

SIERRA TO CALIFORNIA ALL LANDS ENHANCEMENT (SCALE) SPRING 2022 MEETING NOTES

May 24th and 25th – Sacramento State Harper Alumni Center, Sacramento, California

ATTENDEES:

Alex Keeble-Toll, Sierra Fund
Ali Meders Knight, Mechoopda Tribe
Amye Osti, 34 North
Bill Keene, Sustainable Recreation CALREC Vision Key Working Group
Brian Newman-Lindsay, Department of Conservation
Byron Krempl, Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS)
Cathy LeBlanc, Camptonville Community Partnership
Chris Anthony, CAL FIRE
Corrinne Scieszka, Sierra Institute
Danny Manning, Greenville Rancheria
David Griffith, Alpine Biomass Collaborative
Emily Blackmer, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Erin Ernst, CA Tahoe Conservancy
Gary Knoblock, CA Landscape Stewardship Network
George Dondero, CHIPS
Isabella Bledsoe, Sierra Institute
James Mayer, CA FWD
Janet Hatfield, Whitebark Institute
Jaqueline Dalton, Sierra Institute
Jennifer Eberlien, USDA Forest Service
Jerry Bird, USDA Forest Service
Jill Micheau, CHIPS
Jim Houtman, Butte County Fire Safe Council
John Amodio, YSS and Tuolumne River Trust
John Heywood, Sierra RCD
John Wentworth, MLTPA
Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute
Jonathan Long, USDA Forest Service
Juliana Birkhoff, Dinkey Collaborative
Kat Perlman, South Yuba River Citizens League
Keali'i Bright, Department of Conservation
Laurel Harkness, GO-Biz
Matt Sjöholm, Blue Forest Conservation
Matthew Reischman, CAL FIRE
Meredith Sierra, ACCG, Foothill Conservancy
Mervet Mitri, Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
Micheal Maguire, OPR
Nick Goulette, The Watershed Center
Norma Santiago, SOFAR Collaborative
Patrick Wright, Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
Rich Farrington, ACCG & UMRWA
Sarah Di Vittorio, National Forest Foundation
Sheri Elliott, Camptonville Community Partnership
Sophie Castleton, Sierra Institute
Steve Haze, Sierra Resource Conservation District
Steve Wilensky, Sierra Institute
Todd Sloat, Pit and Fall River Resource Conservation Districts
Will Harling, Mid Klamath Watershed Council

DAY 1: MAY 24TH

Opening Remarks and Q&A: Jennifer Eberlien, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region

It's great to be together in person, with a powerhouse of collaboratives in the room together. The question is: how are we going to reshape our lands together? Working together is the only way that we are going to be resilient, both community-wise and landscape-wise.

The last few fire seasons have been tough. We have had record dry seasons and record rains. All of our lands are threatened by drought, climate change, tree mortality, and more- and this is our reality check. The good news is that we've never been more aligned on what we need to do together with our communities, key partners, and state and federal agencies. The USFS's 10-year million-acre shared stewardship strategy is at the core of our values, and we have been working on it for decades.

State and federal agencies value collaborative and Tribal input, with the State putting \$2 billion toward these efforts in addition to the federal infrastructure bill. North Yuba and Stanislaus specifically are being invested in by the 10-year strategy and the Wildfire Resilience Task Force. A couple hundred thousand acres is a start, but the question is how to build up from that. The FS are focusing on the fireshed scale and identifying firesheds at risk across the nation- 60% of which are in California. They are also working to increase their number of positions, as they have lost almost 40% of their fire prevention positions. The Task Force will be very important to success. They are looking at developing statewide plans to collectively identify joint priorities to answer: where can we have an effect on the ground in high-risk areas and how can we jointly get out priorities together? Collaborative community efforts will drive this from the ground up, to help focus time, resources, and attention. Ultimately, our water and air are at risk, people have lost their homes and places that they love. We're all living it, and we're all in it together.

Q&A:

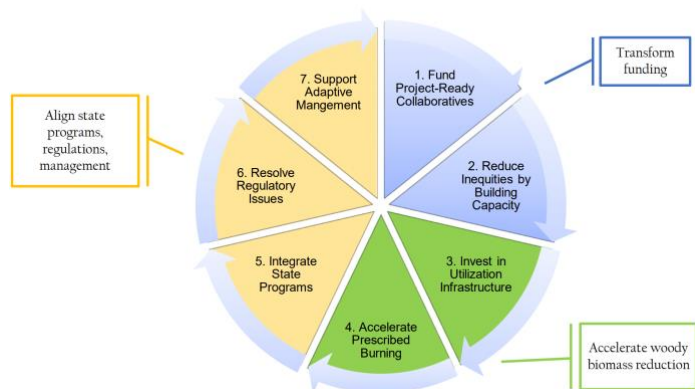
- Q: Given the transitions we're in, where do you see a conflict in policy that you have within your agency with this new reality? Where do you see the changes that need to be made? Everything is aligning really nicely, but the systems in play are causing delays. Bureaucratic cycles prevent the USFS from moving fast enough. We agree there's a sense of urgency, but something in the system needs to change.
 - A: The more money we get, the more eyes we're going to have. We certainly have our systems (grants and agreements, NEPA, contacts, etc.), and we've lost 40% of non-fire staff and are feeling it. HR and contracting are some of the most difficult positions to hire, retain, and fill within the federal government. We've kept things moving with a vast reduction of staff because we've received different types of authorities from Congress that have let us move faster- i.e., Categorical Exclusions. We recognize that we have those system issues, so we are trying to break barriers and take some risks.
- Q: Funding question - in light of funding to the Yuba and YSS projects, is there any more money coming? Chief Moore testified before the senate resources committee that money has been distributed to regions, and grants and agreements are being written up. We need money!
 - A: We're working through line items in the bipartisan infrastructure bill. We're looking at where else to fund. Jennifer will look through a task force about where to put funding through joint projects; where are we aligned the best? That is where we want to focus funding – collectively agreed places we have joint priorities for.
- Q: I want to ask you about Chief Moore's recent suspension of prescribed fire on federal land, and Tribal burning. What does it take to stop this process of suspensions every time a fire gets away? We know fires getting out >1% of the time is the risk necessary to keep putting prescribed fire on the ground. There's a certain amount of risk with Rx fire that we'll never get away from. Prescribed burns are necessary to protect communities.

- A: Chief Moore has to manage politics and social license around prescribed fire on a national scale. We have the ability to look at and assess the conditions that we have in our state, and are looking at our protocols. Jennifer thinks this is an opportunity to have more Rx fire in the end. We've improved our systems collectively – she's hoping we can use the pause to get a greater understanding and social license to do more prescribed fire in the future.
- Q: As we move from the small ~3,000-acre treatments to the 110,000-acre SERAL project that is necessary, what do you see as NEPA strategies? Can the Task Force provide a roadmap to help us get there?
 - A: They are trying to be as streamlined and efficient as possible and are looking at using as many CEs as possible. How do we get greater public involvement to bring people along? They want to work with USFWS and NOAA collaboratively and to see how we can improve our efficiencies across federal agencies. The Task Force is working on a roadmap.

Achieving Pace Through SCALE: Seven Steps to Achieving Recovery and Resiliency: Jim Mayer, CA FWD and Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute

After the SCALE meeting in November, Sierra Institute and our partners reviewed the meeting notes and discussions to distill the information into a framework to inform the work that the Task Force is doing. The guiding principle of the document is as follows: California can only achieve its goals for reducing carbon emissions, protecting public health, and adapting landscapes to climate change by building the capacity of local collaboratives. Local partnerships possess essential attributes to achieve this including community-based knowledge, science-based agreements, ability to execute, experience-based feedback loops, and laboratories for adaptive management. The document outlines 7 steps to achieve recovery and resiliency, with 3 groupings: transform funding, accelerate woody biomass reduction, and align state programs, regulations, and management.

Seven Steps to Achieve Recovery and Resiliency



Transform Funding

1. Fund project ready collaboratives and partners to increase pace and scale
 - CA must move from a funding model that is fragmented, limited term, and competitive to one that is consolidated, adequate, and sustained.
 - We need to develop capacity to do block grants.
2. Reduce inequities by supporting core capacity
 - Local collaboratives are at different stages of development, often as a result of their ability to secure state or federal funding.

Accelerate Woody Biomass Reduction

3. Invest in utilization infrastructure for woody biomass reduction
 - Recent investments in landscape treatment and restoration are both historic and insufficient.
4. Accelerate prescribed burning and cultural burning

- The State needs to accelerate approvals for prescribed and cultural burning throughout the forested landscape.

Integrate State Programs, Regulations, & Management

5. Integrate state programs
 - The State needs to support cross-sector investments and activities.
6. Resolve regulatory issues
 - The State needs to coordinate regulatory requirements and resolve ambiguities and conflicts.
7. Support adaptive management
 - The State needs to support learning and adaptive management across the collaboratives and gather feedback for future policy, budget, and regulatory decisions.
 - Adaptive management is exciting work - we can incorporate what we know at the state, watershed, community levels. With accountability comes flexibility, and collaborative groups need this from the State.

We are talking about creating new structures and processes. Trust and relationships are at the heart of this. We need to build the trust and understanding to get the work done. Without building collaboratives, we won't get to pace and scale.

- What success looks like:
 - Financial support is integrated, adequate, and stable.
 - Forest communities have capable local collaboratives and capacity.
 - Forest health, carbon reduction, economic security, and social wellbeing goals are met.
 - Pre-settlement regimes of fire on the landscape are restored.
 - Programs are aligned and coordinated with local plans.
 - Collaboratives efficiently and confidently pursue projects.
 - Actions incorporate learnings.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has” - Margaret Mead

- The sawmill ribbon cutting that recently occurred in Indian Valley is an example of community stewardship – a local 5 generation family-owned logging company (J&C Enterprises) is operating a sawmill purchased with grant funding, to help process logs from the Dixie fire and rebuild the town of Greenville. The mill would not have been possible without the state and federal funding to support it. This event brought community members and government officials together and was an example of the deep alignment between community needs and state and federal government to heal communities and restore the landscape.

Q&A:

- Q: Are there talks about how to lean into the Dixie footprint? How do you restore resilience by getting frequent fires back in that landscape?
 - A: We are working with the Maidu Summit Consortium and Greenville Rancheria to identify potential projects. Not all of the footprint is high severity burn and major concern is still there for fire in the near future. SI has launched a project to talk about what happened with the landscape in the Dixie fire and how to collaborate across the state, local, and federal levels. SI also launched a NEPA team to help the agencies and get work done more quickly.
- Q: I am privileged to learn about change management. We are influenced by experience. How do we incorporate the idea of change management so when we talk about cross-agency we can get to people's hearts so things can work and continue to work?
 - A: Building organizational skills to manage change is required. Transformational change needs to be widespread and roots deep. We need to build the human capacity to be able to work together. The agencies are rule-bound organizations and there is a challenge when agencies want to shift responsibilities and create flexibility and encourage staff to take chances to promote work through partnerships.
- Q: How can we advance these concepts and recommendations? What more can we do beyond the paper and presentation?
 - A: We need to move ahead with the principles that have been identified to drive this work forward. It comes down to us all to think about how we apply these implementation principles to move the work forward. Taking the conversation to the next level and pushing it toward

legislation is where we need to go next. We need to stay diligent, follow up, and continue to push this work forward.

Collaborative/Partner Update: The Initial CFLRs (Collaborative Forest Land Landscape Restoration) in California Group Updates: Burney Hat Creek, Amador Calaveras Consensus Group, and Dinkey Collaboratives

Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group (BHCCFWG): Todd Sloat

The Burney-Hat Creek Collaborative was established in 2009 with the help of Sierra Institute, with 50% of individuals still involved in the collaborative. They have professional facilitation now. CAL FIRE has helped tremendously with strategic planning and project implementation, involving multiple partnerships. The collaborative has not experienced wildfire to the scale of other areas in the state yet, but they are trying to get work done as fast as possible. The group also helped the forest acquire CFLR funds. SCALE and RCDI meetings helped in the development of biomass facilities, and RCDs are co-leading feedstock aggregation for existing and emerging infrastructure. In terms of what the future looks like: all of the authorities are in place to help them do better work. It is really the human element and trust that they need to work on to get there. They are looking forward to figuring out how to develop more trust with Tribal, state, and federal partners.

Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG): Rich Farrington

ACCG is currently composed of 22 member organizations and has been active for 13 years. Last year was the end of the 10-year CFLR funding for the Mokelumne River Watershed. Last year, they treated 48,000 acres, and 53% of their funding was provided by partners and their grants. They are now working on other sources of funding- the Upper Mokelumne River Authority is using a Master Stewardship Agreement with the USFS to acquire funding. They just completed scoping for the first phase of their large landscape project planning, which included 25,000-acre hazardous fuel reduction and preparing the land for prescribed fire. Roughly \$2,000 an acre for field work will result in at least \$30 million in project costs. Phase 2 of the project includes a proposal for a 200,000-acre fuels reduction project. Time spent on applying for grants has been a barrier. They asked whether a joint powers authority is eligible for a good neighbor agreement, but have yet to hear an answer on this. They feel they could accomplish a lot more with multi-year block grants.

Dinkey Collaborative: Juliana Birkhoff

Funding for the collaborative has included over \$11,000,000 from Congress, \$4.5 million in two large California Climate Investment grants, \$1.9 million in matching projects, and \$350,000 in partner donated time. The Dinkey collaborative formed as a result of bitter conflict and litigation over forest use from 1980-2000. Gridlock led to decreased management and less forest products and infrastructure. The dense Sierra National Forest was less resilient to drought, diseases, and changes from climate and fire. Environmental groups, forest industry representatives, and local groups got together to forge a compromise. The group obtained CFLRP funding in 2010. The collaborative includes over 20 active partners, with two very active and competent RCDs. Structurally, the group is composed of the large collaborative group, in addition to working groups that come and go, including groups for land use planning, cultural burning, socioeconomics, and prescribed fire. Accomplishments include developing a process to prioritize restoration areas (Landscape Assessment Process), planning 5 projects in priority areas, reviewing NEPA documents, helping SNF implement projects, and reviewing and approving three SNF projects to respond to tree mortality. In regard to challenges faced, the 2020 Creek fire, as the 5th largest fire in CA history, set the district back. COVID and fire together have made progress difficult for the collaborative. SNF is an area that is likely to have stand replacing fires and trying to retain enough forest to allow for seed dispersal is a challenge, and replanting has been challenging and controversial. The stands are some of the last remaining areas for endangered and threatened species. Additionally, there is low capacity to get work done in small southern Sierra towns- jobs are not paid enough and are dangerous. There is also a big division in the Dinkey collaborative about large landscape planning, and condition-based management. Finally, there is ongoing uncertainty about future funding sources.

Q&A

- Q: How does your collaborative pay attention to the forest revision process?
 - A: Environmental questions are first and foremost in people's minds. Is the science current enough for climate change and does it protect endangered species enough? The large landscape planning is too vague.
- Q: Given that you 3 groups were the initial CFLRs in CA, what is the current status of these projects, and are you interested in pursuing funding in the future?
 - A: Todd: Our collaborative continues to function without the funding and has secured funds from other sources.
 - A: Juliana: The USFS likely won't entertain a 4th application for funding from the Dinkey collaborative. They are trying to help groups plan for a future funding source that isn't just grant funded. It's hard to find NEPA funding- that is a problem with current CFLR funding.
 - A: Rich: I agree with previous speakers. We have to look elsewhere for funding and we are pushing the envelope to do it. Long term funding is what we need to accelerate pace and scale. We have a minimal staff of consultants, how do we start a 200,000 acre project? We need a new team to do that.
- Q: Has CFLR grant funding resulted in any net increase in human capacity, net business growth and development? Do you see prospects to continue to grow workforce with continued state funding over the next 5 years?
 - A: Todd: Yes, we've seen net growth and capacity. It feels like the industry has adjusted to meet private land management. We need mechanisms that have levels of assurance for 2 years down the road.
 - A: Dinkey: We've seen a decrease, especially in the Sierra National Forest staff. I could use guidance to see how to help districts and forests think about workforce development as an outcome. We've seen growth in the Sierra and Yosemite RCDs, they've done a great job. But we haven't seen new forestry crews or timber management.
 - A: Rich: The biggest power we have is the joint power authority. That group has gotten grants working with the collaborative, so we have developed a small bit of consultants that work with us. The core people we have built our foundation on is great, but that foundation is not going to be enough moving forward. We are looking at Blue Forest options and loans to provide additional capacity.

Collaborative Update: Lessons Learned in Designing and Implementing Landscape-Scale Forest Health Plans: Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions and North Yuba Forest Partnership

Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS): Mervet Mitri and Byron Kreml

YSS is a diverse collaborative with huge partnerships. They have a Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA) between YSS, Tuolumne County, the USFS, and the Tuolumne River Trust. Communication has been their greatest asset. The Tuolumne River Land Trust works with the county to implement projects, and YSS helps the FS to bring more funding and capacity in to get more done on the land. They currently have 2 large landscape restoration projects. One is focused in the Rim Fire footprint (roughly 414 sq miles burned). YSS brought in \$11.5 million to help restore the landscape. They are helping to reforest the landscape and fill in capacity gaps with the Forest Service. The other is the SERAL project, which is a proactive project to help prevent large scale wildfire. YSS and the FS worked together to determine what a successful large landscape project would look like. They completed an EIS in 18 months for 180,000 acres, with 1 of 2 decisions signed. The 2nd NEPA decision is in a conflict resolution phase. They have \$6 million in funding to implement and have local contractors for fuel reduction. Between these two efforts, they have approximately \$200 million in projects either signed or ready to be signed.

North Yuba Forest Partnership: Kat Perlman, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL)

SYRCL is 1 of 9 partners on the North Yuba Partnership. Conversations of the group started in 2016 on the Tahoe National Forest and started to identify the Yuba River watershed as one of the focal watersheds, get plans and funding on paper, and link Blue Forest Conservation with the FS. The French Meadows project in 2016 served as a prototype in getting the TNF comfortable with partner supported, larger restoration projects. Leadership on the Tahoe took to the idea of working with forest resiliency bonds and Blue Forest Conservation. Yuba water agency was identified as an investor to fund the Yuba project. SYRCL is involved in capacity building and contracting out NEPA partners. They are in the early stages of the partnership- an MOU was signed between the 9 partners in 2019 and has turned into a very solid partnership. Specifically, having Sierra County on board has been very impactful to pushing work forward and involving local partners in the planning process has been key to scaling up. The North Yuba project is over 300,000 acres. They work to include stakeholders and community values in the planning process and are incorporating stakeholder prioritization on restoration areas. They are in early conversations to include shovel-ready projects in the footprint so that all projects are not in the same stage of NEPA readiness. They are also working on how best to use the CFLRP funding to create a robust monitoring plan. It is an exciting time, with a flurry of activity as we figure out how to move forward and be effective.

Q&A:

- Q: (To YSS) Is it safe to assume fuels reduction projects have chips associated with it? How are you thinking about scaling?
 - A: Chips are not being removed for the first series of fuel breaks. The first decision includes no biomass removal, which is the least controversial. The 2nd decision will allow for biomass removal and the MSA will speak to duration. There will be sustained perpetual feedstock through 2 MSAs.
- Q: For those of you working with counties, what is true about your county that made that logical/likely?
 - A: YSS: There is 70% public land in Tuolumne County. Difference is local leadership. Local leadership and innovation are key. The Rim Fire was a wakeup call for county leadership to work together with partners. County representatives are longstanding participants with the YSS collaborative group and this builds trusting relationships.
- Comments:
 - North Yuba Forest Partnership: NFF has stepped up and brought capacity in terms of implementation. This has allowed the partnership to show progress, beyond what they would have been able to do with just federal partners. Bringing in additional capacity-building partners like NFF is huge.
 - What do we do with all the biomass? We are looking at being in the center of one of the few remaining green watersheds in the area. Finishing funding is vital. We need to finalize biomass plants. How can we best move forward with that funding? Biomass plants need to be a priority and they need to be funded.

Block Grants and Capacity Building: Keali'i Bright and Brian Newman-Lindsay, Department of Conservation, RFFC Program

The goal of the presentation is to 1) achieve understanding of goals, context, and direction, 2) test proposed path using the group's expertise, and 3) inform RFFC guidelines and regional framework. The draft RFFC guidelines have been released, and the value of the SCALE network is to test the path they are trying to set and how ideas will play out in reality. The goal is to line well-thought-out, flexible funding to achieve statewide goals and meet needs. The challenge is that there are many funding sources with various rules, timelines, etc. They are working in two timeframes. The goals of the regional frameworks in the near term are to assemble and fund existing, actionable groups of projects. Long-term goals include comprehensive plans, combined funding, and long-term plan implementation. Key elements of the regional frameworks include statewide input and support, regional leadership, regional plans, project portfolios, long-term aligned funding, and monitoring of progress. There will be statewide priority setting for regions of the framework, with regional forums, regional profiles, and regional metrics and assessments. The purpose of regional priority plans will be to help regional partnerships organize, plan, and work across all lands, build regional support, and align with Task Force goals

and strategies to open long term funding opportunities. Key elements of the plans will include geography and governance, assessment and methodology, and landscape portfolios of projects.

The RFFC mandate recently got expanded, with 10 different regional block grantees, split into subgroups. They are seeing good planning efforts, but some confusion about how this new system will work. New guidelines outline key priorities for community and regional visions. The program wants input from collaborative groups on if this block grant system will be useful. 3 key elements will need to be addressed in the regional plans: 1) geography and governance, 2) assessment and methodology (what is the need of the landscape and how that can be addressed using the plan), and 3) a landscape portfolio of projects (bringing projects together with benefit in mind to seek consolidated, multi-year funding. This is an opportunity for the regional plan to articulate who players are, what they need, and tools that they use.

They want to know, do the elements of this plan apply to the work that SCALE representatives are doing now, and how can they adjust them to be relevant? They are doing everything they can to provide flexibility in funding and capturing these 3 elements in the plans can give entities the ability to plan from within.

Q&A:

- Q: There are 4 regions within the regional framework across the state, the Sierra-Cascade region is big and encompasses a lot of counties, some of which do not have collaborative groups. Are you envisioning the creation of “super collaboratives” to make these regional visions more cohesive? What about the regions without collaboratives?
 - A: We are trying to make investments and build trust in our regional partners, then try and identify ways to hold those partners accountable. For example, RFFCP’s primary partner in the Sierra is Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which has 7 subregions. RFFCP is putting a lot of trust into SNC and their process, and SNC trusts their local partners. We want to identify gaps, where there may not be active partners with capacity to do this work at a regional level.
- Q: Do we have the capacity to add these tasks to our load as collaboratives? How do we accomplish this while increasing pace and scale? Will this effort take time away from increasing pace/scale?
 - A: We hope that what we are proposing is work that collaboratives are already doing, while providing a framework to create a working portfolio.
- Q: Could you articulate what level those regional plans will be developed at?
 - A: We are working with many different agencies and funding authorities. We assume there will be plans at all parts of the spectrum, the ones that rise to the top will likely have an easier time lining up more funding over longer periods. We want to take some of the large priority areas off the table, so we can focus on the areas that may need more capacity building. We don’t want to dictate the size and form of the regional plan, we want regional plans to articulate the needs of the region and develop a plan that articulates those needs. It is a plan with a lot of nesting. Different regions are approaching this differently, and we want to allow for that.
- Q: Are you providing funding for staffing, etc.?
 - A: We provide funding, some of which is applied to staffing, other federal funding is also being utilized.
- Q: Who will administer the block grants?
 - A: The goal is to have less competitive grant proposals, in the Sierra, SNC will be the regional intermediary. Some regions are easier - you can give large block grants to certain regions with outlined plans. How do you fund the large Sierra Nevada region, with different partner capacities? We need to collectively figure out what to do about funding the Sierra- what is the right level to administer funding? The idea is to have this kind of framework to make yourself eligible for block grants. This is up to the Sierra Nevada region to figure out.
- Q: Do you consider fire resilience to cover post fire recovery? If so, why do we not have Dept. of Wildlife, Dept. of Resources, CalTrans, Public Health on this list of players?
 - A: I agree with you, there are a lot more players here. This list represents who is actually sitting on the task force. We need more structure about this funding opportunity before we bring in

more agencies, that's where your feedback comes in. Once we have a portfolio and system in place, we can bring in more agencies.

- Q: What is the scale of money we are talking about in block grants?
 - A: This is an opportunity to organize needs in a way that captures both small and large funding opportunities.
- Q: How do we avoid paralysis by analysis? If we plan enough, we will lose all of our forests. I worry that we will be so lost in planning that we will lose the ability to be preventative.
 - A: Once an entity walks through with a plan, we turn it into a regional priority plan, and act. We do not see this as additional planning. We want to consolidate. Consider the near term and long-term goals we presented in the beginning- we are trying to provide a vehicle for plans starting immediately. We need to look at scale planning strategically. There won't be room for managed wildfire until we can have conversations about managing those risks. These regional frameworks build a mechanism for us to have those conversations.

Closing the Loop: Investing in Utilization and Biomass Supply (Panel Presentation/Discussion)

Phil Saksa- Co-Founder, Blue Forest Conservation

Blue Forest is working with private companies interested in fire resilience, particularly hydro and water utilities affected by restoration work. The North Yuba Partnership is focused on a 300,000-acre landscape in the Tahoe watershed. An abundance of biomass waste is being created as a result of successful landscape projects and we need to do something with it. Specifically, 2-3 million tons of biomass per year is anticipated if the goal of 1 million acres treated per year is accomplished. Large, long-term contracts with small biomass facilities are lacking, so Blue Forest works with partnerships that have stewardship agreements with the USFS and others. The North Yuba project is anticipated to cost roughly 80-100 million to restore the landscape. As they finance projects, they can use 3rd party partners to facilitate long-term contracts with increased flexibility. This allows contract facilitation where it hasn't happened before.

A report was recently released from Berkeley Law titled "Branching Out: Waste Biomass Policies to Promote Wildfire Resilience and Emission Reduction," which provides a set of recommendations to the State from experts across California. Specifically, what are barriers to facilities, and what are recommended solutions i.e., should the state facilitate a broker for woody biomass? Exchanges in feedstock can happen and facilitate movement of biomass throughout the region. Maps need to be created of where facilities should be located and where supplies exist. Immediate needs of where biomass is located now may not always be the need for sustainable forest management. The State must also invest in workforce capacity and needs. Investments are stepping up in infrastructure. Additionally, Blue Forest is helping to develop a biochar offset protocol, which would allow for cutting costs in half with offset credits to create better carbon and economic outcomes. This is what they want to be doing with biomass utilization.

Michael Maguire, Associate Planner, Office of Planning and Research

OPR's Woody Feedstock Aggregation Pilot Program was developed in response to action item 3.10 of the CA Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan to address feedstock barriers through pilot projects. Specifically, the plan states "OPR will develop five pilot projects to test new mechanisms for developing long-term feedstock contracts. Information and templates from the pilot projects will be shared broadly to provide a menu of options for broader adoption. \$2.5 million has been allocated through SB 85 for the pilot projects, with \$500,000 available for each project. They are developing a learning cohort to bring pilots together, to discuss challenges and solutions, and to address concerns. Project deliverables include organizational studies (financial and economic analysis, carbon analysis, feedstock analysis, legal analysis, community analysis, wood product market analysis, infrastructure assessment, etc.) plans (legal structure implementation plan, entity action plan, long-term action plan), infrastructure development (sort yard and/or log deck and wood product campuses), a

feedstock mapping and aggregation tool, community engagement workshops, and quarterly progress reports. There will also be a final report of lessons learned, with an overview of study findings. Pilot regions include the Central Sierra Project (Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Tuolumne Counties), the Marin Biomass Project (Marin County), the North Coast Resource Partnership (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Modoc, Siskiyou, Sonoma, and Trinity Counties), the Northeast California Project (Shasta and Lassen Counties), and the Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative (Amador, El Dorado, and Placer Counties). Learning cohort meetings are bi-monthly, open to the public, and cover topics including governance structure, partnerships and networks, tools and technologies, wood product market opportunities, future funding sources, and risk management and insurance.

Todd Sloat, Fall River RCD

When the RCD was trying to get the green light on their biomass facility, they needed a long-term feedstock contract. There were a lot of moving parts, and they convinced one LTO to take a lot of the risk. The risk is high, and we need a solution. There is existing infrastructure in Northern California. We need a market assessment- can we maintain viability? We need to consider community-scale, which can be slow, but productive. June 1st is the kick-off meeting with 35 entities.

Q&A

- Q: (To Phil) I want to learn more about what you were saying about being an implementation partner, looking at entities that have stewardship agreements, and how that works. I have a contact willing to underwrite a facility in El Dorado County. They discussed feedstock agreement. They are going to use biochar and bioenergy and get money back from sales. How does that work in terms of your investors, how do we collaborate?
 - A: We are not foresters or contractors. When we work with implementation partners and secure finance, we do that with a 0% loan. We pass those investments along to an implementation partner, a group like a water agency for example, and agree to pay that investment back and state grants. These reimbursable grants can create cashflow issues. The partner manages the project on ground with woody material coming off projects and projects happening on ground. Negotiation is what are they comfortable entering into based on the work they see in front of them. Contracts could be facilitated through RCDs, etc.
- Q: One of the challenges that groups have faced is that at a half million tons of biomass, you are moving beyond the community scale. When you are thinking about a feedstock contract, does the size of the feedstock matter?
 - A: It's about building capacity. Initially you'd start with someone that can start a small contract, to build trust capabilities in order to scale up. It depends on the project, and the environment. It's important to be realistic about the transportation costs and distance- this will influence what the potential contract will look like.
 - A: I like the idea of community scale because if things go south or get difficult, community scale facilities are more likely to survive. Scaling up to bigger facilities causes a higher level of risk to get feedstock to that entity, so size needs to be carefully selected based on geography. Ag waste is another possibility, depending on location. We need an aggregation process- feedstock yards that can store material in the winter, or store material in log form (this will last longer than in chips).

Collaborative/Partner Group Updates

Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI)- Erin Ernst

TCSI covers a roughly 2.4 million-acre landscape with several watersheds. The group formed out of a recognition that there are grave forest health restoration issues across the landscape, as well as woody biomass

interest. It was developed to create innovative planning using a science-based approach to ecological resilience. They have had a lot of early success with funds from CALFIRE. They have received \$31 million over 3-4 different awards. They completed first implementation work this year. Their framework and pillars of resilience have gotten traction; the State has adopted them and the Task Force is using a modified version of them. The pillars are not a static idea and are meant to be used to work best for the entity using them. They developed a blueprint for restoration and analyzed current and projected future conditions to prioritize treatment across the landscape. There are many stakeholders involved in the group- including MOU partners, Tribes, and NGOs. It is of huge value to get more entities involved in TCSI. They hired a full-time outreach position to assess stakeholder needs. They are starting to develop a sub-regional priority plan including the pillars of resilience and outcome statements. They are working to develop a priority portfolio for planning projects over the next 10 years. It is designed to be a living document to be updated as time goes on. It prioritizes maintenance and is adaptive to change with the changing landscape, taking wildfires into account in real time.

Alpine Biomass Collaborative (ABC)- David Griffith

ABC is a small collaborative in Eastern Alpine County. With the help of CHIPS (Calaveras Healthy Impact Solutions), they applied for a grant to do a scoping study on biomass utilization and helping the local economy. In the study, they looked at available biomass, alternative uses of the material (i.e., pole and post plants, heating systems, and biomass energy). A second study was completed regarding the district heating system for Kirkwood. They had been using propane for district heating, which comes with many issues. Financial analysis did not look good for biomass heating- it would be 18 years before paying off the investment. The Public Utility District is not interested. Sierra Institute had extra money and donated time from an engineer, allowing them to improve things considerably based on the North Star project. They made project cash in the first year. Kirkwood is still not interested with grant funding and help and are moving to electricity instead. One thing of great importance to the region is that Tahoe Forest Products is developing a new sawmill in Carson City, NV and are close to signing agreements on Washoe Tribal lands. If the Tribe is interested, this would reduce permitting difficulties and change the dynamic on the east side with what can be done with biomass.

Reflections on the day

Erin Ernst

Erin attended her first SCALE meeting 2019. The value of SCALE meetings is the ability to have conversations that are not being had elsewhere, which is so important. She has not seen another space that allows this. We are talking about work we are doing and want to do. This is not just about landscapes, but people as well. These relationships allow us to be innovative and make things happen.

Nick Goulette

Nick has 20 years of working on community-based resiliency. Failing is an essential part of the solution. He is inspired by the work that SCALE partners are doing- including taking risks with agencies. In particular, biomass facility development, 3rd party NEPA, and prescribed fire on federal lands are tough. We need to make our work more efficient in the funding process and work with intermediary organizations, with grants and agreements cooperation included. We are in a deep crisis. Fire impact is overbearing, and everywhere. We are dusting off, getting back up, and continuing to fight. "I refuse to be a victim of this circumstance- this needs to be a place where people can live." Not being victims together, that's what it is going to take.

DAY 2: MAY 25TH

Opening Speaker: Patrick Wright, Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

There are political difficulties regarding wildfire planning- it is challenging to simultaneously educate people about wildfire issues and get work done with the money we have right now. There are many tensions including:

- Getting work done on high priority sites v. slowing down and focusing on collaborative efforts
- Focusing efforts v. spreading them out over time and space
- Planning v. implementation- the State needs to be accountable for money they are spending on priority areas. Broad base support, monitoring, capacity, and transparency are key.
- Competing priorities: protecting communities, biodiversity, water, and other interests. How do we develop a statewide approach that reflects diverse values? What's the happy medium? Agencies are rule-based, but the State wants to take a more flexible approach to allow collaboratives to decide which priorities to push forward and adapt. The idea is to start with where the local priorities are and grow them over time.
- What is the right scale? State and federal agencies need to respect that local regions within the state need to come up with different scales of work.
- Land ownership- cross-boundary work is hard and different agencies deal with CEQA/NEPA differently.
- Lastly, how to deal with data.

The State does not have clear answers of how to deal with these tensions- but is working to address them through a 3-pronged approach:

- 1) Statewide strategies: avoid duplicative state and federal versions of programs and instead align efforts, i.e., private landowner assistance and seed banks
- 2) Statewide inventory of recently completed and planned projects with an ongoing tracking system
- 3) Regional frameworks: just beginning to evolve. Given all of these tensions, how do we develop a framework that is common but also reflects diversity across the state? The pillars of forest resilience are a single set of common indicators across agencies with metrics to evaluate those pillars for projects in the state, with a regional assessment to be completed on how each region is doing against those metrics. The idea is for the State to start with where the science is telling us to focus, then shift to capacity and match science with workforce and project readiness/pipelines. Given these two things (science and capacity), they will determine where to invest and get agencies to align support to priority areas. This is currently just a concept, and work needs to be done to make this a reality. Up until 2 years ago, there was no money for planning. It's remarkable how in the last couple of years communities have made the argument that they need funding for planning and capacity building.

Q&A:

- Q: In regard to the statewide strategy and tiers for the regional framework, a lot of that is based on authorities. One of the things that is critical is looking at things hyper-logically in a watershed context. Challenges in our communities have increased a lot over the last few years (wildfire, water quality). How can we add science within the regional context hydrologically?
 - A: The drought will bring increased attention to this. Initial modeling indicates that although we are focused on the impacts of fires, in 20-40 years drought will have as much of an impact to our landscape as fires in terms of tree mortality. There are too many competing watershed plans (DWR, IRWM, DOC). The watershed network needs to come back, but in a more cohesive way. Some collaboratives have very strong connections to watershed groups and water utilities, others don't at all. This is a challenge.
- Q: Could you expand on the \$100 million for capacity building? What are the key needs? Is this going to be regionally driven? There is a huge disconnect between managers' ability to use planning tools. A lot of staff just do not know what tools to use.

- A: The Department of Conservation has money to provide capacity grants. The challenge is that the money is all for capacity building and planning. My hope is that these agencies will use the same criteria to award landscape scale grants as the RFFC program. The hope is also to move towards landscape-scale grants for bundles of projects rather than individual projects. At the state and federal level, we need agreement on the pillars of resilience, how we measure them, and how we address them. We need a common standard. We do not want to go to the next step recommending a decision support system as part of the plan. We need a more flexible approach to allow collaboratives to use different decision support tools. Having a common framework but also having flexibility within that framework is key.
- Q: As head of the Task Force, what pushback are you getting from within?
 - A: Both the USFS and CALFIRE are largely operational and are 40% down in staff. They are so overwhelmed with day-to-day work, with little time to spend building plans. The Task Force is trying to fill that planning void. Each workgroup is co-led by agencies who have 3rd party leadership. We are operating by trying to align them and bring in those 3rd parties. Fortunately help is on the way. The state budget is allowing the forest health side of CALFIRE to recruit for 48 new positions. They need more people just to get money out the door. One difficulty is dealing with expectations on one hand vs. tension issues such as workforce, capacity, wood utilization, etc. on the other.
- Q: There is certainly complexity with coming up with a cohesive statewide strategy. Is there anything underway that could estimate how long it will take and how much it will cost to adequately achieve wildfire resilience and forest health?
 - A: This is a brand new thought to folks- to develop a cohesive statewide strategy that links with what the Forest Service is doing and to march toward a goal and adapt as we go. The forest health budget at the state is a 2-year budget, we really need to get sustained funding so we can plan.
- Q: Funding can come but our funding partners are saying state money is coming down. We need this now, work needs to be done now. Is there a way that we could get these funds from local agencies with the idea that they get paid back from the State?
 - A: It is possible but providing advance commitments can be difficult. I do think it is possible, but it is challenging.
- Q: Sustained funding is what we need to meet goals. What message do they need to hear from the people in this room in order to get it?
 - A: We have to demonstrate that the money being spent now is effective. It's the projects, but also stories of how this work is effective. We need to show that we are producing benefits and we need to have targets. We need build on some efforts that are challenges, like prescribed fires. If you say "if we do not do that, here is the result," I am convinced that pushing for prescribed fires will be effective if we show what public health impacts and community fire risk impacts will be without it.

AB1717 Discussion

AB 1717 is a bill going through the assembly that changes the definition of public works to include fuel reduction projects, thus requiring payment of prevailing wage. It is a sensitive issue, and one that we wanted to cover at SCALE to discuss the varying sides of the issue. On one hand, proponents of the bill argue that it takes a necessary step to providing financial security and social mobility to those conducting forest health treatments, thus creating a stable, robust, and equitable workforce that is desperately needed. On the other hand, organizations are concerned that the prevailing wage requirement will greatly slow efforts to increase pace and scale of forest health treatments through increased cost.

Nick Goulette, The Watershed Training Center

There is sticker shock with this bill. But we have a mission of doing right by the woods and the people. We have watched the sector closely over many years. The USFS has been complicit in allowing labor use for contract use. We have accepted much higher cost on public and private lands. The bottom line is that people who do this work ought to be paid justly for their hard work. We can argue what prevailing wage ought to be, and I would love to have that conversation to reduce the sticker shock. I am looking forward to finding a middle ground. There has not been a lot of rich dialogue around this issue, with is problematic.

Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute

Nick and I have 95% overlap in agreement. But, as a result of this bill, we will see a reduction in acres treated, layoffs, and a shock to system. Most supporters of this legislation are urban groups and we will see more large contractors coming in to take this local work as a result.

Steve Wilensky

I spent most of my life as a union organizer. I have had, through forest experience, interaction with supporters of prevailing wage. We are all in collaboration and it is possible that different perspectives can both be right. How do we incorporate the significant points of both together? What is the state of the forest industry? Capital formation? We need capital formation to be able to pay prevailing wage before it is implemented. We have old power plants shutting down. We have shut down most mills in California over the last 40 years and we have small NGOs and others. Who can pay for this and at what level has to do with the nature of the industry. There are companies coming in who should be paying prevailing wage; they have the capacity. When is the right time to have a prevailing wage rule and how do we find a way to pay people decent wages for doing really intense, difficult work, which involves rattlesnakes, bees, steep slopes, heat, smoke, etc. Achieving pace and scale is reliant on retaining a workforce. How do you get an industry that is funded enough to pay wages that sustain a workforce in tough conditions? Wages and benefits are key elements to sustaining a workforce. Mandating this particular legislation will not help pace, scale, or workforce. We need to think about the quality of work offered and the resources that need to be put into that. Let's talk about what it takes to get people to work and keep them in the game. NGOs cannot afford to pay prevailing wage. A phase in approach could be effective. This issue needs to be addressed like everything else in the industry, with serious thought and extreme importance. How and when are we going to pay prevailing wage so we can rely on it for the long term?

Comments:

- This is a brilliant SCALE issue that requires resources. I doubt there is an example in US, but maybe there are in other countries who transitioned from low to high pay work. What is that model?
- The equitable pay conversation has not been enough of a metric in the workforce needs conversation. Investing in Tribal workforce is also important. This pay issue is significant in doing that.
- This is a big issue we're hitting with the forest biomass facility. When you have a proforma, we want prevailing wage with benefits but it's difficult as a non-profit.

Collaborative/Partner Updates

Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP): Janet Hatfield

The Eastern Sierra Climate & Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP) sets forth to plan for ecological forest restoration on approximately 56,000 acres of Inyo National Forest lands surrounding the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The Inyo NF is the most visited forest in California and is what sustains the local livelihood. Recreation is huge, but there is no recreation without a healthy forest. The Inyo was an early adopter of the 2012 planning rule and the new forest plan revision is what inspired the project. Early conversations with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) revolved around the different needs around Mammoth Lakes than other communities. Inyo County does not use CEQA because of land ownership (limited private lands) and they also have a large amount of turnover with federal partners. Additionally, the elevation gradient is over 10,000 feet, so there is a drastic range of vegetation. There is no one size fits all approach to their wildfire protection needs. The forest is not an industrial protection forest, and never has been. There is a lack of biomass and timber industry, with the nearest mill located 300 miles away. They have achieved success in getting early support to make this challenging project a reality. The project just completed a needs assessment and they have received help from a CALFIRE directed grant program and the Eastern Sierra Council of Governance. Additionally, they are hosting an SNC board meeting next week.

South Lassen Watershed Group (SLWG): Sophie Castleton and Bella Bledsoe

The South Lassen Watershed Group (SLWG) covers a 1-million-acre footprint with 25 participating agencies and organizations. They started with 2 pilot projects covering 6,000 acres each. The Dixie Fire highlighted that 6,000 acres is not enough and are working on scaling up collaborative processes. The West Lassen Headwaters project is unique in terms of its landscape and planning process. It covers 160,000 acres and is home to some of the only anadromous fish populations in the Sierra Nevada. It is also home to many communities, with ownership of lands spanning from Lassen Volcanic National Park to private land and timber company owners. The project is seeking to restore both burned and unburned areas- 1/3 of the project area burned in the Dixie Fire, which has increased the complexity of the project. The multi-jurisdictional nature of the project requires a 2-track process of both NEPA and CEQA. The collaborative is facilitating this and designing their own process for collaborative involvement. They are focused on identifying agency needs and partner support. Sierra Institute provides specialist support (data collection, NEPA, etc.), and LNP has committed money and staff to collect data across national forest land. Outreach is being done to private landowners in the project area to provide a learning network. Sierra Institute is also providing information on landowner assistance programs, so that landowners can get the financial support to do the work that they want to do on their own lands. Ultimately, collaborative partners want to be involved early. They designed a series of workshops to set the project scope, discuss needs, and directly inform the interdisciplinary team. South Lassen collaborative members divided into 4 groups: water/meadows, upland forest, community needs, and fire prevention and response. Challenges to the project as a whole include collecting data across ownership boundaries and a large landscape, agency and partner burnout after the Dixie Fire, complexities included in involving the collaborative early, and discomfort with condition-based NEPA. Specifically for condition-based NEPA, site-specific is not working for scale, but changing the whole system is challenging. Finally, they need to consider the whole system through implementation- i.e., where does the biomass go, who will be the workforce, etc.

Q&A:

- Q (to Janet): What are the barriers you are seeing?
 - A: Cashflow and forest closures- they are hoping to start implementing June 3, but snow is an issue.
- Q: Do we need a focused effort on how we do very large landscape efforts w/ NEPA/CEQA? How do you do these processes over 10s of thousands of acres? Do we need a focus strictly on landscape scale and how do we address that?
 - A: A cohesive effort to figure out condition-based efforts would be helpful. Sierra Institute had funding to look into 7-8 projects working on this across the nation. We called them to ask about their processes in conducting this work. We learned there is no one way, but there are helpful strategies. How do we share this info in a way this is helpful? A statewide, cohesive effort would be a great way to do that.
 - A: Are we diluting our practices to get to scale? There must be resources to do work well while doing it quicker.

- Q: Why are we not talking forest to forest, partner to partner? We share the same partner organization, can we put an invite out there to go visit each other at their next meetings?
 - A: We may do a sub-regional SCALE meeting.
- Comments:
 - As many people know, condition-based management has caused challenges in the past and it's frustrating to know that some people have solved this issue and some have not.
 - Condition-based NEPA was also an issue with YSS. They applied it in less controversial aspects and less so elsewhere. Establishing some mechanism for sharing experiences is needed. As good citizens, we should all be sharing what we have learned.

Working with Diverse Groups: TEK, Cultural Burning and Implications for Collaborative Work:

Ali Meders Knight, Mechoopda Tribe, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Specialist and Meleiza Figueroa, Policy Researcher and Environmental and Social Justice Activist

TEK is turning into a term that encompasses a lot. It is a system of knowledge and ecological science based on place-based information and science. Ali is a TEK practitioner whose work is based on her Tribal territory. Place-based knowledge is important because people have experienced climate change over the last 20,000 years of human existence and experience. The TEK that came from their ancestors explains to them the use of adaptive tools that can be used during climate change and other times. Familiarization with Tribal territories is important, and implementation of NEPA and CEQA must be compliant with Tribal consultation. There are different legal words that mean different things, so it is important to speak in appropriate context regarding terms such as “trust,” “Tribal land,” “Tribal territories” for policy and other documents. Anywhere you are in CA, you are on Tribal territory.

There are standing laws that can help in Tribal engagement and funding resources and to allow TEK to inform federal decision making. At the state level, AB 52 requires public agencies to consult with Tribes during the CEQA process. SB 18 recognizes that protection of traditional Tribal cultural places is important to all Tribes, whether federally recognized or not, and it provides all California Native American Tribes with the opportunity to participate in consultation with city and county governments for this purpose. The Chico TEK stewardship program is being developed with 10-15 fully employed people. Two certification programs are offered to workforce and communities. They offer the opportunity to learn about restoration projects such as management, seed banking, planning and managing, understanding invasive plants, and more. They also work on contracts and working with different agencies to provide training on traditional ecosystems. Their crews will have forestry, fire, TEK, planning and monitoring knowledge. The seed program has an agreement with Mendocino farms and federal land to have a seed bank through the USDA. This is the first program of its kind in the nation. There is need for CAL FIRE and other agencies to ensure that good genetics are being planted, and they are establishing a program for that through this effort.

When a Tribe is engaged early on a project, it is possible to develop relationships, increase biodiversity, increase vegetation survival rate, and publish work.

Danny Manning, Assistant Fire Chief, Greenville Rancheria

Years ago, Greenville, CA had the biggest boarding school at the time and was ground zero of the goldrush. It only takes one generation to erase a culture. His grandmother experienced this suppression. “We can streamline a lot of TEK and other practices, and we need to in order to practice our culture and care for the land.” The laws and policies that Ali mentioned are important in this.

Danny took clippings of native plants to the Lockford nursery to get them going and then planted them because he knew we needed more knowledge. They have UC Davis students come up to collect and plant seeds for elderberry- 6 plants doubled the elderberry in the valley. Maidu, USFWS, and UC Davis all helping to plant those plants, and Ali led the project. The land had burned before they planted and elders were there to share knowledge and tend the land. They had lockbalm, elderberry, and more. They essentially created a garden. They wanted to plant at a certain time based on TEK, but grants and meetings timelines made this difficult, and disrupted the process.

Fire goes through the homes of plants and animals, and this is more devastating to their people than the impacts on humans. He takes USFS or other agencies to the project area to show the importance of the plants that they are focusing on. This spreads knowledge to the agencies and they can implement these ideas through their work as well. Understanding location is important to this work- where to avoid and where to work. Before burning or working, they call in basket weavers and other experts who have knowledge of how exactly to burn, etc. Certain plants have different needs around burning. Different fuels are needed- propane, for example, is not always appropriate based on the use of the plant. Finding the right people to work with is important. Some agencies have an effective way of working with native peoples, and others do not. All of their cultural sites are on state and federal land. They have to convince agencies to lease it then just manage and take care of the land. All they want to do is take care of the land. They do not own any of their land because most of their rancherias were terminated. They have bank accounts where they can move federal funds to their accounts, and back and forth for projects. This has been working well.

Their crew burns at low intensity with the Tahoe National Forest, CALFIRE, and UC Davis, and they help with classes at the university. They also work with homeowners, Tribes, Forest Service, and others. Finding the right people is key. Policies and liabilities are changing and making it easier for them to work. One benefit of burning is that it allows for straight basket weaving materials, whereas untended willows tend to produce baskets that are crooked and knotty. Cultural monitoring on fires is important to protecting these resources. Having a voice in the operation helps, especially in terms of getting more hand crews on the ground. They will use hotshot crews if needed, but sticking to native crews is most effective. Ultimately, if you have a dream, you can make it happen. You just have to find the right people. Policy and law are difficult, but you can get through it.

Jonathan Long, USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station

Jonathan is a research ecologist with the FS and he is working on supporting Tribal interests in forest and fire research. His presentation provided a reverse outline of steps in this process.

4. Indigenous Co-Stewardship

- The Tribal Homelands Initiative will incorporate Tribal capacity, expertise, and Indigenous knowledge into federal land and resources management. Current partnerships with Tribal student researchers at UC Davis and U Montana will develop case studies of Indigenous stewardship including fire management. They are planning a national virtual workshop on Indigenous stewardship on national forests.

3. Tribal Interests in Post-Fire Landscapes

- A research proposal with Colorado State and Northern Arizona Universities, starting in September 2022, will seek to understand forest recovery priorities, management options, and policy needs for Tribes in post-fire landscapes. Case studies may include the Slater fire (Karuk Tribe, CA), Dixie fire, (Greenville Rancheria, Maidu Stewardship Consortium, and others, CA), and Rodeo-Chediski Fire (White Mountain Apache Tribe, AZ).

2. Integration with Fire Planning (PODS)

- This work seeks to recognize areas of Tribal importance in fire and forest management plans, work toward sustainable and respectful management of control line features and fuel breaks, and develop a coordinated response on managed wildfire and integration of Indigenous

stewardship. Current PODs project with Tribal engagement includes the North Coast Resource Partnership project and the Lake Tahoe Basin PODs project.

1. Forest Treatment Planning

- Forest Service research initiative with Region 5 builds upon the “10 Pillars” in the TCSI Framework for Resilience including social and cultural well-being inclusive of Tribal communities and environmental justice populations.

Examples of Approaches for Considering Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities:

- Mendocino National Forest: Forest Plan revision outreach and engagement
 - Questions: What are locally significant nonwhite or low-income populations located near NFS units? Data: census blocks, block groups; FS surface ownership. Objectives: seek their engagement in decision-making and consider their needs during program development, planning, and NEPA.
- Plumas National Forest: Fuels program assessment
 - Question: Are risk-reduction benefits of fuels treatment equitably distributed? Data: FACTS, decennial census. Objectives: determine how fuel treatments spatially relate to nonwhite/BiPOC populations and equip officers with tools to consider EJ future fuels work

Q&A:

Q: We are bringing TEK and Tribal workforces back to the land. Is there a mechanism for returning these lands back to the Tribes themselves?

- A: Co-management agreements have goals to re-establish presence and if we cannot get those lands back, at least we have that presence. Behind the research is where co-stewardship can accomplish goals while the ultimate goal is returning land. Transfer of land dialogue has changed a lot. Is co-management delegating authority? We want to figure out returns of land and how to make that work.

Landscape Scale Work and State and Federal Partnership

Jerry Bird, Representative to the Regional Forester, USFS Pacific Southwest Region

Jerry is passionate about prescribed fire and believes that it is the only way to achieve pace and scale. The FS recognizes that they are insular and are going to work on being more inclusive and incorporating groups where the knowledge lies. They are working figure out how they can have several fire training centers throughout CA.

Chris Anthony, Chief Deputy Director, CALFIRE

Chris was a California graduate in Forestry and spent some time on natural resource management side, before being pulled into fire protection. Prevention, suppression, and resource management are all related. Fire prevention made a difference in the Caldor fire. There's value in bringing these collaboratives together- each have different capacities. We can't allow jurisdictional barriers to prevent us from working across the landscape.

Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director, CALFIRE

Matt received his degree in wildlife biology degree and worked as scientist for the Central Valley Resource Board. He had been with CALFIRE for 22 years. CALFIRE has an opportunity to be a middle person between state and local government as provide resources, but they cannot do this alone. They have 90 million allocated to 22 projects. They have 90 million allocated to 22 projects and are ready to announce their workforce development grants. \$33 million will be provided to workforce, business, and nursery funding, with 30 grants total. Block grants of 11 million were just announced. This is exciting because it allows them the ability to move funding to the local level, fit to business development, and remove the silo effect. Regarding prescribed fire efforts, they are excited about increasing TEK and participation in trainings and knowledge expansion. Burn permits will become available

towards the end of the month online. Through assistance, they can deliver curriculum to increase the amount of burn bosses out there while also supporting the private sector and local resources.

Q&A:

- Q: As long-time agency folk, what is your perspective on relationships between CALFIRE and the Forest Service?
 - A (CALFIRE): We are dealing with politically complex areas with lots of stakeholders. We make a priority to be side by side with Forest Service folks. We have new positions that are exciting and are committed to working closely together, have inter agency stakeholder meetings, and cooperative meetings with partners. Bottom line, the Forest Service has 57% of the land base and we need to work together. Funding decisions have led to collaborative work efforts. Burn boss qualifications have room for improvement. The foundation for a good relationship is built and there are no topics we cannot discuss together.
FS: Increased capacity in CALFIRE has resulted in an easier relationship. We have made connections through employment and we have far more in common than we do differences. We are well aligned in leadership. We are working together on climate investments opportunities. The color of money does not matter, it's the work we want to get done. We have moved from 10% private in grant applications to 50%. Cross boundary projects are increasing and that is important.
- Additional comments:
 - We are addressing qualifications for burn bosses and how we can break down barriers. The goal is for burn bosses to come in and work no matter what the land is and who runs it. The National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center is someone we are working to align with to reduce these barriers. There are liability, resource availability issues. We are creating a clear message that we are supportive of prescribed fire. We hope to resolve barriers surrounding burn bosses sooner rather than later. We want to learn more on this and we are making it a priority for the department.
- Q: Now that collaboratives are developing plans exceeding 100,000 acres, what are the plans to fund these larger plans?
 - A (CALFIRE): Funding is a one-time appropriation and this is part of the challenge. Prioritizing landscapes means needing to focus funds in the best way possible. I worry about the maintenance and how these projects create connectivity for multiple needs and goals. Continual funding is needed and it is an everlasting challenge. What do block grants look like? We have programs where we are getting a lot of funding requests and do not have enough funds to fill them all.
 - Forest Service: Large fire scars give us an opportunity to do work in those areas and that work is critical. These funds are susceptible to other issues going on within our country. 23 million acres needs to be managed for public health = 5 billion/year. We must make sure we are spending these funds well. There are a lot of problems to solve, with the previous discussion around prevailing wage as an example. Good Neighbor Authority allows for federal land to be managed by other entities. This is great. Timber receipts can be managed by the state. How can we use this agreement on other state lands such as state forest? BLM could be an option as well. We can pull money together through foundations and remove the "color" of it, using it where it is needed. This can support integrated, watershed programs and projects. SCALE is one of the best forums where we can accomplish good work. CALFIRE wants to bring more people to the table and more people should be involved-leaders, line officers, etc.

Collaborative/Partner Update: SOFAR Collaborative

Norma Santiago, SOFAR

SOFAR was established in 2014 as part of the implementation of the national cohesive wildland management strategy. There were 3 goals: restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes, fire

adapted communities, and responding to wildfire. The project area includes burned and unburned areas along the Hwy 50 corridor. Not much of the Caldor Fire area is included in the SOFAR footprint, but there is a plan to include more. When the Caldor Fire hit, those in South Lake Tahoe thought they were protected by a huge granite wall. The fire jumped the crest into Meyers. The lake and water quality are at risk. The group has a landscape vision committee, a steering committee, and infrastructure and biomass committee, with a biomass working group which is working on a comprehensive strategy for biomass structure within El Dorado County. How do we get there? 1. Getting the buy in from local government- El Dorado County recently hired 2 key biomass advisory positions. 2. Elicited TCSI's assistance to evaluate potential projects, weigh priorities, and predict possible biomass production. 3. Develop a business plan.

The black oak mine unified school district is located in the foothills and seeks support to build a biomass facility to supply power to a high school in the district. SOFAR has worked on creating a partnership between the unified school district and Wisewood energy. This will expand existing career and technical education opportunities. They will also plan a small log mill on the campus. They would like to expand this biomass/mill concept to a second school site. SOFAR is also helping to process material from the Caldor fire and exciting conversations are taking place.