

FEATHER RIVER STEWARDSHIP COALITION

www.featherriversc.org

Meeting Minutes

September 16th, 2015

Portola City Hall

In Attendance:

Bill Powers, Portola City Council; Brian West, Graeagle resident; Tara Stone, Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship; John Sheehan, Philanthropist; Steve Munson, Far West Biomass, Carlos Lovizzaro, Far West Biomass; Ryan Tompkins, Plumas NF; Deb Bumpus, Plumas NF; Mike De Lasaux, UC Cooperative Extension; Rachael Norton, Plumas County Fire Safe Council.

Welcome and Intro

Addition of Good Neighbor Policy Update to the agenda, after the logo update.

Rachael, Vision, Mission, Charter update - Mission changes reflecting comments from last meeting to recognize our actions enhance effects on downstream users. After some discussion, the Mission was changed to:

The Feather River Stewardship Coalition (FRSC) is a diverse community of willing stakeholders working to improve the ecosystem health of private and public lands within the Feather River Watershed, the headwaters of the state water project. We work to identify solutions that facilitate productive balance among community, economy and environment.

Rachael, Charter discussion – Reviewed some feedback reflected from last meeting.

John – Need a bullet addressing our influence and importance of the Feather River watershed on water downstream.

Additions and suggestions will be emailed to Rachael

Mike - Coalition goals would be what we look to do in the big picture, examine each year our explicit goals.

Ryan – Turnout at last meeting was great, reps for different organizations, this charter addresses membership geared towards interested citizens, could we word this section differently to address membership of different organizations, it seems to be a strength we could tap in to. Similar to IRWM. Organizations participating in the IRWM sign an MOU.

John – IRWM also has individual users.

Rachael – In regards attendance measures in the charter, we don't want to cut out organizations that we have been trying to work with that don't have time to attend.

Ryan – what about trying a daytime meeting?

Mike – Next round in Quincy try a daytime.

Deb – Try to coordinate a daytime meeting with the Forest Service, tribal consultants and include the FRSC.

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Tara – Live broadcasting can be helpful.

Rachael – Charter wrap up – email me changes, we would like to vote on the charter in the next meeting or two, and include a caveat to address and update the charter yearly.

Rachael, Logo Update - Official Logo is needed for legitimacy and marketing. Approached Raphael Blanco of FRC, mid-October he will introduce a logo contest to two of his classes. Rachael will go talk to the class about the group.

The group agreed that keeping the logo contest to the FRC rather than expanding it to the community would bring efficient success.

Deb, update on the new Good Neighbor Policy – The Good Neighbor Policy has been developed to fund ecosystem type restoration work through the state, the state can sub contract to local agencies, tribes, etc. State and private organizations as the lead will diversify results. Stewardship process is competitive, this new state process may not be. Been focusing on planning and creation of the FRSC, this may be useful as we take on an implementation role. Interest from the Forest to be involved in this, noted the widespread acknowledgement of the need to increase pace and scale of work on public lands. This is in addition to the New CE authority of 3,000 acres from the Farm Bill, this is another effort to bring in other local groups outside of the FS contracting role, reduces complexity of the process.

Mike – Found hardcopy information online, the document for this process is called the Master Good Neighbor Agreement of the State and Forest Service.

John - Sounds like CRM of 1984, same relationship was allowed for in legislation, but it was so vague that people were unsure how to use it. The Feather River CRM was developed and active until 2 years ago, and has been replaced by the IRWM. This is a new tool.

Mike – (Reading the agreement) The Forest Service (FS) shall work in collaboration with the state to identify projects using a Supplemental Project Agreement.

Deb – Who is the resources state agency is unclear at this time whether it will be Cal Fire or another agency. Just heard about it last week at a leadership team meeting. Not sure there will be a need for it right away, but it's another tool and it's an easier way to cross the jurisdictional boundary. The FRSC can combine projects on private and public lands.

Brian – Sounds like a process similar to what is used in Tahoe since they often have multi-jurisdictional projects.

John – No mention of trails projects in the description. (Agreement was projected so everyone could read it).

Deb - Farm Bill does include trails. Tribal Forest Protection Act. This program is across entire FS. The FRSC Charter notes needed research into policies we can include.

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Ryan – Stewardship contracts and agreements, this is another tool. Set up like a partnership agreement. Tahoe NF projects use a stewardship master agreement similar to this rather than a timber sale contract.

Mike – need to educate ourselves on all these options so we can weigh our options

Deb, Lakes Basin Project Presentation – Had two open houses this summer for the Lakes Basin project. The idea was to throw out ideas and get ideas pre-decision. Well attended meetings, projects have been appealing to people. The Silviculturalist is still getting stand data, and verifying operability of land. Keeping an open mind to different techniques. Shooting for scoping doc in next month and half. Still getting comments, mainly a templated comment letter from SBTS, some additional comments and background and giving historical perspective. Completed surveys for SNYLF (Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frog), species isn't common yet high densities exist in this area. Maintaining and protecting habitat is conducive to the project as well as fire protection and aesthetics. Reduction of conifers in meadows and aspen are an important component, project areas are still being field verified. Over snow and thin/burn to protect trees from insect/disease perspective and not impact frogs (Suggestions from FS entomologist Danny Cluck). We need to figure out what sponsoring means. Creative ideas and diverse operators, need small area operators, special equipment for wetland areas.

Brian – need small equipment operators for these “boutique” projects. If we get enough of these lined out, someone will get really good at these small projects, possibly move here.

Mike – Skid steer based harvest technology using a small cat. Dave Sims used it.

Deb – Tahoe NF projects may have those components. Need to find out who their operators are.

Brian – Stewardship contracts can now pay for these small operations when a normal timber sale wouldn't pay for these small tree removal projects.

Deb – In order to have a stewardship contract, need some money to fund the project. May utilize Eureka Ridge project to provide timber base and money to accomplish the Lakes Basin project. This could be accomplished with the New Categorical Exclusion for 3,000 acres, need authorization for it, if it doesn't pass then they have to go the normal NEPA route which would take more time. This connection is possible under the farm bill as Eureka Ridge is fairly straight forward and could provide revenue to support the smaller, more complex Lakes Basin project.

John – Do you have a historical Maidu perspective on the meadows? Or other sources of knowledge as to where meadows used to be?

Deb – Aerial photos from 1940's which is pretty good. Photos from mining days had no trees. More of a large tree component. Need to see on the ground level change on vegetation (grasses). Need to fine tune on the ground more.

John – Will the IRWM (Interregional Water Management Group) LIDAR proposal help?

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Ryan – IRWM funding for Deer Creek LIDAR is uncertain, the FS is looking into some LIDAR if they can find funding. Multi resource spectrum, veg, heritage, hydrology. Probably won't come in time for Lakes Basin analysis.

John – Aspens have to get the broadest extent of where they were, not what is there now in regards to conifer removal.

Deb – Research done to extend conifer removal well beyond the last aspen seedlings. Ingalls project has good examples of stringer meadows that have little pockets of aspen where conifers were removed well beyond the existing aspen and new aspen regen is cropping up well beyond what was suppressed by conifers now. Now have ground experience in aspen success. May also want to remove unwanted species and plant.

Knock down brush component, Rx fire to create the mosaic and diversify the age component. So we need to discuss what role the FRSC wants to take.

Mike – Adopt rather than sponsor, foresee commenting.

Deb – Collaborative approach is more than commenting and the FS is looking for a more active collaborative approach on this project. Don't have to be recognized as a partner or volunteer as in a formal agreement. Example of the Greenville Rancheria project, tribal group is on the ground helping with layout, and the Lakes Basin project would be improved with active collaborative roles and input rather than just comments.

Mike – SBTS (Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship) wants an active role in shaping the project. Are they a sponsor or collaborator?

Tara – we have considered ourselves partners.

Deb – Recreation is easy, finite and we have been working on it.

Bill – Actively looking for answers to the watershed. Could say we adopt, partner, etc. and get on board and help find answers.

Deb – So maybe you could help with the aspen aspect.

Bill – Elevated walkways around Lake Davis, stringer meadows, additional knowledge we could help with.

John – Effect of non-attainment status of air quality in relation to a third the project slated for underburn, can effect project completion.

Deb – This is what we would like to do, talking to Julie Ruiz from Air Quality and she can help figure out what is realistic, holding off on those decisions for later.

John – No economics on a third of the project (prescribed burning).

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Deb – Funded through multiple sources, funds money has been consistent. Will be easier to fund the burning than other aspects of the project but the attainment will be the main issue. If it takes time, burning in steps will provide the mosaic.

John – Worry about not having economics on a third of the project, no return to the treasury.

Deb – The Plumas NF is viewing this project from a protection standpoint, and it has environmental return. Some alternatives to burning include using a stump grinder if needed, or mastication. Tim Bales at Sierra County is in favor of this concept, noting the dichotomy of forest line from a management standpoint. Yuba River Ranger District also has talked about complimenting the project with some of their own work. This could give a larger landscape level and balance the recreation aspect.

Mike – what about combining the Plumas Eureka project with this project?

Deb – Different approaches are needed for analysis if the project gets bigger. Then we would have to come in and field verify after the NEPA decision, which would mean assuming the presence of all sensitive species in the NEPA rather than doing field analysis first.

Ryan – 7,000 acres of analysis area. More treatment means more surveys, need to keep NEPA moving forward. Lakes Basin is complex and at the forefront of the public. In the past, the Forest Service has buffered projects off high use areas to hide mgmt., this is an opportunity to engage the public and show why we need to manage areas and educate people. Effects locals and urban users.

Mike – Red Dirt rd (Plumas Eureka project) is in fire shadow of Graeagle, and it's a lower priority?

Deb – Lakes Basin is also in WUI. If we backed up to include the Plumas Eureka project, we would have to change analysis methods, assume presence of all sensitive species, and field verify these assumptions after NEPA. Changing now would hold up progress an additional year. Also have to follow regional direction on project prioritization. So think about the next projects, the Plumas Eureka project will expand to Sierraville with treatments.

Ryan – Having a functioning collaborative with multiple stakeholders will help. We can't go back on decisions made but we will help with future project design. This is the first time the district has strategized with stakeholders with a complex project and planned with a simpler one to generate funds and transfer retained receipts to the more complex project. Want to get that story to the public, FS can struggle with this.

Tara – Can the public continue to provide input?

Deb - Formal scoping is 30 or 45 days, taking comment through the end of that, and important to comment during that scoping period.

Currently the comments are shaping the next steps. Balanced response from hikers and bikers, horse groups. Recreation standpoint to make sure that each user's spots are protected during the project. May be a conflict with some areas, some roads are duplicated and some are needed for the project, some

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just lead to mining claims. Daunting task yet interesting. Management hasn't happened yet and won't happen again, we are creating a legacy with this project.

Rachael - Can we provide input and suggestions beyond the comment period?

Deb - Continue to refine and adjust the process. Draft can be commented on. If we get new research, we will take it into consideration and modify the project, and have done it before. This group (FRSC) is still looking at the project broadly, need to focus in on what areas we want to provide input.

Rachael - No pretreatments are designed for prescribed burning, concerned about the public reaction with aesthetics.

Deb - Helicopter method to create mosaic, to leave green areas, may have to burn off trails. Met with Justin with PCT, good response after talking, could be a fall project so snow can remove the charcoal a bit.

Rachael – Are the comment cards as legit as the one comment found online?

Deb - Kyla is putting comment cards on a spreadsheet and specialists are using them to investigate in the field. No authority to dismiss any comments.

Brian – Technology and elaborate on LIDAR and what it will give the FS?

Ryan - Light detection and Reflection. Fly over land with lasers to map the earth surface, canopy and penetrates canopy. Spotted Owl direction wants higher canopy cover levels. Current veg technology lumps veg. LIDAR is more fine scale, Tahoe NF using it to develop algorithms, can detect tree size (height diameter relationship) to detect areas of large trees. Useful for analysis. If these areas could be detected and strategized then they could be connected and manage more efficiently. Also helps heritage to find historic mining ditches. Filter to reduce survey costs. Not super new tech, but cost is lowering to become feasible. Costs around \$1 an acre varies on the scale of land acquisition.

Brian – savings in field time, accuracy, rather than yearly flights for aerial photos.

Used for stand tables, BA of stands, but not good for species detection. Wouldn't be yearly but every 5 years or 10 years. Could better meet our standards and guides. LIDAR is on some areas of the Plumas, Meadow Valley.

Steve Munson, Biomass Legislation Update – As of Friday last week (09/11), SB 350 (50% renewables portfolio) passed and is now law. Priority to biomass and geothermal. 7,000 MW of renewable energy will need to be developed. Issues with condors being killed by wind power and solar fields. Bill AB 590 didn't pass, according to Dahle's staff, the gas emissions funds of \$1 billion was going to be spent to reduce cost of getting biomass fuel to biomass plants. \$4 billion in request to spend this money to offset global warming. Didn't pass because of too many requests. Requesting that the FRSC would ask the legislature to go into special session to deal with wildfire solutions in October. He thinks this could be pushed to the top of the agenda. Steve suggests taking 10% of this emissions fund to address wildfire issues. The SB 350 law has scheduling of new contracts is in the future but we need it now.

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Bill – Support letter to the governor and members of legislature.

Steve – 1 in 4 CA homes are at risk of wildfire destruction, snow pack is in a 500 year low.

Mike – So you want to ask to resurrect the Dahle legislation through special session.

Steve- Seeing Dahle in Alturas, to comment on the film. Need to go on record as concerned citizens.

Mike – Plumas County and PC FSC commented originally, need those supporters again? Ask Brian Dali if it's really feasible.

Bill – a few towns burned down should provide motivation.

Steve – would like our group to take a position rather than see what Brian says.

Mike- some of us are tied to the FRSC project directly and can't provide the support, but other participants can.

John – Need a letter to the governor and get a special session.

Rachael- can distribute the letter through our mailing list.

Brian – so much going on in congress, fires are rampant, we can't afford but to be proactive. A letter is essentially harmless and shows proactive concern. The need hasn't changed.

Bill – Larger papers have been picking up info on fuel loads and bug kill. Valley Fire is so aggressive. Fire is everywhere and drought conditions are killing off major parts of our forest, another year or two of drought and we could be looking at a whole new landscape.

Steve – letter asking to act on disaster relief funds. \$700,000 spent on fire suppression already this year and the season isn't over.

John – This is tangential to what we need to say. We need to write and demand solutions to the situation.

John motioned, Brian second to have Steve draft a letter and Rachael distribute. Vote passed.

Steve – Will tell Brian Dahle about our group.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45

Next meeting is October 21st, 6-8 PM in Greenville at the Indian Valley Community Center.