

Feather River Stewardship Coalition Meeting Minutes Quincy Library, December 9th, 2015

In Attendance: Mike De Lasaux, Brian West, Ryan Tompkins, John Sheehan, Rachael Norton, Ryan Bauer, Kyla Sabo, Nils Lunder, Nancy Francine, Sue McCourt, and Lynn Campbell. Remote attendance: Steve Munson and Carlos Lovizzaro.

Charter – Rachael reviewed recent charter changes.

Nils suggested some rewording – rephrase to **“Recognize that local management efforts influence communities, agriculture, recreation and ecosystems far beyond the upper Feather River Watershed; the Upper Feather River is an important resource to the state of California as the headwaters of the State Water Project.”**

Membership review – The group agreed to use the new revision as written to reflect membership by organizations.

Nils made a motion to adopt the charter as revised with the ability to amend the charter on a yearly basis. Mike pointed out that we should make this opportunity more available as we grow and change. John suggested we have a two member minimum needed to modify the charter. Nils revised his motion to reflect this, John seconded, the motion passed with full support.

Logo art contest - Logos displayed from Feather River College at the Greenville meeting in October, a preliminary voting was done to choose the top 10, which were displayed. John noted the holiday tree of 1995, and that the use of a feather really sets a logo apart. Rachael instructed everyone to take a post it and choose their favorite and a vote on the top two would take place. Nancy reiterated that the art would be digitized and could be modified, and that some logo art was beautiful and intricate, it would likely not work shrunk down on a letterhead or convert well to black and white. Voting ensued, and a logo was chosen, from the art of Kaylamae Kelton. The logo chosen was discussed. The group wanted to make a few modifications, which was noted by Rachael including font use, the possibility of adding a creek through the bottom, making one of the flames into a feather. John volunteered to help with logo changes. Rachael will contact the FRC instructor and artist for the next steps.

Lakes Basin – Rachael - guidance on next steps of the Lakes Basin project and grant applications to SNC for planning or implementation funds. Next deadline is March 1st with a pre application deadline end of Jan.

Lynn – Prop 1 funds, water quality and supply focus. The SNC was allocated \$25 million over the entire Sierra, to be focused on restoration and forest health. Two categories, Category 2 is allocated for planning grants with a cap of \$75,000; the purpose is to facilitate all planning and permitting required so that projects are ready for implementation. Category 1 projects are for implementation funds, with a \$500,000 cap. Projects can apply for Category 2 at one funding cycle and Category 1 on a later funding cycle. SNC can be the lead agency for CEQA, but there are limits to the extent of CEQA that they can oversee, for instance, they cannot create a programmatic EIR. Projects applying for Category 1 must have a NEPA decision and permitting completed. Funding to the SNC for the first two years is \$10 mil, \$7 mil the next two years, \$5 mil for the last year.

Kyla – If we were to apply for a cat 2 would we be more likely to be funded for cat 1?

Lynn – Yes, SNC does give a few more points for that.

John – We applied for one project, what is the status of that?

Lynn – It's a large project, decisions are still being made on it. Field visit is on December 18th. Lisa Forma is the SNC representative in charge. Mike has been in contact with Lisa. That tour will visit the site near Greenville because of snow and time limits. Ryan T. will be using the maps used in the application. Lynn added that the technical evaluators will ask detailed questions, and be ready to give a clear picture of what the problem is and the connection to watershed health, water quality.

Kyla – Will there be a hydrologist?

Ryan T. – we haven't had any hydrologist on board so far.

Nancy – Joe Hoffman has been involved with IRWM and not this SNC process, so this first round is a learning piece.

John – it seems like this project hits all the points and intent of the prop 1 funds.

Lynn – yes, Technical Advisors just need to ground truth the project.

Ryan T. – The forest is interested in submitting to SNC for a March 1st deadline, Lakes Basin decision is scheduled for fall of 2017. Could we submit for a cat 1 in March?

Lynn – need all decisions for Cat 1, so you could do a cat 2 proposal.

Ryan B. – The USFS maintains a capability list of projects that are NEPA ready.

Nancy – we have several projects we could look at.

Kyla - need help with implementation around recreation and meadow sites, this is a new kind of contract and very costly, so looking for help. Also want to be engaging with other agencies and collaboration.

Lynn – if you are getting your decision signed in fall of 2017, can request cat 1 funds in March 2018. Keep this project on the radar. If we can help on some component of the NEPA that is defined, surveys we could apply for a cat 2 planning grant.

Ryan T. – CEQA compliance after NEPA is done, can we get CEQA done in line with NEPA?

Lynn – we typically only do CEQA if a project is recommended.

Mike – so potentially this could hold up the project. Since there is a learning curve for this grant process, Mike suggested we see how this first grant goes if funded, since grant administration would be a task for the Plumas County Fire Safe Council and Plumas Corporation for public lands rather than private lands within the WUI.

Lynn – funds can be used to hire additional coordinators for the life of the grant?

Rachael – I wonder if FRLT could be a grant administrator for this group.

Lynn – I am meeting with FRLT as well for SNC grants, I will try to engage them.

Nils – we have been trying to engage more partners and progress is slow.

Nancy – noted that our first meetings were well attended and people were curious, but less so now. Over snow meetings are well attended because people are mad and motivated while this effort is positive and proactive. Not getting the angry public.

Lynn – see this up and down the Sierra. If you keep putting out public notices and workshops, decreases pushback rates for negative feedback. Persistence and transparency prevent negative pushback.

John – So March SNC application, is the consensus that we want to apply in March, and Mike’s concerns about capacity could be viewed as “pass through” money.

Kyla – FS meeting about meadows, expanding meadows, wanting to do seed collection prior to tree removal to maintain a diversity of plant species, however this idea isn’t funded for NEPA or implementation.

Rachael – Our fieldtrip of the project area showed that people wanted to be involved and working on the ground on this project, and seed collection could be an excellent activity for volunteer work days.

Kyla – Botanist Mike Friend estimated \$25,000 for contracting to get the work done.

Lynn – not sure if this will fit with SNC big picture of forest health. CA Fish and Wildlife also has prop 1 funds for riparian health.

Kyla – point is to repair these habitats quicker. Hoping tree removal will raise the water table.

Lynn – will send CA Fish and Wildlife application guidelines.

John – CRM projects used to gather seed and grow plants, volunteer base was large for this effort and people love to do this work.

Nils – participation in this effort could also increase participation in the collaborative.

Kyla – amazed at the amount of people attending the fieldtrip, Lynn noted that Kyla handled the group well. Rachael- so NEPA funding not needed and implementation is a few years away.

Ryan B. – We really don’t need funding for NEPA, would it be appropriate to present a list of our current unfunded projects to this group and prioritize a list of projects to apply for implementation funds?

Nancy – we could line this list up with the Prop 1 guidelines.

Nils – we could look at projects for the nexus with the WUI and domestic water supply, which would fit the purpose of Prop 1 funds as well as the Plumas County Fire Safe Council.

John – great opportunity for collaboration with neighboring properties such as Quincy CSD.

Nils – they are interested. Look at all communities at risk and see how we could help with watershed health. John – seems like we need dueling lists for public and private lands.

Nils – we should focus on this for the next few months.

Ryan – wanted to sort out the capacity piece for grant administration.

Nancy - Or bring in other partners, the benefit of a coalition is that different organizations could take on different projects rather than limit ourselves. Understand the caution to not want to staff up for the life of a grant, we could pool together and accomplish more.

Ryan – suggest March 1st is two months away, we need to figure out projects we could easily support, need action item in January to approach Plumas Corp for their capacity for additional cat 1 proposals, reach out to other partners who could administer grants so we can grow the capacity of this coalition beyond the FSC. Also, appreciate the 3-5 time to gain those other staffers from different groups so reach out to those groups during their daytime paid time to focus on this and bring their organizational strength.

Lynn – Utilize me to help bring these groups together, meeting with several organizations.

Nils – let's invite the Quincy CSD as well.

Rachael – Thank you all for these new action items, wanted a January date and will continue with the 3-5 time.

Nancy – stewardship work throughout the forest.

Nils – could have some project areas around FSC project areas.

Mike – Suggested bringing this presentation to the FSC, lots of crossover, get a larger audience.

John- in the IRWM process, \$60 mil from private industrial timber for long term management. Wondering if at the January meeting we could address a long term strategy.

Rachael – part of the collaborative goal is to create a long term plan, since we are presenting all these projects, the time is right to create some priorities and start lining out a strategy.

Mike – the CFLR proposal already created could be used as a framework to define collaborators, define projects. Our next step since we have a charter now is to develop a plan for implementation through the CFLRA. Rachael – not only that but we could use a plan to strategize our actions, and with Forest Plan revision coming up, we could use it to help guide multiple objectives.

Nils – would like to incorporate private industrial long term management plans to compliment work on public lands.

Nancy – also wants to include lands treated by NRCS, because they would be eligible for funding from the Joints Chiefs.

John – so are we ready to have a similar list from the private industrial timber owners.

Brian – not sure how everyone will respond to a request for long term management plans. John – maybe just ask for information on WUI lands.

Mike – it would be great to be able to utilize SNC funds for this long term plan. Lynn – it would need to end in a project.

Ryan – Lakes Basin in the future- is there a way to be CEQA compliant through SNC funds so we could be ready to apply for cat 1 funds. Could we do an SNC funded cat 2 for CEQA compliance?

Lynn – This is happening in Susanville.

Ryan T. – so when would be the appropriate time to apply?

Kyla – decision comes out fall of 2017, so apply for funds for CEQA before that decision.

Ryan T. – March 2017 or September 2016 for CEQA compliance funding or is March of 2016 too soon?

Nils – RCD hoping to become a CEQA lead.

Ryan T. – we may not be ready for the March deadline but we should be getting a CEQA lead ready and planning this out.

Lynn – also Daniel Bradfield is CEQA savvy (RPF).

Rachael – so action item for Lynn to see if this CEQA compliance is a good use of SNC cat 2 funds.

Next meeting – January FS will present at the FSC meeting to showcase what the Coalition is doing and get some input from private industrial landowners. John - huge spreadsheet from the DFPZ days of QLG was essential to grasp a strategy on that scale of the landscape. So we need a similar strategy to create a plan. Ryan – we still maintain that big spreadsheet, we would love to share this information. Nils – Steve Munson has been inquiring about a list of QLG projects that weren't funded, so this is a great opportunity to obtain some information.

Update from Steve Munson:

Formed a partnership with a regional investment bank to purchase the Loyalton Biomass facility, will hear in a few months if the purchase was successful. Congress will pass the budget this month with \$700 million in disaster relief funds, the Forest Service has identified 1 million acres and BLM has identified 500,000 acres to be treated. Steve is working to request funds for Plumas County to increase treatment. Inquiring to the Coalition to be a collaborative group to design a strategy for large scale "units" for treatment and secure a 10 year supply of biomass and small logs while restoring forests. Report by the Nature Conservancy out assessing water supply benefits in connection to forest thinning, studies performed in the Feather River Watershed. Rachael to post this report on the website. Steve – we could benefit from some other stakeholders as support and assistance, to put on next agenda.

Nancy – Update on Forest Plan Revision –

The Plumas NF will be entering some level of forest plan revision in this next fiscal year 2016. No additional funding is available yet for the plan, and the Plumas may coordinate with other Sierra Nevada forests who have not started forest plan revision to share resources and ID teams. Starts with a lot of assessments, requiring lots of public engagement, tribal engagement, and collaborative groups so the Coalition could be a great solution to public meetings. Plan revision could oversaturate the public with meetings. Rachael to post web link to 2012 planning rule handbook. What the Forest Service needs is a vision for what public engagement in Forest Plan Revision.

John – would like a list of required assessments, maybe we already have current efforts that could compliment some of these assessments. Nils suggested creating some sort of motivated self-interest through a dialog where people can provide input on what concerns are out there, and how do forest changes affect people?

Nancy- we need to identify the need for change, can learn from other early adopter forests such as the Sequoia, Stanislaus and others.

John – we should be the primary partner for the Plumas NF in the plan revision.

Ryan Tompkins – update on new categorical exclusion for the Plumas NF-

The new Farm Bill includes a CE for up to 3,000 acres to be used in cases of forest insect and disease, for salvage and prevention measures. The Plumas NF has an area of 856,000 acres (2/3 of the forest) that potentially could use the CE if the criteria are met. Collaboration is required in order to use the CE, engaging with either a recognized CFLR project, an active RAC, or a collaborative group. Collaborative engagement needs to be used early in the CE process. Mike – provide a map of the CE area at our January meeting.

Next meeting January 6th from 3-5 PM at the Quincy Library.