MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

June 20, 2012

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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Action Items

1. **Dorian and John Stewart** to work on the language for the Monitoring Activities' handout graphic diagram.
2. **Stan** to distribute the monitoring coordinator RFQ to all members.
3. **Sue, Chad, and Monitoring Coordinator** to review MIS rankings for monitoring projects.
4. **Stan** to revise monitoring project list and redistribute.
5. **Robbin Ekman** to contribute road use statistics.
6. **Dorian** to draft language for the group's support for safeguarding funds.

All materials and presentations are available to members on DataBasin.org

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Ray Porter, High Sierra District Ranger, welcomed all participants to the full Collaborative meeting. Ms. Kim Sorini-Wilson, District Biologist, stood in as project manager while Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Deputy District Ranger, High Sierra Ranger District (HSRD), Sierra National Forest (SNF), is on assignment. Mr. Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) Facilitator, reviewed the meeting ground rules and agenda items.

2. Monitoring Activities

Review of Monitoring Activities

Mr. Stan Van Velsor presented the members with a summary of the recent monitoring activities. He presented a graphic diagram and stated that the monitoring group is in the process of hiring a part-time monitoring coordinator, under the auspices of the Wilderness Society. It was noted that any interested member could participate in the advisory group for

the socioeconomic proposal. The members had comments on the monitoring group's graphic diagram:

- The group discussed that the community influenced the socioeconomic advisory group. Some members suggested more local involvement in the proposal through adaptive engagement strategies. It was suggested that a direct connection with the local communities be included within the diagram.
- It was noted that the graphic could include a reference to the proposal on databasin.org, and add language such as, "involvement in implementation and engagement with local and regional communities and stakeholders."
    - **ACTION ITEM: Dorian and John Stewart** to work on language for the Monitoring Activities' handout graphic diagram.
- It was suggested to investigate the involvement of recreational uses and local businesses within the socioeconomic monitoring proposal.
- Members noted that the Dinkey Creek landscape is of interest to individuals statewide, and is not only restricted to local residents.
- The group commented that they were interested in having a copy of the RFQ drafted for the part-time monitoring coordinator position.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Stan** to distribute the monitoring coordinator RFQ to all members.

Ecological Monitoring Projects/Question Prioritization

Mr. Van Velsor discussed the monitoring matrix framework for the monitoring program. He talked through the main points of the handout, such as ecological monitoring, questions derived from the Forest Landscape Restoration Act, the Dinkey strategy, and desired conditions. He discussed the evolution of the question development, read through the criteria, and discussed the ranking system assigned for the questions. They discussed the new assessment for the question prioritization, which entailed combining questions into monitoring projects. For example, it was noted that a goal for the prioritization is biodiversity; therefore, combing RFQ's that reflect biodiversity would be a potential project. In addition, it was noted that the average score was used for each category. The members had a variety of comments on the question prioritization:

- The group stated that some categories did not show accurate rankings, and felt that there were information gaps. Part of this is looking at the forest in its entirety.
- Regarding question 47, it was noted that the conservation biology, multiple benefits, and sensitivity rankings do not reflect the importance of the issues.
- Rather than using the average scores for the categories, and look at the standard deviation, bimodal distribution, weighting factor, and relevant range.
- Members stated that there should be a more detailed list of sensitive species and management indicator species (MIS). For example, they suggested that the document include management for the California Spotted owl as its own project with additional questions. It was mentioned that sensitive species were included as an encompassing category.

    - One could reference the Federal and State species list, which is located in the Dinkey Landscape Strategy.
    - There should be revisions of the category and allow each project to call out specific MIS, which should be differentiated from more general sensitive species, as they are mandatory and have regional significance
    - **ACTION ITEM: Sue, Chad, and Monitoring Coordinator** to review MIS rankings for monitoring projects.
- Recognize that the monitoring question prioritization is a dynamic process with room for modifications. The group explained that having a document ready for the 2013 budget discussion would be beneficial to display the Collaborative's progress.
    - The group stated that fieldwork might change the prioritization handout. In a year, the matrix could be amended based on the information gathered in the field.
    - They agreed that the generic scoring and information would be better to allow for adaptation to different project needs and specifications.
- The group agreed to add a disclaimer to the document stating that there will be amendments made for future use. In addition, note that the rankings will be revised.
- One member stated that this document cannot address every monitoring question, and recommended to not stray from the original intent of providing a guideline for the monitoring process.
- The question prioritization was overall effective, but including measures with numerical values causes individuals to focus on details.
    - Mr. Van Velsor understood the issue, but stated that the intent of the prioritization is to be an overall approach to the whole ecology of a site.
- In regards to the categories on wildfire, it was noted to be careful differentiating between high and low intensity fires.
- **AGREEMENT:** The group agreed to adopt the document with the understanding that it would be amended.
- **ACTION ITEM: Stan** to revise monitoring project list and redistribute.

Budget Proposal

The 2012 and 2013 Budget handout was distributed to the members for review. The handout recommended that the Forest Service would fund the first phase of the socioeconomic monitoring proposal with 2012 funds, and if they receive the standard allotment, there would be no conflict for budgeting monitoring programs in 2013. It was asked if the members had any comments about the budget handout:

Regarding the 2012 Budget

- Include project names for the purpose of references them in the monitoring matrix.
- In regards to matching funds, members inquired about the origin and requirements of the matched funds. It was noted that all funds are 100% matched.
- In regards to current monitoring tasks, it was noted that not all of the tasks listed are being implemented this summer. The group stated that some of the tasks are not ready

to be monitored in 2012. Mr. Van Velsor and Ms. Kim Sorini-Wilson will work together on revising the planned monitoring tasks in 2012 based on staff input.

  - Ms Julie Gott noted that the certain tasks were not able to be performed because either the time for them had passed or they did not apply. For example, there were few meadows in Soaproot, and all the baseline data has already been completed.
  - Add a disclaimer to the tasks stating that some treatments began, but the budget list is not complete.

- It was noted that the monitoring coordinator will link the monitoring group, the budget discussion, and evaluation of monitoring results.
- It was noted that if the first phase of the socioeconomic monitoring proposal could not be funded in 2012, it would be funded in 2013.
- The group discussed that the projects listed in the budget are completed except for Bald Mountain, which is planned for this summer.
- Mr. Stan Van Velsor stated that he would work with Ms. Gott and Ms. Sorini-Wilson to refine the budget and tasks.
- The budget discussion for 2013 is currently happening, and the funds for 2012 could only be adjusted; therefore, the group stated that as a backup, the tasks they want funded in 2012 (Phase 1 and 2) to be included in 2013 budget proposal.

Regarding 2013 Budget

- The 2013 budget was the same as 2012, in order to cover the tasks that do not receive funding in 2012.
  - In addition, the group noted that as a safeguard for the socioeconomic proposal, the 2013 budget should include language that incorporates the phases that do not receive funding in 2012.
- PSW is monitoring fisher restoration, which continues through 2013. The group noted that there is a need to obtain fisher monitoring funding in 2014 and beyond.
- Members expressed concern about owl monitoring funding because it approved on an annual basis. They noted that the Forest Service did not match the FLRA proposal funding from the region for California spotted owl monitoring. The group wanted to clarify the commitment for the spotted owl.
- They stated that the proposal lists the money of the CFLR and the matching dollars.
- **AGREEMENT**: All members agreed to adopt the 2012 and 2013 Monitoring Budget with the discussed amendments.

3. Communication Activities

Ms. Pamela Flick told members that the first official Collaborative outreach event is scheduled for September 19, 2012. She distributed the communication activities handout to the group and briefly reviewed the contents:

- It was noted that the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) had been finalized, but can be edited for future versions.

- Region 5 collaborative groups have been working on a MOU template, which could be a potential tool for the Dinkey Collaborative to share information with the Burney-Hat Creek CFLR and the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group CFLR.
- It was noted that Ms. Flick, Ms. Veronica Garcia (not present), and Mr. Vance Russell (not present) were working on establishing a future host site for the Dinkey Collaborative.
    - Members stated that Region 5 used the Forest Plan Revision website as a host to provide information, but this did not have very flexible formatting. It was noted that other sites might also help to hosting the Dinkey Collaborative's information.
    - Information is currently located on the Sierra National Forest planning portal, but the Communication Work Group thought of creating another website to reach the public, which containing high-level information with quick links for further information.
- Note the level of maintenance needed for keeping the website updated and useful.
- The PowerPoint presentation preview is set for July and would be displayed it at the community outreach event on September 19, 2012.
- It was noted that the member biographies submitted are uploaded.
- In regards to the communication strategies, the volunteers are listed in the previous meeting summary, May 17, 2012.

4. Project Updates and Member Announcements

Members read the Project Updates Handout and followed with a variety of comments:

- It was suggested that posting maps with the DLRP boundary, project boundaries, and roads displayed in the project areas for people to reference would be beneficial.

Regarding Forks Hazard Timber Sales:

- One member asked about if there was a recent NEPA analysis prepared. It was noted that in the 1990's an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared and they made decisions based on that document for the roads. The member felt that the 1990's EA was programmatic and does not seem to offer the opportunity for public comment. The member agreed to speak offline with the District Ranger for further information, as the hazard timber sales are not part of the DLRP's activities.

5. Roads, Trails, and Watershed Issues in the Bald Mountain Project Area

Ms. Julie Gott and Mr. Andy Hosford had a PowerPoint presentation prepared for the group about roads and hydrology. They distributed a general statistics handout for the members, and discussed the information that pertained to the Bald Mountain project site. Members noted that the visitor survey seemed skewed in 2008-9, since it was two and a half times greater than previous years. The presentation discussed issues such as road parameters, surface types,

jurisdiction, access, road decommissioning, and maps. The group had comments on the roads and hydrology presentation:

- The members discussed the methods used for road closures. It was noted that there were different methods to indicate a closed road, such as providing physical barriers, restoring the surface, removing the road from the maps, and providing signage.
- 50 miles of road were not surveyed, so there is the opportunity to improve drain dips, and decommission roads.
- The need for mitigation of hydrological impacts, for example chronic sediment. They discussed that culverts were used on the roads where there were identified stream crossings.
    - Note that in July there is a series of webinars about various techniques for addressing roads.
- The ecological impacts associated with roads were noted, for example, the removal of snags located within 200 feet adjacent to roads. It was recommended to explore the possibility of decommissioning level one and two roads, and exploring other opportunities.
- Members discussed that there are areas with sensitive fish, and they noted that these sites do not appear on a map for the public. A map of the fish locations in relations to roads was requested. The facilitator noted this was the focus of the June 22 field visit to the high elevation and critical aquatic refuge of the Bald Mountain project area.
- In regards to the Lahontan Trout, it was noted to consider repairing the areas of road identified near the stream crossings. Members discussed that local sub-contractors could do the road repairs.
- It was inquired about travel management Sub-Part A (evaluation of the existing road system), and what to do if a decommissioned road is needed in the future. They discussed that it would be beneficial to focus on the overall and seasonal recreation load of Bald Mountain.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Robbin Ekman** to contribute road use statistics.
    - The Sierra Forest is working on Sub-Part A, and this could be a potential CFLR project matched by the legacy roads and trails funds. It may be possible to complete the scoping this year and NEPA the following year.
- Members asked about the exact definition of “decommission” and the physical prescriptions, such as adding a simple blockage or ripping out the roadbed. It was clarified that that decommissioning consists of “removing from the official roadmap”.
- Identify the use of the road before it is decommissioned, and the possibilities for reopening the road.

6. Review First Draft Proposed Action

Ms. Kim Sorini-Wilson presented a general overview of the Bald Mountain site boundary, and noted the potential treatment sites, botany sensitive plants, protective activity centers (PAC), migration corridors, and species of concern (Mountain Yellow Legged Frog, Pacific Fisher, Spotted Owl, and Great Grey Owl). The group had comments on the proposed action:

1. Clarify whether mountain yellow-legged frog exists in the area, and its status.
2. Include restoration involving sensitive botanical species
3. Need historical information on female fisher (#8, etc)
4. Clarify the use of the term "resiliency" – ecological resilience is not the same as fire suppression
5. Prescribed burning should include mixed intensity fire, particularly at higher elevations, with the goal of creating some mortality (page 3)
6. The area where large snags are created should be expanded to all deficient areas, not only those listed on page 3
7. The CFLR statute discusses prescribed fire and small woody biomass, not removing commercial trees up to 30" in diameter; the ecological basis for such activity is not explained, and such trees would eventually play an important role as snags
8. The Reese Unit work should not include any thinning
9. Potential impacts to recreation use need consideration throughout the project
10. More information is needed on the origins of the plantations created by the 1980 Rock Creek Fire
11. The WUI areas need to be mapped and their accuracy ensured
12. More consideration is needed of the brush-conifer regeneration relationship, and its value for biodiversity
13. Large snag creation should be differentiated from creating the conditions for snags to evolve
14. More consideration is needed of the relationship between fire, brush, and streamflow as this affects trout
15. The rationale for working on Lahontan cutthroat trout needs to be clarified, and associated mitigation measures
16. The relationship between high intensity fire and its application outside/inside the critical aquatic refuge needs clarification
17. The seasonality of prescribed fire needs clarification – is this for ecological purposes or fire control purposes, and what are the downsides?
18. The possible need for additional prescribed fire after a high intensity fire needs discussion
19. Better explanation is needed of the possible causes of dead brush patches and recommended treatments

Regarding Recent Court Activities

The group discussed the recent settlement regarding Management Indicator Species, and the appeal of the Gray's Mountain decision, noting that project activities in that area would impact the work of the Collaborative. The members commented on the recent court activities:

- Consider the recent activities as an opportunity to address Collaborative group challenges, and to understand it is a collective process that could positively evolve.
- A number of projects were dedicated to ecological diversity such as fisher conservation, and stakeholders should come together for the fisher ruling. The group discussed that the Region should take the leadership role in focusing the research and post-monitoring because the current process is not transparent or collaborative. Research would help determine where to take risks. The answer is not known or predetermined; science will help inform what to do.
- The group discussed the issues regarding monitoring the treatments to the Yosemite toad in Bass Lake Ranger District or SNAMP. They stated that the region has backed off their commitment to fund monitoring programs, which raises the question, Why implement treatments if they are not properly monitored and analyzed? The lack of evaluation means the work is inconclusive and not credible, and the area cannot be treated from an informed perspective. There is no way to show the efficiency, effectiveness, viability, or importance of the work. Without the monitoring, the Dinkey Collaborative's work is no different from anything the Forest has done historically. The habit of not follow-up and doing planning based on science needs to be broken so people can feel good about what they do.
- Questions for how long the fisher research will be funded. It was stated that originally, fisher research was to be matched through 2017, around $800,000 per year through 2017 and around $200,000 per year through 2020 – this was a precondition of submitting the proposal, but what is being discussed is that funds will only be matched through 2013. The Region is asking many other Forests to pay their way. Many members stated that this would affect the group's progress with the Bald Mountain project beginning in 2014, which is after the funding period for fisher research.
- Monitoring and research are needed. If doing something is risky, teople at the table are willing to live and die by the science. The work the Dinkey Collaborative is doing will benefit the whole region and the Forest Service.
- Members support reinvestigating the California Spotted Owl and monitoring any proposed treatments to identify successful strategies.
- The group noted that a year ago they asked about the status of the Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Plan and had not received any answer. Members felt discouraged by the lack leadership the Region has shown. It was felt that the Region did not trust the Collaborative to work through these issues.
- The group understood that these issues are not in the District Ranger's hands, but in fact reaches higher within the Forest Service.
- The group wants to create a statement that safeguards the money received for certain projects, and do not want to see funds pulled or redistributed else ware.
    - **ACTION ITEM: Dorian** to draft language for the group's support for safeguarding funds.
- Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program (SNAMP) scheduled a meeting that focuses on budget and budget timelines. The group stated that the Forest Service is

sending mixed signals because funding is not being delivered to SNAMP, and SNAMP is looking for a long term funding commitment for post treatment modeling.
    - In addition, SNAMP is not receiving the monitoring funding promised.
- The Forest Service receives rewards based on accomplishments. When funds are tight, budgets are cut. But losing the opportunity for monitoring does not aid progress. Everywhere has less money. But the Collaborative's success has helped the Forest get funding. If there are limited funds, the DLRP is a good place to invest.
- Members noted that if the Collaborative's monitoring plan can be established, and the effectiveness of treatments can be demonstrated, this will improve the chance that the Collaborative will receive the full amount of funding awarded in 2010.

7. Attendees

1. Justin Augustine
2. Rich Bagley
3. Sue Britting
4. Dirk Charley, SNF
5. Narvell Connor
6. Teri Drivas, SNF
7. Kent Duysen
8. Robbin Ekman, SNF
9. Dan Fidler
10. Pamela Flick
11. Dorian Fougères, CCP
12. Lisa Garcia
13. Gabriella Golik, CCP
14. Hon. Ron Goode
15. Julie Gott, SNF
16. Chad Hanson
17. Stan Harger
18. Steve Haze
19. Andy Hosford, SNF
20. Joe Kaminski
21. Ray Porter, SNF
22. Mark Smith
23. Kim Sorini-Wilson, SNF
24. Frank Stambach
25. John Stewart
26. Ryan Stewart
27. Craig Thomas
28. Stan Van Velsor
29. Cindy Whelan, SNF