

Dinkey Collaborative – Full Collaborative Meeting SUMMARY – February 22, 2011

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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1. Opening Remarks and Staff Introductions

Scott Armentrout, Supervisor, Sierra National Forest (SNF) welcomed meeting participants. Scott noted that the Region’s ecological restoration objectives provided guidance for the Dinkey Collaborative. This requires the Forest to focus on restoration that yields multiple benefits while increasing the scope and pace of management. He reiterated the need to plan projects so that fieldwork and treatments can be conducted in 2012 and yield ecological services. He believed this was possible even though the compressed timeframe meant things had to continue moving.

Larry Fisher, Public Lands Program Manager, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, introduced himself and his colleagues. Larry noted he is working with several Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects (CFLRPs) across the country, and thanked members for this opportunity to observe their meeting.

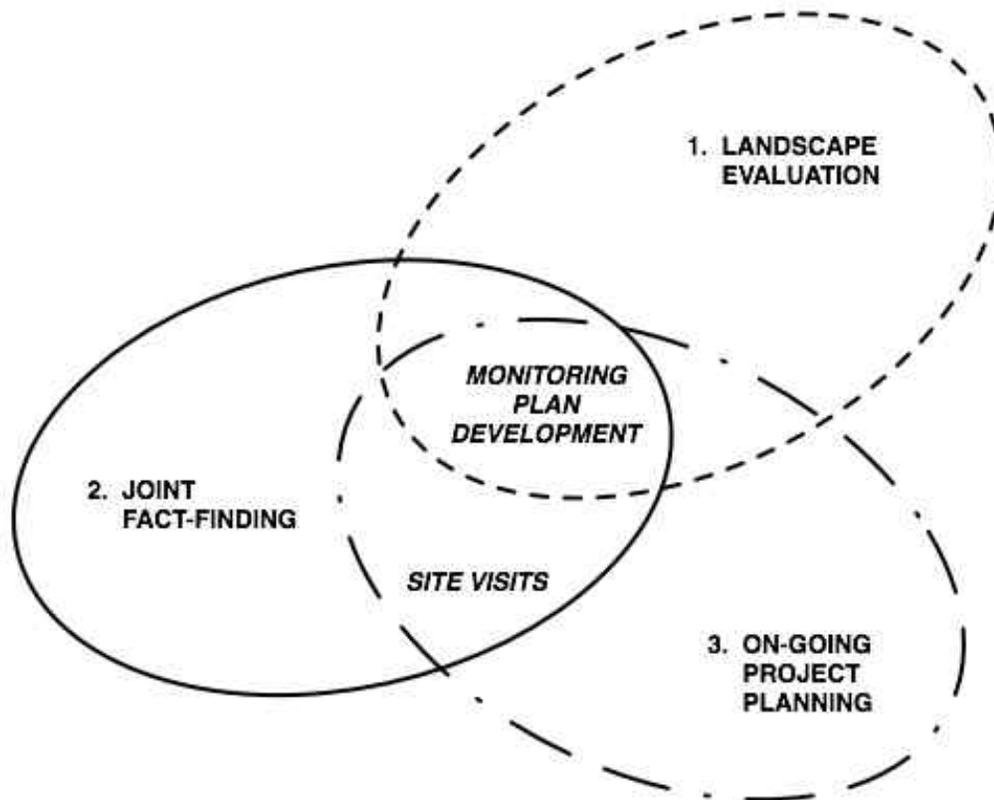
Facilitator Dorian Fougères reviewed the agenda and groundrules.

2. Updates on Recent Developments and Initial Discussion of Next Steps

A. Three-part Schedule of Activities: Landscape Evaluation, Ongoing Project Planning, and Joint Fact-Finding

The facilitator reviewed the outcomes of the morning’s technical meeting, which included adjusting the site boundaries for the Soaproot and Snowy Patterson projects [see Project Planning meeting summary, February 22, 2011]. He also reviewed the outcomes of two webinar-based technical planning meetings conducted the previous week, during which time members emphasized the need to step back and look at the Dinkey landscape as a whole, as well

as continue doing detailed work on specific projects, which included addressing some scientific debates. Based on these discussions the facilitator presented a three-part approach for the Collaborative's work, noting that monitoring and field visits were also critical components of the approach. The following diagram was provided:



The group then asked some questions and commented on the proposal.

A member noted that this structure would allow the group to create treatment prescriptions for less controversial areas first, while still advancing monitoring work and fact-finding that would eventually allow for prescriptions in areas that are more sensitive.

Later in the afternoon the Honorable Ron Goode, Chairman of the North Fork Tribe, emphasized that cultural resources should be included as a part of the landscape evaluation. This extended beyond archaeological sites to features of the landscape like springs as well as plant and animal resources. The facilitator and Mosé Jones-Yellin, SNF, agreed to work with Ron to help bring this aspect into the process.

Later in the afternoon Mosé Jones-Yellin, SNF, suggested it would be worthwhile to explore the possibility of expanding the existing Soaproot project boundary into additional low conflict areas. A few members were supportive while another wanted to focus on the existing boundaries before considering any expansions.

ACTION ITEM: Mosé Jones-Yellin and Dorian Fougères (facilitator) to work with Ron Goode to appropriately bring cultural resources into the landscape evaluation process.

B. Desired Conditions

Another member noted that it would be critical to identify desired conditions for the landscape as a whole, at multiple scales, in order to develop projects with specific treatments.

Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy, noted that his organization had developed some ideas for desired conditions, and that he could share this with the group. Ramiro Rojas, District Silviculturalist, SNF, also asked the group whether it would be helpful for the Forest Service to provide a straw proposal of desired conditions, and the group agreed that this would be useful. The group requested that the proposal:

1. reference the objectives established in the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act and other foundational documents
2. include desired conditions for ecological resources as well as socioeconomic resources
3. include information on density, underburning, and snag creation, and
4. be based upon integrated planning that includes watershed, roads, and wildlife objectives, not only vegetation and fuels objectives.

Scott Armentrout, Supervisor, SNF, noted that the Regional Forester's ecological intent was being reprinted and would contain guiding principles for ensuring that ecological restoration is part of on-the-ground projects. This would help identify smart investments that met multiple objectives.

ACTION ITEM: Craig Thomas to provide a copy of SFL's straw proposal for desired conditions.

ACTION ITEM: Ramiro Rojas and staff to provide a straw proposal for desired conditions.

C. Multiparty Monitoring

A member asked about how the need for multiparty monitoring identified in the diagram would be met, and noted that other CFLRPs had hired an outside expert.

It was suggested that Marc Meyer, USFS, would be an appropriate person to help lead the effort from the Forest Service side. Marc noted he had a large workload and would need staff support if his role were to expand. In response to a question, Marc explained that the Dinkey Landscape is one of the most advanced when it comes to LiDAR data and analysis, so it would be a good reason for him to get more involved. Furthermore, Marc made four suggestions for monitoring work:

- (1) Ensure, per the Act and an earlier conference call on monitoring, that the monitoring plan and activities are developed and implemented through multiparty collaboration
- (2) Ensure that baseline pretreatment data is gathered for any areas that will be treated later, so it is possible to substantively compare the effects of treatments

- (3) Ensure that the monitoring plan is developed to answer specific questions needed to advance landscape and project planning, rather than being a general effort to gather as much data as possible
- (4) Ensure that the monitoring plan references and leverages the existing monitoring information already being collected by the Forest Service.

Per Marc's observation one member suggested that additional expert support would be needed to develop monitoring around socioeconomic and youth issues. It was also suggested that it would be good to have a co-lead from the Collaborative to work closely with Marc Meyer, if he were designated. One member noted that UC Merced is also doing monitoring work in areas similar to Dinkey, and there was a chance that a university student with appropriate technical expertise could support the effort and help provide coordination.

D. Prescribed Fire

In response to a question about the fire history on the Soaproot project, staff explained that there is a limited number of "entries" over a given period of years, which is linked to air quality regulations. It might take two or three entries to achieve desired conditions, but with advance biomass removal (i.e., pretreatment) this number can be decreased. It was noted that fire history studies suggest a return interval of five to seven years.

Members expressed significant concern about these constraints. Several members explained that the use of prescribed fire was a key tool in ecological restoration and called out in the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act, hence they would not feel comfortable if the Collaborative could not significantly increase the acreage treated this way. It was suggested that if these limitations affect the restoration potential then the Forest Service should convene a conversation about regulations and discretionary actions.

A member noted that air quality in the valley is cleanest from approximately February to May, which is a good time for planned ignitions, but this conflicts with Limited Operating Periods (LOPs). After this time ozone and fine particulate levels rise until the winter.

It was noted that smoke, weather, and labor workforce availability are important constraints.

Ramiro Rojas, District Silviculturalist, explained that the Dinkey proposal included underburning as a strategy. The proposed action for Soaproot North unit includes broadcast burning along a strategic ridge, while using fire in the Providence 1 unit has been difficult to control and is high risk, even if material is piled in advance.

One member explained that it was important to educate people about how to use fire. For example his Tribe would burn some areas three times in ten years, and then the area would be in good shape for 20 years. Different plants needed the smoke. People in the surrounding area need to understand what's being done and why, because other treatments will not be enough.

A member suggested that a concerted discussion about the use of fire was needed. This had to address constraints on Forest Service work, as well as consider planning issues. This included exploring how much fire is needed, when this should occur, the appropriate intensity, and desired

conditions like post-treatment fuel levels and heterogeneity. The member noted that most current treatments do not occur during the natural fire season. Later in the afternoon another member noted that simulating how stand density would affect snags was made more complex by climate change.

A member asked for clarification of how the treatment schedule's proposed 30,000 to 48,000 acres of prescribed burns could be conducted given regulatory constraints. One staff member suggested that the use of helicopters was the best approach. Another staff mentioned that all fires on the Providence 1 unit had gotten out of control because of unpredictable winds, so underburning here was taken off the table because of public safety risks. Soaproot had fewer constraints.

One member noted that summer lightning fires could be catastrophic depending on the fuel loads. Another member did not agree, and noted that recent fires had been predominantly low and medium intensity.

It was noted that the question about how to maximize prescribed fire would have to be part of the landscape evaluation as well as project planning. One member requested that staff present some options to the group regarding prescribed fire in Soaproot.

Mosé Jones-Yellin agreed to at least come back with an explanation of the prescribed fire elements in Soaproot, and additional options if needed thereafter. Furthermore, in preparing for the landscape evaluation staff could gather available information on watershed fuels and fire history.

Marc Meyer, USFS, suggested it would be best to find areas that had low levels of conflict between vegetation goals and wildlife goals. Marc added that the University of California is completing a Sierra Nevada Risk Assessment that will provide information on fuels, and that decisions would also have to involve the best available science and adaptive management.

The facilitator summarized discussions and noted that it seemed three steps were necessary for the landscape evaluation: (1) staff would have to provide information (not options) about the fire, wildlife, vegetation and other variables that members desired, (2) the group would have to identify criteria for deciding whether to work in a particular region, and then (3) the group would use the information and criteria to prioritize where they wanted to go on the landscape.

ACTION ITEM: Staff to prepare a summary of constraints on the use of fire, in preparation for a focused discussion including air quality experts in the near future.

ACTION ITEM: Staff to prepare an explanation of the prescribed fire elements in Soaproot.

E. Fisher and Prescribed Fire Proposal, and Revised Project Boundaries

Craig Thompson, SNF, noted that he and his colleague Kathy Purcell were planning to propose a treatment of a unit that had fisher activity, in an effort to understand the effects of prescribed fire

on the animals. The proposal would build in protection of the fisher and monitoring for adaptive management.

In response to a request from staff, members reiterated that per the morning's technical discussion [see Project Planning meeting summary, February 22, 2011], the Providence 1 unit boundary should be amended so that any areas with documented fisher use or a probability of occurrence greater than 0.4 CBI were avoided.

Members then asked animal-specific questions to Craig Thompson, SNF. Regarding one female that had slipped its collar in 2009, staff felt that scat surveys indicated the animal was now further to the east. One member suggested it would be better to be cautious and assume the animal was still there. Staff also noted the importance of overlaying topography.

The group agreed that it would be appropriate for Craig Thompson and Kathy Purcell, SNF, to review existing data and the group's earlier decision to avoid fisher areas, and provide the group with a unit-specific revised project boundary for Providence 1.

ACTION ITEM: Craig Thompson and Kathy Purcell, SNF, to provide the group with a unit-specific revised project boundary for Providence 1.

ACTION ITEM: Mosé Jones-Yellin to distribute the overlays of fisher information and project boundaries prepared by Janet Sanchez, SNF.

3. Draft Collaborative Charter

Gina Bartlett, facilitator, asked the group whether they agreed with the revised charter.

It was suggested to add a reference to old growth in the Introduction (section 2), and to add reference to air quality in the Vision (section 3).

Dirk Charley, SNF, also noted that the role of the Tribal Relations Program Manager needed to be revised to better reflect that role. This includes safeguarding information about sacred sites yet still having this important aspect of cultural resources inform the Dinkey planning process. Dirk noted that the quarterly Tribal forum provides one way of raising this issue.

Members also did not agree about the meaning of the term "reforestation" in the list of possible ecological restoration tools. Some felt it was an appropriate reference to tree planting, while others felt it was a foil for salvage logging.

Members also did not agree about "increasing ecosystem resilience to insects and disease" because they felt that this pitted the reduction of tree mortality against the creation of snags for sensitive and endangered species. Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy, offered to work offline on revising this language.

One member also felt that the reference to “supporting a viable forest products industry” went further than the language in the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act, and was therefore not appropriate. Another member desired this reference to remain.

The facilitator was tasked with resolving these disagreements.

ACTION ITEM: Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy, to work offline to develop appropriate language regarding insect and disease stressors in the Charter Vision.

ACTION ITEM: Dorian Fougères, facilitator, to revise the draft Charter.

4. Web Presence

The facilitator, Dorian Fougères, was tasked with investigating simple data sharing websites that had minimal costs.

ACTION ITEM: Dorian Fougères, facilitator, to investigate low-cost data sharing website options.

5. Attendance

1. Scott Armentrout, SNF
2. Richard Bagley
3. Carolyn Ballard, SNF
4. Keith Ballard, SNF
5. Sue Britting
6. Elissa Brown
7. Kim Caringer, USIECR
8. Dirk Charley, USFS
9. Kent Duysen
10. Larry Duysen
11. Patrick Emmert
12. Scott Ferreria
13. Larry Fisher, USIECR
14. Pamela Flick
15. Dorian Fougères, facilitator
16. Honorable Ron Goode
17. Rebecca Garcia, SNF
18. Julie Gott, SNF
19. Amy Gustafson, SNF
20. Chad Hanson
21. Andy Hosford, SNF
22. Mosé Jones-Yellin, SNF
23. Rich Kangas
24. Ray Laclergue
25. John Lorenzana, SNF
26. Tom Lowe, SNF
27. Maggie McCaffrey, USIECR
28. Matt Meadows
29. Marc Meyer, USFS
30. Scott Nester
31. Ramiro Rojas, SNF
32. Gwen Samat
33. Greg Schroer, SNF
34. Kim Sorini-Wilson, SNF
35. Craig Thomas
36. Craig Thompson, USFS
37. Stan van Velsor
38. Cindy Whelan, SNF