



2024 SCALE
Sierra Institute Conference Notes
Thursday, July 25th, 2024

Welcome and Introductions

Land Acknowledgement

Albert Titman - *Native Dads Network*

- Song from Albert and introduction to the tribes of the Sacramento region.

Jonathan Kusel - *Sierra Institute for Community and Environment*

- Discussed the growth of the Sierra to California All Lands Enhancement project and emphasized its critical role in addressing California's landscape challenges.

Opening Speaker

Lisa Lien-Mager - *Deputy Secretary for Forest and Wildfire Resilience, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)*

- Agency priorities:
 - Building climate resilience across landscapes
 - Protecting biodiversity: Huge initiative under Secretary Crowfoot; partners are key
 - Expanding nature-based solutions
 - Ensuring equitable access to the outdoors
 - Wildfire resilience/forest resilience (Lisa's role)
- State has stepped up; historic levels of investments being made: \$2.6 billion across many different programs; 1,900 projects on the ground (e.g., prescribed fire, home hardening)
 - Seeing that fuels treatments are already starting to affect wildfire behavior, tracking this can help get support for more work.
- Priorities to continue with:
 - Enabling more beneficial fire: Cultural burning is a key.
 - Workforce development: The Regional Career Capacity Program is helping this shift.
 - Science and data: Investing in spatial data (LiDAR) and ground data collection.
 - Biomass utilization: Create sustainable markets through partnerships and investing.
 - Collaboration with the Task Force to develop organizing State and Federal efforts.
- The next couple of budget cycles won't carry the same level of resources: Although a lot of cuts in the original budget, we still have \$2.6 billion over the next handful of years.

Questions:

Q: "Pace and scale" is a mantra a lot of people have been using. One thing that has been missing is quality treatments that will last. How do we insert quality control into treatments and center it?

A: We need to think about the outcomes and what efficacy looks like. The State is using science and metrics to assess how effective projects have been, to be strategic about future work.

Q: Where do we find funding for maintenance for fuel breaks that are protecting towns?

A: Maintenance is something we're thinking about through existing funding and needing sustainable funding for maintenance. When landscapes are ready, beneficial fire can play a big role.

Q: I heard you speak about investments in geospatial tech. Is there a plan to share that data and technologies at large with other entities?

A: Sharing this data with partners is part of the plan when we get our contracts in place.

Q: You mentioned the desire to bring policy makers into the field. Who should we be targeting?

A: This speaks to the need to have people not operating in silos; bring different experts together.

Q: For biomass utilization, innovative technologies are being developed. Is there a strategy to pitch to venture capitalists so they can invest in biomass utilization?

A: State dollars are funding pilot projects, it will be a while before they're at scale. We need to think about what we're going to do in the interim. Need to bring Federal and State agencies along.

Q: Do you have thoughts about community-oriented prescriptions that might be specific for roads and infrastructure?

A: This is a huge need- I would lean into engaging local communities and collaborative groups.

Collaborative Updates

Butte County Collaborative Group (BCCG)

Taylor Nilsson and Connor Gilmartin - *Butte County Collaborative Group, Butte County Fire Safe Council*

- Mission: Form strategic partnerships for forest health and wildfire safety.
 - The purpose is to develop and maintain a robust spatial database, identify gaps in capacity, data, and landscape needs, plan and implement landscape-level projects, and examine funding opportunities.
- Tribal Caucus: Formed in 2023 and is led by North State Planning & Development Collective.
 - Recognize and respect the sovereignty of tribal governments, seek their involvement and support integration of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK).
- BCCG over the past few years:
 - Butte County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP): Collaboratively developed with interested parties, federal, state, city, town and county agencies.
 - 535 projects in the past 10 years: Treatment across 2,032,500 acre footprint
- Success story: Homeowners from Kelly Ridge attended a workshop and learned what mastication was. They then hired contractors and prevented infrastructure loss.

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI)

Maiya Greenwood

- Established in 2017, TCSI is a collaborative effort to restore a 2.4 million acre landscape.
- Framework: TCSI 10 Pillars of Resilience guides project metrics and outputs.
- Web-based Project Tracker: Launching project tracker for monitoring and evaluation with metrics like, acres, timeline, dollar raised, etc.
- Partner outreach: Database of over 200 regional partners that will build awareness, collaborative relationships, and trust with regional partners.
 - Conducted capacity assessment to identify partner priorities and needs. A challenge they are facing with outreach is working at the regional level.

North Yuba Forest Partnership (NYFP)

Kat Perlman

- Planning, fundraising, and implementation on a 275,000 acre project - NYFP project area.
 - Work began in 2016, MOU in 2019, steering committee meeting for 4-5 years.
- Fundraising and financing landscape

- North Yuba Landscape is one of 10 priority landscapes - received influx of funds under IRA. A challenge to work with large amounts of funding coming in at once.
- \$150,000,000 over a few years
 - Obligor funds and making sure they make sense to spend them appropriately.
 - Communication requires transparency and accountability.
- One key finding from their process is the need for a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the landscape, with a Record of Decision (ROD) required for each project area.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: Next Steps & Working with Collaborative Groups

Forest Schafer - *State Coordinator for the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force*; **Sarah Campe** - *Sierra Nevada Conservancy*; **Kristen Merrill** - *CAL FIRE*

Forest Schafer

- Aligning regional investments by transforming funding.
 - Combine multiple sources of funding to support projects.
- State frameworks: Support both implementation and capacity building, and to further develop metrics and decision-support systems.
- Expand use of good neighbor and other partnership mechanisms (ex. CNRA renewing GNA).
- Expand partnerships: Seek to align funding application and review processes.
- Regional coordination: Allow for regional differences and partner with regional conveners.

Sarah Campe

- Regional Priority Plan- Strategy to implement the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.
- Partnership Capacity - Partnership details to provide transparency as to projects across the landscape such as who, what, and where.
- Project Portfolio - What is planned in the region; location, status, acres, cost, objectives.
 - Portfolio strategy aims to complement collaboration, reduce redundancy and provide real time information to illustrate partner work and capacity.
- SNC is grounding itself in landscape grant readiness - Large landscape, effective decision-making, assessment, broad-based participation, project portfolio, and capacity.

Kristen Merrill

- Historic Investment: \$2.6 billion invested FY20/21 - FY27/28 across 40 programs.
 - R5 is allotted about \$500m annually, surplus is estimated at \$68m for FY 2025 on Federal lands. Non-federal lands - almost no supplemental funding.
- Regional Profiles and Regional Resource Kits: Pillars of resilience, metrics, assessments to identify priorities, decision-support tools, project inventories, and monitoring.
- Transparently monitor and track progress to advocate for sustained funding
- 2025 Action plan Update: Aggressive timeline to achieve this.
 - Project specific funding → funding for multiple projects guided by resilience plans

Workforce Development Strategic Plan, Building a Wildfire and Forest Resilience Economy

Zoe Watson - *Sierra Institute for Community and Environment*

- Discussed the recent Sierra Institute paper: *Workforce Development: A Vision for the Future*.
 - Forest restoration work is critically important and it is a career option.
 - Concept of "Grow our own" - Invest in and train in rural forested communities and tribal communities.
 - Plan for long-term stewardship over short-term treatments.
 - Identify local populations and generate opportunities for them to mobilize.
 - To plan for long-term stewardship, invest in communities we want to live in.
 - Build work into any training or workforce development program.

- Build or expand capacity to employ and provide jobs for those trained individuals.
- Scaffolding of Opportunities
 - Support anchor businesses, wood campuses and regional hubs to house the key pieces of a regenerative forest economy.

Tribal Land Stewardship

Angela Bolton-Tout - *Berry Creek Rancheria and Sierra Institute for Community and Environment*; **Rick Napoles** - *Bishop Paiute*; **Magan Murrell** - *Berry Creek Rancheria*; **Gregory (Feather) Wolfin** - *Pit River Tribe*; **Saxon Thomas** - *California Heritage Indigenous Research Project*

Angela Bolton-Tout

Current Projects and Excitements: What projects are you currently working on that you're particularly excited about?

Rick Napoles

Having worked with the Inyo NF for 34 years, my experience includes managing Rx fires and contributing to the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) with a focus on fire management. I also run a farm in Bishop and collaborate with the White Bark Institute and recently the Sierra Institute.

Current Work: We've initiated a Tribal fuels crew to address various ecological and community needs. This involves recruiting young individuals. Our work focuses on restoration, such as reintroducing water to meadows, removing excess trees, and revitalizing the spiritual health of our community.

Challenges: General mistrust toward government and nonprofits. Effective consultation requires more than formal letters and emails; it necessitates meaningful engagement and understanding.

Magan Murrell

As an Indigenous herbalist with over six years of experience, I am dedicated to building an ITEK workforce for Berry Creek Rancheria and have achieved certification as a California Naturalist.

Current Work: Focused on developing an ITEK workforce to manage bio-harvesting and the cultivation of medicinal plants. We've secured a stewardship agreement with the Plumas National Forest (PNF) to manage this sacred site.

Barriers and Challenges: Despite the need for preservation and restoration, bureaucratic obstacles continue to hinder our ability to practice and pass on our traditional ways.

Gregory (Feather) Wolfin

A citizen of the Pit River Nation and member of the Tribal Council, I also serve as the Environmental Director. Our Tribe engages with several NFs, including Modoc, Lassen, Klamath, and Shasta-Trinity.

Current Efforts: We are engaged in a protracted struggle against the Cal Pine Industry and BLM regarding Medicine Lake, a site of profound cultural and spiritual significance. This ongoing battle involves advocating for federal protection and gathering signatures for our cause. Recently, we reclaimed 6,000 acres from PG&E, although we encountered resistance in our proposal.

Challenges: Securing adequate funding and navigating red tape. The decline in traditional basket-making materials. Need for collaboration to access resources outside Tribal jurisdiction.

Saxon Thomas

In my role as a Tribal Council member and land cultural resource manager for a non-recognized Tribe, I also work with the California Heritage Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP). We are focused on integrating ITEK back into land management practices.

Current Projects: We have successfully raised \$2.6 million for a land-back campaign and purchased a 232-acre parcel. Involves hiring and training in cultural land management practices. Have certified seven Tribal members and are working to ensure ecologically sound land management practices.

Barriers and Red Tape: Early and meaningful interaction with Tribes is often lacking, and Tribes can be treated as mere checkboxes in the consultation process for legal compliance.

Questions and Answers

What should the level of consultation be? When? How?

Rick: Consultation should begin at the conceptual stage, leading to better outcomes and collaboration.

How to acknowledge and respect footpaths and sacred features?

General Response: Crucial to engage all relevant Tribes, especially in areas overlapping multiple Tribal territories. Collaboration among Tribes is often necessary to determine appropriate actions.

Red Tape and Consultation Issues:

A: Effective consultation requires multiple attempts beyond just emails and letters. Funding should support consultation efforts to avoid it being a mere formality or checkbox.

State and Federal Budget for Wildfire Resilience and Community Development

Alan Talhelm- *Assistant Deputy Director for Climate & Energy, CAL FIRE*; **Jody Holzworth -** *Deputy Regional Forester, US Forest Service*

- **Consultation:** CAL FIRE and the USFS are working for meaningful consultation processes.
- **Funding Sources:** Significant funding for wildfire prevention and resilience is available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
- **Recent Funding:** The Great American Outdoors Act provides valuable financial support.

FY 2025 Developments:

- **CAL FIRE:** Plans to reduce workweek from 72 hours to 66 hours to improve well-being.
- **USFS Initiatives:** Jody Holzworth is working on Keystone agreements and national-level master agreements to streamline administrative processes.
- **Tribal Involvement:** Tribes can indeed participate in Keystone agreements.
- **Climate Bond:** Passing the climate bond is crucial; otherwise, progress could regress by a decade.

Challenges and Needs:

- **Wildfire Risk Reduction:** Seven priority landscapes require urgent wildfire risk reduction.
- **Disaster Management:** Addressing disaster events in national forests is critical.
- **Staffing:** Recent funding enabled the staffing of diverse leaders, but more skilled professionals are needed.
- **Tribal Engagement:** The Newsom administration is effectively engaging with tribes. However, the Department of Finance and the legislature are slow to approve new positions.

Regional Insights:

- Recommendations for compensating tribal monitors have been released. 18 forests in the state, and the USFS remains significantly understaffed in terms of tribal engagement and monitoring.

Friday, July 26th, 2024

Opening Speaker

Jim Mayer - *McGeorge School of Law*

In today's landscape of inevitable challenges, strong collaboration is essential for effective preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation. Key focus areas include:

- **Changing Leadership:** Adaptively navigating frequent shifts in leadership.
- **Intergenerational Trauma:** Addressing long-term impacts of trauma within communities.
- **Forest Health Focus:** Shift from disaster management to proactive forest health strategies.

Community Engagement Continuum:

- **Informing:** Providing necessary information to stakeholders.
- **Consulting:** Seeking input and feedback from communities.
- **Involving:** Actively including stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- **Collaborating:** Working together to develop solutions.
- **Empowering:** Enabling communities to take initiative and lead.

Consultation with Tribes: Engaging with tribal communities to address problems effectively.

Human-Centered Design/Core Themes:

- **Understand Core Problems:** Focus on the root issues.
- **People-Centered Approach:** Prioritize the needs of individuals, communities, forests, or watersheds.
- **Systems Perspective:** Consider the broader system and interactions within it.
- **Rapid Prototyping:** Test and refine solutions quickly.

Working Together Continuum:

- **Compete:** Acknowledge and manage competitive dynamics.
- **Coexist:** Find ways to coexist peacefully and productively.
- **Engage:** Communicate, cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate towards common goals.

Individual and Collective Truths:

- **Individual Truth:** Derived from observation, insight, and experience.
- **Collective Truth:** Emerges through shared goals, inquiry, effort, and learning.

Towards Deep Collaboration: Integrate elements to foster deep and meaningful collaboration.

Attributes of Well-Functioning Systems:

- **Resilience:** Ability to adapt and recover from challenges.
- **Self-Organizing:** Empowering systems to organize and manage themselves.
- **Hierarchy:** Structuring systems to support effective function and oversight.

Forest Health 2.0: Need to elevate engagement across communities and hierarchies, align funding and regulatory strategies, and pursue deep collaboration.

Critical Policy and Legislation

Paul Mason - *Pacific Forest Trust*; **Kim Delfino** - *Earth Advocacy*

Paul Mason:

- **Recent Developments:** Positive movement in Sacramento, with a shift towards consensus in policy discussions over the past 20 years.
- **Fire Management:** To manage fire effectively, consider using smaller units known as Potential Operational Delineations (PODs). Makes fire management more manageable.
- **Legislative Updates:**
 - **SB 1101:** Expands the POD approach statewide to include private lands, aiming to create a comprehensive network for large-scale prescribed fire management. Effective January 2025, with a goal to identify all networks by January 2026.
 - **AB 2276:** Revises exemptions for oak woodland restoration and forest thinning. It allows the removal of trees up to 30 inches in diameter on up to 500 acres.

Kim Delfino:

- **Funding Challenges:**
 - **Funding Whiplash:** Transition from unprecedented funding availability to significant drops. Adjustments have led to unsustainable “backfilling” practices.
 - **Delayed Funds:** Promised funds, such as those for CAL FIRE Unit Forest Fire Prevention Grants, are delayed until 2027/28.

- **State Environmental Program Cuts:** Reduction in state environmental program funding due to slow allocation processes.
- **SB 867 (Prop 4) Bond:**
 - **Overview:** A \$10 billion bond with allocations for drought/water resilience (\$3.8 billion), wildfire resilience (\$1.5 billion), and other areas. Includes provisions for advance payments and administrative costs.
- **Cap and Trade:** Expected to be renewed by 2030, potentially sooner.

Q: Where can we access information on the state budget that “cuts to the chase”?

- **A:** Kim will provide detailed notes to SCALE organizers, who will then circulate them.

Q: What is the main barrier to raising the 500-acre limit for forest management?

- **A:** CAL FIRE is hesitant to increase the limit beyond 500 acres (previously 300 acres) due to the added complexity and administrative challenges.

Q: Do you have updates on SB 1159 and AB 1554?

- **A:** SB 1159 is progressing and introduces a new CEQA categorical exemption. AB 1554, sought to exempt community fuel reduction projects from CEQA requirements, did not pass.

Q: What’s the latest on SB 2509 regarding invasive species?

- **A:** SB 2509 is still advancing. Aims to strengthen the role of California Invasive Species Council in defining invasive species, reducing pesticide use, and promoting less toxic methods for managing invasives.

Q: What is a trailer bill?

- **A:** A trailer bill follows the budget and often appears at the last minute with limited public engagement. Its use has increased recently, making it harder for the public to participate.

Q: How much will the Prop 4 bond cost?

- **A:** The \$10 billion bond will be repaid over 30 years with annual payments of \$400 million. While bonds are useful for funding, they are akin to using a credit card.

Q: Are there discussions in legislature or policy circles about developing a holistic rural economy that utilizes biomass and supports rural employment?

- **A (Paul):** The current forest management focus includes removing merchantable timber, which may influence the viability of biomass utilization.
- **A (Kim):** Frame the benefits of rural economy initiatives for their value to urban areas.

Collaborative Updates

South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy (SOFAR)

Norma Santiago

- **Introduction and Goals:** Created to implement a cohesive strategy. We are engaging in a Partner Planning Alignment project, similar to the Regional Priority Plans.
- **Biomass Utilization:** The Alliance for Renewable Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems (ARCHES) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to invest \$12.6 billion for hydrogen production sites.
- **Mote Energy Collaboration:** Mote Energy establishing facility in Kern County. Working with Mote and Sacramento Municipal Utility District to supply feedstock from projects.
- **Innovative Biomass Utilization:** Exploring process developed by Michael Wagner of George Washington University. Method converts low-value woody biomass into crystalline graphite through laser pyrolysis. Can be used in lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles.

Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

Megan Layhee

- **Background and Formation:** Established in 2008, our community-based forest stakeholder collaborative operates with a triple bottom line and consensus-based decision-making under a MOA

- **Recent Successes:** Achievements include the development of a strategic plan, communication and engagement plan, guest speakers, and project development support.
- **Challenges:** Major challenges involve securing sufficient funding.
- **Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA):** UMRWA is a joint powers authority established in 2000. Is involved in the Mokelumne Amador Calaveras Forest Health and Resilience Project (MAC project). **Phase 1:** NEPA completed for 26,000 acres. **Phase 2:** Considering 247,000 acres with an estimated completion by December 2025.
- **Monitoring and Tools:** Developing monitoring program, including both field-based and desk-based strategies. Additionally, we are utilizing the Planscape decision-support tool.

The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

Craig Thomas - *The Fire Restoration Group*; **Jessica Morse** - *Candidate for Congress, CA-03*

Background:

- **Initiation:** The commission comprises of 38 direct members and experts who have engaged with community voices as well as state, federal, and private sector representatives.
- **Process:** The commission fostered a sense of collegiality, crucial in addressing issues such as biomass management. Building relationships was essential for the endeavor.
- **Challenge:** Exploring how the government can adapt to the rapidly changing pace of wildfires, given that state and federal budgets and decision-making processes often lag behind.

Recommendations: The commission developed 148 recommendations, under seven key themes:

1. **Urgent New Approaches:** Implement new strategies to tackle the wildfire crisis.
2. **Supporting Collaboration:** Enhance partner involvement at all levels.
3. **Reactive to Proactive:** Move towards proactive planning, mitigation, and fire recovery.
4. **Enabling Beneficial Fire:** Facilitate controlled burns to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires.
5. **Expanding the Workforce:** Increase efforts to hire and retain wildland firefighting staff.
6. **Modernizing Tools for Decision-Making:** Utilize technology and information more effectively.
7. **Investing in Resilience:** Boost current spending to mitigate long-term costs.

Closing Speaker

Diana Almendariz - *Cultural Practitioner of Maidu/Wintun, Hupa/Yurok Traditions, Heritage, and Experiences*

- **Connection to the Land:** I work closely with native people and participate in their ceremonies across CA. My experiences with the land and its people have shaped my work.
- **Naturalist and Cultural Work:** Raised alongside my grandfather, who frequently used fire, I grew up in naturalist work, then moved into cultural interpretation, and later ethnobotany.
- **Tending and Gathering Garden:** An aspect of my work involves tending and cultivating a garden of native plants located on the traditional lands of the Patwin Wintun.
- **Plant Care and Fire Management:** One key plant is Tule. It produces a biofilm beneficial for insects and helps keep water clean by acting as a filter. Tule is burned, and it regenerates quickly.
- **Fire as a Tool and Tradition:** I emphasize that fire is a living force with its own power. It is a tool, friend, and companion. Understanding fire's spirit and working with it is crucial.
- **Stewardship and Gathering:** Gathering is essential to stewardship. We strive to avoid using propellants. When burning, I consider our relationship with animals to be integral.
- **Holistic Approach:** Fire is essential for plants, animals, and water. Ash from fires enriches water, becoming homes for aquatic animals. Effective burning practices involve starting near water and burning away from it. Cultural burns are vital for maintaining ecosystems.
- **Invitation to Experience:** For a deeper understanding, please call Cache Creek and experience this holistic approach to fire and water management with us.