

Landowner Engagement Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday, March 24th, 2022, 4 - 5:30 pm

Attendees:

Bella Bledsoe, Sierra Institute	Larry Rinehart, Mineral Homeowners Assoc.
Sophie Castleton, Sierra Institute	Jo Cunningham, Baccala Ranch
Kyle Rodgers, Sierra Institute	Jim Richardson, Lassen NP & Mineral Firewise
Michael Hall, Feather River RCD	Brin Greer, RCD of Tehama County
Julia Sidman, Feather River RCD	Sharon Roberts, St Bernard Lodge
Mary Davidge, Friends of Warner Valley	
Mark Black, Mill Creek Homeowners Assoc.	

Feather River RCD: EFoRT Program (Michael Hall & Julia Sidman)

- The Feather River RCD is forming the Emergency Forest Restoration Team (EFoRT) in Plumas County in response to multiple large wildfires in 2020 and 2021.
- The Feather River RCD is outreaching to non-industrial private landowners in Plumas County to enroll them in this program, covering CEQA, site prep, dead tree removal, fuels reduction for green areas, and follow-up release treatments, and monitoring.
- The EFoRT program will cover the full cost of the work (outside 100 ft defensible space)
- An EFoRT program is also being formed in Eldorado County in response to the Caldor Fire. The Feather River RCD is in communication with them about their process, although local needs are different and require a tailored approach.
- Feather River RCD plans to bring on operators and start the first phase of work by late April.

Eligibility:

- Nonindustrial private forest landowners located within Plumas County.
- Within the footprint of 2020 or 2021 wildfires.
- Program will prioritize landowners in the WUI and properties that burned at moderate to high severity.
- No work within 100 ft defensible space (that is responsibility of the homeowner).

Two ways to fund

- Cap-rate reimbursements
 - Encouraging local contractors, allows the landowner to choose the operator/contractor or continue work already started with a certain operator.
 - Rates based on NRCS/CFIP/average operator rates; adjusted annually.
 - Landowners/operators will be reimbursed pending completion of project.
- District-managed contracts
 - Feather River RCD oversees all operations
 - RCD will connect landowners with RPF

Timeline: 3 years of funding: May 2022 – March 2026

Enrollment

- Visit www.frrcd.org
- Fill out “Landowner Assistance Form”
- A project representative will contact you
- Schedule a no-cost site visit
- Enter into agreement, start developing workplan

Q&A

- Program will treat property regardless of the size, get your neighbors to treat their properties too!
- The RCD is aiming to reforest 1,000 ac/year.
- Can program treat across county lines? Feather River RCD will follow up about that.
- Lassen County is starting their own similar program, Tehama County does not have one at this point.

RCD of Tehama County: Mineral Project (Brin Greer)

- Hazard tree removal in Mineral is challenging, with utility lines overlapping dense trees near houses.
- RCD of Tehama County is coordinating with the Mineral Firewise community to work with non-industrial private landowners in Mineral; the goal is to fell targeted hazard trees.
- The RCD will address over 700 of the large hazard trees, as well as smaller trees and ladder fuels.
- Work planned for early summer, will recruit landowners before then and gain access permits.
- Grant term is through June 2026.
- The RCD also offers defensible space programs to help landowners treat 100 ac. around homes.

Q&A

- Education needs to be a huge component of this program; some landowners still do not want to remove trees on their properties.
- PG&E is felling more trees than usual. PG&E has historically felled hazard trees that residents thought were healthy, resulting in some lawsuits.
- What about Tehama County residents that have lost trees due to the Dixie Fire? Are there similar programs for those people? Not at this point.
- Bella & Kyle highlighted that as the state and communities respond to a situation like the Dixie Fire, landowner assistance programs are popping up in real time. Sierra Institute is pushing agencies to think across boundaries as we go forward.
- Mary noted that these meetings are a helpful forum to assist landowners in navigating these processes.
- Brin noted that organizations like the RCDs and nonprofits are searching for funding opportunities to meet outstanding needs.

West Lassen Headwaters Project Update (Kyle Rodgers)

What is happening on public lands (Forest Service, Park Service) in the WLHP?

- This Landowner Engagement Subcommittee was born out of the South Lassen Watersheds Group (SLWG), a collaborative tackling forest health and restoration issues.
- The SLWG is taking on a new project which is now in the planning phase: the 130,000 ac. West Lassen Headwaters Project. The goal is to plan restoration on public lands, and include private lands in a parallel process so treatments occur across boundaries.
- We are trying to take a holistic, landscape approach to treat the whole WLHP footprint, to protect communities by treating the forest both within and around them.
- The WLHP is unique in a few ways:
 - Early and complete engagement from the public/collaborative group in the project.
 - It will be planned through a condition-based approach (a new approach for LNF & LAVO).
 - Aims to treat at a larger scale, across boundaries.
- There are two parts to this planning process on public lands:
 - Federal Interdisciplinary Team – USFS led team of resource specialists developing federal compliance (NEPA) for the public lands in the planning footprint.
 - Kick-off meeting was in Feb.
 - Collaborative engagement – workshops focused on four subgroups (Water, Meadow & Riparian Zones, Communities & Built Environment, Upland Forest, Fire).
 - Workshops planned so far in Feb and April.
- For us to be successful, we need to build and maintain trust. We need to develop a common understanding and ownership over what we want to do on the landscape. We need to communicate regularly both internally and among partners. We want to encourage meaningful engagement from the public, not just asking for comments on proposed actions, but making recommendations to the Agencies.
- If landowners are interested in larger landscape effort, we encourage you to join one of the planning workshops (email Bella if you are interested).
- We will also offer public field trips in the future and encourage this group to participate in the formal opportunities for public comment on the federal process. Announcements in future meetings of this group will let you know about opportunities to participate.

Q & A

- Mary is curious about the predictive nature of the planning, under climate change. How can we think about resiliency for the future?
 - Condition-based management allows us to be more adaptable as things change over time.
 - We are learning lessons from the Dixie Fire about how what we are modeling based on past fire behavior is changing under current and future conditions.

- The large landscape approach allows us to think about things more holistically (habitat and watershed connectivity).
- Fewer trees = more forest resiliency.
- Jo Cunningham is not getting any assistance with sediment runoff, which is filling irrigation ditches on her ranch and significantly impacting the meadows. The Dixie Fire impacted 95% of her ranch. We need to think beyond trees, to other post-fire impacts.
- Jim noted that we going to have to learn to live with fire. Fires are going to be larger and more frequent, so we need to plan that into our future. Jim thinks it will be helpful to get on the ground in the post-fire areas to see what tactics were successful. We want a forest that is still there after the fire goes through. We can all get together in this process and envision what that future is going to be.

Next meeting in June