

# SIERRA TO CALIFORNIA ALL LANDS ENHANCEMENT (SCALE) SUMMER 2023 MEETING NOTES

July 17th and 18th

Sacramento State Harper Alumni Center, Sacramento, California

## DAY 1: July 17th

### Welcome and Introductions

**Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute for Community and Environment**

Jonathan reviewed SCALE's history with the early focus of SCALE was on the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). He introduced SCALE's intentions, accomplishments, and plans for the future.

### Opening Speaker

**Malcolm North, Pacific Southwest Research Station**

Malcolm introduced 4 categories: 1) Dealing with post-fire conditions, 2) Reforesting after fires, 3) Pyro Silviculture after fire, and 4) Beyond fuels treatment, what is resilience? To address this he offered 6 guiding principles: 1) Restore ecological process, 2) Consider landscape context, 3) Promote native biodiversity, 4) Sustain diverse ecosystem services, 5) Establish a prioritization approach, and 6) Incorporate adaptation to agents of change. "I cannot emphasize enough the importance of heterogeneity." Promoting individuals, clumps, and openings reduces the density of forests and makes them more resilient.

### Q&A

**Q:** How do we communicate what you want to contractors if it's not pines and lines?

**A:** It takes more training, but possible. The silviculturist can go out and mark ICO spaces.

**Q:** How many of these stands might not come back after high-severity fires?

**A:** Climate change will push these systems even more especially in drier places.

**Q:** Have you looked at Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and how indigenous people and North State Tribes burn compared to how the Forest Service burns?

**A:** The USFS goals are on a larger scale than TEK practices.

### Going to Scale: How Collaborative Groups And National Forests Are Planning and Implementing Landscape-Scale Restoration

**Yosemite-Stanislaus Solutions (YSS): Liz Peterson, Tuolumne County**

Liz described YSS's participation in the Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape (SERAL) Project, a 118,000-acre project. SERAL 2.0 is in the works with a 160,000-acre footprint largely involving private land. Challenges were lack of sustained funding and the introduction of AB 338.

**North Yuba Forest Partnership (NYFP): Sabrina Chui, Blue Forest**

NYFP is implementing work on 245,000 acres. Their priority is fire resilience surrounding Downieville. Sabrina concluded: partnerships are critical; a pilot to scale model is beneficial; we can build momentum over time; and we should plan at scale when possible.

***South Lassen Watersheds Group (SLWG): Sophie Castleton, Sierra Institute for Community and Environment***

SLWG is currently planning the West Lassen Headwaters Project (WLHP), which focuses on the remaining green forest in areas within the Dixie Fire. SLWG's challenges: difficulty with large landscape data collection; discomfort with conditions-based NEPA; considerations such as biomass and workforce needs; and shifting priorities following the Dixie Fire.

***Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLRp) Program, Partner Updates  
CFLRP Overview: Bryce Esch, US Forest Service (USFS)***

The CFLRP program involve ten years of funding for collaborative projects focused on USFS land. Tier 1 requests go to USFS, and the region determines who moves to Tier 2. Proposals move onto the Federal Advisory Committee, and then recommendations go to the Secretary. Challenges identified are: prioritizing resources; disturbances; economic conditions; markets for low-value wood; turnover; and landscape scale monitoring.

***Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG): Michael Pickard, Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)***

Projects included an expansion of the ACCG Forest Project Plan. This is a NEPA landscape-scale planning in the Stanislaus and Eldorado NFs with the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority. 25,000 acres have been treated.

***Burney Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group: Todd Sloat, Forest Creek Restoration, Inc.; Fall River and Pit Resource Conservation Districts***

They are working with the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to come up with new strategies for biomass utilization. There were efforts to advance workforce development that were not as successful as they had hoped. Trustwith the Forest Service is a central issue due to turnover. A planning process that is standardized would be helpful.

***Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (WGRP): Erin Rentz, US Forest Service:***

Erin shared that WGRP formed with three goals: restoring ecological balance; stream restoration; and fuels reduction. They are in the beginning stages of a work plan as part of the Klamath Basin Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape. The Karuk Tribe has received funding under the Tribal Forest Protection Act.

***Q&A***

**Q:** For Erin: Regarding dam removal and the Tribes involved, who would be the representative to implement this?.

**A:** The process of WGRP has been to follow the leadership of the Karuk Tribe and how/where they want to proceed.

**Q:** Tribes leading the way is not typical. I see an opportunity for change here.

**A:** It all depends on local groups and how they work together.

***Expanding Wood Utilization Infrastructure & Generating Long-Term Supply***

## **Contracts**

**Wood Innovations Update: Helena Murray, US Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region**  
Helena provided updates from the R5 biomass utilization program. Updates included: Wood Innovations Program will provide grants up to \$300,000 to support biomass markets; Community Wood up to \$1 million for shovel-ready projects; and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance up to \$1 million. 2024 announcements are expected in late fall/early winter.

**Community Wood Facilities Assistance Act: Dominic Faria, Sen. Dianne Feinstein Office**  
The Community Wood Facilities Assistance Act (S. 1735) was introduced this past May. The bill supports the development of facilities making use of low-value timber. The bill revises the Wood Innovations grant program as well to support investment in new wood facilities.

**Joint Powers Authority (JPA): Christiana Darlington, Clere Inc.**  
Current issues with the biomass markets include: prices sensitive to external factors; hard to transport; wood doesn't last forever; and a high risk to commit to long-term contracts. JPAs manage contracts, own infrastructure, and provide services. Options to spur biomass use: 1) fund infrastructure, 2) create a menu of community services, and 3) utilize a wildfire prevention authority. Two tools to control biomass price 1) a formula rate contracts and 2) indemnification can be used to better manage risk with a new partner.

**Long-Term Supply Contracts with the Forest Service: Todd Sloat**  
In a long-term supply contract, the implementing entity would have a SPA with the FS. An agreement can be developed with an entity such as a small biomass facility. Advocating an implementing partner to move product is more flexible than business as usual. Taking smaller steps to increase wood infrastructure can be more sustainable than a large facility.

## **Q&A**

**Q:** How do we find out how pilot efforts are going?

**A:** Governing documents are expected to be completed this time next year for the JPA.

**Q:** Is the legislation accepting applications for the grant programs Dominic described?

**A:** FY24 or FY25 is when the changes are expected.

**Q:** Do you have any biomass projects happening or opportunities in the S. Sierra area?

**A:** There is a biomass project in Mariposa through a partnership with West Biofuels.

**Q:** What do you see as potential innovative biomass products?

**A:** Lignan and cellulose. Nano cellulose is being worked on. Biochar can be an output.

## **Update from the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force**

### **Regional Resource Kits and Funding: Patrick Wright & Forest Schafer, Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force**

Patrick discussed a new data hub of an interagency treatment tracking system. Users can track what projects have been completed, project outcomes, treatment, and footprint acres. Forest discussed improving regional resource kits that will support planning, implementation, and monitoring efforts. Metrics are driven by regionally specific needs. Another tool discussed was Planscape. It will include an interactive element for project polygons and interagency tracking. This system will allow for the viewing of four screens at

one time, is free and user friendly, and will use ForSys for treatment and planning guides.

### **Q&A**

**Q:** How will you distinguish between trees and shrubbery?

**A:** Thinking about wildfires and landscapes instead of wildfires and forests. A lot of metrics refer to shrublands and forests. We track vegetation and focus on that statewide.

**Q:** How will you keep up with all 66 metrics?

**A:** There are 66 metrics that come from a variety of sources. We cannot maintain that, but we can identify key metrics that are most critical and focus on those.

### **Collaborative/Partner Updates**

#### ***Alpine Biomass Collaborative: David Griffith, Alpine County Board of Supervisors:***

David mentioned a Biomass Educational Program for the community in 2016 and working with Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) in 2019. They have been continually working with the public throughout the years. The public passed a measure to prohibit biomass facilities, which has been discouraging and their biggest challenge.

#### ***Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project: Janet Hatfield, Whitebark Institute:***

Janet discussed their experience dealing with 3rd party NEPA. Mammoth Lakes is the center of this project. Working on partnering with local Tribes in a productive manner. They are partnering with Format Tech and Quomma Systems, the latter will be testing their technology on a small scale in Mono County.

#### ***Firescape Mendocino: Bob Schneider & Frank Aebly, US Forest Service:***

The focus is on collaborative long-range planning to integrate wildfire struggles in the area. The difficulty is in combining all of these features AND protecting wildlife habitat, assets, and resources. They have created a prioritization map, using the Soil Survey Geographic Database as a resource.

### **Advancing Tribal Workforces**

#### ***Irvin Jim, Alpine County Board of Supervisors and Chairman of the Hung-a lel-Ti Washoe Tribe, Josiah Jacobs, Pit River Tribe & Steve Wilensky and Jacqui Dalton, Sierra Institute for Community and Environment***

Jacqui provided an overview of the panel and emphasized the High Roads Training Partnership work that the Sierra Institute is participating in to advance Tribal workforce. This program has trained over 300 individuals in the last year and a half.

Josiah spoke about increased Tribal involvement in restoration work. Tribes have their own science (TEK) that can be used to balance modern-day science. He discussed getting the Tribe's youth trained. Josiah provided an update from the Pit River Tribe. The Tribe is using a greenhouse facility to grow native plants and food, helping to build the Tribe's food sovereignty and stewardship efforts of native species.

Irvin commented that Tribes need validation. There are these groups doing work in the forest, but land managers are not validating Tribal knowledge. "We live in respect for our

homelands, and we are the caretakers of these homelands.” The Intertribal Stewardship Workforce Initiative (ISWI) started with the goal of working on homelands. Irvin talked about the Tamarack Fire and how it burned pinyon pine and pinyon pine nuts, a Tribal staple.

Steve highlighted, “We are pretty good at identifying the challenges - no money, no workforce. We need to make our workforce real career options.” Steve emphasized the harsh conditions for the workforce. How do you retain people? “We have a lot to learn about equity and about justice.” A holistic approach is needed that emphasizes restoration and stewardship economy- versus greed and extraction. It’s imperative to look to Tribes.

### **Q&A**

**Q:** Is there wood utilization infrastructure on Tribal lands?

**A:** Irvin- There is a sawmill in Carson City on Tribal lands and benefits Tribal members.

**Q:** If there was one thing to increase your capacity to do this work, what would it be?

**A:** Josiah- Partnerships and collaborative agreements.

**A:** Jacqui - Flexibility and funding. Localized, on-the-job style training.

**A:** Steve - Recognition. Consultation. Have Tribes developing plans, requiring real listening.

**A:** Irvin - Validation. Native people have always been there to help. We have that knowledge to take care of lands. Work with us.

### **Reflections on the Day**

#### ***Nick Goulette, The Watershed Research and Training Center***

Nick expressed there’s a lot less forest than there used to be. “Yet I’m heartened a lot here. You’re all going to keep trying with the time you have.” There is money and people flowing into the work. “How can we create those learning venues that allow us to go deep and learn different strategies and tools to advance this work?” This will be a multigenerational issue. It means learning from the native people who came here before. It means building tools and partnerships with knowing this is a multigenerational process.

#### ***Angela Avery, Sierra Nevada Conservancy***

The folks that come to these meetings have a lot of the answers to questions with which those at the state and federal level are struggling. Organizations are working together to get more done at a larger scale. Angie stated, “What scale should we be working at? The folks on the ground know the answers. They’re answering the questions and showing the way.”

### **DAY 2: July 18th**

#### **Opening Speaker**

#### ***Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary for Forest and Wildland Resilience at the California Natural Resources Agency***

Jessica discussed what is happening at the state level to support wildfire resiliency and improve communities. The state put \$3 billion into wildfire prevention across 40 different programs. The goal is to mobilize local partners and surge investments. The state is helping Tribal partners access grant funding without competing against large organizations. The

state is investing in stabilizing the feedstock to have assurance of material. Pilot projects through OPR are investigating feedstock brokers and JPAs.

### **Q&A**

**Q:** With DWR's updates, is there a way to utilize and overlay that with forest ecosystems?

**A:** We need to change the definition of infrastructure. We want local water districts to invest in the upper watersheds.

**Q:** How do we get a comprehensive understanding of what is available?

**A:** There's a trade-off of having forty different grant programs; the benefit is we can release money and help facilitate projects quickly. Hope to consolidate funding, like a block grant.

### **Landscape Investment Strategy**

#### ***Elliott Vander Kolk, Sierra Nevada Conservancy***

Elliott provided an overview of the million Landscape Investment Strategy. Goals were to reduce redundancy, streamline reporting, fund cohesive projects, and provide permanent positions at RCDs and non-profits. After considering 18 partnerships, SNC recommended the Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership. Lessons learned included: administrative barriers; programs aren't designed for this scale; data and decision making; streamlining reporting; and the value in assessing partnership readiness to inform capacity building.

### **Next Generation of Collaboratives**

#### ***Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI): Erin Ernst, Coordinator***

TCSI is a federal-state-private partnership established in 2018 covering 2.4 million acres. A few accomplishments by TCSI partnership: developed the Pillars of Resilience; \$32 million to fund implementation; advanced SB901 (CEQA exemption); and completed an analysis to determine where wood facilities would be the most useful. Challenges and lessons learned include improving project prioritization and all-lands approach to better private lands.

#### ***Dinkey Collaborative: Erin Capuchino, Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council***

The Dinkey landscape had CFLRP funding. During COVID, tourism stopped and the Creek Fire started. Challenges include: turnover in leadership; siloed work in the S. Sierra; lack of state and federal funding; and a lack of FS staff and capacity. Dinkey is preparing for turnover by recruiting and actively building a leadership pipeline, and developing strategies for streamlining onboarding and transition procedures.

#### ***Trinity County Collaborative Group (TCCG): Nick Goulette, The Watershed Research and Training Center***

As TCCG looks at program design, it's important to think about how landscape-scale work is designed, conflict resolution, and on-the-ground implementation. The collaborative is a forum for broad stakeholder coordination, project scoping, and building support, but doesn't implement, go after money, or accountable to any funding agency. Accountability for implementing partners has increased as funding goes to partnership, not collaborative.

### **Q&A**

**Q:** What does it mean that the collaborative doesn't have accountability measures?

**A:** The collab group includes a lot of volunteers but aren't interested in rigorous processes.

**Q:** The Sierra NF needs assistance from partners. Is that something in the Dinkey's future?

**A:** Yosemite-Sequoia has been awarded capacity building funding. It might come down to the NGOs to take that on and form a new kind of collaborative partnership.

### **Next Steps for Collaborative Groups and Landscape Scale Work**

1) What are the barriers your collaborative is facing?

Responses: lack of fiscal agent, burnout, retaining crews, funding, agency turnover, engagement with tribal nations, biomass utilization infrastructure, public outreach, getting beyond business as usual, and public opinion about prescribed burning in WUI.

2) What activities and support are needed to address or overcome these barriers?

Responses: Conversations about mental health, 1-to-1 coaching, facilitation funding, succession planning, skill building, shared language, collaborative organizational structure and how implementation partners fit, policy changes, and federal funding flexibility.

3) Specific topics for upcoming SCALE meetings. What needs to be part of the discussion?

Responses: Deeper dive into the operational models that collaboratives are using, management of multiple funding sources, conversation around shared authority if FS staff doesn't have enough capacity, and the role of collaborative institutional knowledge.

### **Long-Term Funding For Forest Restoration**

***Climate Resiliency Bond (CRB): Tina Andolina, Legislative Director for Senator Allen***

The CRB is a \$15 million climate and natural resources bond. First introduced in 2018, the government went for general fund money instead, leading to money being retracted and unreliable. The CRB was reintroduced and popular with the public. The bond has biodiversity, CA's 30X30 campaign, drought, and flooding funding.

***Alternative Funding Mechanisms: John Amodio, Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions***

CA was in a period of historic investments in natural resource work and now in a deficit. Bonds should be a bridge to long-term funding. John approached Senator Laird about the need for multi-year funding. It's going to take a quilt of different revenue streams.

### **Q&A**

**Q:** Can we spend up to 10% of the bond on capacity building?

**A:** The public doesn't want to see the money lost on administration, but see that money go into the field. The senator's office is looking at an endowment fund, covering O&M.

**Q:** What is the likelihood of the bond passing in either March or November?

**A:** Not sure at this point if the bond will come on the March or November ballot.

### **Collaborative/Partner Group Updates**

***SoCal Montane Forest Conservation Strategy: Megan Jennings, San Diego State University***

S. CA Montane Forests Project focus is on forests over 3600 feet. The region has reactive collaboratives, not proactive ones. Very few researchers focused on S. CA forests. Tribal

partners are helping the conversation about good fire. The idea is to create a framework for strategic management by evaluating exposure to threats and identifying priorities.

***South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy (SOFAR): Norma Santiago***

SOFAR is a facilitator of projects and a connector of dots between partners. SOFAR potential projects include: a biomass to energy pilot project in the Caldor burn area; working with Gold Seal Inc. to produce biofuel, biochar, and mid-grade water; and working with Wisewood to develop wood gasification technology that can power a microgrid.

***Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership (HELP): Sabrina Chui, Blue Forest & Michelle Wolfgang, US Forest Service***

HELP is a combination of conservation finance and a project incubator. Focus area includes: Crystal Basin, Western Georgetown, King Fire Recovery, and Caldor Fire/Consumes. HELP received a \$10 million pilot block grant from SNC. HELP expects to begin implementation in Spring 2024.

***Community Economic Resilience Fund & What's Next for SCALE***

***Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute for Community and Environment & Jim Mayer, Senior Fellow & President Emeritus at CA FWD***

Jonathan gave an overview of the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF). It has \$5 million allocated to each of the 13 different regions, focused on climate change and community resilience. They are pulling regions together in ways they haven't before.

Jim encouraged the group to reflect on the extraordinary work we're doing and how hard it is. We need to see the people through the trees and focus on their wellbeing. It's about modeling and maturing effective governance. We need to be inclusive with Tribes and our communities. The collaboratives have become the institutional memory. Stewards are system thinkers who understand the interconnectedness of the landscape and are frustrated with the fragmentation and bureaucracy. We need to lose the idea that competition for resources is a way to manage resource scarcity. We need to honor the work that has taken decades to develop and recognize that it's not going to happen overnight. Progress these groups have made would not occur without such collaboration.

***Closing Remarks***

***Eli Ilano, Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest***

Eli talked about wanting people to know California as the place that created resilient forests. "I think the world needs to know about what we're doing here." Eli reminded everyone of the successes and reiterated that when it comes to land management, we often know what we're doing, what we need to do, and in some places, we are doing it. Eli referenced the idea of "readiness" that was discussed throughout the conference. It's about identifying where you are in your activism, in your work, and what you need to get to the next step. We cannot do it without each other's support and are a community with a common mission.