added that Mule Deer was super effective for a while. They struggled for a while when they lost Kevin. A mastication job is a perfect place for them to help.
- Sarah added that she is excited to see funding; she just wants to meet with Mule Deer. I have been working on this since 2018. Let's not relearn it. Let's work together.

- Stephaney said she would require Mule Deer and BHC to collaborate. Please do not feel the FS is shutting you out of the project. We would have been crazy not to take their money to finish the project.
- Lejon asked if anyone from this group got to go to the Cal Fire meeting about BHC phase three submission. Todd and Sharmie had an hour discussion with Cal Fire, about how to improve the application. We did not attend the larger meeting for all unsuccessful applicants. We got good notes in the one-on-one meeting. One of their primary reasons was that we have two previously existing CCI grants. They want to see those cleared before they award the third.
- Sarah added that BHC has had some good successes. Fall River RCD has had a lot of success, even though there have been some challenges around implementation.
- Lejon added a bit more about restrictions for IRA funding. Generally speaking, they are restricted to National Priority Landscapes. So, they are not that flexible; they are limited to being categorized as a Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape.
- Disaster supplemental dollars are different from IRA dollars. We have no details about those funds yet. We are more optimistic about those dollars than IRA dollars.

Project Updates

WUI, Linear Corridors, Plantations

- Todd described that around 2020/2021 BHC identified things we wanted to do in the future. We wanted to do landscape-scale work. Deb advocated for treating plantations at scale, and we identified WUI and corridors as features to treat across the landscape. We requested initial funding for NEPA for that work from SNC and provided a letter to Deb. The RCD wants to do A-Z projects so that we can move the product and use projects to develop long-term feedstock for new and developing infrastructure. We submitted a draft PIL last year. And as it was submitted, the Forest developed a new POW process. Our project was not recommended for 2024.
- Stephaney commented that there was confusion about whether the project was going to do a phasing NPA, so that arc surveys could be done incrementally during the implementation phase. This project had no discussion of the phasing NPA. When we want to implement the phasing NPA, we cannot get specific about the project. We have to work with Tribes before we can get specific about the project. The WUI project was too general and there was not enough information about it, but there was also no discussion of the phasing NPA.
- Todd added that when this project was conceptually developed in 2021, the phasing NPA was not even conceptualized.
- Stephaney added that we should reinstate the discussion but keep the NPA as part of it.
- Jennifer Norton added that the phasing NPA is not a NEPA process; it is a Section 106 process. Section 106 is more strenuous than NEPA is when it comes to arc. Right now, Region 5 has a programmatic agreement (PA) that we use for almost everything. Full surveys need to be done before NEPA. The National Phasing PA is a plan to make a plan. It requires full consultation with Tribes, SHPO, and anyone else who cares. It is

essentially a heritage implementation plan discussing how we go about protecting arc resources. This does not make things faster or easier; it just shifts the effort. Lejon added that they should talk offline a bit more about this process.

USFS Projects: Crossroads, Badger, North 49, Plum, Hat Creek Recreation

- Badger - All specialist reports are due in September, and surveys are ongoing. Robin Wall reached out to Fall River RCD because the FS was struggling to get goshawk surveys done. The RCD worked to get funding from a contractor (FWS), so they could take the surveys. FWS is now doing \$20k worth of surveys. LNF is going to take on the rest.
- North 49 - Road packages are the last item we are working on. A hydrologist can now get out because the snow has melted and do road assessments. The FS is doing that in the next few weeks. Road packages will be put together soon.
- Plum - An enterprise team is marking. Andrew asked: are any sales coming out? Lejon - no sales that I am aware of right now. Some sales will come out in Q1.
- Hat Creek Recreation - The FS just had an executive POW meeting. During which, we looked at all projects to determine what we could get done this year. This project is the number two priority. It is so close to the finish line. Tami has been out but is returning next week. She will be moving towards finalizing the Decision Memo. The last report that we are working on is wildlife. We are looking at a Q4 signature on this project.

CCI projects: Manzanita Chutes, Backbone, Whittington-Cypress, Bald and Eiler

Reforestation

- Manzanita Chutes - Mod 2 was approved in May.
- Backbone - Modeling is complete on the FS side. The fuels report is complete for Backbone, also. We are doing CSO surveys now. FWS--a contractor-- is taking care of that.
- Whittington-Cypress - We are working to get a sale out in 2024, ideally, similar to Manzanita Chutes. Stewardship West is doing layout.
- Bald and Eiler - This is a great success. We planted 1000 acres in Bald, and did a follow-up herbicide spray. We will see how the trees do. Eiler is out to bid. We have quite a few bidders for site prep work. We will proceed with treatment in August. We are planting 500 acres this year. In Bald, we are using RoundUp, and in Eiler, we are using Imazapyr.

Others: Soldier Mt., Thousand Springs

- Soldier Mountain: This project is pending road packages. It is planned for Q3 or Q4, but we have no funding for Soldier Mountain.
- Thousand Springs: Also pending road packages. Hydrology folks need to get out with the engineering crew to identify concerns. This is planned for Q1.
- In the future, we are hoping to streamline project updates. Let's talk about the issues rather than providing a three-sentence update for every project. At the next meeting, let's have a table of project updates, but only discuss the important issues that we all need to make time to discuss.

Program of Work Development

- The program of work is not finalized yet. It is still in development. The process is still in development too. It is going to, at some point, go to partners. The basic skeleton of the process is done. IPOWT will make a final recommendation for projects in September. The POW will be finalized in November.
- BHC is waiting to understand the process for Program of Work development, so the collaborative can think strategically about how to get our projects on the list. Jonathan commented that the collaborative could help make the Program of Work development process more productive. The FS has capable partners that are securing funding throughout the forest.
- Lejon - I am going to the Program of Work meeting and hearing the pros and cons of projects. We have three districts - Almanor, Hat Creek, and Eagle Lake, and then the Forest has projects as well. 10 -12 projects are all that is manageable. We need to align here as a collaborative group to determine the priorities for Hat Creek, and then we will go advocate for that POW.
- Will we receive written comments on our PPF? Stephaney - I am advocating for written comments on PPFs. If a PPF is rejected, you should understand why and also understand how to move forward in another way.
- Sarah commented that centralizing at the Forest level is slowing our projects down.
- Lejon responded that this is still a new process and we are working out the issues. The reason why we are centralizing at the FS level is that we are at 50% capacity. That means we are 50% deficient in our staffing. We cannot just look at each District. For example, Eagle Lake is deficient in staffing, but it has an important project for the Forest. We have to all help them out.
- Jason added that there is not going to be a brand new crop of staff. A lack of staffing is a thing everyone is dealing with. Private companies are poaching FS staff, and generally, we are not growing the total number of people doing this work. We need to work on getting junior staff up to speed. NEPA is not a Hemingway. It is a compliance document. Let's get people moving quickly with NEPA templates.
- Jonathan - the FS needs to explore how to engage the collaborative better. The reality is that the FS is capacity-deficient. The collaborative wants to engage in how to do this productively. Stephaney- We are lining out the process, and we will take recommendations from the group on how to improve it. There are solutions that are a work in progress. We have also had some internal processes and issues as a FS figuring out the POW process. It would not be appropriate for us to ask for advice on those. We have to put out a skeleton before we get input.

Partner Updates

- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
 - We just closed our funding solicitation for Wildfire Resilience and Forest Recovery. We have \$37 million available, and we had \$94 million in proposal requests. We are not going to be able to fund them all.
- Pit River Tribe - No update for the group at this time.

- Fall River RCD - We submitted two concepts to SNC; one was for Soldier Mountain, and the other one was for data collection analysis with the University of Washington, 34 North, and SIG.
- Sierra Institute
 - We have our SCALE meeting on July 17th and 18th in Sacramento. About 90 people have RSVPd so far. We are looking forward to the event and please let us know if you would like to join.
- SIG - We are working with the state on Planscape, and helping to standardize data across the state. Planscape is free and open source.
- Doug - We started work in the Park. We started in May on rehab. We are working on getting all the biomass and logs out. The Park was very great to work with, and we are proud of the work that got done.

Adjourn