

# MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

June 16, 2016

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

## Meeting Synopsis

At its June 16 meeting, the Dinkey Collaborative began the meeting discussing the re-prioritized monitoring elements as recommended from the Monitoring Work Group. The group agreed on the recommendation with the understanding that some of the questions would be reviewed before finalizing. Members of the Communication Work Group reviewed the progress of the Public Awareness Campaign and its timeline. Ms. LaPlante provided a short presentation on landscape planning efforts. The group discussed how to focus efforts on tree mortality in the near future. Following the discussions, the Fire Policy Work Group informed the group of its fast-moving and positive progress with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Finally, members reviewed project updates and briefly discussed the possibility of hosting staff from the Regional Office to present ideas to increase local contracting. The full Collaborative will meet again on July 21, 2016.

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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 "AGREEMENT" precedes the words.*

*All materials are available to members on DataBasin.org, and general information is available on the Dinkey Collaborative website,*

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sierra/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5440860>

*For questions, please contact the facilitator, Juliana Birkhoff, at [jbirkhoff@ccp.csus.edu](mailto:jbirkhoff@ccp.csus.edu) or (916) 445-2079.*

## Action Items and Agreements

1. **Ms. LaPlante** and Ms. Ballard follow up with Mr. Morris Johnson, Research Fire Ecologist, Pacific Northwest Research Station, on question 8.
2. **Ms. LaPlante** and the facilitator to review gap question numbers 1, 3, 8, 9, 16, and 27 on the Ecological Monitoring Report.
3. **The facilitator** to convene the Ecological Monitoring Work group.
4. **Ms. Reynolds** and Mr. Thomas to follow up on the possibility of the Collaborative coordinating with the Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Council Meeting.
5. **The facilitator** to combine sub-fire groups into one PFWG and convene the work group to list the barriers that limit burning and offering additional suggestions to the SJVAPCD.
6. **Mr. Stewart** to send names of representatives from the recreational community to Ms. Reynolds.
7. **The facilitator** to send members a reminder on how to access Databasin.

## 1. Members Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Sarah LaPlante, Deputy District Ranger, represented the Forest Service and welcomed members and guests to the Dinkey Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) meeting. The facilitator, Dr. Birkhoff, conducted introductions, and reviewed the agenda items and ground rules.

## 2. Interested Party Comment Period

There were no comments at this time.

## 3. Ecological Monitoring

The facilitator explained the process for reprioritizing the Ecological Monitoring Plan. She reviewed the handout and provided an overview of the prioritization criteria, and the ranking for each of the gap questions identified.

Discussion Followed:

- What do the numbers represent in the ranking?
  - The first number represents the item's rank in 2013, and the second represents the rank from 2016.
- Consider revising question 1 to read, "Did forest treatments that reduce canopy cover increase or decrease the water temperature of streams?"
- Members thought questions 3 and 27 regarding sedimentation and avian species had a capability score of zero.
- Question 9 regarding Yosemite toads was a question of interest but members thought it had been moved into the category 'no possibility of carrying it out'.

- These questions may not be feasible for the Forest, but for University researchers or contractors if the funding and resources were available.
- Why does question 8 regarding fire treatments have a capability score of zero when the Forest is already doing the work?
  - The Forest is required to look at the fire effects.
  - Originally, it had the word 'modelled' but the work group removed that word because the models do not account for mortality.
  - Mr. Morris Johnson, Research Fire Ecologist, Pacific Northwest Research Station, was looking into question 8, Ms. LaPlante and Ms. Carolyn Ballard; District Fire Management Officer will follow up.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. LaPlante and Ms. Ballard follow up with Mr. Morris Johnson on question 8.
- With the tree mortality in mind, will there be monitoring on what happens when the trees stop utilizing the water?
  - Questions 18 and 21 discuss watershed and hydrology impacts.
- For question 16 regarding habitat use, the capability score is zero but the Forest is currently researching this issue and has data from Dinkey North and South.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. LaPlante and the facilitator to review gap question numbers 1, 3, 8, 9, 16, and 27 on the Ecological Monitoring Report.
- Consider adding criteria to include oak trees and acorn production.
- Is it only Sierra National Forest resources or are the partnerships with Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW) included?
  - The owl and fisher funding is an official match, but Ms. LaPlante was unsure about KREW funding.
- US Forest Service staff revised the Forest Plan based on the previous 20-year's data. That data no longer reflects the changes. Conducting hazard tree removal on pines will change the water use and availability. It will be important to monitor oaks and cedars, while monitoring the budget.
- The facilitator proposed reconvening the Monitoring Work Group to look at the questions again.
- Ms. LaPlante reemphasized the need for a Co-Chairperson for the work group's effectiveness.
  - Remove Ms. Ballard and Ms. Flick from the work group list of participants.
  - Erin Stacy volunteered to take over the co-chair position, if the group agrees.
  - Ensure that Mr. Steve Ostoja is at the next work group meeting.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Convene the Ecological Monitoring Work Group to review and revise plan questions and columns as necessary.
- The data is still valid despite the mortality. The Monitoring Plan is still functional and relevant for Eastfork and Exchequer, but not for Soaproot.
- Members agreed that proceeding with the monitoring was still beneficial and could lead to future questions.

- It would be helpful for Ms. Lauren Pile, Ecologist/Project Monitoring Coordinator (United States Forest Service (USFS), Dinkey CFLRP) to have a month to review the information before reconvening the group.
- The facilitator reviewed the recommendation, with the caveat that the questions and columns would be reviewed and revised as necessary.
- **AGREEMENT:** Members agreed to recommend the re-prioritized monitoring elements to the Forest.
  - **Members in support of the recommendation:** Mr. Stewart, Ms. Flick, Mr. Kent Duysen, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Smith, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Bagley, Mr. Mount, Ms. Stacy, Mr. Ashley, Mr. Larry Duysen, Ms. Oberti, Hon. Ron Goode.
  - **Members not in support of the recommendation:** None.

## 4. Public Awareness and Education Campaign Activities and Target Audiences

Members updated the group on the progress of the website development and reviewed the timeline for the outreach and engagement plan.

Discussion followed:

- The plan includes activities such as survey development, outreach to key stakeholder groups, phone interviews, outreach events, public media communication, and progress reports to the Collaborative.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Thomas to follow up on the possibility of the Collaborative coordinating with the Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire council meeting.
- How did the Communication Work Group identify key stakeholder groups and leaders?
  - The Communication Work Group provided a list to the Collaborative and members prioritized the list.
  - Add representatives from the recreational community to the list of key stakeholder groups.
  - It would be beneficial to display information on Collaborative activities in local stores for other audiences to see.
  - When posting information in the community, include a map.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Stewart to send a list of representatives from the recreational community to Ms. Reynolds.
- For the Public Symposium, would it be the same presenters or Collaborative Members? If it is the same presenters, it is important to consider the budget for travel expenses.
  - Often times it is more difficult for members of the public to understand the technical dialogue of the researchers, it would be better to have Collaborative members presenting a digested version of the information.
- Sierra Resource Conservation District has offered to host the website, and research into the pricing is underway.
  - Information will remain on Databasin but will be accessible from the website.

- **ACTION ITEM:** The facilitator to send members a reminder on how to access Databasin.
- In conjunction with the website, it would be beneficial to have a Facebook page.
  - The Communication Work Group will discuss this option further.

## 5. Landscape Planning Work Group Updates

Ms. LaPlante updated Collaborative members on an exploratory approach to create a "green network" of living trees. She also discussed the opportunities to stop or slow a fire moving through the Collaborative area. Ms. Pile used available data to compile a beginning overlay of forest mortality.

Discussion followed:

- How recent is the data?
  - The images were taken on May 28.
- It would be beneficial to create maps every 32 or 48 days to better document change.
- How accurate are the Red, Green, and Yellow pixels?
  - It is a very preliminary image and some of the results could have been picking up vegetation data rather than conifers, making it a conservative estimate.
  - The aerial detection data can be superimposed over the image as well as over the climactic water deficit.
  - It would also be beneficial to create a wildlife layer for owl, fisher, and amphibians.
- Additional components may include, but are not limited to:
  - Possible treatment areas.
  - Wildlife habitat.
  - Cultural and historical resources.
  - Site quality data.
  - Water deficit and evapotranspiration.
  - Percent slope.
  - Aspect.
  - Bear clover and ceanothus habitat.
  - Black oak habitat.
  - Incense cedar habitat.
  - Possible suppression opportunities.
- Possible mortality project locations include:
  - Area along Dinkey Creek Rd between the Bald Mountain and Dinkey North project areas. Efforts would include vegetation type conversion, creating a defensible space, and increasing the width of the corridor. These actions are beyond the current NEPA.
- What about the public utilities infrastructure? Efforts should include:
  - Risk mitigation at high use recreation areas such as campgrounds with fuel breaks or concentrated clearance.

- Protecting the green areas.
- Consider cultural resources. The project must include suppression and restoration.
- Blend restoration with fire prevention and safety efforts.
- Is there a maintenance plan on the fuel breaks?
  - There are maintenance plans on the fuel breaks, but some areas have grown back (e.g. the powerhouse fire area).
  - Front Country fuel breaks are in place.
  - The 10S18 Defensible Fuel Profile Zone needs work, but does not have the extensive tree mortality like the rest of Blue Canyon.
- There is not enough funding or staff to respond to tree mortality, but the Forest is working to prioritize its efforts to accomplish both restoration and catastrophic wildfire prevention. The intent is to keep planning for the House project, but also recognize the changing conditions and work to prevent wildfire.
- Once the Forest Service has selected areas for a resilient forest, look into the possible opportunities for categorical exclusions for NEPA.
- Large portions of the trees either have been thinned or have died, it is important to focus on the small trees and brush.
- The intent of the CFLRP legislation is restoration. Funds and efforts must focus on restoration. The Forest has other resources to respond with the mortality, but the Forest Service must spend Collaborative dollars on the intent of the CFLRP.
  - The CFLRP may not be relevant in places like Blue Canyon, what can the Forest Service do?
  - How the Forest Service create a green network? What are the approaches to achieve multiple benefits?
  - Utilize the 'root stock' seeds to develop a new forest that is more resistant to bark beetles.
  - Continue cone collection as a part of reforestation.
- Where crews have been working near Bass Lake, there is an area with only one dead tree within 10 acres. Restoring the forest has brought 60 black oaks, 49 golden oaks and many seedlings.
- There should be no conflict between restoration and protection. Reducing risk though restoration is still reducing risk overall and creating multiple benefits.
- Finding the best approach is a difficult task. How can the Forest Plan fire on the landscape with the ever-increasing mortality? Should the Forest replant? What vegetation types should be restored? Where is it appropriate to place fuel breaks? If there is an area that will still be there in a year, start there. Changes in the approach to fire are necessary.
- There is also the option of restoring areas where trees are all dead and starting with a 'blank slate.'
- **ACTION ITEM**: The members agreed that the group would reconvene when Ms. Pile is better acquainted with the project needs.

- The information will go to the Landscape Planning Work Group meeting for a possible August conversation.

## 6. Fire Policy Work Group Updates

The Fire Policy Work Group (FPWG) has been successful in creating immediate changes with prescribed fire. The group was working on educating the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) with educational outreach to board members when the board reached positive conclusions and directed staff to allow more burning. The FPWG had developed a list of suggestions and the Air Board took the list and added to it.

- The SJVAPCD will now allow medium sized burns on poor air quality areas. Burns must be segmented into a localized event.
- Sequoia National Park has successfully began the Goliath burn and the SJVAPCD is allowing it to continue.
- The board is beyond needing education, and is open to more suggestions.
- In the past, if they received complaints were received, a burn would likely be shut down; this is not the case now. SJVAPCD will defend prescribed fire and are willing to support options that may be more drastic.
- Changes are being seen at all levels, from local to state. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) was planning to shut down all burning above a certain elevation, which included the KREW burn, but gave Edison the option to continue if they chose to do so.
- The California Air Resources Board is aware of the message and is supportive.
- Change is happening. The CALFIRE director is making an effort to expand the Collaborative work across CA.
  - CALFIRE also has funding to conduct cross-jurisdictional work in different areas.
- Members were inspired by the Collaborative members who had accomplished so much in such a short time.
- Television ads are supporting preparation and changing the community perspective from being reactive to proactive.
- Multi-agency support and cooperation is needed.
- Many agencies are finding ways to support prescribed and managed fires to reduce the impacts on wildfires.
- At the last Prescribed Fire Work Group (PFWG) meeting, members asked what the forest needed. The PFWG recommended that each Forest should have dedicated prescribed fire crews.
  - Currently, Forests bring on firefighters for a limited time, if they are brought on earlier in the season to train; it takes away from their time later the fire season.
- When the conditions are right, it is important to have all available resources. In the past certifications were not needed for igniting and managing fire. There are more tools available now to determine burn days. Rather than setting a date to burn, it is important to monitor the conditions and be prepared for when the days are available.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Members suggested requesting the Forest Supervisor to allocate the resources so that staff and funding are available when needed. The planning efforts must match the availability of burn days, and there must be staff ready for prescribed burns.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Members recommended combining sub-fire groups into one PFWG moving forward.
  - The next steps include listing the barriers that limit burning and offering additional suggestions to the SJVAPCD.

## 7. Project Updates

Members reviewed the handout, but had no questions.

## 8. Region Five Acquisition Management Request

The facilitator explained that one of the issues identified in the Sierra Cascades All Lands Enhancement discussions was the need for defining local and increasing local contracting. In response, the Regional Forester sent a letter to all Forest Supervisors and Directors requesting time for Regional Office staff to present to the Collaborative on ‘What is Local?’ and the ‘Potential for Increased Local Contracting.’

- Ms. LaPlante explained that the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment has already briefed the Collaborative on the information regarding ‘What is Local’ and thought the information would be duplicative.
- The conversation first arose when a Forest hired a contractor from Oregon and the local communities were outraged. Proximity matters for local contracting and should be included in the decision-making process.
- It would be a great opportunity for Regional Office staff to come and see the progress and needs of the Collaborative.
- The Forest Service uses two basic types of contracts-US wide or locally. Patrick Gallegos would be a good point of contact for more information.
- Members agreed that it would be beneficial for the Regional Office staff to come and present the information on increasing local contracting.
- The Cold Springs Tribe is preparing for a Tribal Forest Protection Act proposal that will include a process of prioritizing labor crews.
  - There is an opportunity to continue the conversation for inclusion of tribal burning crews.

## 9. Attendees

- |                     |                     |                          |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Emily Adams, CCP | 5. Rich Bagley      | 8. Juliana Birkhoff, CCP |
| 2. Chip Ashley      | 6. Carolyn Ballard, | 9. Jeff Blewett          |
| 3. Jared Aldern     | USFS                | 10. John Cielnicky, USFS |
| 4. Maria Ayela      | 7. Miles Baty       | 11. Joshua Courter,      |

- USFS  
12. Kent Duysen  
13. Larry Duysen  
14. Pamela Flick  
15. Ron Goode  
16. Dean Gould, USFS  
17. Iveth Hernandez,  
USFS  
18. Sarah LaPlante, USFS

19. Ernest Marquez  
20. John Mount  
21. Jodi Nickerson, USFS  
22. Chris Oberti  
23. Steve Ostoja, USFS  
24. Lauren Pile, USFS  
25. Justine Reynolds  
26. Mark Smith  
27. Kim Sorini-Wilson,

- USFS  
28. John Stewart  
29. Craig Thomas  
30. Erin Stacy  
31. Dave Updike, USFS  
32. Melinda Van  
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