

# MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

May 19, 2011

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

## Action Items

- Marc Meyer offered to add a paper on historical species composition shifts in an adjacent area to the Collaborative’s living library.
- Mose Jones-Yellin to make available his notes on opportunities associated with each project option.

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## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Mosé Jones-Yellin, Dinkey Collaborative project manager for the Sierra National Forest, welcomed the participants to the full Collaborative meeting and reviewed the agenda, noting

the intent of different items. Mosé noted that Ray Porter, High Sierra District Ranger, was out sick. Facilitator Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy, reviewed the meeting ground rules.

## **2. Landscape Evaluation Part 1: Process Review and Refinement of Criteria**

The facilitator reminded the group that as part of their Landscape Evaluation process they were learning about the key aspects of different dimensions of the landscape (e.g., watershed, fuels, vegetation, cultural resources), and examining a series of potential projects to implement in 2013-14. The intent was to identify several projects in the coming months so that the Collaborative could have adequate time to shape them before the 2013-14 field season, rather than having to rush through the process. The facilitator explained that the criteria document would be used to loosely evaluate the potential projects. The facilitator also reminded the group that a project option involving Cow Creek was presented in April, and that two more would be presented later in the day. In terms of process, the idea was that in June or July the group would review the four projects; receive additional information from the Forest Service per member requests at the April and May meetings; conduct an exercise to evaluate the three or four options according to the criteria adopted; and then decide whether to proceed with each project, and whether additional options were requested.

Later in the day Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that a fourth option could include Pacific fisher, although it would be difficult to specify a specific location at this point so the project might have to be structured differently than the rest; Ms. Sue Britting suggested that instead of focusing on fisher and then trying to create burn plans for those areas, start instead with existing burn plans and then see whether opportunities for studying fisher behavior existed in those areas.

The facilitator reviewed changes made to the evaluation criteria based on April feedback, noting where the changes were highlighted in the text.

- Mr. Chad Hanson clarified that his original suggestion for improving the second criterion included the term “natural” before “early successional habitat.” The group felt this term was too difficult to define. Mr. Hanson clarified that his primary concern was to avoid clearcuts. Mr. Craig Thomas asked whether “clearcuts” would include an opening one acre in size, to which Mr. Hanson explained that yes, he was concerned about patch cuts like this, and that his primary concern was to have an example that pertained to fire.
  - The group agreed to the language, “for example, early successional habitat from fire”

- Per Mr. Stan van Velsor’s suggestion, the group also agreed to add the term “heterogeneous” to the second criterion, which would then read “creation of desired and heterogeneous habitat”
- Per Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin’s suggestion, the group agreed to add “improving” to the fourth criterion, which would then read “for fuels treatment and improving public safety”

### 3. Landscape Evaluation Part 2: Foundational Information - Vegetation

Mr. Ramiro Rojas, High Sierra Ranger District Silviculturalist, USFS, provided a detailed presentation on the historical changes in vegetation on the Dinkey Landscape, concluding with his suggestions on priority opportunities for restoration. Mr. Rojas’ detailed powerpoint slides will be made available in color on the Collaborative’s website. As with previous presentations on foundational information, the group then focused on questions of clarification and requests for additional information needed to understand the landscape’s vegetation.

- Mr. van Velsor asked, How is tree canopy cover measured? A combination of photo interpretation and plot data, depending on the location.
- Ms. Sue Britting asked, What vegetation classification system was Weislander using (referenced in an early slide)? It is not clear whether his classification matches current descriptions, which likely were developed in the 1940s. This should be clarified.
- Ms. Britting asked, Does Sudworth (referenced in an early slide) include images of shrubs, to help improve our understanding of shrub and patch dynamics? Shrub images are not available for the Dinkey landscape but do exist for other locations, and a paper has been published on that.
- Mr. van Velsor asked, How is heterogeneity determined? This is borrowed from another scientist who drew on soil moisture and focused on changes in tree density and canopy cover.
  - Other important aspects of heterogeneity would include species composition, stand structure, snag abundance, habitat types.
- Mr. Hanson asked, What quantitative (and qualitative) information exists regarding historical shifts in tree species composition, and the relationship with logging and management?
  - The Forest’s Ecological Unit Inventory (EUI) analysis includes potential natural vegetation (PNV) based on 1957 soil surveys and certain assumptions about fire. This is one reference.

- Mr. Hanson noted the importance of differentiating between managed and unmanaged lands.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Marc Meyer offered to add a paper on historical species composition shifts in an adjacent area to the Collaborative’s living library.
- Mr. Hanson noted that it is important to differentiate between limiting and maximum numbers for the stand density index (SDI). Mr. Hanson and Mr. Rojas did not agree on the appropriate numbers to use and how to interpret this.
  - Ms. Elissa Brown expressed concern that the use of technical terms makes it hard for non-technical members to follow the conversation and understand the importance of what is being discussed. Ms. Brown expressed concern about the pace of these discussions, and requested that members avoid the use of acronyms.
  - Ms. Britting explained that the concept is complicated but important for discussions about how to manage for healthy trees, and that it warrants having a more detailed discussion at an appropriate time.
  - Mr. Hanson provided a succinct explanation of the term, noting its relationship to site capacity, disturbance, and species composition. The notetaker was not able to capture it verbatim.
  - The facilitator noted that the group or technical work group would revisit this topic in more detail, and the intent of the current session was simply to flag topics where additional information was needed.
- Mr. Bob Rice requested that an elevational component be added to the vegetation characterization.
- Ms. Britting emphasized the importance of thinking about likely future treatments and their sequencing to achieve a desired state, particularly those involving fire where obtain several reentries or intensity may be very difficult. Ms. Britting explained that hence the group should not assume it can use fire everywhere on the landscape. She also noted that thinning of certain species like white fir could have cascading effects in an a stand because the reduction of some trees would reduce soil moisture and hence change conditions for others in the stand.
- The Honorable Ron Goode noted that these conversations focused on the production of goods and services from the forest. He felt that discussions about “forest health” should not be limited to goods and services, but should instead focus on the health of all species.
  - Mr. Thomas echoed the concern that the focus of the group must be larger than tree mortality, and should instead focus on the entire biological diversity of the forest ecosystems.

- Mr. Rojas noted that silviculture itself does not set objectives but rather provides a series of tools. He emphasized the importance of clarifying and agreeing upon objectives, and only then deciding which tools were best.
- Mr. Marc Meyer, USFS, noted the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act as a key reference given that it underpins this group's work.

## **4. Cultural Resources and the Dinkey Landscape**

Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that Collaborative members had noted several times that tribal participation was important, and that he had met with tribal leaders to discuss the Collaborative and their desired level of involvement. He noted that today's presentation by three tribal chairpersons was the beginning of an important conversation with tribal communities.

Mr. Dirk Charley, Tribal Liaison for the Sierra and Sequoia National Forests, asked members to make sure they had an information packet. He explained that the presentations would focus on the Haslett Basin and that he would explain several photographs, and that the powerpoint presentation would be posted after the meeting. He noted that the main goal for the day was to improve the Collaborative's understanding of how Native Americans have and continue to live with and utilize the Dinkey Landscape, flagging that some aspects of engagement would require consultation between sovereign tribal and federal governments.

### **A. Honorable Ron Goode, Chairman, North Fork Mono Tribe**

Mr. Goode briefly noted a website that provided examples of meadow restoration work that he has guided, which involve cultural resources. This work included some meadows that were 400 or 600 acres in size, where only a few cultural resources were harvestable; since their work they have had 24 species come back in an area where just 5 or 6 were surviving, including strawberries, mint, soaproot, medicines, deer, and bears. He noted that his work includes a strong youth engagement component.

Mr. Goode also noted that he and a colleague have received a \$500,000 grant to develop curriculum for K-12 schools regarding Native American land tenure. He noted this would be available online later this summer, and would be available to anyone interested, including the Collaborative. He explained that land tenure refers to the history of the land, including native practices that continue today, as well as the language arts and science.

Mr. Goode referenced the handout comparing differences in the cultural views of Native Americans and the general population regarding goods and services and convenience. He

noted that massive changes had occurred on the land in just a few generations. Today there were no eagles on the San Joaquin River, because there were no fish, because the water was too warm – because dams were built. He grew up without electricity at a time when he could do everything with the water in the river. Today he is told not to drink it.

He flagged that one handout is excerpted from a book he published on historical cultural resources in the Dinkey Landscape and surrounding region. He noted there were 179 listed, and he missed a few. He explained that this was an important reference describing where these resources grew, when they were harvested, how they were used, and other things.

Mr. Charley transitioned between presenters by explained the images on the slides.

## **B. Honorable Robert Marquez, Chairman, Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians**

Mr. Marquez pointed to a map from 1982 that illustrated his tribe's historical territory, and noted that Dinkey Creek is right in the middle. He expressed grave concern that he and his people are having constantly to rebury their relatives, and he is dedicated to stopping the need for this. He noted that his tribe is federally recognized, and that he attended today to work together, not to cause problems or act as a special interest group.

He cited a cautionary case where his tribe had an agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to act carefully when replacing a pipe, but they moved into construction early and destroyed the remains of several of his ancestors. He explained that this was an example where everything seems to be done appropriately and an agreement was in place, and yet the utility company still broke its word and created grief and destruction. He wants to minimize impacts to cultural sites and tribal identity.

He emphasized that baseline data already exists, and that the PG&E in 1986 completed a survey of cultural resources on the Dinkey Landscape. He stressed that the group needs to talk to the utilities about the information they have in order to avoid cultural sites.

He explained that he rarely participates in collaborative meetings because his tribe has legal status as a sovereign government and hence talks directly with decision makers to establish government-to-government agreements. His tribe has several agreements in place regarding hydropower, and cases where the courts have found in favor of his tribe, which could restrict what the Collaborative proposes to do on the land. He wants the Collaborative to be aware of federal laws, legal decisions, and obligations.

He expressed his willingness to continue working with the project manager, and also expressed his concern that it does not sound like the group has a clear purpose or vision for what it is trying to achieve.

Mr. Charley presented additional slides.

The facilitator noted that many comment earlier in the day and Mr. Marquez' comments suggested that the group needed to clarify its vision of what constituted "restoration".

### **C. Honorable Ron Alec, Chairman, Haslett Basin Traditional Committee**

Mr. Alec said he would try and explain the importance of the land in laymen's terms. He noted that approximately 27 years ago his tribe established an agreement with PG&E and the Forest Service to protect their gravesites and ancestors, which were being looted. He noted that the areas in the slides shown by Mr. Charley were of an area where his people were buried, and that his tribe did not want to share that information because it would jeopardize them.

He noted that these efforts occur regularly, and that the same issues continue to come up even though there are new projects. He asked why the group was focused on creating new projects rather than improving ones that were already on the ground.

Mr. Alec emphasized the living relationship between his people and the land and the mountains, which they view as the veins of the earth. He noted his people descend from the bear, and also have a sacred relationship with the eagle. Everything is alive, including the rocks and the rock people.

He noted that under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) he had attempted to get the bones of his people back from the universities. He was escorted off the property, and only 10 of 2,000 bodies were returned. Even though these were the remains and artefacts of his people, they were prohibited from touching and possessing those items that remained at the university.

He noted that he did not speak in technical terms yet still had important recommendations for improving the land. He suggested focusing and starting work on the little things that are important, like the abundance of poison oak in Haslett Basin. He also expressed concern about the sugar and yellow pine being taken over by undergrowth. He underscored the importance of traditional language for preserving everything. He asked people to learn the word, "munahoo," which means "hello." He expressed his happiness that the young Mr. Marquez was leading his tribe, and closed his presentation with a song about how the bear and the eagle helped take a message to the Creator to heal the people.

#### D. Questions and Discussion, including Options for Tribal Engagement

- Ms. Britting asked what the proper approach would be to working with the tribe, what possible negative changes to the landscape might include, and what common benefits might exist.
  - Mr. Goode explained that he had done some work in a meadow but then the Forest Service came in to clean the area and destroyed the elderberries he had been cultivating. Despite good intentions there were still problems. Mr. Goode also noted that sacred sites presented a conundrum because they have to be protected but the elders are very careful about what information they provide because revealing the sites puts them at risk.
  - Mr. Alec emphasized the importance of getting outside and working and answering questions together. He noted that his people had the same approach to sacred medicines as they did to sacred sites. Mr. Alec also noted that in the past many medicine people were killed because they presented a challenge to dam-building.
  - Mr. Marquez explained that there are many legal angles to consider, and also that he worked hard to bring traditional knowledge and ways of knowing into the process. In the field any project that disturbs the land must include a cultural resource monitor.
- Mr. Hanson suggested adding a criterion to the landscape evaluation regarding the protection of sacred sites and resources.
- Mr. Alan Gallegos, Forest Service, suggested that part of the desired conditions focus on cultural resources. Mr. Marquez replied that cultural resource were part of all the desired conditions and management activities, from the vegetation through the wildlife through the waters, rather than being a separate part of the work.

The facilitator repeated that Mr. Jones-Yellin noted this was the start of dialogue with the tribes, and summarized what he heard as important ways for continuing the conversation:

- Guidance from Mr. Charley, the tribal liaison
- Government-to-government consultation, as needed
- Continued participation in Collaborative meetings, like today
- Participation in Collaborative field visits, like Mr. Goode the next day
- Development of a common vision, including tribal perspectives and desires
- The use of cultural monitors during project implementation that disturbs land
- A presentation by Mr. Goode on Native uses of fire (Mr. Goode is presenting on this at Stanford in early June)

- The inclusion of tribal perspectives throughout the desired conditions

## **5. Presentation of 2013/14 Near-Term Project Options 2 and 3: Bald Mountain and Aperson Ridge**

Mr. Jones-Yellin provided a brief presentation on these two new project options for near-term planning followed by implementation in 2013/14. In response to a question from Mr. van Velsor, Mr. Jones-Yellin reiterated that in June or July the Collaborative would review all project options and conduct an exercise with the evaluation criteria to identify which projects to advance, and whether additional options were requested.

Mr. Jones-Yellin's powerpoint covered the proposed project boundaries, a brief history of each area, how each project met the evaluation criteria (noting that likely every project option would inform future management and a crude cost-benefit analysis might be too simplistic). He explained that Haslett Basin has two projects, an Aperson Ridge is just one of these. His slides will be made available in color on the Collaborative's website.

For Bald Mountain Mr. Jones-Yellin clarified that staff had discussed including an additional southern segment that bordered Southern California Edison (SCE) lands and included recreation sites, camp grounds, high traffic roads, and a few meadows. However given the relatively weak links between those concerns and ecological restoration the current proposal did not include this sliver of land.

- He noted that Bald Mountain also has a section that is covered by the 40% CBI fisher probability index, which would eliminate mechanical vegetation treatments in those areas.
- Similarly there are Protected Activity Centers (PACs) for spotted and great gray owls and goshawks.
- The potential for fuels treatment exists because the area is not within the wildland urban interface (WUI).
- The potential for road decommissioning has not been fully explored.
- Watershed improvements might better be focused upstream.

For Aperson Ridge Mr. Jones-Yellin noted:

- There has been minimal vegetation management in this area, along with some road maintenance work.

- There have been a handful of major fires. Some burning work is ongoing. Fuels treatment is difficult and costly, and should be done in the autumn – which is the worst time with regard to air quality concerns.
- The area was outside fisher habitat, although it does include spotted owl PACs. Deer, turkey, and quail use the area for migration.
- Tribal communities are interested in the project and it provides an opportunity to improve communication and relationships.

#### **A. Questions and Discussion regarding Bald Mountain**

- Mr. Hanson noted that the area is higher elevation and might have good opportunities for mixed intensity burning and in turn good potential for creating habitat. Other members echoed that observation.
- Ms. Pam Flick asked whether the western border of Bald Mountain was private land. Mr. Jones-Yellin confirmed this and noted the opportunity to coordinate management with SCE. Mr. Rich Bagley noted that SCE has been conducting joint projects including burning near the project boundary. He suggested there is a potential to look at mixed intensity fire and further coordinate management in this area, including joint burning work.
- The group discussed whether the “creation” of new habitat meant starting new habitat types restoring existing habitat types. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that his understanding was that the group was focused on restoring existing habitat, and reiterated that the group would benefit from clarifying its vision.
- Mr. Marquez asked about the intent and outcome for road decommissioning, and whether this would include restoring an area to a natural state or converting it to trails. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that he thought the focus would be returning the roads to a natural state because of concerns about impacts to the land, impacts to water quality, or because they were no longer being used. The group could develop criteria for making decisions and could choose other desired outcomes.
- Several members of the group noted that tree density treatments were mentioned in the presentation and this would be an area where the Collaborative would want careful involvement.
- Members noted that Markwood Meadow provides the one opportunity for meadow restoration in this project. The area is full of aspen and elderberry. Mr. Goode noted that he had spoken with hunters in the area last fall and they noted many bears and few deer. He suggested talking with the California Department of Fish and Game about deer population dynamics.
- In response to a question from Mr. van Velsor, Mr. Jones-Yellin clarified that no road construction would be required for the Bald Mountain project.

- Mr. van Velsor asked what might be done to improve wildlife habitat. Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that this might involve decreasing tree density to improve PAC habitat. Mr. Hanson noted that a secondary benefit of this might involve the creation of blackbacked woodpecker habitat at higher elevations. Ms. Kim Sorini-Wilson, USFS, noted that conditions on the ground might not support this.
- The group emphasized the importance of keeping a record of their conversations so that down the road they would not have to repeat these exploratory conversations.
  - The facilitator noted that the meeting summaries captured the questions and answers.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Jones-Yellin to make available his notes on opportunities associated with each project option.

## B. Questions and Discussion regarding Aperson Ridge

- Mr. Mark Smith requested additional information on the historical extent of yellow pine in the project area.
- Mr. Ray Laclergue noted the potential for native grass restoration, which would in turn benefit native insect communities.

## 6. Informational Updates

### A. Fisher Research Proposal

Mr. Craig Thompson, USFS, explained that the update was brief: due to weather constraints no burn was possible in the fisher area. It is likely that a burn would be possible in the coming months, which will be outside the limited operating period (LOP). He and his colleagues have thought about other sites but it is hard to predict where fisher will den and what those opportunities would be.

- Mr. Hanson noted that he felt the research would be more useful because the burn would take place during the historical burn season.
- Ms. Britting Suggested that burn plans should drive NEPA analyses, and a different analysis could be included to account for what to do if fisher were present. This should be easier than trying to locate fisher and then design a burn plan around them.
- Mr. Bagley asked whether this fisher returned to the den location, and Mr. Thompson confirmed it would be her second year in that den. Mr. Bagley suggested being careful because a later burn might disturb this behavior, and not inform how fisher respond to burns within the LOP.

## **B. Soaproot Project Proposed Action**

Ms. Elaine Alaniz explained that she was writing the NEPA analysis and that she had made revisions based on the technical working group's webinar on May 4. Changes included maintaining reference to the General Technical Report 220; making the design proactive in terms of taking advantage of opportunities; and clarifying that the treatments focused on restoration. She suggested that the analysis would be done in the next few days and the Collaborative would have until May 27 to provide final comments.

- Mr. Hanson expressed serious concern about any treatment involving intermediate trees because he did not feel this had any restoration value, and also that proposed actions often become preferred alternatives once they are released for scoping.
- Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that Mr. Hanson talk further with him after reviewing the revised proposed action, as he felt the revision was responsive to this concern. Mr. Jones-Yellin also noted that the group had created a special transition process in the Collaborative Charter to deal with this project, which emphasized continued Collaborative involvement to refine the desired conditions, proposed action, and alternatives after the initiating of scoping.

## **C. Monitoring Work Group**

Mr. Marc Meyer reviewed the recent work of the Monitoring Work Group, noting that members had developed an initial framework and principles, which references the objectives in the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program legislation and the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Strategy. Mr. Meyer noted that the next step was to refine questions for a series of topic areas and identify appropriate indicators. The plan would then be refined after considering the costs and benefits of different approaches, technologies, and needs and opportunities associated with the near-term projects. Mr. Meyer reminded the group that this near-term monitoring plan would eventually be extended to a full-scale monitoring plan.

## **D. Road Decommissioning Decision-Support Tool**

Mr. van Velsor noted that The Wilderness Society (TWS) has been working with the Forest Service on their travel management planning efforts. The second phase involves identifying a minimum road system, including those that can be decommissioned. For this work TWS has created a decision-support tool that uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and social data as well as use data to analyze the importance of different roads. He noted that TWS will be

conducting one or two tools to present this tool, and invited interested Collaborative members to contact him at [stan\\_vanvelsor@tws.org](mailto:stan_vanvelsor@tws.org) or (415) 398-1111.

In response to questions, Mr. van Velsor clarified that TWS has recommended that the effort focus on the scale of a forest, not a ranger district, and that the process was advisory, not decision-making.

### **E. Upcoming Budgeting Information Discussion**

Mr. Thomas asked when the Collaborative would discuss budgeting. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that detailed information was not yet available, and that the group would discuss this when it was available and they could hence provide grounded recommendations.

### **F. Reminder to Submit Member Biographies**

Ms. Flick noted that she had received around a dozen biographies, and encouraged members to please send their biographies in to her. She noted that photos could be attached separately.

### **G. Data Basin as a Online Platform for the Dinkey Collaborative**

The facilitator noted that Mr. Marc Meyer had connected the Dinkey Collaborative with the Conservation Biology Institute's Data Basin online platform for information sharing, and established an account. The facilitator noted that staff would be working to set up the site as a source for all information used by the Collaborative – technical information, meeting materials and summaries, a meeting calendar, a list of action items and due dates, a member roster, the living library, and other topics. He noted that members would be required to create an account, and that he would work with the platform administrator schedule a series of short webinars to introduce members to Data Basin and show them how to set up a password and navigate the site.

## **7. Mini-Briefing: Willow Creek Collaborative, Bass Lake Ranger District, Sierra National Forest**

Ms. Elissa Brown, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, distributed a map of the Willow Creek watershed and a handout describing the vision and objectives for a new collaborative group. She noted that the scale, scope, and duration of the effort was smaller than the Dinkey Collaborative, and

in its first phase would focus on developing principles for managing the forest. She noted there was wide interest in the group, and that District Ranger Dave Marten was involved on the Forest Service side. She acknowledged that people were busy and noted that people could chose to get involved at different levels of activity. She noted that a kickoff meeting would be held in July, with the planning process likely ending in November.

Ms. Mandy Vance, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, noted that the handout had a short survey and requested members to turn this in to her or send it to her via email.

Mr. Jones-Yellin thanked members for their time, suggested that it would be important to start discussing and defining a vision for restoration in more detail, and encouraged all members to attend the field trip the following morning, which would focus on fisher den sites and ladder fuels in the Soaproot project area.

## 8. Attendees

1. Elaine Alaniz
2. Ron Alec
3. Rich Bagley
4. Sue Britting
5. Elissa Brown
6. Dirk Charley
7. Charlotte Chorneau
8. Larry Duysen
9. Pamela Flick
10. Dorian Fougères
11. Allan Gallegos
12. Lisa Garcia
13. Ron Goode
14. Chad Hanson
15. Andy Hosford
16. Mosé Jones-Yellin
17. David Konno
18. Ray Laclergue
19. Steve Marsh
20. Robert Marquez
21. Marc Meyer
22. Tom Munton
23. Bob Rice
24. Ramiro Rojas
25. Mark Smith
26. Kim Sorini-Wilson
27. Craig Thomas
28. Craig Thompson
29. Denise Tomie
30. Mandy Vance
31. Stan Van Velsor
32. Cindy Whelan