

MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

May 15, 2014

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

Meeting Synopsis

At its May 15 meeting, the Dinkey Collaborative received a presentation on the adjacent Kings River Experimental Watershed, a scientific research study designed to characterize the variability in important watershed attributes and evaluate mechanical and prescribed fire forest restoration treatments. Subsequently the Collaborative hosted a special Water Panel with nine speakers, including representatives from Fresno Irrigation District, Kings River Conservation District, Organic Agriculture, UC Merced Southern Sierra Critical Zone Observatory, North Fork Mono Tribe, Southern Sierra Regional Water Management Group, California Department of Water Resources, and the US Forest Service. The panel and Collaborative members discussed the variety of upstream-downstream connections and how restoration of forest health can yield a range of water and non-water benefits for people who live, work, and recreate in the region. After lunch the Collaborative recommended by consensus a boundary for the Exchequer Project to the Forest Service, and reviewed a revised list of items to include in a Proposed Action for the project at the end of 2014/early 2015. The Communication Work Group reported on a successful field visit for elected officials to Terra Bella Mill, attended by 14 electeds or their representatives. Along with other regular business and monitoring items, the group also received an update on the Sierra Cascades All Lands Enhancement (SCALE) effort, which aims to promote learning across the three Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program efforts in California. The group also revised its announcement for a logo contest, and recommended a revised Finance Work Group charge to the Forest. The full Collaborative will meet again on either July 16 or 28, from 10 am to approximately 4 pm at the Sierra National Forest Supervisor’s Office, 1600 Tollhouse Road, Clovis, California.

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This meeting summary paraphrases individual comments and suggestions from Dinkey Collaborative members. Statements do not indicate consensus of the group unless they are preceded by the words, "AGREEMENT:".

All materials are available to members on DataBasin.org, and general information is available on the Dinkey Collaborative website, www.fs.usda.gov/goto/sierra/dinkeycollaborative For questions please contact the facilitator, Mr. Dorian Fougères, at dfougeres@ccp.csus.edu or (916) 531-3835.

Action Items

1. **Ms. Reynolds** to circulate volunteer forms to Communication Work Group members.
2. **CCP** circulate map of Collaborative in relation to the Forest and Region.
3. **CCP** to circulate revised logo contest information for distribution.
4. **Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Van Velsor** to send Dorian the dates, hours and number of non-FS and FS participants for the 2013 public tour, 2014 mill tour, and socioeconomic subgroup meetings.
5. **IN PROGRESS - Mr. Gus Smith** to gather and distribute the volunteer hour forms for members to fill out.
6. **CCP** to send out water panelist presentations and materials.
7. **SNF** to circulate revised list of Proposed Action topics for recommendation in July.
8. **Mr. Thomas** to circulate GAO evaluation questions via the facilitator.
9. **CCP** to circulate final Finance Work Group Charge.
10. **The All members** to send Mr. Bagley suggestions on example treatment equipment or approaches for 2015 SCE comparative showcase.

11. **IN PROGRESS - Mr. Gus Smith** to revise budget materials.
12. **IN PROGRESS - Mr. Gus Smith** to get SCE accomplishments and investments from Mr. Bagley for DLRP.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Gus Smith, Deputy District Ranger, represented the Forest Service and welcomed members to the full Collaborative meeting and water panel. Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) Facilitator, reviewed the agenda items, meeting ground rules, and conducted member introductions. He also notified members that the June 18th Collaborative meeting was released from the schedule.

2. Interested Party Comment Period

There was no public comment at this time.

3. Communication Updates

A. Elected Official Visit to Terra Bella Mill

At the May 14 Terra Bella Mill visit, 11 elected officials or staff representatives, and 9 Collaborative members were in attendance. The tour included presentations, information sharing, and the history and progress of the Dinkey Collaborative. Participants were surprised about the level of collaborative work that has happened thus far and suggested to keep up the educational aspect. Members agreed that the overall tour was very well received. There was the suggestion to invite representatives from Fresno County including Ms. Debbie Poochigian, Fresno County Board of Supervisors, to the open house event scheduled for August 22.

B. Briefings

The Communication Work Group will be sending invitations to conduct briefings to Ms. Poochigian, The Huntington Big Creek Historical Society, Supervisor Tom Wheeler, Sierra Foothill Conservancy, Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau, and the Eastern Madera Fire Safe Council. The group also noted that Mr. Ferreira of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) wished to present at an upcoming Collaborative meeting, and likely will join the group in July.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Reynolds to circulate volunteer forms to Communication Work Group members.

C. Logo Contest

The facilitator compiled a short logo contest announcement that included contest information and photos of past Collaborative Projects. He asked members to provide feedback on the language of the second and third paragraphs.

Discussion followed:

- Members discussed the image quality could not be less than 300 dpi and not exceed 5x5” in size. It must also be limited to a 4 color rendition for ease of transfer to gray scale and have the ability to scale it up or down for multiple purposes.
- Suggested language revisions included: design uses, a multiple submissions clause, and an ecological benefit clause. Members also recommended adding communities to the list of landscape and elements, revising the language to include artists and designers and adding a link to the website.
- Members also recommended adding a photo of Shaver Lake, and separating the flier page from the photo page.
- **ACTION ITEM: CCP** circulate map of Collaborative in relation to the Forest and Region.
- **ACTION ITEM: CCP** circulate revised logo contest information for distribution.

D. Collaboration Statistics

The Facilitator displayed an excel worksheet of the Collaborative statistics and discussed the total hours. Based on meeting length, and attendance, he was able to calculate both volunteer and Forest hours worked. The information will be used in the volunteer forms. There is also the possibility that the information can be supportive of grant recipients and reimbursement. Mr. Joe Sherlock asked how many unique members actively participated; the facilitator estimated this was around 80 people, with a core group of around 30, including Forest staff. The facilitator noted that he would fill in the gaps in the document within the week.

- **ACTION ITEM: Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Van Velsor** to send Dorian the dates, hours and number of non-FS and FS participants for the 2013 public tour, 2014 mill tour, and socioeconomic subgroup meetings.
- **ACTION ITEM: IN PROGRESS - Mr. Gus Smith** to gather and distribute the volunteer hour forms for members to fill out.

E. Mileage Update

Mr. Gus Smith informed the members that the forms had been obtained and would be distributed to members soon.

4. Kings River Experimental Watershed (KREW) Presentation

Ms. Carolyn Hunsaker, PSW, provided a brief history of the research and progress of the KREW project. She explained that some of the watersheds being studied were inside the boundaries of the Dinkey Collaborative and discussed how the KREW Monitoring Plan and other aspects were similar to Collaborative projects. The goals of her research are:

1. Understand processes and quantify variability of headwater stream ecosystems; and
2. Evaluate the effects of forest management for healthy forests.

She also reviewed the primary focuses of the experiment, which include animals, vegetation, bacteria and fungus, soil, water, nutrients and carbon. While the study remains ongoing, some findings included evapotranspiration levels equal to maximum precipitation levels, higher elevation sites with higher carbon and nitrogen levels, and nitrogen deposition above critical loads at almost every grid point.

Discussion followed:

- Members asked about the primary sources of the nitrogen. Ms. Hunsaker noted that the majority of it comes from agricultural applications, vehicles, and the Bay Area activity. One member asked about the ability of the nitrogen to track with or decline with pesticides. Ms. Hunsaker noted that the wind patterns are playing significant roles in funneling nitrogen levels up the drainages towards higher elevations. In the beginning of summer, the breezes travel west to east; further into the summer, the wind patterns shift from the southwest and funnel up the Kings and San Joaquin River drainages.
- There were also questions about treating in riparian regions. Ms. Hunsaker explained that most Forest Staff would apply a 300' barrier to any stream whereas private and state landowners would apply a 75'-100' barrier. One of the expectations of the KREW project was to measure fuel loading in riparian areas and recommend that the areas be treated as close to the stream as was deemed safe.

5. Panel Discussion: Connections Between the Forest and Water Resources

A. Matt Meadows, UC Merced Southern Sierra CZO

Mr. Meadows reviewed purpose of the Critical Zone Observatory, and the three I's: Infrastructure, Institution and Information, which the CZO strives to connect. He noted that one of their most important findings is that with decreasing elevation, the drought impact increases.

B. Steve Koretoff, Valley Farmer and Organic Advocate

Mr. Koretoff explained his position as a valley farmer and organic advocate and noted that in the midst of the drought conditions, he has experienced two wells drying up in the past month. Members asked about his irrigation methods. He noted that his current system was flood irrigation but was in the process of transitioning to drip. He was also asked about his nitrogen inputs. In response, he noted that across his roughly 600 acres, he strives to utilize composted dairy manure and other recycled materials.

C. Honorable Mr. Ron Goode, North Fork Mono Tribe

Mr. Ron Goode, Chairman of the North Fork Mono Tribe, explained the progress of forest, meadow, oak and cultural resource restoration that the Tribe has currently underway. He provided two handouts and highlighted some of the primary issues. He discussed the article, "Too Many Straws in the Cup" and explained that more funding should be focused on green energies and meadow restoration.

D. Cristel Tufenkjian, Kings River Conservation District (KRCD)

Ms. Tufenkjian reviewed the KRCD responsibilities which included water resources, power resources and environmental resources. She also provided a brief introduction to the Tulare

Lake Basin General Order, noting that the primary objective is to determine effectiveness of agricultural management practices in protecting groundwater quality.

E. Gary Serrato, Fresno Irrigation District (FID)

Mr. Serrato explained the drought conditions that the Fresno area is experiencing. He highlighted the limited state and federal funding for water and expressed his optimism for the bond. He also discussed the proactive measures the FID is taking to bank groundwater in their four facilities.

F. Kathy Wood-McLaughlin, Southern Sierra IRWMP

Ms. Wood-McLaughlin provided a brief history of her experiences as a Watershed Coordinator and explained the basis for the Southern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Plan. (IRWMP). She noted that the SSIRWMP water code contains 4 primary components: water quality, water supply, flood management (flood protection), and environmental restoration (ecosystem restoration).

G. Michelle Selmon, California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Ms. Selmon explained her position at the DWR as a Regional Climate Change Specialist. She noted that she works in collaboration with the IRWMPs to achieve all 16 of the standards that must be met for future conditions. One of the responsibilities of the DWR is to measure the snowpack annually. Ms. Selmon noted that DWR has seen a 10% loss in the last 100 years, projecting a 40% loss by 2050 and 70% loss by the end of the century. She expressed her concern about the ecosystem impacts of climate change and offered her assistance to any members in need.

Ms. Selmon is also a representative of the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) which looks at ecosystem protection on a landscape scale. She noted that the Collaborative is the kind of organization that the LCC looks to support, whether it be through tools, resources, funding, or assisting in future restoration given the climate change impacts. As a subcommittee of the LCC, the Tribal committee will be having a Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) workshop in September and welcomed member attendance.

H. Alan Gallegos, Sierra National Forest

Mr. Gallegos discussed his many positions in the USFS as a geologist, watershed management specialist and planner. He explained the history of the Land Management Plan in comparison to the present 2014 revision. He recommended thinning the forest under the current standards at sub-drainage levels and restoring the meadow ecosystems.

I. Carolyn Hunsaker, KREW

Ms. Hunsaker noted that getting fire into the ecosystem can aid in reducing nitrogen deposition. She recommended the most efficient use of funds is to apply prescribed fire on the landscape. Members and panelists asked about her opinion on meadow restoration.

Discussion followed:

- Members discussed the decreasing conditions of meadows and noted that healthier ecosystems are attached to healthy meadows.
 - Ms. Hunsaker noted that not all meadows are in such unfortunate conditions and added that while there may be a number of reasons to restore meadows, in terms of water yield, getting fire on the landscape would be the most cost effective.
 - Ms. Wood McLaughlin noted that the Mill Creek Proposal provided an example of sediment control, fuels management and invasive species, and their impacts on the downstream users.
- It was noted that many of the meadows are in that condition because of channelization, which can cause a drop in the water table and impact the reservoirs.
- Members asked the panelists their opinions on the Forest First program, which funds projects in southern California. Ms. Hunsaker noted that there is a report on “Natural Infrastructure” that discusses healthy, well-functioning, forest.
- One member noted that most people understand climate change, but yet ignore that tree ring history displays data showing that 20 year droughts were once considered normal.
 - Mr. Smith asked about the rate of recharge after these years of drought. Panelists explained that the rate of recharge depends on the soils, land use and community development in recharge areas. Others added that by looking at areas such as Dry Creek there is evidence of the use exceeding the rate of recharge, resulting in dry conditions and sinking.
- A member of the panel concluded by noting that the most important thing is to be looking at the overall health of the forest, and ensuring that the management practices are going forward to promote that.
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- **ACTION ITEM:** CCP to send out water panelist presentations and materials.

6. Exchequer Boundary Recommendation

Mr. Gus Smith displayed the original MUG boundary with the overlays of the proposed expansion, which included McKinley Grove. He discussed the controversy of including the grove in the treatments and noted that treating it would require an additional management plan, although the Forest was still determining the level of detail and elements that would be needed. He added that members from the Landscape Planning and Prescribed Fire Work Groups had made the decision to “leave it in until it is out”, meaning that if the additional staging or politics becomes too much, the grove may be taken out of the project.

Discussion followed:

- Members expressed concern that Including the McKinley Grove may bog down the overall Exchequer project, and suggested making it a separate project.

- Others explained that the idea was to reduce the amount of additional work by combining it with the current Exchequer planning.
- It was noted that members of the LPWG and PFWG have spoken with key members of the public and various environmental organizations and received positive feedback on the issue of treating within the grove.
- The facilitator noted the importance of monthly check-ins and putting an emphasis on regular communication.
- Members requested additional information on the internal prescribed and managed fire boundaries within the blue section of the MUG. The facilitator summarized that there is still opportunity to address prescribed fire within the original MUG.
- **AGREEMENT:** Members recommended the proposed Exchequer Project boundary to the Forest.
 - **Members present:** Mr. Thomas, Mr. Ashley, Mr. Haze, Mr. Bagley, Ms. Flick, Mr. Harger, Mr. Van Velsor, Mr. Fidler, Mr. Kent Duysen, Mr. Larry Duysen, Mr. Conner, Mr. Meadows, Ms. Stacy, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Mark Smith, Ms. Vance, Ms. Freedman, and Mr. Mount.

7. Proposed Action Components Recommendation

The facilitator reviewed the feedback from the April 18 meeting and discussed the additions that had been made. He asked members to provide any additional comments.

Discussion followed:

- Under “Existing conditions”
 - “...forest service and state sensitive and threatened and endangered species and their important and/or critical habitat.”
- Section 7b.
 - Revise to eliminate redundancy
- Introduction
 - Remove “that,” so the passage will read, “This outline identifies...”
- Under “Fuels prescription”
 - Add: snag creation, downed log creation, prescribed fire treatments other than fuels, no action, and cultural burning.
 - 4a: there is no “ii”
- Make prescribed fire equal to “stand prescription”
- **ACTION ITEM: SNF** to circulate revised list of Proposed Action topics for recommendation in July.

8. General Updates

The facilitator requested that members read over the project updates and ask questions if necessary.

- One member asked if there was any advanced notice that could be given prior to the Soaproot Stewardship additional work. Mr. Gus Smith noted that with the current fire conditions, there is currently work being done, but will likely be shut down. He added that additional information could be provided on any ongoing projects at the front desk of the High Sierra Ranger District office in Prather.

A. SCALE

Mr. Stan Van Velsor, from the Collaborative’s SCALE committee, provided an overview of the inaugural meeting for 2014. He explained that the intent of the meeting was to establish the overall work plan, identify key issues of focus and to discuss the successes and challenges of each of the Collaboratives. The group was able to identify five key focus issues: contracting, all lands approach, ecological monitoring, best practices, and business plan development.

B. Socioeconomic Assessment Status

Mr. Van Velsor noted that there was no current update and that the presentation from Mr. Kusel will be postponed until the July Collaborative meeting.

C. Monitoring Report to Congress

Mr. Van Velsor reviewed the context of the required 5 year progress report. He noted the initial topics of assessment: Collaboration, Leveraged Funds, Fire costs, Ecology, and Jobs and Economic Impacts. The report will be due at the end of this fiscal year.

D. GAO Evaluation

Besides the Washington office field visits, the General Accounting office is conducting a review of the CFLR programs. Additional information will be distributed to the members.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Thomas to circulate GAO evaluation questions via the facilitator.

E. Revised Finance Work Group Charge

The facilitator reviewed and clarified the revisions and additions to the document from member feedback during the April 18 meeting. He asked members to provide any further comments. Members noted that it seemed to be a large time commitment but agreed to recommend the document as the final document.

- **AGREEMENT:** Members agreed to recommend the final Finance Work Group Charge.
- **ACTION ITEM:** CCP to circulate final Finance Work Group Charge.

F. 2015 SCE Comparative Showcase

Mr. Bagley noted that SCE would be hosting a comparative vegetation treatment showcase and is soliciting treatment suggestions from members.

- **ACTION ITEM:** The All members to send Mr. Bagley suggestions on example treatment equipment or approaches for 2015 SCE comparative showcase.

9. Attendees

1. Emily Adams, CCP
2. Jared Aldern
3. Chip Ashley

4. Rich Bagley
5. John Cielnicky,
USFS
6. Narvell Conner
7. Kent Duysen
8. Larry Duysen
9. Dan Fidler
10. Pamela Flick
11. Dorian Fougères,
CCP
12. Marcia Freedman
13. Alan Gallegos, USFS
14. Hon. Ron Goode
15. Dean Gould, USFS
16. Stan Harger
17. Steve Haze
18. Andy Hosford,
USFS
19. Carolyn Hunsaker,
USFS
20. Jenny Johnson
21. Steve Koretoff
22. Matt Meadows
23. John Mount
24. Justine Reynolds
25. Ramiro Rojas, USFS
26. Michelle Selmon
27. Gary Serrato
28. Gus Smith, USFS
29. Mark Smith
30. Erin Stacy
31. John Stewart
32. Craig Thomas
33. Cristel Tufenkjian
34. Mandy Vance
35. Stan Van Velsor
36. Kathy Wood-
McLaughlin