



Lake Tahoe

Federal Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 9, 2012, 9 a.m. to Noon

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA

Attendees –

- Doug Martin, Bob Cook Natalie Yanish, John Reuter, Patrick Wright, Jim Lawrence, Steve Teshara Bob Cook, John Pang, Suzanne Garcia, John Falk, and Peter Kraatz via conference call.

Chair –

- Steve Teshara

Designated Federal Official –

- Jeff Marsolais

Members of the Public –

- Bob Hassett, Perry O Bray, Garry Bowen

Agency Representatives –

- Nancy Gibson, Arla Hains, Denise Downie, Joey Keely, USFS; Robert Gregg, NDSL; Karin Edwards, Jeanne McNamara, TRPA; Maureen McCarthy, TSC; Lisa Heki, Steve Chilton, USFWS; Myrnie Mayville, USBOR

Introductions –

- Everyone in the room introduced themselves.
- Steve – the Tahoe Summit is Monday. This is an opportunity to see our leadership and let our presence be known.
- Jeff –I know this is a busy time but the important work of LTFAC continues. I will update you later on where we are at with the new LTFAC charter and new member outreach. There is an additional Forest Plan agenda item today to give you all the opportunity to ask questions.
- Nancy – welcome to everyone. The Forest Service is in our busy time with field work since we have constraints and need to stop work during the middle of October. I know everyone is busy, thank you for attending today. I look forward to seeing each of you at the Tahoe Summit.

Review of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes –

- Steve – we don't need to move any agenda item. For the minutes – Bob Anderson had a couple of corrections and with the group's permission; I would suggest tabling the minutes until next time.

Forest Plan Revision – Steve

- During the last meeting you received a good overview on the Forest Plan. We thought we would give this group a chance to answer any questions from the last meeting.
- Nancy –I would like to introduce Denise Downie, co-lead for the Forest Plan. The Plan has been years in the making. It has been reevaluated several times. In the past, the Plan has gone through various phases, and then gets litigated. In 2008, the Plan was printer-ready when it was litigated and set aside. Our team has retooled to follow all guidance by the powers to be. This Forest Plan is in the draft phase with the public comment period concluding August 30. We have had several public presentations and a webinar. We have met with several entities and done our utmost to present the draft and stimulate feedback. You have a full range of alternatives to review; we are aggressively seeking public comment and the best alternative. This will be the Regional Forester's decision.
- Jeff – we wanted to stimulate conversation and indeed we have. We are starting to understand the underlying themes that drive the issues. The draft is on the street and getting thorough public comment. We are not just checking the box; we want people to tell us what they think. A national analysis team will help us review the comments and analyze them. At the last LTFAC meeting, Jim Lawrence agreed to help organize a presentation to the State of Nevada. We will continue our strategy to meet with public agencies and map out how to move from draft to final. If you have issues coming up from your constituencies or you yourself are having questions, that's what today's forum is about.
- Patrick – what are the top 2-3 issues being raised?
- Jeff – aggression with fuels and their impact and a winter recreation conflict. We had the public wearing "no on alternative D" t-shirts, wanting no impacts to snow mobile opportunities at the Lake. We are hearing from both sides on that topic.
- Nancy – wilderness by exception. Mountain biking is prohibited in wilderness. We are receiving comments for trails on alternatives C and D.
- Jeff – we began public engagement sessions to orient the public to effectively comment. We showed them where things were in the document. We never said we got it perfectly right. We are using public comment to help that. The public comment is not closed; there may be more comments out there up until the deadline of August 30th.
- Nancy – we are asking for comments for purpose of clarity. I am not going to negotiate behind closed doors. We are establishing a baseline of understanding so people can voice their concerns. Input is critical but it needs to go to the published web address.

- Bob A. – conflict exists among winter recreation enthusiasts. Environmental groups are afraid the plan does not address the winter conflicts.
- Jeff – to make a land use allocation, it is the wrong place to resolve in Forest Plan. Subpart C of the Travel Rule directs us to look at the conflicts and the designated routes for snow use. We are using that. The Winter Recreation Collaborative on north shore got people talking and they came forward to make a proposal. This is best handled in Subpart C of the Travel Rule.
- Bob A. – there should be some statement of principle. You will be hearing that.
- Jeff – put in your comments. We can make strategic choices between draft and final.
- John R. – what are the issues on fuels?
- Denise – the alternatives vary in a few aspects for wildfire management for resource objectives. We mostly heard as an issue - vegetation treatments as related to wildlife habitat. Old forest habitat as necessary for spotted owls, goshawks and similar species. Alternative D would maintain the current direction. Alternative B and C would manage for old forest habitat wherever they exist on the landscape. There is confusion; some believe that what we propose is less protective because we don't have polygons (management boundaries). In reality, desired conditions are attached to polygons. It is very well spelled out in the standards, very detailed. Forest Service Regional Office specialists are working with us. In alternative B and C, there are seven exceptions for cutting trees 30" in diameter. It is a source of discomfort.
- Jeff – Alternative A is like what we currently have. Alternative B has the latest and greatest thinking. Alternative C has a more aggressive stance on fuels. When we go in, with the more aggressive treatments, it will be less often. Alternative D is a passive approach, using natural processes to make timber stand decisions. We have stakeholders in all those areas.
- Denise – because money from the SNPLMA is maxed out, there is not a lot of difference in Alternatives A and B in fuels reduction. Fuels reduction is a little more aggressive in alternative C. There are concerns on what alternative C would look like.
- Nancy –we need to keep open dialogue with the community. We don't have the ability to plant 30" trees. We can only plant to enhance the environment for animals – that won't happen overnight. In the work we do, we think in terms of 50-100 years. Right now we are doing south shore fuels working at Camp Richardson. It gets people thinking the forest looks bad but the prescription is good for the forest in the next 30-50 years. It will enhance the environment, water, soils, all those things. The intent is that we have the best science contributing to that vision to get us to the best place we can be.
- John R. – did you evaluate progress and targets?
- Denise – we went by the 10-year Basin Fire Plan – our strategies would kick in after that.
- John R. – different timelines?
- Jeff – we expect this Plan to be in effect 15 years. In forest management we need to be looking out 50 years.
- Nancy –we did not want to supplant the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFF) 10-Year Fuels Strategy Plan.
- Denise – alternate D would impose a 12" diameter outside the defense zone. It would not go into effect until after completing planned WUI treatments.

- John P. – the 10-year plan started 1-2 years before that. Have you received comments on forest health and the influence of science on alternatives?
- Denise – not yet but we know they are coming.
- John P. – the public may not realize the importance.
- Nancy – the general populace is not always savvy. In September a science consortium of forest health pathologists will be here. They will be going around the Basin looking at the pathology. This is not a stale or stagnate thing. We are adding new science as available for lots of things we do. In the 1990's fire behavior professionals were working throughout many California fire ecosystems. They were a comprehensive team of 6-8 people going to all forests to look at the best treatments.
- Jeff – you represent important groups; let those groups know it is important to comment. The science review was a component; we used the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW). We postponed the review at draft stage because we knew the latest and greatest thinking would come during the comments.
- John R. – will PSW respond to comments or give full peer review?
- Denise – yes their job is peer review.
- John R. – seems like an odd precedent. It doesn't make sense to me that they didn't have latitude to look at the Forest Plan so the public could look at what the experts (PSW) brought up.
- Jeff – the intent is to use most relative science in the decision. Local specialists have access to the most up to date thinking in many fields. The baseline is high for the quality of science available at our fingertips. We knew between the draft and final we would hear a lot from many different folks. In the decision, that seems the best timing to hear about science in the public comment.
- John F. – looking at the Basin plan and TRPA Regional Plan (RPU) – do they dovetail or diverge? What do you perceive as the necessity to have consistent for the plans to be validated? Winter recreation – there is much discussion on the usage on public land.
- Jeff – the two plans come from different places. RPU is different in its approach to areas of responsibility. We had interagency coordination to make sure they weren't dueling plans. The TRPA planning team came in and worked through the nitty-gritty of the plan. Coordination has been going on a long time, since Pathway 2007 there has been a lot of shared work
- Denise – on the timing of the science review – we are using the objection process, the administrative review comes before the decision. That is one more opportunity for comments before the decision comes out.
- Patrick – how come different agencies deal with same land differently? You get different fuels treatment depending on which crew you use. Not that they are not using science but there are multiple objectives. When not in the WUI there are different perspectives. Will there be a change to that? The CTC Board asks us how come treatments look different.
- Steve – sounds like a future topic. **Action item.**
- John P. – there are different regulations from TRPA, the State, and Caltrans.

Update on the Lake Tahoe Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Projects – Nancy Gibson

- The SNPLMA Executives are concerned about the life of projects. They are trying to hold agencies accountable to about five years. Sometimes that works, but in a lot of these projects you have third parties or weather delays implementation. The Executives are concerned about having so much money on the books. They have to respond to the Secretary of Interior on how much money is spent. Two years ago we got that message even though there is so much good work happening. I still want to clarify and celebrate accomplishments.

PowerPoint presentation.

- Nancy – now the challenge is that money is starting to decline but we need someone there (staff capacity) to the last day of the last project.
- Steve – with the capacity built up, the learned lessons, the good system, we are a national model. The role of LTFAC includes some level of funding so we don't have to turn off the last light.
- John F. – at what point do projects lose their effectiveness because there is no money to keep them up?
- Nancy – they will sustain themselves overtime. But the erosion control projects in the neighborhoods are different. They need to be cleaned out. This is an ongoing dilemma, our conversations with partners is to make that a front end fix. Don't forget in your annual program of work the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) needs to be embedded.
- John F. – is there any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for that?
- Nancy – yes, on a number of projects. It is up to each of the entities that have spearheaded the project. Everyone has the same good intent. We need an element of sustainability built in.
- Jeff – this was at the heart of the visioning conversation of LTFAC. LTFAC can help direct that conversation for future funding.
- Steve – science and technology has changed. As practices become more well-known, remind ourselves to have a project sustainability component so projects sustain themselves.
- Jim L. – Nancy did a great job at the SNPLMA Executive meeting. Starting with Round 5, SNPLMA was awarding \$600-700M annually. Money was sitting in accounts and we were asked what was getting done. It was a well-received presentation. There are limited funds through hazardous fuels with only \$ 6-8M available. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) may have to skip rounds. There will be smaller projects in the future.
- John R. – is the Forest Plan based on SNPLMA projects being done?
- Jeff – it clearly mentions the future without SNPLMA.
- Peter – O&M– local government has not forgotten this critical function. California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC) and Lahontan O&M project commitments in writing. Some projects are more self-sustaining. The Kings Beach project – we are looking for local residents to pay for maintenance.

Sugar Pine Foundation – Overview of Purpose and Activities– Maria Mircheva

Handout – letter to LTFAC

- Maria – I am the executive director of the Sugar Pine Foundation (SPF). The SPF was founded in 2005 to restore Sugar Pines and other white pines.

Power Point presentation.

- Maria - the Sugar Pine Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring sugar pines and other white pines in the Lake Tahoe region. By involving volunteers in hands-on forest stewardship, SPF educates local communities about the importance of conserving native species and people's role in enhancing forest health.
- Steve – the presentation brought up a lot to think about. At a follow up meeting, LTFAC can help identify where to plant with federal and other agencies. **Action item.** With your display booth at the Tahoe Summit, website, Facebook page etc., you can educate young people. When you have sixth graders in the forest it's a good opportunity to teach them more.
- Jim L. – thanks for all your help on Tunnel Creek. What is your minimum acreage size? Do you work in in the Carson Range?
- Maria –100 trees is the minimum to plant. We usually plant 300 at a time. We are working with the Washoe Tribe to plant near Carson at Clear Creek. We have done some Jeffery Pine plantings. If we can we get volunteers there we can support with the trees.
- Bob A. – on forest plan, do you have concerns?
- Maria – there are quite a few mentions of white pine, and a beginning strategy of restoration. There is nothing about identifying planting sites. They need a more active and deliberate action.
- John P. – what's your success rate?
- Maria – between 10-40%. We are still learning about how to get the success rate higher. Water availability and competition are the important factors. We are improving with monitoring and research. Partial shade is best. We had a higher success rate at the Gondola Fire than at Zephyr Shoals.

Overview of Planned and Accomplished Field Treatments by the LTBMU – Duncan Leao

PowerPoint presentation

- Goal - prioritize treatment areas to meet objectives in the Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-jurisdiction Fuels Strategy. Treatments in the urban interface.
- John P. – is west shore work being done?
- Duncan – there are a few 100 acres left in the Ward and Quail projects. There are 24,000 acres of treatments to occur in the next several years. A lot of progress is being made. The initial change is shocking for people, but over time the photos tell the story.
- John F. – where would the Placer County biomass plant fit into the mix? How much could you send to that?
- Duncan – we are currently hauling 1.5-2 hours away. There is no money to be made at that distance. Something more local would create incentive and would be utilized.

- John P. – as an energy source, the chips are not a commodity like they use to be. Natural Gas is cheaper.
- Duncan – technology for biomass is getting better.
- John R. – 24,000 acres – what was the total number of acres needing to be treated? What percentage have we done?
- Duncan – 60,000 acres across the Basin including all agencies. We are maybe halfway there. 15,000 acres have been treated by the Forest Service (FS) at this point. SNPLMA has been the bulk of the funding.
- Steve – we are over half way according to the 10-year strategy. We are unsure whether we will be able to finish that goal with funding down.
- Jeff – in the South Shore project etc. we will have NEPA that covers more of the forest than we have for implementation. In Round 12, in conversations about acres we traded some away. We continue to discuss funding with our Regional Forester and Chief. LTFAC may have a role in helping getting that funding. This conversation will be important for LTFAC to have in front of them. Good marketing opportunity. Projects ready to move forward (have NEPA) will need an active stakeholder component.
- John P. – thank to the FS – treatments have made a huge difference on the west shore. There was a recent fire that did not affect the community because of forest health (treatments).

Public Comment –

- Maureen – Tahoe Science Consortium (TSC) held a successful science conference the end of May. We appreciate your engagement. We briefed the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board and offer that presentation to you. I want to acknowledge Jeff for the FS sponsorship and forest service participation.

Logistics and Review -

Future meeting topics:

- Steve – there is an Aquatic Invasive Species issue for the joining. A letter writing campaign could be joined by LTFAC for Lake Mead. Tahoe Integrated Information Management System (TIIMS) – Karin Edwards could come back with an update. We could ask for a biomass update from Brett Storey. We also could request a Tahoe Fuels and Fire Team (TFFT) presentation.
- Bob A. – Peter mentioned the Tahoe Pipe Club misinformation. I didn't know what that meant, so I did some research. Maybe LTFAC can help clear up the misinformation.
- John R. – it is a very complicated issue. We are in the middle of it. It needs full vetting.
- Steve – maybe we could work with others for a more broad-base review.
- John R. – Maureen could help with that.
- Peter – TRPA has reached out to them. There is a lot of science involved with water quality. I am all for representing local government in a dialogue.

- John F. – the fact is if you don't listen and respond to information out there, you don't get traction. It is easy to give bad information on the front end. I would rather have free flowing discussion in the beginning.
- Steve – the topic needs a broader venue in the community than this forum.
- Jeff – we have projects that are the heart of the concern for this issue. SNPLMA projects including the Upper Truckee River. Maybe offline – Steve, Patrick and I could map out a meaningful conversation. **Action item.**
- John R. – please include me.

Re-charter process – Jeff

- The open application period has closed. We are working with USDA and FS Washington Office Federal Advisory Committee. We decided to open one more 30-day application period. The Secretary of Agriculture wants us to demonstrate that we have given a fair outreach. The Charter is on a different tract. We are looking at changes including adding alternates and staggered terms.
- Maureen – alternates that sit at the table?
- Jeff – we are working on that.

The Lake Tahoe Summit –

- Steve – the Summit is Monday. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. The booths are by the clubhouse. There is shuttle service from the casino parking lot. The program starts at 10 a.m. The theme is public/private partnerships. There will be a RPU presentation. Chief Michael Brown of the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will talk about fuels, the 5-year anniversary of the Angora Fire, and the 10-year anniversary of the Gondola Fire.
- Maureen – TSC will have a photo display at the Summit that includes a lot on Angora Fire and restoration activities.
- John R. – the 2012 State of the Lake Report is out today.