



Meeting Summary: Sierra Cascades Dialog #15 Planning Tomorrow's Forests Today

Thursday October 15, 2015

Lions Gate Hotel, Sacramento, California | Inyo National Forest, Bishop, California
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Dialog Overview

The Sierra Cascades Dialogs provide a forum for conversations among stakeholders and the Forest Service on a range of issues affecting California’s Sierra Nevada and Cascades regions. The goal is to create shared understanding among participants with diverse perspectives.

Dialog 15 focused on how three national forests, the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra, are revising their forest plans according to the requirements of the recent 2012 Planning Rule. These three “early adopter” forests are the first to implement the 2012 Planning Rule in California and can offer lessons learned for future plan revision processes in the Region. The Dialog focused on four key topics in forest plan revision of particular interest to many stakeholders:

- Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) study requirements under the 2012 Planning Rule
- Managing the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) on national forests in California
- Wilderness identification and evaluation under the 2012 Planning Rule
- Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) in forest plan revision

Ninety people participated in the Dialog, 71 in Sacramento and 19 in Bishop. Participants represented a diversity of stakeholder groups, including: conservation and advocacy for natural resource protection, outdoor recreation, rural and urban residents, county governments, state-level natural resource

agencies, private and industrial landowners, tribal interests, youth, and scientists. A small contingent of visiting Chilean foresters was also welcomed and participated in the morning session.

Key Outcomes

Key themes from small group and plenary discussion include:

Topic 1. Wild and Scenic Rivers study requirements

- Improve coordination with counties and other agencies.
- Use interactive maps and technology that allow site-specific public input.
- Conduct early and comprehensive stakeholder outreach, including to users of local resources that may be affected by WSR designation.
- Consider upstream, downstream, temporal, and scalar aspects of river designation.
- Address concerns about WSR status on private lands management.

Topic 2. Pacific Crest Trail Management

- Improve communication and collaboration about the PCT with local communities.
- Use more proactive and site specific efforts to address trail crossing and other conflicts, for example through signage, partnerships, and field visits with stakeholders.
- Collect better data about trail users to inform management and communication.
- Develop more consistent PCT planning, management, maps, and signage across forests.
- Trail corridor. There were different views about the use of a trail corridor to manage the PCT. While some felt a corridor was important to protect the recreation experience for PCT users, others worried about continued loss of access for off highway vehicle users.

Topic 3. Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation

- Develop more data and studies on local economic impacts of wilderness designation.
- Build on successful examples of seeking broad based management solutions for recreation and wilderness, such as the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative.
- There remain disparate views about the implications of designating forest lands as wilderness. Wilderness designation limits modes of travel and therefore access for those with disabilities. Some note that wilderness designation also limits the options in managing the landscape using mechanical treatments or through introduction of fire. Wilderness advocates believe strongly that setting aside substantial portions of lands is essential for diverse, resilient landscapes and ecological systems.

Topic 4. Species of Conservation Concern in forest plan revision

- Use science symposiums, collaborative problem-solving models, and/or expert panels to work through conflicting science and data.
- Explain SCC processes and methods using concrete examples, with specific species.
- Rather than single-species approaches, employ co-adaptive system modeling and ecosystem-based approaches that look at functioning and resilience.
- Include trends, conditions, traditional knowledge, and ecological knowledge in analysis.
- Analyze and manage for SCC corridors.
- Set triggers for adaptive management.

How to better engage the public in plan revision generally

- Build trust in the process through greater responsiveness, transparency, and communication.
- Show how public comments and feedback are incorporated into plans.

- Develop inclusive, iterative, and transparent analysis, engagement, and decision processes.
- Improve transparency about what science the agency is using and why.
- Improve and broaden communication at every stage, including about the process, status, timelines, and opportunities for public involvement.
- Use better and more online tools, communication, new media, and interactive maps.
- Conduct more field visits with the public and stakeholders.
- Engage the public and tribes earlier in the process.
- Improve outreach to broader public audiences, including underrepresented groups.
- Reach out to, recognize, and balance different local, regional, and national constituencies.
- Recognize that multiple meetings and processes can produce stakeholder fatigue.
- Identify clearer public points of contact within the agency.

Detailed Summary of the Proceedings

The following sections detail the discussion and presentations that took place throughout the day. The agenda for the Dialog comprised:

- Opening comments by Al Olson, Director of Ecosystem Planning for the Region.
- Presentations by Forest Service specialists on the four key planning topics for the Dialog.
- Concurrent small-group discussion sessions on the four key planning topics.
- Report-outs from small-groups, in plenary session, with time for audience question and answer.
- Concluding remarks and Q&A with Deputy Regional Forester Bernie Gyant.

Welcome, Orientation, and Update on Forest Plan Revision

Deb Whittall, Regional Social Scientist for the Forest Service, welcomed participants and introduced facilitator **Caelan McGee** of the Center for Collaborative Policy, who explained the format for the day.

Al Olson, Director of Ecosystem Planning Region 5, provided an overview presentation on the 2012 Planning Rule and its implementation in the Region. He emphasized that under the 2012 Planning Rule, public engagement takes place earlier in the plan revision process. Previously this engagement would occur during the agency's public presentation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), whereas now it occurs before the DEIS is completed. He also noted the complexity and uncertainty of interpreting and implementing the 2012 Planning Rule, and emphasized the need for public input.

In particular, Mr. Olson highlighted the agency's desire to hear stakeholder feedback on its plan revision approach and methodology in the early adopter forests. The Forest Service will apply this feedback toward creating more efficient, effective plan revision processes in coming years, as the Region undertakes future rounds of plan revision. He ended by listing a series of topic-specific outputs for the early adopter forests that the agency will release to the public in coming months, including Wilderness Area evaluation narratives, a WSR inventory list and process document, and the SCC rationale.

Forest Service Presentations

Next, a series of presentations by Forest Service specialists overviewed the agency's plan revision methodologies for each of the four key planning topics, highlighting key challenges and complexities. These presentations provided context for the small-group discussion sessions that followed.

Presentation 1. Wild and Scenic Rivers

Teri Drivas, Deputy Director of Public Services for Region 5, overviewed the agency's approach to WSR study under the 2012 Planning Rule. Ms. Drivas noted the areas where public involvement is especially

useful to the Forest Service, and what stakeholders can expect from the Forest Service in the months to come.

- The WSR process has three required steps – inventory, assessment of eligibility, and classification – plus one optional step – suitability.
- The inventory step reviews earlier lists of WSR candidates and attempts to update these based on newly available information and any apparent geographic gaps.
- Eligibility of a river for inclusion in the WSR system is based on criteria related to free-flowing water, water quality, and the presence of at least one Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV). ORVs can be scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. On the basis of these, eligible rivers are evaluated for potential Wild, Scenic, or Recreational classification.
- The final step, suitability analysis, is not being undertaken in the three early adopter forests. Suitability analysis provides the basis for determining which rivers the agency will recommend to congress as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- The Forest Service is especially interested in public input on how to operationalize the concept of ORVs. In order to be approved, these need to capture in detail the uniqueness of the river involved. This raises the key question of the geographical basis of comparison: whether uniqueness is defined regionally or locally (within the watershed or an even geographical unit). This is a key question on which the Forest Service would like public input.
- In the coming months, the Forest Service will post tentative inventory, eligibility, and classification results as an appendix to the DEIS for the early adopter forests.

Presentation 2. Species of Conservation Concern

Don Yasuda, Regional Analyst, and **Virginia Beres**, Special Uses Staff Officer, overviewed the Forest Service process for identifying SCCs in forest plan revision.

- The Planning Rule identifies two categories of at-risk species 1) endangered species and habitat under the Endangered Species Act, and 2) SCCs, defined by the 2012 Planning Rule as species “where scientific information indicates substantial concern for their ability to remain in the landscape for a long time.”
- For the Dialog, the Forest Service is seeking feedback on the processes it used to evaluate SCCs, not species listed under the Endangered Species Act, which has a defined process and list of species.
- The purpose of the SCC approach is to develop plans that will broadly provide the ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. The focus is on providing or maintaining ecological conditions.
- Presenters overviewed the Evaluation process. For species that occur within the national forest boundary, the agency applied threat rankings from the NatureServe database. The key criterion for a threat ranking in NatureServe is that there is a substantial concern about the species based on the best available scientific information.
 - The agency is required to use the NatureServe rankings. The rationale is that it helps create consistency across time and space (eliminates bias)
 - The agency also looked at databases with more local information.
- Presenters discussed some of the challenges of applying best available science to these evaluations, including how to deal with conflicting science. The Forest Service has to consider not just the latest science or the biggest study, but the strongest, most supported science, taken as a whole. Challenges include:

- What causes the effect? Is there cause-effect evidence?
- What is the baseline of comparison – trend from what to what? Most science is relatively recent, but is the current condition the desired condition? What does the science tell us?
- What does all of this mean for the future, given climate change and other drivers of change?
- How do we identify the proper scale for applying existing science?
- When is knowledge certain enough to be actionable for management?
- Presenters reviewed some of the opportunities for public engagement on SCCs in forest plan revision in the early adopter forests, to date.
- Adaptive planning under the 2012 Rule enables new science to be integrated as it arises.
- The Forest Service would like to hear participants' thoughts about how to deal with scientific discrepancies, how to communicate about the approaches it has used, and how the public can be best engaged in determining SCCs.

Presentation 3. Wilderness

Chaz O'Brien, Forest Plan Revision Team, provided an overview of the process the agency uses for recommending wilderness.

- There are four steps: Inventory (Preliminary and Final), Evaluation, Analysis, and Recommendation Decision. The agency is current at the Evaluation phase.
- In the Inventory phase, the agency: developed a preliminary inventory by identifying national forest system lands that meet the legal criteria for inclusion, solicited public feedback, and used the feedback to develop a final inventory.
- In the Evaluation phase, the agency evaluates the wilderness characteristics of each area identified during inventory, including the degree to which each area:
 - Appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.
 - Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.
 - Contains ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.
 - May be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.
- Next, the Forest Supervisor reviewed the evaluation, public input, and staff recommendations to identify specific areas to carry forward into the environmental analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- In the final Recommendation Decision phase,
 - The responsible official may recommend wilderness as part of the Forest Plan Record of Decision, based on the Final Environmental Impact Statement.
 - If a wilderness recommendation is made, it is referred to as a "preliminary administrative recommendation."
 - Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.
- The agency would like to hear input on how to best engage the public in this process.

Presentation 4. Pacific Crest Trail Management

Beth Boyst, PCT Program Manager, reviewed the planning process that the agency has used for PCT management in the three early adopter forests.

- Ms. Boyst began by reviewing the legal and policy framework for PCT management, which includes the National Trails System Act of 1968, the PCT Comprehensive Management Plan of 1982, and others.
- Under the National Trails System Act, the routes of national scenic trails should: “provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant, scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. They should avoid, insofar as practicable, established highways, motor roads, mining areas, power transmission lines, existing commercial and industrial developments.”
- The PCT was designated by Congress in 1968. It travels 2650 miles through California, Oregon, and Washington, crossing 25 national forest units, and multiple other state and federal jurisdictions. 54% of the trail lies within a designated wilderness area. 71% of the trail lies within lands managed by the Forest Service.
- Under current forest planning directives, forest plans must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails. In addition, they should include desired conditions for the trail and may include objectives where existing conditions are different than desired conditions.
- The agency may identify activities to:
 - Improve national scenic and historic trail conditions.
 - Mitigate or enhance associated resource values.
 - Create or improve connections with communities and visitors.
 - Address other desired and measureable outcomes that will improve the national scenic and historic trail experience.
- Planning may also include standards or guidelines to limit projects or activities to protect the trail and associated resource values.
- Planning may identify a “trail corridor” or use other means to clearly identify where plan components apply in reference to the trail.
- To protect scenic attractiveness and integrity, the agency considers three distance zones for trail corridor planning: foreground (0 – ½ mile), middleground: (½ – 4 miles) and background (4 miles to the horizon).
- The PCT will have a designated corridor that is wide enough to encompass resources, qualities, values and associated settings, and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored.
- PCT analysis considers different ways that people use the trail (day use, section use, and thru-trail hiking). It also considers the contribution of the trail for recreation across local, regional, and national scales.

Concurrent Discussion Sessions and Report-Outs

Concurrent discussion sessions took place before lunch in small groups of 6-8 participants, lasting about one hour. Participants selected into small groups as follows: Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation (four groups), SCCs (three groups), PCT management (three groups), and WSRs (one group).

After lunch, representatives of each small group from the concurrent discussions provided a brief report to the larger group, in plenary session. These reports were followed by audience questions, comments, and discussion. These reports and discussions are summarized below.

Topic 1. Wild and Scenic Rivers

Small group discussions focused on two questions: (1) How can the Forest Service improve the process for identifying Outstandingly Remarkable Values? (2) How can the Forest Service best engage the public

in developing the WSR Inventory and Eligibility? Key themes of the report-outs and plenary discussion included:

Coordination with other agencies and government bodies

- The Forest Service should work to improve coordination with counties and with other agencies.

Inclusive, iterative, and transparent decision process

- Think outside the box to engage and share information with the public. Use technology, for example interactive maps where people can place value and location of river use, and videos to update and disperse information about the process and its importance.
- Develop an iterative process in responding to comments and developing alternatives. Currently, there is a gap between input from the public and the agency's decision. Be proactive in illustrating what information, process, criteria and rationale was used in developing decisions.

Early and comprehensive stakeholder outreach

- The Forest Service should involve the public early in the process, and develop an inclusive and comprehensive list of stakeholders and uses.
- Include all of the stakeholders who use the watershed to determine eligibility and ORVs. For example, grazing and other special use permits that impact the watershed.

Improving the process for identifying ORVs

- The Forest Service should make sure that current WSR designations are clearly presented and justified.
- The Forest Service should consider upstream and downstream impacts on fish as a key component of overall system value.
- The WSR designation process should consider temporal situations of rivers at the time of inventory and then in the future. For instance, dams may be removed or wildland fires may burn an area, but the setting will change within a few years/months.
- The Forest Service should consider multiple geographic scales, including clearly defining watersheds since they are often nested.

Additional comments and questions raised in plenary session

- Concern about how WSR status impacts management of adjacent private lands, for example limits to a private landowner's ability to harvest timber for profit.
- Comment about the presence of popular misconceptions about the impacts and implications of WSR designation, and the need for the Forest Service to emphasize the values that accrue from designation when making the case to the public.
- Comment in favor of using private land acquisition, as happened on the North fork of the American River, to minimize problems caused by conflicting land uses.
- Suggestion that, as WSR status requires congressional action, legislative proposals could include language to address concerns such as private lands impacts. Comment that doing so requires stakeholders to get involved and voice their views in the process.
- Question about how WSRs can be de-designated. Answer: Congressional action.

Topic 2. Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) Management

Small groups discussions focused on two questions: (1) What are the most important considerations and challenges in accomplishing PCT conservation and enjoyment as it crosses through national forest lands

and interfaces with other uses? (2) How can the Forest Service best engage the public in planning and management of the PCT? Key themes of the report-outs and plenary discussion included:

Integrating PCT with local communities

- The trail is an asset to California and the Forest Service but it exists in communities, so how will the goals of the PCT integrate with the goals of its host communities?
- There needs to be better communication and collaboration with gateway communities.
- Question: does revenue from the trail go to local communities? (No, because the trail is free to use. So, the trail does not generate any funding but it requires money to maintain it.)
- There is no economic or social data to explain how the trail affects local communities.
- Planning processes need to work better with communities that want to build recreation trails that connect to or cross the PCT (e.g. Eldorado Trail).

Address user conflicts, trail crossings, and off-highway vehicle access

- The Forest Service should protect the recreation experience for PCT users, including addressing the impacts of increased use, noise, and visual impacts. Most of the trail is in designated wilderness areas.
- The Forest Service should address user conflicts on and surrounding the trail and at trail crossings, for example through improved signage and partnerships.
- Trail segments leading to the PCT need to be better managed and consistent with how the PCT is managed.
- Trail crossing challenges include mountain bike trails that dead-end on the PCT, and lack of crossing opportunities for other users, like snowmobile crossings in winter.
- The agency should use site-specific conflict resolution among user groups, and use field visits with stakeholders. Communities and local users care more about what is happening near them (e.g. Northern California communities).
- Management challenges and conflicts vary regionally.
- How will the FS manage increased trail use and a trail corridor without impacting other users?
- Historic trends in OHV user conflicts continue to damage current and future OHV use near the trail and access to other public lands. Every time forest or trail management occurs, more OHV access is taken away to provide for other users/uses. This makes “compromise” hard for OHV users.
- If some users are restricted near or on the PCT then they should be given equal access opportunities on other public lands.
- Concern about permits issued for special events that may be inconsistent with the trail’s intended purposes.

Users: data, signage, and education

- We need for more data about who is using the PCT and how, including trailhead surveys.
- Data on who is using the trail can help improve communication about trail use and ethics.
- There needs to be consistent messaging/signage along the entire PCT.
- Develop maps and signage that highlight multiple uses to reduce conflicts.
- People on and near the trail need to be educated about fire conditions.

Improving PCT planning processes

- There was frustration about the slow pace of PCT-related trails projects from planning to implementation, including re-routing projects.
- Forest Service should work to build trust in the process:
 - Increase pace/responsiveness of planning.
 - Demonstrate how public input is considered in decision-making.
 - Clarify points of contact within the agency for public to approach.
 - Clarify and communicate the planning/management process, including next steps.
- The agency should “move at the speed of trust” to gain public confidence that consultation is not just pro forma and that slow processes actually produce results.
- The large number of meetings and processes is overwhelming to public who wants to participate.
- There should be 1 overall PCT planning document; not 25 separate documents.
- If the PCT were an OHV trail, it would be shut down immediately because of how poor the planning process is.

Improving communication about the trail and planning processes

- Stakeholders want to weigh into the process earlier, and should have been engaged before the Notice of Intent was created; people wanted to contribute to the Notice of Intent, not be surprised by it.
- There is no trust in the process because there is not transparency in the process for revising forest plans and creating management options for the PCT.
- The agency and Pacific Crest Trail Association need to use social media and technology to communicate with trail users and to gather data about users. The agency and Pacific Crest Trail Association need to bring in other partners.
- There is no map or documentation with a consistent route for the entire trail. There are interim routes, but GPS is often wrong. This leads to inadvertent misuse of the trail.
- It isn't clear what are permitted activities on the trail and why.
- The Forest Service communication strategy should include more website information, new media to reach youth and underserved demographics (e.g. YouTube), and improved maps and graphics.
- Need to include the PCT on Motor Vehicle Use Maps and winter recreation maps.

Topic 3. Wilderness Recommendations

Small group discussions focused on two questions: (1) What are the main challenges in interpreting and applying the final Chapter 70 directives? (2) How can the Forest Service best engage the public in wilderness evaluation and planning? Key themes of the report-outs and plenary discussion included:

Public engagement

- The public has not had enough opportunity to provide input into the planning process in general and more specifically regarding wilderness.
- The Forest Service needs to make involvement in every step of the wilderness process easier for the general public. Design the process in a way that allows input from everyone, not just the main advocacy groups that tend to drive the discussion.

- The agency needs to reach a broader, national audience than just the local forests because wilderness is a national designation.
- There needs to be a clear connection made between those public comments submitted to the agency and how they are used (or not used and why) in the wilderness inventory and evaluation process.
- There is not enough tribal consultation in the planning process.
- Tribal views on wilderness differ from FS regulations in several ways but specifically in terms of “where no man has tread.”
- The agency needs to be better educate the public about where/when to be involved.
- The agency should use better online tools and information: more communication formats, more images, better website organization, and interactive mapping.
- The agency should incorporate other successful processes to engage the public, like the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative for the Inyo National Forest.

Comments about the process

- The wilderness process is about making subjective decisions in a subjective process.
- How the agency released the wilderness inventory information was good. The agency should have used the same process for releasing the evaluation information.
- There is not enough information available about the wilderness evaluation process. It is unclear how other areas will be addressed in the future.
- The Inyo National Forest should be commended for sharing the early evaluation information with the public.
- There is current skepticism among stakeholders because of the past questionable agency rationale for not making an area wilderness.

Wilderness, accessibility, and multiple use

- The Wilderness Act is discriminatory to people who physically cannot experience wilderness by foot.
 - Alternatively, others expressed the preference to protect wilderness even if they personally cannot access it due to age or disability.
- Wilderness is a single use designation and erodes the multiple-use nature of public lands.
 - Alternatively, others noted that wilderness is not single-use because it provides for watershed protection, grazing, hiking, etc.
- Any designation, wilderness, WSR or otherwise takes away multiple-use lands. There is no way to create more multiple-use lands that do not already exist. Wilderness means a loss of land usability and access.
- There is inconsistency across forests for how travel management will affect wilderness.
- People value living near and recreating in wild lands; there is more than just economic value in wild lands.
- There is lack of understanding that proposed areas are treated like wilderness.

Concerns about fire and wilderness

- Most large wildfires start in wilderness and escape because of the agency's wilderness management practices for fire suppression and fuels reduction.
- Wilderness is a threat to public safety (e.g. Rim Fire).
- Wilderness is an excuse not to manage the land.

Additional questions and concerns

- What is "suitability?" Who determines this? How is it determined?
- What does "manageability" mean in Chapter 70?
- The FS should consider adjacent land manageability when considering wilderness.
- If something is "rare" is there enough information available to make a rare species determination for wilderness?
- How does the current FS wilderness process track with the original intent of the Wilderness Act?
- We need more economic and demographic data on wilderness users and studies of how wilderness designation impacts local communities.
- There is no way to separate how politics and money are tied to any type of special land designation.

Topic 4. Species of Conservation Concern

Small groups discussions focused on two questions: (1) Under the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service is guided to use "best available science." Due to the complexities involved with determining "best available science" in the context of the large numbers of SCCs, how should the Forest Service consider discrepancies or conflicting findings? (2) How can the Forest Service best engage the public in determining SCCs?

Public engagement and collaboration

- It is not clear how/when the public can provide input into the SCC process or what type of input.
- There should be early and frequent engagement between the agency and the public, throughout the entire process.
- The agency should engage broader communities (e.g. diverse, multi-cultural, tribal, k-12, research institutions, and universities).
- The agency should utilize broader forms of outreach including public service announcements, and use online information resources to reach broader audiences.
- There should be more involvement by the general public, not just interest groups. The agency should reach out and tailor information to broader audiences.
- There should be more partnerships between the agency and citizen's groups to make SCC lists.
- The Forest Service should consider local stakeholders and their needs.
- The agency should recognize cross-boundary issues and coordinate with those other entities and the public to determine and manage for SCCs.

Transparency

- The agency should be more transparent about how it develops SCC lists.
- The agency should be transparent about what science and information it is using and why.

- The agency should be clearer about how public input was provided and used. This information can be shared in person, in a rationale document, or through local meetings.

Addressing Scientific Complexity

- The Forest Service should hold science symposiums to bring various perspectives together.
- The Forest Service should explain its process and methods using concrete examples. The public needs to see specific examples of how SCC species are determined in order to understand and evaluate how to manage conflicting science issues.
- The Forest Service should use the Quincy Library Group model, of bringing together many groups and various sources of information, to address SCCs.
- Expert panels should be used to resolve conflicts in findings and science. Findings should not be used if they cannot be replicated.
- The Forest Service should look at gaps in the ecosystems (functionality, resilience) rather than using only a species-based perspective.
- We should move toward complex co-adaptive system modeling and away from single-species approaches. This is the approach most countries have adopted.
- The agency should include trends, conditions, traditional knowledge, and ecological knowledge in its SCC analyses.
- The agency should consider how SCC corridors are developed and used between the forests.
- The agency should consider natural disasters and how they could impact SCCs.
- Skepticism about quality and bias of databases and science used by the agency; belief that groups funding the research are seeking a predetermined outcome.

Adaptive Management

- The agency should set triggers for adaptive management.
- Questions: When was the baseline for best available science chosen and why? When is the SCC list final? Can it change over time or is it static?
 - Response: There's no "final" list – it is adaptable, based on best available science as it changes over time.
- Question: Will a SCC remain a SCC if it can adapt or change its needs for food/habitat?

Big Picture Questions about Species Management

- Should the agency be approaching SCCs with a conservative approach to save the species or should the agency be actively managing forests and resources instead?
- Is the agency "acting like God" in determining which species to conserve and which not to?
- Human presence and actions need to be considered as threats to species just as much as other environmental impacts and threats.

Taking Stock and Next Steps

Deputy Regional Forester Bernie Gyant offered closing thoughts on the day's discussion and responded to audience questions. Mr. Gyant highlighted that forest plan revision is a new process for the agency and there is a learning curve. The discussion highlighted the agency's next steps and funding challenges for forest plan revision in the Region.

- Questions: What is the Region's current approach for revising the other northern Sierra forests? Will the forest supervisors be involved? Will there be another science synthesis. Will the plan revisions be phased or simultaneous? What are the start dates for the public involvement for those forests?
- There are challenges for the Region in interpreting the Forest Service handbook direction for SCCs .
- Question: Will funding for forest plan revision take away from other projects in the Region? Important work on the forest falls by the wayside until the forest plan is completed revised and accepted.
 - Response: The agency needs more money in general, but also to complete forest plan revisions. (The money issues need to be directed to everyone's local congressional representatives because it is not something the agency can affect.)
- Half of the agency's budget goes to fire suppression, and this has been growing.
- Comment: The expense of fire suppression could be mitigated if the agency did more restoration and fuels reduction work.
 - Response: Fuels reduction work requires funding, too.
- Comment: Revising forest plans from the Stanislaus to the Plumas will affect more than 20 counties. The agency should send a letter to these counties with specific dates and a timeline for when plan revisions will happen in these areas.
 - Comment: This letter should also layout the lessons learned on the Early Adopter forest plan revisions and how the agency will improve the process for the next round.
- Comment: The agency should work with Counties in this process. Counties have a better understanding of local conditions and communities.
- Comment: The agency should reach out to communities and Sierra Cascades Dialog participants in these processes. We want to help and be involved.
- Comment: In light of the major fire issues, should forest plan revisions really be the agency's priority? Why not put plan revisions on the backburner and focus efforts on the ground with current issues such as ecological restoration and fuels reduction?
 - Response: we have a lot of policy and infrastructure challenges.
- Comment: There is no infrastructure in place to deal with all the logging that needs to happen in order to meet the agency's pace/scale needs for forest restoration. This is because the agency stopped producing timber years ago. Can the Forest Service commit to marketable timber levels so that industry can begin again and be sustained in California?
- The Forest Service needs to see new ways to engage the public through innovative technology. This approach can reach broader audiences and engage youth.
- When will the FS share more information about the three early adopter forests? When can the public expect to see the DEIS?