MEETING SUMMARY | Landscape Planning Webinar

February 27, 2012

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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Action Items

1. **Stan and Mosé** to bring the TWS road model into the Collaborative planning process.
2. **Dorian to help Rich Kangas** find the 2011 landscape evaluation historical fire and historical logging information.
3. **Mosé and Carolyn** to investigate prescribed burning opportunity in relation to Dinkey North and South.
4. **Craig Thomas to work with Mosé** on soliciting Fish and Wildlife Service representation in discussions and field visits involving the Critical Aquatic Refuge.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Sierra National Forest, welcome participants and thanked them for their time, noting that the webinar would advance discussions at the next Collaborative meeting on March 15. Mr. Dorian Fougères, facilitator, reviewed the agenda and participants introduced themselves.

2. Review Landscape Planning Goal and Work to Date

Mr. Jones-Yellin reiterated that the approach taken in January was not fruitful, but provided insights for today's webinar, namely that the project proposal would have to be place-based (rather than abstract) and based on restoration opportunities (rather than NEPA, contracting, or other boundaries). He explained that today's presentation would show a series of slides with different overlays, with the goal of clarifying what opportunities are available on the landscape.

If the group supported this approach at the end of the webinar, the March 15 would go into further detail on the potential project boundary.

In terms of a work plan and timeline, Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that he aims to refine the boundary until the field season, and then examine controversial locations. By the end of the field season he hopes to have a proposed action that has been developed with the Collaborative and gone through revisions, so that during the autumn the Collaborative would have seen this multiple times and worked out the details. Sierra National Forest could then submit a Notice of Intent and begin the NEPA process. In the Collaborative's Charter this is typically where Collaborative involvement ends, but like with Soaproot and Eastfork, Mr. Jones-Yellin would appreciate the Collaborative's assistance in developing alternatives and responding to comments. The Forest would then continue through a NEPA EA or EIS, and go back into the field and do the marking and layout in 2013, and then sell the contract and implement the project in 2014.

3. Review Proposed 2014 Project Boundary

Mr. Jones-Yellin then moved into his presentation, taking questions as they arose.

Part 1: Landscape Characteristics

- It was recommended to include all roads, including undocumented, since they all have an impact. The Wilderness Society (TWS) is developing a general model incorporating criteria for all forests and supporting prioritization of decommissioning opportunities; the run for Sierra National Forest may include specific criteria.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Stan and Mosé** to bring the TWS road model into the Collaborative planning process.
- In response to a question, it was noted that the 2011 landscape evaluation presentations included detailed information on the location of historical fires, and that lightning was not recorded in electronic databases because it covered less than 10 hectares.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Dorian to help Rich Kangas** find the 2011 landscape evaluation historical fire information.

Part 2: Locations of Past Projects

- In terms of including meadows outside the project area in overall landscape restoration, given their isolation, Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that the project would focus on a main area, and that this could be augmented with auxiliary locations. This could also be applied to roadwork.
    - It was requested that this process be explicated so the Collaborative could incorporate it into discussions of other projects, and how more isolated locations would be managed in conjunction with main projects.

- In response to a question, it was noted that the 2011 landscape evaluation presentations included detailed information on historical logging. At the turn of the century there would have been large trees in the forest; the current size class map can show low size values due to large numbers of small stems, but this is the best information available.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Dorian to help Rich Kangas** find the 2011 landscape evaluation historical logging information.

Part 3: Proposed Boundary

- It was noted that it was unclear whether the northern portion of the boundary has been surveyed by Craig Thompson and Kathryn Purcell for spotted owls. The 2004 Framework requires that, if habitat is suitable, an area be surveyed to see if it has become occupied. Management strategies could make the area more suitable.
- There are two known den sites on the boundary of the project, with none in the area. It is not clear whether PSW has surveyed this area. This portion of the project includes prime fisher habitat, so the Collaborative would have to figure out what this meant for their management strategy. There are also meadows and PACs.
- It is unclear whether riparian areas are degraded; more surveying is needed. Maps show potential habitat that is not occupied. Staff will collect data this summer.
- If it makes sense, the project could be extended north of the current area, although is is likely that this is a watershed boundary.
- It was unclear whether burning south of Dinkey North and South was reflected in the boundary, and if there was an opportunity for expanding the prescribed burn area. Dinkey North and South talked about underburning in an area that did not overlap with the harvest area, if one became available.
    - Mr. Rich Bagley noted that SCE will conduct thing at the south end of Shaver Lake, with burning near the east boundary of the SCE property, and there were some actions already scheduled that would be complementary to the work being considered here, in the same timeframe.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Mosé and Carolyn** to investigate prescribed burning opportunity in relation to Dinkey North and South.
- It was requested that a simple list of all management constraints be assembled to help stakeholders track the issues.
- The presentation implies that areas treated in the past are currently in a desired state. Clarity is needed about whether future projects will focus on one of the other four opportunity areas, as well as past project areas that have not attained desired conditions. This will depend on a thorough analysis of current conditions.

Critical Aquatic Refuge

- The Lahontan cutthroat trout is located in the Critical Aquatic Refuge (CAR). Yosemite toad is in the meadows, though likely not mountain yellow-legged frog. The CAR also includes road decommissioning considerations.
- Excellent baseline LiDAR data exists, except for one corner near the CAR.

- The relationship between Lahontan cutthroat trout and the restoration of red fir in this area, plus high probability fisher habitat, will be critical to articulate. Fire return intervals and severities are different in that area.
    - Recent research talks about a wide range, small areas of high intensity and large areas of moderate to low intensity. Treatments must reflect this diversity. In the Cow Creek CAR, the group discussed how to design treatments in a way to address concerns about erosion and runoff impacts to sensitive species; Lahontan cutthroat trout must be protected wherever they occur.
    - The Fish and Wildlife Service must be included in discussions, as they have authority over listed species. The Forest would likely be required to consult with the Service about proposed actions, like any situation with endangered species.
    - The Endangered Species Act is recognized, and at the same time the Collaborative must have the opportunity to talk directly with Forest Service specialists and be part of making recommendations and decisions. This did not happen with the discussions about removing lodgepole pine in Snow Corral, and the Forest Service refused to let the Collaborative discuss this with the specialists. The Forest Service needs to work with the Collaborative to think about how to implement restoration ideas and processes and manage them thoughtfully. For example, how can fire be managed there to avoid disturbance and sediment loading?
    - A field visit including the Fish and Wildlife Service is needed to develop a thoughtful approach. Notifying them that work on habitat for threatened and sensitive species may help the Service understand what is at stake and the need for their involvement.
        - **ACTION ITEM: Craig Thomas to work with Mosé** on soliciting Fish and Wildlife Service representation in discussions and field visits involving the Critical Aquatic Refuge.

4. Next Steps, Endorsement of the Approach, and the March 15 Meeting

Mr. Jones-Yellin clarified that if participants support this approach and provisional boundary, he will brief the full Collaborative on March 15, and futher identify areas that need additional input – like the CAR, meadows south of Shaver Lake, SCE coordination – so the Collaborative can begin work on these topics. Once the Collaborative feels fairly certain about the location, specialists will collect data (over the summer), and also raise questions before a proposed action is developed. The Collaborative and specialists will work through their questions together, developing a proposed action over the course of the spring and the summer.

The facilitator checked with each participant (aside from Forest Service staff, represented by Mr. Jones-Yellin), and the group agreed to bring the proposed approach and provisional boundary back to the full Collaborative on March 15, for discussion and, if possible, recommendation. Mr. Craig Thomas clarified that he was not concerned about the boundary,

and at the same time this was not a green card for the Forest Service to do anything. More specifically, the fisher conservation strategy remained a major concern, and Mr. Dan Jiron has left the region; and a broad group including the Fish and Wildlife Service must be involved in planning restoration in the Lahontan cutthroat trout area, where high elevation areas probably burned historically in ways that people are currently uncomfortable with. Mr. Thomas favored protecting endemic species, and also working around constraints to the use of fire and restoration of the historical fire regime. The Collaborative must be able to discuss and work through these issues, rather than having the Forest Service make an internal decision. Ms. Pam Flick echoed Mr. Thomas' concerns.

5. Participants

1. Rich Bagley
2. Carolyn Ballard, SNF
3. Keith Ballard, SNF
4. Stephanie Barnes, SNF
5. Sue Britting
6. Kent Duysen
7. Pam Flick
8. Dorian Fougères, facilitator
9. Julie Gott, SNF
10. Steve Haze
11. Mosé Jones-Yellin, SNF
12. Rich Kangas
13. Kim Sorini-Wilson, SNF
14. Craig Thomas
15. Stan Van Velsor
16. Cindy Whelan