

# MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

## March 15, 2012

### Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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#### Action Items

1. **Craig Thompson** – evaluate boundary Bald Mountain proposed project boundary line and make recommendations about how it might be expanded to include low-risk treatments in fisher territory that would produce valuable research information.
2. **Dorian Fougères** – distribute landscape evaluation and Mount Ashland links, and CFLR sign-on letter.
3. **Stan Van Velsor** – talk with Pat Winters about the potential overlap between the science synthesis and socioeconomic monitoring proposal, and the timeframe for the science synthesis.
4. **Mose Jones-Yellin** – gather information that clarifies the RFP solicitation and evaluation process.

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Deputy District Ranger, High Sierra Ranger District (HSRD), Sierra National Forest (SNF), welcomed all participants to the full Collaborative meeting and reviewed the agenda. Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin also thanked Mr. Matt Meadows from UC Merced and Tom Wheeler (SFCC) for their attendance and participation with the Collaborative. The facilitator, Dorian Fougères, walked participants through the agenda.

All meeting materials and presentations are posted to the group’s site on Databasin.org.

## 2. Sustainable Forests and Community Collaborative

Mr. Tom Wheeler of the Sustainable Forest Community Collaborative (SFCC) introduced himself and his members to the group. He distributed a supporting SFCC handout and stated that the SFCC officially wants to support the Dinkey collaborative, as noted in the Dinkey charter. Mr. Wheeler noted that the SCFF supports projects such as public and Tribal involvement; public education and outreach; High Sierra Ranger District – Bass Lake Ranger District learning exchange; community economic development project, e.g, bioenergy feasibility study; media and public relations; technical and facilitation assistance. The members had questions and comments for Mr. Wheeler and the SFCC members:

- Possible collaboration with the SFCC to support the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project (SNAMP) and Kings River Project regarding water and fisher research coordination, including other areas where research projects are being conducted and the 2013-2014 results analysis and related outreach.
- Suggestion to research a one-megawatt biomass facility that does not require combustion. Currently, the group is in contact with a vendor in the North Fork area, and developing a business model.
- Collaboration with the SFCC will break down barriers by promoting communication with supervisors and creating connections between counties, including through Yosemite Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council.

## 3. Fisher Research and Collaborative Engagement

Mr. Craig Thompson presented information on fisher research. He noted different projects that consisted of fuel treatments and fisher issues. Mr. Thompson discussed the fuel treatments in the Mount Ashland area and briefly described some of the preliminary details of the research site. Members followed with questions and comments:

- Regarding the treatment's timeframe and the impacts, it was over a six month period, and the research was geared to the fishers immediate response.
- The fisher population is native.
- Regarding the monitoring process and methods, that the fishers have GPS tags and their activity is being monitored.
- Terms such as commercial and pre-commercial should be specified.
- Regarding the gender of the fishers being monitored, there were two female fishers that were looking to den.
- There was close involvement between the city and Forest Service when suggesting treatments.

**ACTION ITEM:** Dorian Fougères to distribute landscape evaluation and Mount Ashland links.

Mr. Thompson further presented findings on monitoring ringtails in Soaproot. Ringtails and fishers have similar den structures, and monitoring the ringtail helps to understand fisher habits. They have tagged 40 ringtails and have a decent sample size to analyze research data. The members had questions and comments:

- Ringtail populations are variable.
- Ringtail and fisher have an overlapping diet.
- Ringtails are located in the lower elevations.

Mr. Thompson continued his presentation by highlighting issues associated with pesticides. He stated that these chemicals cause hemorrhaging and lead to premature fisher deaths. These toxins are linked to marijuana gardens, and therefore are not easily accessible for chemical sampling. Documentation of the chemicals is challenging. Research would include an interactive fisher model, which illustrates treatments and impacts.

- Suggest field visit to a remediated marijuana farm. The group wanted to encourage efforts for site cleanup with volunteers.

The upcoming fisher research projects are intended to begin in spring. The proposed underburning is the same as that approved by the Collaborative in 2010. The members had questions and comments:

- Identify the most sensitive denning periods, and observe the fisher's activity. For example noting when fishers do not move their kits. The group also asked, if the fisher moved because of a prescribed burn, how would a permanent or temporary adjustment be distinguished? The group stated that identifying the type of adjustment from the fisher study would be an important result.
- Parameters of the fisher experiment were discussed. The group spoke about conditions inside the den and the smoke detectors around the fisher sites. The group referenced a similar woodpecker study to compare the cavity conditions with fisher dens. The group mentioned a potential debriefing of the experiment and a letter of support drafted for the April meeting.
- Consider the project deadline in December 2013, and the information can be used for project planning. The group stated that monitoring after 2014 would be weak.

#### **4. Long Term Monitoring Framework**

Ms. Sue Britting handed out a document on monitoring framework. She guided the group through a circular model of adaptive management that starts with assessment, leads to design, to treatment, to monitoring, and back to assessment. Ms. Britting stated that the intention of the handout was to foster synchronization of the project timelines and generate information for an analysis of gaps in fisher understanding. She further noted that the model's intent is to demonstrate the pacing of the current projects. The members had a variety of questions and comments on the framework handout:

- Long-term research support is needed.
- Specific gaps in start and end dates of projects were noted.
- The group noted that 2014 is a critical decision date for fisher listing. However, work through 2013 could help manage and protect the species and avoid listing.
  - The original DLRP proposal called for a science symposium, and there could be a nexus with this if it were planned in advance.

- The decision process for fisher work needs development: where and when can treatments be separated, and how can they be sequenced?
  - Some things can be started earlier, like GTR-based brush retention evaluation, or other key questions like those explored in Cedar Valley.
  - What treatments come next and where should build on what's already available.
- It is essential to link treatments to a long-term monitoring program – and to have adequate funding for such a program.
- A map is needed that displays fisher treatment efforts and their timing.

## 5. Forest Plan Revision Discussion

Mr. Scott Armentrout introduced the Forest Plan Revision handout. He focused on keeping the new plan economical and timely. He reviewed the past revisions to the Forest Plan, for example touching on the 1991 plan and the 2004 revision. Mr. Armentrout stated that the revised plan includes improved social evaluations. He wanted to involve the Collaborative in the revision process. Mr. Armentrout emphasized that there is a short timeframe of three years and a budget of approximately one million dollars to finish the process. He noted that another challenge would be having enough funds to operate while the new plan develops. He stated that the first phase is the science synthesis followed by forest assessments.

Mr. Armentrout said that the Dinkey Collaborative positively influenced the budget outcomes, for examples he suggested the results of Soaproot, Eastfork, and Dinkey North and South were beneficial projects. With possible budget cuts for next year, Mr. Armentrout wanted to raise the issue of working with the Collaborative to propose ideas for the plan that would be quick and inexpensive to implement. The members had questions and comments for Mr. Armentrout and the Forest Plan Revision:

- Travel Management sub-part A requires an assessment of the current road system in Sierra National Forest. This should inform the revision. It also already has a public engagement component.
- The science synthesis needs to go beyond a literature review to examine trends, existing conditions, and create recommendations. The group discussed that a perfect answer will never be reached, but testing and review is important. An example was the use of the fisher research by the Collaborative.
- The revision process should develop and leverage decision-support tools.
- The group asked about the level of collaboration needed, and the effect on the group.
  - It was suggested that a work group could be created for the Collaborative to provide input to the Forest Plan Revision.
  - Regular briefings could also be provided to keep the Collaborative aware of developments. Early on this should create an opportunity for shared learning about the framing and process for revision, while later these could be less intensive.

- Participants in the revision would benefit from learning collaborative skills and third-party facilitation.
- The Collaborative could provide input on the questions and components that should be included in the science synthesis.
- Recognize the best use of time and resources.
- One member raised concern that the new rule made it an option to preserve species of conservation concern, and negated the mandatory requirement there would be not safety net. This undermined the value of the entire effort, including the science synthesis. Species would now be identified by the regional forest, whereas the 1982 planning rule required the protection of native populations. It was unclear whether the Forest still intended to meet the spirit of native population protection, above and beyond simply adhering to standards and guidelines.
  - Mr. Armentrout explained that the new wording still intends to monitor species viability, but is more flexible in its application.

## 6. Project Planning in 2012: Approach, Project Boundary, and Key Issues

Mr. Jones-Yellin summarized the February webinar presentation with a slideshow consisting of GIS data layers of the Dinkey Landscape. He displayed the mapping of past projects, which led to the proposed boundary. He distributed a document that outlined project issues identified during the February webinar and proposed approaches for addressing them (joint fact-finding, site visits, full Collaborative meetings, technical groups, in-kind work by members, monitoring efforts). He noted that the boundary lines can change based on the member's suggestions.

- The existing Land Management Plan for the Forest has desired conditions for red fir. Red and white fir have evolved under mixed fire intensity.
- Consider the desired conditions to set guidelines for the boundary.
- Suggest Mr. Marc Meyer to present the historic fire intervals in the site area.
- Identify the adjacent areas that have fisher habitats. New information would continue to become available until implementation in 2014.
- More information on fisher in the proposed boundary will be available in the fall (including Rebecca Green's dissertation, burn impacts, and KREW tracking). As noted earlier, activities in fisher areas would have to consider adjacent areas, spatial and temporal sequencing, and the scale of treatments themselves. Activities in these areas must be information-driven

**ACTION ITEM:** Craig Thompson to evaluate Bald Mountain proposed project boundary line and make recommendations about how it might be expanded to include low-risk treatments in fisher territory that would produce valuable research information.

- The group discussed the options for creating a categorical exclusion for meadows, and how this would fit with the larger project. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to have meadows on a separate plan. This might be more efficient than planning meadow by meadow, if meadows could be separated out in the draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Because of lack of time, the Collaborative noted that the Soaproot and Eastfork projects did not utilize the full potential of the group. When decisions are made, It was noted that the group needed to better draw on the full range of technical expertise available. For example, some members felt that the Snowy Corral treatment did not include adequate discussion. Internal debates should be aired, and expert sessions held as needed.
- Have documentation (notes and images) of site visits for those unable to attend.
- Note the proposed project is approximately 8000 acres.
- The group discussed the potential of expanding the boundary line south and including some of the Southern California Edison property. It was noted that low risk prescription burns should happen near sites with fisher.
  - Mr. Patrick Emmert described the Southern California Edison efforts around Shaver Lakes, and stated that there is a ten-year rotation plan for harvesting (a revised timber harvest plan is nearly complete).
  - There was concern amongst members with the terrain south of the boundary line because it is steep, therefore the area would be difficult to work.
  - The Dinkey Creek is was located in one area identified by the group, and had high activity, which made it have questionable value for fisher research. The area had potential for pre-commercial and commercial thinning and limbing.

Mosé explained that the proposed action would be slightly more specific than the one developed for Eastfork and Soaproot.

## 7. Review Dinkey North and South: Future planning

The facilitator went through the handout of actions items listed for the Dinkey North and South project. The members had questions and comments on the handout:

- It was noted that #4 should refer to the layout and design of adjacent areas, not regeneration areas themselves.
- Consider pine restoration in Dinkey North and South. Members discussed white fir dominant areas and the use of snags by a number a species.
- Consider more field visits.
  - SFCC is holding a fisher den site visit on May 1, 2012. Mr. Dirk Charley stated that a number of people are participating in the visit, and it would be an opportunity to discuss den issues.
  - The Willow Creek Planning Collaborative is interested in having more field visits. Each visit will focus on a different issue such as marking, fishers, marijuana eradication, and the Whiskey Ridge Project.

- Suggested to go to Bass Lake and the Sugar Pine in Cedar Valley, in order to observe different approaches.
- Consider flagging fisher clumps ahead of time. For example, Bass Lake was successful by identifying the fisher clumps. It was discussed that some crews might not be able to identify the fisher areas; therefore tagging them would be useful. GPS could be utilized for identification.
  - In Eastfork, there will be forest staff to flag and GPS the fisher clumps.
  - It was noted that the starting condition of the habitat is also important – Dinkey and Bass Lake Ranger District areas are not the same in terms of canopy closure and other qualities.
- Identify openings and landings. The group discussed the challenge in distinguishing an opening.

## 8. Monitoring Work Group Update and Question Prioritization

Mr. Van Velsor noted that progress was being made to hiring a part time monitoring coordinator, and the next step is the interview process. Mr. Van Velsor stated that in April, the monitoring group would know if the National Forest Foundation is approved. He presented a handout for Soaproot and Eastfork on the Dinkey Monitoring Question Prioritization Process. He explained that in February the group established the process and point system for the ranking. The members had a variety of questions and comments:

- Inform the group that the Forest Service is addressing the top issues. Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that reviewing the Forest Service’s planned monitoring projects would be beneficial for prioritization, and then prioritizing all the questions in the matrix. Mr. Van Velsor noted that the monitoring group will communicate with the Forest Service for feedback about monitoring funding.
  - Consider establishing a two-hour webinar for more information.
- Identify the overall budget for the year and the monitoring funds. The next year has a total of \$1.8 million for the CFLR budget, including FS funds. The Collaborative makes recommendations to the Forest Service, which is the decision-maker. The original proposal paralleled other CFLR monitoring amounts, which is a 10% allocation of funds plus a 10% match for effectiveness monitoring.
- Some monitoring is already done by the Forest Service, with additional efforts funded by CFLR or matched funds.
- Clarify the line between effectiveness and implementation. Effectiveness is the goal of the monitoring program.

**AGREEMENT:** The group agreed to adopt the monitoring question prioritization process, which will be used to develop a revised draft ranking based on information about Forest Service activities and the project budget.

## 9. Socioeconomic Monitoring Proposal

Mr. Van Velsor presented the revised socioeconomic proposal from the Sierra Institute. He stated that the monitoring group was advised to use a two-phase approach for more flexibility. Mr. Van Velsor spoke with Ms. Whitall to gain comments from Region Five. Mr. Van Velsor noted that there is potential overlap with the science synthesis, and that he would follow up with the Forest Service's economist who was working on the synthesis to clarify this.

**ACTION ITEM:** Stan Van Velsor to talk with Pat Winters about the potential overlap between the science synthesis and socioeconomic monitoring proposal, and the timeframe for the science synthesis.

The members followed with questions and comments:

- Mr. Hanson stated that he supports a socioeconomic monitoring proposal, but not from the Sierra Institute. He suggested a Request for Proposal (RFP).
- The group asked for clarification about an RFP process. Mr. Dave Marten, District Ranger, Bass Lake Ranger District, explained that the group has to outline the criteria, timeframe and costs for the proposal.
  - An RFP might lend value to outlining the group's desired outcome from the socioeconomic monitoring effort. The group requested clarification of the desired scope of work for the socioeconomic monitoring effort, including the questions it would be designed to address.
  - The timeframe for a RFP was estimated to take no less than 60 days, and more likely four months.

**ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Jones-Yellin to gather information that clarifies the RFP solicitation and evaluation process.

- Mr. Thomas expressed his concern for not using Sierra Institute's proposal, noting that they were known for high-quality work, and that the proposal was innovative. He also noted that there was a lot of time involved in finding Mr. Kusel to construct an adequate proposal.
- Consider outsourcing the proposal locally or consider a partnership.
- Mr. Laclergue stated that there is currently not much local involvement and does not see the value of a socioeconomic plan.
- Mr. Hanson stated the importance of local involvement, but still wanted to solicit other proposals.
- Ms. Elisa Brown offered help to Mr. Van Velsor with the RFP process.

The monitoring work group considered setting up a work group call for April 4, 2012 and report back at the full Collaborative meeting on April 19, 2012.

## 10. Work Group Updates

### Project Updates

- Eastfork: The objection period has closed, SNF is still waiting for one or two days to see if anything else arrives (items can be postmarked by March 15). Scott is considering the alternatives and will decide shortly. Also in Eastfork, SNF is using enterprise team (an internal contracting team within USFS) to do the sales preparation and marking, and develop the contract for Eastfork. The enterprise team is aiming to start marking as early as possible, probably around May 1; Ramiro is currently writing prescriptions for Eastfork. The sale will likely be completed in late September.
- Soaproot: Ramiro is currently working on prescriptions, and SNF will be marking the land and preparing that contract internally, mostly through Keith Ballard's crew. SNF is looking at a NEPA timeline with decision notice in late September, although SNF is hoping to go a bit faster, and hopes to complete the sale in January or February 2013.
- Also in Dinkey CFLR area (but not CFLR funds), there is the Kings River Experimental Watershed contract that was sold last year. Work will start this year, around early June. The project is attached to an experimental process, so when they start this year they have to complete all the stands that are part of the study.
- Work on the Forks hazard sale, also sold in 2011, will begin sometime this summer.

**Regarding the Communication Plan and recruitment efforts**, Ms. Pam Flick created a list of members interested in addressing the media. She wanted interested members to add themselves to the list. Ms. Flick updated the group on the brochure, and noted the option of creating a pocket media guide. She suggested outreach such as newsletters and presenting to other groups. Ms. Flick discussed the possibility of creating a community outreach event in June at a site visit, for example at Camp Edison.

**Regarding the CFLR Sign-on Letter**, There is a coalition among national groups requesting funding support. Mr. Van Velsor stated that he would email the group the letter for signatures of support.

**ACTION ITEM:** Dorian Fougères to distribute the CFLR Sign-on Letter.

**Regarding GTR 237 Managing the Sierra Nevada Forests**, There will be a link added to the library. It was suggested to review the document.

**Regarding the Marking Guidelines**, there will be an optional meeting scheduled that will review the document for the workgroup created by Ms. Britting, Mr. Rojas, Ms. Ballard, and Mr. Thomas. The preliminary discussion is on March 30, 2012.

## 11. Attendees

- |                          |                      |                 |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Scott Armentrout, SNF | 3. Elisa Brown       | 5. Kent Duysen  |
| 2. Sue Britting          | 4. Dirk Charley, SNF | 6. Larry Duysen |

7. Patrick Emmert
8. Pamela Flick
9. Dorian Fougères, CCP
10. Veronica Garcia, SNF
11. Gabriella Golik, CCP
12. Chaturika  
Goonawardena, SNF
13. Chad Hanson
14. Steve Haze
15. Mosé Jones-Yellin, SNF
16. Rich Kangas
17. Ray Laclergue
18. Dave Marten, SNF
19. Matt Meadows
20. Mark Smith
21. Craig Thomas
22. Craig Thompson, USFS
23. Mandy Vance
24. Stan Van Velsor
25. Tom Wheeler