

# Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement Fall 2019 Meeting

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November 6-7 | Sacramento CA

## Meeting Summary

The Sierra Institute held its biannual Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Sacramento, CA. On Day 1, participants discussed and shared innovative approaches to landscape-scale management. Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary of Forest Resource Management at California Natural Resource Agency, framed the State's approach to fire mitigation and barriers faced in the day's introduction. A panel of collaborative representatives outlined their groups' respective approaches to working on a larger scale. A second panel reviewed the definition of condition-based NEPA, what is needed for it to be successful, and The Nature Conservancy's ideas about its use in the future. Professor Scott Stephens presented his research on the science behind forest restoration and the role of fire. Participants broke into small groups to share examples of large-scale NEPA and how those approaches could be applied in their respective areas. Jennifer Montgomery, Director of the Forest Management Task Force, and Jim Mayer, California Forward Senior Fellow and President Emeritus, provided reflections about the day's conversations.

Retired Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Director Jim Branham shared thoughts about the importance of integrating forests and watersheds with communities in efforts for landscape-scale management to begin Day 2. Participants asked questions and shared their experiences with Master Stewardship Agreements while Jason Ko from USFS Region 5 shared insights and answered questions. Bill Craven, California State Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water Chief Consultant the provided additional background to collaborative approaches toward pace and scale. A panel of leaders from CalTrans, CALFIRE, and Sierra Nevada Conservancy discussed approaches and funding opportunities of the agencies, and engaged collaborative members in dialogue and answered questions. The day ended with reflections from Liz Berger, Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Tahoe National Forest, and David Bunn, director of the Department of Conservation.

## Attendees

Chris Adlam  
Frank Aebly  
John Amodio  
Christine Aralia  
Angela Avery  
Liz Berger  
Jerry Bird  
Juliana Birkhoff  
Sarah Bolnik  
Jim Branham  
Steve Buckley  
David Bunn  
Ryan Burnett  
Ray Cablayan  
Kate Campbell  
Jennifer Chapman  
Bill Craven  
Hinda Darner  
Robert DeSotle  
Jenny DiStefano  
David Edelman  
Sheri Elliott  
Erin Ernst  
David Featherman

Chris Fischer  
Alissa Fogg  
David Fournier  
Chris Freidel  
Andy Fristensky  
Nick Goulette  
Randy Hanvelt  
April Hargis  
Katie Harrell  
Laura Hierholzer  
Rick Hopson  
Tracy Hruska  
Holly Jorgensen  
Cynthia King  
Zach Knight  
Jason Ko  
Byron Krempf  
Jonathan Kusel  
Cathy LeBlanc  
Angie Lottes  
Jim Mayer  
Dan McDonald  
Jennifer Montgomery  
Jessica Morse

Lindsey Nitta  
Jodie Pixley  
Laurie Perrot  
Sherry Reckler  
Chad Roberts  
Thurman Roberts  
Kyle Rodgers  
Terrence Rodgers  
Andrew Salmon  
Hilary Sanders  
Greg Schroer  
Josh Sjostrom  
Todd Sloat  
Scott Stephens  
Kim Sorini-Wilson  
Craig Thomas  
Allison Tomson  
Alex Vance  
Dov Weinman  
Steve Wilensky  
David Wilkinson  
Dotrik Wilson  
Lisa Worthington

## Day 1

### Introduction

*Jonathan Kusel, Executive Director, Sierra Institute; and Kyle Rodgers, Collaborative Forestry Program Manager, Sierra Institute*

Introduction to Sierra Institute, what it has done in the past as an organization, how it got started working with collaboratives (through CFLRs), and funding sources for SCALE.

SCALE has grown a lot since the early days, and we now have collaboratives all over California. A big theme of today's meeting will be: how do we get to landscape scale?

In our last meeting in Jackson, some of the key issues brought up were:

- How to engage Tribes?
- Finding funding to organize collaboratives and keep them operating (facilitation, etc.)
- There is a lot of money available for work now; how do we prioritize what to do with it?

NEPA is a part of what we are going to be talking about today, but it is not the central theme of the meeting. If we are going to get to landscape scale, however, NEPA is one of the challenges that we have to figure out.

### Introductory Speaker

*Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary of Forest Resources Management, California Natural Resources Agency*

Jessica described State efforts at fire mitigation as being organized into three concentric zones:

1. Homes and structures: we now know that many homes burn from the inside out, highlighting the need for home improvements to make them more resistant to embers and fire.
2. The wildland-urban interface (WUI): ensuring that homes and structures have well-maintained defensible space, and that (especially private) land around towns is being treated with thinning and fuel breaks to protect structures and communities.
3. The forested landscape: this is the area that the SCALE program also focuses on – forest management at large spatial scales, including thinning, prescribed fire, and logging.

There are, however, structural obstacles that are standing in the way of the State and other organizations getting more forest/fire prevention work done:

- Insufficient workforce;
- Environmental regulations (“green tape”) that slow down project planning and implementation;
- Access to capital for project implementation and infrastructure/capital improvements;
- Insufficient market and facilities for woody biomass;
- Lack of suitable data and analytics: there is a need for more LiDAR and similar forest data at large spatial scales.

Jessica subsequently responded to several questions and comments from the audience, where she highlighted the need to encourage (rather than legislate, probably) local governments to conduct urban infill rather than expand exurban development into the WUI. She also requested that forest collaboratives send in ideas on how to fund large scale forest management on non-State-owned lands, and also to share stories or data to better connect urban populations to the need for forest restoration.

## Collaborative Updates

### Butte County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Work Group

*Holly Jorgensen, Executive Director, Sacramento River Watershed Program*

The group has been identifying and addressing resource management issues and supporting community needs through restoration efforts. They are developing a planning framework and web-based data collection tools to create a centralized data repository for Butte County. The group continues to integrate community priorities, resources, and resiliency goals into planning processes.

### Western Klamath Restoration Partnership

*Jodie Pixley, WKRP Coordinator, Mid Klamath Watershed Council*

The Karuk Tribe has led work with the U.S. Forest Service in collaborative processes since the early 90's. This year they held their sixth TREX event and have treated over 1,000 acres with fire. In 2013 TNC helped the partnership in establishing agreements; the National Forest consults with WKRP in ongoing efforts toward collaborative restoration. Partners can expect the Klamath Fire Ecology Symposium to be held in June 2020. They are implementing their pilot project (in planning since 2013), and have signed a contract for mechanical work to begin this year. About 500 acres have been treated so far.

### Dinkey Creek Collaborative

*Kim Sorini-Wilson, District Wildlife Biologist, Sierra National Forest*

The collaborative began in 2009 and since that time has been a CFLRP. Goals of the Dinkey CFLRP include the restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems, promotion of ecosystem diversity, maintenance of viable fish and wildlife populations, and increase of ecosystem resilience. The collaborative diligently reviews all NEPA documentation and has consistently engaged in forest restoration projects. The collaborative has also developed design criteria for projects, including guidelines for fisher marking and Great Gray Owls. Over time the group has seen success after building lots of trust through field visits and getting out on the ground for meetings.

### Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions

*Byron Kreml, Headwater Forests Program Manager, Tuolumne River Trust*

Byron Kreml, their watershed coordinator, is partially funded by DOC watershed coordinator grant. He started three months ago and has been identifying his role and the needs of YSS. YSS stakeholders share common interests in forest management restoration and formed in 2010; the Rim Fire was catastrophic for forests and the collaborative has been primarily focused on restoration within the footprint of that fire. They have found that community work days have helped integrate community members and shows local stakeholders how they can continue to impact the landscape through work with the collaborative. They have received over \$8 million in grant funding since 2010 and have purchased a million-acre LiDAR dataset that is currently being processed.

## Collaborative Approaches to Large Landscapes

*John Amodio, Amodio Consulting | Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions*

YSS has a 500,000 acre planning area. There was no collaboration when John was an environmental activist in the '90s, so he was skeptical of YSS when he got back into forestry in 2014, but was pleasantly surprised. The Rim Fire motivated a shift from defensive to proactive management, but salvage logging remained a challenge. The group reached a compromise of 220 million board feet (instead of zero or 660 mbf) that allowed the mills to remain open while still protecting certain areas. The collaborative soon realized it could reach agreement but there wasn't the resources or mechanisms to get work done. The

current MSA with the county is possible due to a high degree of trust that the county will not pursue any project unless supported by the collaborative. The group has faced litigation from the John Muir Institute, but the judge sided with the collaborative and refused to grant a temporary injunction on fuel reduction projects.

The recent MOTOR M2K was an earnest effort to increase pace and scale but was based on a controversial condition-based approach. Constituents of the environmental community agreed with the premise but were unwilling to take the gamble and instead presented alternatives. MOTOR M2K fell apart, but YSS is moving forward to pursue two Categorical Exclusions with a total of 60,000 to 80,000 acres (compared to 20,000 acres 10 years ago) as a bridge to a long-term plan for the YSS area, which would quadruple current forest health work. Since the Rim Fire, the group has increased treated acreage by 50%. Progress is slower than desirable but it is there and once-polarized interests have one another's backs now, supporting industry infrastructure and environmental needs. Foundational are finding science-based common ground, and respect and friendship among members

*Jodie Pixley, WKRP Coordinator, Mid Klamath Watershed Council | Western Klamath Restoration Partnership*

WKRP will have implemented work on 5500 acres by the end of the year. Ten years ago they were doing a few hundred acres of prescribed fire on TREX units. The collaborative area is 1.2 million acres that follows Karuk territory and watersheds. It is very rural with three main remote communities, and a major part of getting agreement is putting time in to build local support. The communities are trying to rebuild after the loss of the timber industry, so scaling up work to build the restoration economy is critical. Six Rivers National Forest is helping with a 5-year program of work. One major limitation is the lack of collaborative incentive with the Klamath National Forest partner. A lot of the collaborative area is in the Klamath and the support and interest isn't there, except for prescribed fire and a few other things. WKRP is applying for CFLR status and funding. Lack of capacity and finding funding to support leadership is a barrier. The MSA is major way of gathering partners to work together for the pilot project. Tens of thousands of acres are in planning for the 5-year program of work.

*Todd Sloat, Pit and Fall River RCDs | Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group*

One challenge is that it is hard to have a diverse collaborative when diverse groups don't exist in an area. As the group has been figuring out how to get more work done, key bottlenecks have been a lack of personnel and facilities to take product to. The group started securing funds with the Forest Service tackling larger projects and the RCDs doing CEs. There is now an MSA with the Pit and Fall River RCDs, which allows for more flexible procurement policies. Continuing to work at a greater pace and scale requires a pipeline of projects, human power to write NEPA, and a strong and trusting partnership with the federal agency. The group has a 362,000 acre planning area and have consistently worked on about 50,000 acres a year.

*Steve Buckley, Botanist, Lassen Volcanic National Park | South Lassen Watersheds Group*

Steve has been with NPS for a decade and previously worked on precursors of 4FRI (in Arizona). The Park Service has a mandate to work on landscape-scale collaborative conservation, unlike the Forest Service. SLWG is one of the younger collaboratives, and has grown to include everything that drains the south side of LVNP, about 600,000 acres. Developing group processes, having a well-defined MOU, and respectful dialogue are important. They have worked with Sierra Institute and Sierra Nevada Conservancy to develop innovative projects, including thinning (with cross-cut saws) and prescribed fire in wilderness, crossing the Park—Forest Service boundary. They are now discussing doing NEPA for all WUI areas, 100,000 to 200,000 acres, and working on 8,000 acres in LVNP. There is a need for better integration of scientific information. Ecosystem approach is the key. The human ecosystem is also critical.

Response to question: Landscape scale doesn't necessarily mean bigger, but how things affect other areas. There are gaps in the science but we can't wait around for the answers. Using geospatial data can help us start to understand some dynamics and use a firehosed approach to focus on communities and understanding severe fires. This involves gathering stakeholders and assessing values and priorities with overlay assessment, picking high risk areas and how to move forward. The impacts of what we do is another question.

Response to question: How much is enough each year? Once you treat an area you have to maintain it. Historically 325-350,000 acres a year were burned by indigenous people.

Response to question: There is a need to sustain the people working on these issues. Passion and attachment to rural lifestyle are important.

## Condition-Based NEPA: Lessons and Possibilities

*Laura Hierholzer, Regional Environmental Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service*

Condition-based NEPA is NOT in the USFS regulations at present; it is in the draft regulations right now, and may or may not be accepted into the final ruling. So-called "programmatic NEPA" is the same thing as condition-based NEPA, but the term "programmatic" is sometimes used incorrectly to simply mean 'large scale.' The idea behind condition-based management (CDM) is to create a set of different treatment options that can be applied adaptively to different elements of a landscape to meet varying goals. Successful CDM-based projects to date have reached implementation because they had very clear and specific goals, and the Forest Service had done a thorough job of bringing partners to the table early to reach agreement on goals and methods of implementation.

*Steve Wilensky, Executive Director, CHIPS | Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group*

Steve described the recent interactions between three Central Sierra collaboratives (ACCG, YSS, and Dinkey) and the Forest Service in relation to the proposed condition-based MOTOR M2K plan (pre-scoping phase) in the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. MOTOR M2K was initially proposed by a Forest Supervisor without many details, and the proposal quickly threatened to tear apart the three collaboratives into factions who variously wanted to support the plan, kill the plan, modify the plan, and study the plan. The vast scale of the proposal (an area of 2.4 million acres) and 15-year (minimum) operating period was threatening, especially because it would have forced three collaboratives who had never worked together before to coordinate actions very quickly. The possibility of long delay (planning process, lawsuits) was also a challenge due to imperatives for quick work in response to recent fires and high tree mortality. A recent meeting between the collaboratives and Region 5 effectively ended MOTOR M2K and built a small base from which to work collaboratively on developing a new plan to increase pace and scale of work on the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests. The meeting also highlighted the need for collaboratives to work together more effectively, and to better establish "red light," "yellow light," and "green light" processes to make sure that consensus projects move forward quickly, while projects without agreement are held back for further discussion or modification.

*David Edelson, Sierra Nevada Project Director, The Nature Conservancy*

Broadly speaking, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) thinks that CBM is a promising approach, partly because traditional NEPA is too slow and expensive on a per-acre basis for large scale planning. TNC is currently considering a CBM approach for their North Yuba Partnership area in the Sierra. In particular, there are three scenarios where CBM has been used effectively and shows future promise:

- To reach landscape scale (such as in the Cherokee National Forest, where a CBM model was used but with a second tier of short, site-specific environmental assessments (EAs) for further review;
- Where conditions are changing quickly and implementation needs to be adaptable (such as a CBM approach in Colorado responding to a spruce budworm outbreak);

- As a collaboration-building process (such as in Oregon, where establishing the conditions and possible treatments for a CBM plan brought many new stakeholders together and allowed them to work together to make decisions on clear, discrete topics within the plan).

## The Science Behind Forest Restoration

*Professor Scott Stephens, Center for Fire Research and Outreach, University of California Berkeley*

Scott first gave some background about historical conditions of Sierra Nevada forests. Prior to 1800, 4.5 million acres burned per year, much by Native Americans. Now about 10-25% of that area burns, although in the last few years it has reached over 1 million acres per year. USDA form 23A was the first comprehensive inventory of national forests in CA and shows that in 1911, there were an average of 22 trees per acre above 6 inches dbh, 56% pine. In 2013, there were 101 trees per acre, 45% pine.

Scott then described a study he did on the Blodgett Forest Research Station Stanislaus National Forest, comparing the effects of three different treatment types. In 2001, mechanical treatment was done on an area that had surface fuels of 35 tons/acres and duff 30 tons/acre. Crown thinning to 1/3 and commercial thinning from 10 inches was done for species mix and opening up the stand. Materials were masticated and stayed on site due to a lack of biomass options. Crown thinning didn't change fire behavior, and fire behavior did not immediately change due to treatment. 7 years later, however, over 80% fuel had decomposed and fire behavior was as successful for carbon sequestration. In a second area, the same mechanical treatment was done in 2001, plus prescribed fire, although they burned the same year but generally you would burn a year or a few later. The prescribed fire had a residence time of 15 minutes and 1.5-2 meter flame length. Val Lopez calls this industrial burning, burning for broad objectives rather than for the landscape, and is a completely different than cultural burning. It consumed 85% of surface fuel, a little more than wanted. By 2010, shrub regeneration got to 5 foot high by 2015 and had to masticate again which isn't economical. Burned a second time and got 120 foot scorch. Work on shrubs would need to be done earlier. The third area used prescribed fire only. The first burn in 2001 killed 85% of the trees below 10 inches. Another burn was done 7 years later and after a third burn in 2017 the stand had arrived at a fire-resilient system.

Other research has shown that if a fire burned in an area 9 years ago, a nearby fire will not burn over the top of the area again. If fire was present more than 9 years ago, it depends on weather conditions. In 1970 the National Park Service changed fire exclusion policies to allow fire back on the landscape, which resulted in a 22% reduction in forest area in Yosemite, meaning meadows have opened up. Illilouette Creek has increased or maintained water leaving watershed since 1974 while control streams decreased. Median patch size of high severity fire is 10 acres and largest about 230.

Climate change is not the biggest issue, the way we have historically managed our forests is, and that means that there is a lot we can do. We can do a lot more to connect to land and tribes and urban populations. We are running out of time but the next 1-2 decades are critical.

## Getting to Landscape Scale through NEPA

Participants broke into groups to review three examples of large-scale NEPA and discuss the potential possibilities and barriers. The examples were: A-Z third party NEPA on the Colville National Forest; the first EIS (1 million acres) on the 4FRI area; and the programmatic NEPA on the Cherokee National Forest.

A-Z third party NEPA: Trust in the contractor is essential but not necessarily a barrier. The collaborative would be central to this approach. However, there is a lack of capacity to take this on and get value out.

4FRI large-scale EIS: Capacity is a barrier to large scale traditional NEPA, as with any NEPA, with the added concern of letting smaller projects fall through while pivoting to the large landscape and losing ground. It would be important to share institutional knowledge by sharing stories and strategies. Utilizing outside partners would also be important.

Cherokee National Forest programmatic NEPA: The discussion in this group benefitted from participants working on programmatic NEPA on the Mendocino and Tahoe National Forests. The major concern is fear of litigation and balancing risk aversion with need for pace and scale. Different values can be reconciled through collaboration and education, however the person suing you might not be within scope of those efforts. Another approach could be to actively seek legal advice in anticipation of litigation. Lack of trust and leadership continuity can be addressed by documenting opportunities for public engagement, and by starting small and simple to build trust.

## Day 1 Reflection

*Jennifer Montgomery, Director, Forest Management Task Force*

Jessica Morse (morning session) covers similar territory but has a different perspective. Jennifer is more focused on forest health but has a similar 3-tiered view. Governor's priority is public safety, not to exclusion of other work. FMTF is a convening entity, with multiple teams and regional groups – there are a lot of meetings. Forests account for about 40% of fire starts. Half of wildfires start on roadways. Utilities start less than 10% of fires – though the State has a laser focus on this issue, as does the Governor. If we could just address the roadway fires and the utility fires, that alone would free up a huge amount of capacity to do other things and achieve other goals, more ecological goals.

There is a new State action requiring local agencies to take some responsibility around wildfires. That said, local governments are not going to stop developing in the WUI – that is their bread and butter. What might actually make a difference is the increase in price and decrease in availability of fire insurance. That might drop property values, which would reduce the assessed value and therefore reduce county tax revenue. Truckee has a good example of urban infill, and that should serve as a model to other mountain/forest communities.

There are some challenges around grant funding – conflicting priorities, gaps, implementation windows that are too short, etc., and Jessica Morse and Jennifer are working on it in CA agencies. She loved the idea of taking on US AID-style rural development projects in rural California. She tried to start a conversation with GoBiz about how to build wood-product businesses and utilization businesses in rural areas. They initially just said “That is a dying industry; why would we start work in that direction?” But she talked with them about the increasing scale of forest management and the need to have the people to both do the work and utilize the biomass coming out of the forest, and they decided to look into it. She has six sets of recommendations from the working groups within the FMTF, and there are a lot of other studies and recommendations started by various aspects of legislative action over the last year. All that data will be getting to the Governor and the legislature soon, which means that there are going to be new projects and programs and initiatives rolling out in response before too long.

*Jim Mayer, California Forward Senior Fellow and President Emeritus*

Jim really appreciated Jennifer saying that she needed to go back and reread another Little Hoover report, given that he wrote 62 such reports during his time with the Commission. A whole lot of those reports really focused on getting State agencies and other governmental entities to work together better.

5 overall observations:

1. Everyone at the SCALE meeting really ought to acknowledge how much progress they have made. They have put together the social capital and resources to create major changes within communities all over, and that is something that may not get a lot of attention but is worth celebrating. Yes, we are not at the pace and scale we want, but having gone from zero to *anything* is important and valuable. Don't underestimate that.
2. You are on the cutting edge of governance. We have city, county, and state governments, but the real problems are at the community and regional level, at which we have no good governmental structure or organizational model. The private sector and the civic sector are crucial for establishing those governance models, and are needed for accomplishing what we want to do.
3. It is up to you to define the models that will work for you; they won't come from Sacramento. Collaboration is not something that was designed into agencies, and people in those agencies have not been trained or empowered to do collaboration. As Donna Meadows taught us, good systems have good hierarchies, and good hierarchies are those at which the higher levels are in service to the levels below. The systems that we want to be built will have to be built from the bottom up.
4. Communicate, communicate, communicate. The majority of Californians have no idea who we are or what we're doing. Traditional mass media is not going to work for leveraging community and public support. We're going to have to leverage other kinds of institutions and strategies.
5. All the things talked about here, about linking increasing pace and scale of forest management to rural livelihoods, is now a major initiative at California Forward and the Economic Summit. Those two organizations will serve as the "air cover" for all the work happening on the ground by the collaboratives.

Question: Chris Adlam asked how Tribes in California will be recognized and supported by the State to do work to restore their lands and ancestral landscapes? Jennifer responded that she has met with a number of State leaders to talk about his issue, and a few different Tribes. One of her goals over the next months is to do more and better tribal outreach to better involve those communities. She had a chance to go out on the land with Bill Tripp and the Karuk to talk about traditional burning. That trip made it clear to her why those burning practices were not only important for ecological values but also important for spiritual benefit and cultural benefit. It turns out that those practices also meet the objectives of most Western Europeans here, so there is a huge amount of overlap for opportunities.

## Day 2

### Recap of Day 1

Jonathan Kusel asked a few people to give remarks about yesterday. Ryan Burnett, who has worked within the South Lassen Watersheds Group for the last few years, mentioned this was his first SCALE meeting. He felt like the group seemed solution oriented and geared toward innovative management. Lindsay Nitta surveyed the group at her table and felt that there were many agreements in conversations and that there was high value in sharing experiences. Todd Sloat mentioned that SCALE meetings are one of the things on his calendar that keep him inspired. Hinda Darner appreciated the attention devoted to workforce development and supporting local economies through resource-based work. Jodie Pixley mentioned that it was nice to hear Jim Mayer's acknowledgement of their work and was inspired by Jessica Morse's experiences and this type of collaborative work generally.

### Introductory Speaker

*Jim Branham, Executive Officer (retired), Sierra Nevada Conservancy*

Jim started by mentioning his appreciation for being able to talk with members of collaborative groups and reflect on his early work with SNC. He added that he dealt with many of the same issues that collaborative groups are solving now. He detailed how collaborative groups evolved after environmental interests began meeting more regularly with agencies and other organizations outside of courtrooms. SCALE participants are great examples, showcasing success stories and change in natural resource management. Getting to landscape scale is obviously difficult, the environmental review and planning processes have been cumbersome and time consuming, and there is a general lack of understanding of the need to invest over longer timelines. Longer term investments allow organizations and folks on the ground to really work on scale. He suggested that we need to continue to keep workforce development in the center of conversations and stay intentional about supporting rural communities and their resiliency living *with* the landscape.

Q: How can we use the current political climate in CA to our advantage – what about receiving money to maintain the landscape instead of letting PG&E off the hook?

A: The truth is, this crisis will create an opportunity, we need to realize there's no simple solution and encourage more groups to talk with the administration. It was suggested by another participant that we avoid a focus on PG&E and really turn the conversation toward educating the public about the importance of fire and the current status of our forests.

Steve W. asked Jim for his thoughts about the evolution of the thinking of marrying forests and watersheds. Jim responded that we've been building on what some of the agencies have done and that there's been a growing understanding of the connection between forests and watersheds but that a next step is more voices in settings and meetings with personnel from water agencies.

### Collaborative Updates

#### Camptonville Community Partnership

*Allison Tomson and Andrew Salmon, Watershed Coordinators, South Yuba River Citizens League*

Alison and Andrew are both new Watershed Coordinators, working with the South Yuba River Citizens League and CCP. They are working to form a Forest and Watershed Partnership working on both water and forest issues, and will include at least CCP and the North Yuba Partnership. They are working with Lisa Worthington (CalTrans) and others to get ideas and input on how to prioritize forest treatments. In

order to prioritize work, they are working with a data product from Region 5, a Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative assessment product, and potentially some others. [www.yubaforest.org](http://www.yubaforest.org) – the new collaborative will kick off tomorrow.

### Trinity County Collaborative Group

*Nick Goulette, Executive Director, The Watershed Center*

In Trinity County, the Group is really a venue for conflict resolution related to getting work done on federal land. The Trinity County Fire Safe Council is where land managers sit down together and strategize on how to fund, plan, and implement projects. Below that, there are also strategic partnerships between specific groups or agencies to implement specific projects on the ground. He brings this up because it is important to note that different groups are doing different things and have different needs in terms of capacity and funding.

### Firescape Mendocino

*Hinda Darner, Fuels Officer, Mendocino National Forest; and Chad Roberts, Firescape Mendocino*

Their work area is essentially the Coast Range north of the San Francisco Bay, all the way up to the Klamath, which means they have a much different set of ecological conditions than does the Sierra. The North Coast is also subject to the Northwest Forest Plan, and there is now a revision to that plan related to Northern Spotted Owls with as-of-yet unclear changes. There will also be an update on the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, with a lot of uncertainty on how that will develop. Firescape and Tehama County RCD partnered to get about 4.5 million dollars of CCI money to do forest thinning/restoration on the Mendocino National Forest, which is now ongoing. In the wake of the Ranch Fire, there is now a project working on 40,000 acres primarily of WUI in the north of Lake County, with most of the implementation going to local contractors. One landless tribe applied for CCI dollars and is partnering with the Forest Service to manage a piece of land. There are other tribes getting involved in TRES and other management work, leading to a brand new collaborative group in northern Lake County that does not yet have a name but is moving forward with institutional development. There is also another Fire Safe Council in Lake County that is starting a new forest/WUI program. A new college, New Paradigm College, is currently trying to get accreditation and is backed by UC San Francisco, and has a strong focus on local workforce development.

### Amador Calaveras Consensus Group

*Rick Hopson, Amador District Ranger, Eldorado National Forest; and Steve Wilensky, Executive Director, CHIPS*

They just recently got a facilitator and that has been a big help in developing the group in new ways, and has been helpful for identifying where there is agreement in the group and where there isn't. They are now trying to establish priorities for moving to the watershed scale, beyond some of the prior work through the CFLR. Retention within the group has been a bit of a challenge, and they are hoping to get some help through SCALE to figure out how to improve retention. The Caples Fire (which started with an ACCG prescribed burn) has been a big deal for the group, but they have received a lot of support from both conservative and liberal folks. CHIPS recently became the fiscal agent for a big grant to do work on BLM land; they were able to get all the surveys and work done in a single year, out of a three-year grant, because they had established a huge support network which enabled rapid coordination of moving parts. The View 88 project is new, and includes 30 miles of fuel break and view-shed enhancement along Hwy 88. That will connect to other fuel breaks that will in total create 80 miles of linear, contiguous fuel break between Calaveras and Amador Counties.

## SOFAR Cohesive Strategy

*Jennifer Chapman, Public Affairs Specialist, Eldorado National Forest*

The SOFAR group is focusing on how to use CEs across the landscape to get a lot of good work done. One of the things that SOFAR did was gather people around a map and identify where the key areas were for widespread support of implementation. That process identified 3 primary areas, including Georgetown area, Pollock Pines area, and the Headwaters Area, which includes the Caples area. She also noted that there is activity right now not just on Northern Spotted Owl but also the California Spotted Owl, and those decisions will affect not just the North Coast but also a piece of Lassen and Modoc National Forests as well.

## Stewardship Authority: Master Stewardship Agreements

Kyle Rodgers (Sierra Institute) and Jason Ko (USFS Region 5) outlined some specifics about Master Stewardship Agreements, and Jason talked about cross-boundary collaborations at larger scales supported by MSAs. In 2015 there were three MSAs and 1 project implementation. Now, programs like California Climate Investment and Prop16 have helped cultivate agreements so that there are now 18 MSAs, 31 SPAs, and \$61 million of FS and partner funds. It illustrates a changing trend on how work is being approached and that the FS cannot reach pace and scale without partnerships – these MSAs provide flexibility for partners to do a lot of different, novel work. It's critical to define roles and responsibilities for these processes to be successful.

Kyle asked collaborative members with experience developing MSAs or Good Neighbor Agreements (GNAs) to share some of their experiences. Todd Sloat and the Pit River RCD tested the waters with a GNA for doing NEPA on a salvage project on the Modoc – they had the same intentions with their GNA, to use the agreement to add flexibility and community benefits. Byron Krempl mentioned that YSS holds an MSA with Tuolumne County acting as the fiscal agent, and added that the question moving forward is what the roles and responsibilities are. Jodie Pixley shared that there was great leadership involved in their MSA and that it has been a solid way for partners to engage each other and revive old projects without being divisive. She suggested that it was a tool that can be used as a mechanism for problem solving.

Facilitators divided the room into two groups. One group used MSAs as examples for how groups might bring in additional dollars and how the agreements require trust between the agency and partners. Group two suggested that MSAs help nudge collaboratives to assess their goals and identify their barriers. The second group also emphasized the importance of the relationship between the Forest Service and partners. Groups agreed that more MSA-focused workshops for FS as well as partner organizations would help develop understanding for how MSAs and Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) can support more partnerships and flexible work.

## Lunchtime Speaker

*Bill Craven, Chief Consultant, CA Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water*

Bill Craven mentioned that he arrived at this type of work as an environmental organizer and that one of his mentors taught him that one of the keys to environmental success was to first create demand for what you want, and then taking delivery. He suggested that collaboratives probably don't realize how much work they've done creating demand, and though there are still numerous issues to resolve the current situation is currently better than it was previously.

He suggested that there should be a way for CAL FIRE dollars to be spent on National Forest lands and that if there is fire resiliency built into a project that has gone through NEPA it shouldn't have to then go through CEQA. CEQA compliance should be built into our grants rather than relying on an EIR.

Bill also suggested that the government needs to take a more intentional role about where we are building houses and communities, where we're going to improve infrastructure, and whether or not we're going to continue to neglect road systems and forest access roads.

Q: Where should biomass go and how will California assist in this problem?

A: The institutional barriers are significant, and the practice itself is controversial because of area emissions and several of the existing plants are in air districts that are considered non-attainment. We also may need to focus on driving down the cost of biomass and the way to do that is through transportation subsidies.

Q: Issue with using bond funding for landscape scale restoration – How close have we come and what needs to be done to pay for environmental services?

A: Wrap these grants in language that show consideration for both rural and urban areas. There are really innovative climate projects that can be done at the regional and local level that can bring together diverse groups that typically don't mix together. We should encourage this because it creates cross-collaboration and it will foster public support because local communities will be proud of multi-stakeholder innovative programs.

## State Programs for Supporting Landscape Restoration

A panel of representatives of state agencies shared about the approaches their agencies are taking to support and implement landscape-scale restoration work, and what is needed.

*Lisa Worthington, Forest Management Program Manager, CalTrans*

Lisa Worthington presented the work she has been doing to identify and prioritize proactive forest management along state roadways. This represents a significant shift in the agency's approach. Last year (fiscal year 2018-2019) CalTrans spent \$124 million in response to wildfire damages. The question is, can they shift some of the spending to pre-fire activities to reduce the incident footprint? CalTrans recently completed an assessment and prioritization of needs across the state with the highest needs in Districts 1-3 across the northern tier. With priorities mapped and a new master Good Neighbor Authority agreement close to signature, Lisa invited collaboratives to contact her to work to advance projects.

*Angela Avery, Executive Office, Sierra Nevada Conservancy*

Angela Avery spoke to the group about how the SNC is supporting collaboratives across their region. She highlighted the central role of the Conservancy's Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The WIP is an integrated landscape scale program launched in 2015 after the Rim Fire and King Fire demonstrated a need to approach things differently. She also noted that infrastructure today means more than just biomass utilization infrastructure, it also means developing the human infrastructure to accomplish restoration work. One project to come out of the WIP has been the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative, an effort covering a 2.4 million acre area and trying to identify what is necessary to support forest infrastructure, apply science, and pilot new ideas of governance. At the regional scale, the SNC is involved in the Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Partnership which brings together twelve state agencies and the USFS with the goal to create strategic alignment through investments that cross silos and fund common projects. SNC also launched a new partnerships and community support team this year, as part of their work under the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Funding for SNC is primarily bond funding, which means it is cyclical and comes with limitations, e.g., timing and project type constraints.

*Angie Lottes, Assistant Deputy Director, Climate and Energy, CAL FIRE*

Angie Lottes discussed the funding and programs that CAL FIRE currently has that could connect with the work of the collaborative. The two primary funding programs are the Forest Health program and the Fire Prevention program. In addition to these, CAL FIRE also has the California Forest Improvement Program, a cost-share program that allows CAL FIRE to contribute up to \$75,000 toward landowner driven projects on private lands. Angie also updated the groups on changes in CAL FIRE staffing and funding levels, both have grown considerably in past couple of years. New additions include prescribed fire crews, currently working on the agency's 35 priority projects but available to help with other projects after that. Angie recommended building relationships at the local CAL FIRE unit level to access these resources. Both the Forest Health and Fire Prevention programs are currently soliciting applications. Angie encouraged potential applicants to ask for the necessary staff support as these are large grants and the agency needs grantees to be responsive, accountable for the money, and wants the projects to go well. There are some differences between the two programs and applicants should evaluate which fits their project better. Angie also highlighted that CAL FIRE wants to see applications that balance planning needs with implementation of work on the ground. There are three staff at CAL FIRE assigned to the Forest Health program (Justin, Robin, and Julie), and applicants are encouraged to talk with them about how projects look and how to enhance them.

## Support for Collaborative Restoration: Challenges to Integrating Funding

*A response to the agency panel from collaborative members*

Q: Craig Thomas pointed out that one of the challenges in rural landscapes is working across private land and having the capacity to reach private landowners to do work for fire resilience and egress on their properties.

A: Lisa Worthington added that CalTrans tries to make it easy for private landowners to participate by putting as much information as possible online in an easily digestible format.

Q: Steve Wilensky mentioned that CHIPS has had a hard time getting answers from Caltrans about what size a right of way actually was.

A: Lisa Worthington responded that a one-on-one meeting with the Division of Right of Way and Land Surveys is necessary to get things done at that level. There is no standard width, and no statewide GIS layer of right of ways.

Q: Steve Wilensky asked whether, since there are a lot of people writing grants, we are hurting ourselves with competition.

A: Angie Lottes responded that for Fire Prevention it's better to go with a number of smaller projects. For Forest Health they pay attention to who the collaborators are, and there are groups that are coordinating so CAL FIRE doesn't want to make them dependent on each other by giving one group the money and power. They can't tell groups who to work with but also can't have too many different grants in one area, so it is best to talk to CAL FIRE first. Angela Avery said for SNC it is best to submit multiple smaller projects.

Q: Steve Wilensky said that finding funding for workforce development and equipment is a barrier.

A: Angie Lottes replied that Forest Health grants can pay for what you need to get the work done. Fire Prevention grants have a legacy that creates a barrier if half of the funding is not direct implementation. Angela Avery added that the SNC \$1.9 million block grant is intended to allow groups to invest in equipment that will allow future work.

## Agency Reflection on Effective Engagement with Collaboratives

*Elizabeth Berger, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest*

Liz is currently on the Tahoe but can bring a regional perspective from past work with the region. Shared Stewardship is a current focus of the Region and of the Forest Service as a whole, although there is some work to be done around messaging. There is a statewide Shared Stewardship MOU in progress through the Governor's Office.

Liz mentioned the posthumous award of the Francis Raymond Award to Geraldine Bergen, the first female Forest Supervisor (1985-1990) in the country, to illustrate the progress that has been made in recent decades. There are a lot of barriers but we've done a lot and can continue to move forward. In the Forest Service we have done more this year than in the last 10 years and brought in more grant money, and have more partners leading projects.

*David Bunn, Director of California Department of Conservation*

Common issues David sees are 1) how do you move the money and 2) how do you get the permits. Centralizing those processes - such as by having a unified grant program, a permitting center, and unifying grant administration to allow more resources for work on the ground - would benefit community efforts. We need to have less competitive grants and build trust to work together to tweak projects and give money. Consolidating monitoring would also increase efficiency and the relevance of monitoring. The biggest barrier to good work remains environmental laws. We need it but we need a new way to do it. Community groups need to bring the ideas to the agency of how to run the programs. For example, SI wrote report on the watershed coordinator program which encouraged DOC to relaunch the watershed coordinator grant.

Q: Changing personnel in the Forest Service is a challenge for collaboratives.

A: The Forest Service is trying to build in redundancy by increasing the number of people attending collaborative meetings. It is hard to add people in with longstanding collaboratives. State agencies are required to publish an organization chart, although the Forest Service is not. However, that information may no longer be accessible due to ADA non-compliance.

## Evaluation, Next Steps, and Closing

*Jonathan Kusel, Executive Director, Sierra Institute*

Jonathan emphasized Jim Mayer's comments from Day 1 that the collaborative groups represented are doing terrific work to get to where we are. It is a pleasure to see the younger faces that the DOC grants have brought in the door. The new perspectives and young professionals provide more innovation and creativity. Similarly, we need to continue the work and do a better job of bringing in California Tribes. The collaboratives group have the expertise and experience to work through barriers and obstacles through building trust and communicating with partners.