

Feather River Stewardship Coalition Meeting Minutes Quincy Library, January 6th, 2016

In Attendance: Mike De Lasaux, Brian West, Ryan Tompkins, John Sheehan, Rachael Norton, Ryan Bauer, Cindy Noble, Gabe Miller, Dan Martynn, Vanessa Vasquez, Terri Rust, Bill Chapman, David Arsenault, Nancy Francine, Sue McCourt, and Lynn Campbell via conference line.

Logo Fonts – The group votes from 5 logo font choices to incorporate into the new logo, and a font was chosen. Rachael will be working with the artist and art director from FRC to create the additional changes suggested in the December meeting.

Membership – During the December meeting, the charter was modified and adopted by the group. Rachael explained that with the charter now complete and adopted, it is time to start gathering signatories to the charter in order to become an official group. A sign in sheet was passed around and 10 people signed as signatories. Nancy explained that the Plumas NF would sign on as an advisory role and not necessarily as members with the same role, to avoid bias in decisions and voting.

Nature Conservancy Fire Learning Network & National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy– Rachael briefly described these programs, the first developed by the Nature Conservancy with support from the USDA Forest Service. She also mentioned that she had a phone call with a NC FLN representative the next day and would have an update on that soon. The second (NCWFMS) is a public lands strategy for an all lands approach with three main goals to achieve resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, and safe and effective wildfire response.

John commented that in the past he had not seen good communication with the Nature Conservancy, and that the organization tended to be in opposition of commercial forestry. He recommended that we share our charter, and let them be aware and supportive of our group and our goals before we support their strategies.

Ryan B. noted that when performing prescribed burns across jurisdictional boundaries, there tends to be lots of legal barriers and the Nature Conservancy has been one of the few organizations able to legally make it work.

Ryan T. mentioned that these associations could strengthen our grant proposals.

Nancy added that these organizations could help with Prop 1 funding, add ways to implement our goals. She also recommended that we use different groups within our Coalition as a direct line for grants, so the grant goals fit the mission and goals of the lead organization for each project.

Plumas NF Presentation and Discussion – Nancy introduced the presentation as a showing of the additional capability projects, projects that had all NEPA and permitting ready but no funding for implementation. Commonly, these projects were service contract work that couldn't pay for material to be removed. Treatments included hand thinning and mastication.

Mike J. – So none of these projects have merchantable timber?

Nancy – Mostly these projects are what is left over after mechanical treatment is done, and usually some resource or economic concerns delayed treatment of these final pieces.

Mike J. – Any projects unfunded that have commercial value?

Ryan B. Not at this time, some projects may have biomass value but there is no market right now. They do require biomass to be cut, brought to the landing and decked. The backlog of piles and remaining biomass is minimal with the help of year round fire crews to burn.

Lynn – Volunteered to help us define points to hit on our grant proposals, and to highlight the project's connection to water.

Ryan presented a suite of projects, the PowerPoint will be available on the website, www.featherriversc.org soon.

Mike D.L. commented that it would be important to choose projects that fall within the WUI.

Mike J. wanted to see a cohesive plan in identifying water to Oroville within the projects.

John wanted to see adjacent projects from different organizations to show a cohesive strategy (NRCS, PC FSC, and others).

The Bucks Hand Thin Stewardship stood out as a good candidate for an SNC proposal within the group, the FS had already approached the CCC's to work on this project, and passing the work by the CCC's is a criteria for SNC proposals as well. The connection to water quality is strong in this project, and we could use SNC category 2 funds to get the project CEQA compliant. Ryan B. mentioned that PG&E also had a THP in the area and were treating adjacent lands.

John remarked on the amount of work lined up just in this presentation, there is about 20 years' worth of implementation, and we need to show the longevity of our approach in our grant proposals.

Mike J. added that Senator Dianne Feinstein is still interested in keeping a connection to the Plumas NF now that the QLG is wrapped up.

The Grass Flats Project, which connects to the Buck's Lake project, and Sugarloaf around La Porte area, and Round Valley were other projects that struck an interest for a longer term pursuit. These projects were identified as Defensible Fuel Profile Zones during the end of the QLG, the first two are lower elevation projects that burn at a higher frequency. Round Valley was part of the project area that the Coalition applied to SNC for funding. NRCS has also done work in this area, and may consider a Joint Chief's Proposal later in the year.

Mike J. recommended that we pitch these two projects (Grass Flats and Sugarloaf) from a watershed point of view. Water from these areas drain into the Yuba County Water Agency, and we should contact them as well as the Oroville Wyandotte Irrigation District and South Feather River Power as potential partners and stakeholders.

Mike D.L. also mentioned that there is a program in that area to reintroduce salmon into Bullard's Bar, and is a priority stream. Wildfire would cause heavy sedimentation and could wipe out the newly introduced salmon populations. We are losing the big picture seeing these fragmented pieces of projects, these planned QLG projects were multi beneficial and we are seeing pieces that are left over. We haven't pursued California Department of Fish and Wildlife who also have funding from Prop 1, and may have a larger cap on awarded funds. CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife is also a signatory of the salmonid project.

Nancy – these projects are getting closer to the Mooretown Rancheria, who does hand thinning work, and they are working to get a biomass plant up and running.

John – is it the role of the Coalition to approach beneficiaries (water agencies) for support and funds?

Mike J. – These groups can help connect state money to these federal projects.

Nancy asked Lynn about the upper dollar limit for projects, Lynn responded that SNC had a \$500,000 cap for implementation funds and a \$75,000 cap for planning funds, but no limit on the number of proposals submitted.

Lynn offered to meet with Coalition members to work on a pre application proposal on January 20th, and will also get the 2016 Proposition 1 deadlines to us as soon as they are out.

Ryan T. – highlighted the need for inventory of our capacity. There is no shortage of project work, we need to guide our projects to multiple fiduciary partners, as this will be the bottleneck to our progress. All the projects listed today fit in SNC category 1 for implementation, but we shouldn't forget category 2 planning funds for projects like Lakes Basin and Plumas Eureka.

John – how do we make this happen? Plumas Audubon and Feather River Land Trust should be involved in the Lakes Basin project.

David – Plumas Audubon is applying to SNC for NEPA/CEQA planning for the Genesee Valley Wildfire Restoration Plan on public and private lands. Feather River RCD will be the lead agency for CEQA. They are limited by liability and can't oversee implementation of projects but can oversee planning. Plumas Corp, Plumas County Fire Safe Council, and Feather River RCD could all be an implementing body.

Dan – In favor of continuing work in Round Valley, the Coalition has already put in a proposal for this area though more work is needed, the FS has completed work here as well as NRCS. Also this area is a priority watershed. Possibility of doing a Joint Chief's Proposal later in the year for this area.

Mike J. – proposed combining the Grass Flats and Sugarloaf projects to show ag and urban users a demonstration of how to fix the problem of losing 30 million acre feet of water over the years from overstocking of trees. The next ballot has another water bond proposed, the current funds aren't being spent because there is no large scale strategy to fix the problems. We need to show that we are actively working, large scale, and pitch our projects.

Ryan T. – We have a strategy developing of big picture projects, but we can't forget other funding sources, we need to attach the right projects to the right funds.

Mike D. L. – Next big picture step for the Coalition is to develop a proposal to the CFLRA for implementation when funds become available.

Ryan T. - Another cycle of RAC funds will be coming, does the group plan to submit a proposal? Mike D. L. responded that we likely will develop something.

Grant writing workshop and SOPA updates – Rachael updated everyone on the upcoming SNC grant writing workshop on January 20th, with limited seating. Also, the Lakes Basin project is in official scoping, and the Butterfly Valley project should begin the public comment period this month.

John – we should have an official letter of support for the Lakes Basin project. Rachael to draft one and distribute it to the group for comment.

Meeting adjourned at 5:10.

Next meeting February 17th, 3-5 at the Quincy Library.