

Minutes -- ACCG Planning Group Meeting

February 22, 2017, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Amador County Administration Center, Jackson, CA

Facilitator: Jennifer DeWoody

Participants: Jenn DeWoody; Jill Micheau; Rick Hopson; Marc Young; Chuck Loffland; Gwen Starrett; Robin Wall; Joseph Chow; Rocio Espinoza; Bob Broderick; Steve Markman; Casey Jardine; Julia Stephens; Becky Estes; Pat McGreevy; Megan Fiske; Burns Brimhall; Ray Cablayan, Rueben Childress, Paul Leusch, Miranda Gavalis

Cornerstone Project:

- Julia Stephens (CSERC) requested that progress on Cornerstone (CS) projects be reported. Report information is not ready yet. Robin says this is part of the business plan revision; once completed will be sent to ACCG for review. ACCG would like to put it on their website.
- ACCG wants to know if goals are accurate; how does ACCG evaluate progress; what information will be provided
- Cornerstone projects (and financials) need to be identified – separated from other work.
- Robin indicated that ACCG will receive more than just the bar chart that has been provided so far. Information will be provided by project, county, and fiscal breakdown.
- Ray Cablayan will bring something to next Planning meeting as a starting point for discussion.
- Part of analysis should include each project's contribution to the triple bottom line.
- Will also bring information on projects that are in the pipeline, as well as accomplishments that do not appear in the reporting database (reports to DC office)
- Business plan modifications/revisions are in process. The timeline is to have a proposal to this group (planning) and ACCG by the next meeting on March 22, 2017. A proposal is being prepared.

Amador Ranger District Projects:

- A list of projects was provided, but included no descriptions. Many fall within Cornerstone, but are not necessarily funded by CS. Projects included:
 - Panther Project: Planned timeline for comment period and public meeting: 2/17 – 3/20/2017
 - Power Fire RX Burn project
 - Power Fire fuels reduction & forest health project: Work being done now.
 - Bear River Range Allotment: Rick discussed this. EA in 4-8 weeks. Impact of grazing on meadows... part of EA and hydrology report. A field trip was suggested, talk about meadows.
 - Ethnographic study & Mokelumne Archeological District Reevaluation: no CS funds. Ethnographic study will reevaluate district, across to Stanislaus (will use CS funds) to extend boundary to include Native American lands.
 - Scottiago: Should be a FS fuels reduction project. Considering a farm bill for this. Field trip was suggested.
 - Foster Meadows and Cole project: not on the list. Are they scheduled? Add Foster Meadows, Cole will be after Scottiago. Foster Meadows design is done, ready to go.

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- ❑ Julia: ACCG needs to know what has actually been done per project.
 - Robin to provide a list of implementation projects... it is a large list, a mix of CS and other money. Will provide at next Planning meeting on March 22, 2017
- ❑ Archeology hazard tree survey – concerned with cutting dead and dying trees along roads. Survey buffer along roads where trees need to be cut. Hazard tree reduction along roads. State requirement.

Panther Project:

Timeline: Rick – timing of EA to allow review, comment period started 2/17/17, closes 3/20/17, but will take comments after that. Public meeting on 3/8/17 at Amador Ranger District. Will discuss at next ACCG full meeting on March 15th. Comment letter will be generated after the March 15th.

Specialists' reports on Panther Project:

- ❑ Proposed: fuel break outline, timber harvest, roads. Maps on handouts.
- ❑ ~5400 acres of project area. Several alternatives were discussed based on specialists' reports. Shown in set of maps that were handed out at meeting. See FS Website for Panther Project documents: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=41236>
- ❑ **Archeology:** (Miranda Gavalis– Analysis based on proposed actions. 4065 acres. Used full boundary for surveys. 2015 early summer done by contractor; 3 new sites discovered. 23 sites within project area. General recommendation is “flag and avoid,” with handwork for fuel reduction. Sheep and goat grazing will be discussed to see if it can be done in-site. Also monitored 11 sites to see if they can still be located, impact before projects, etc. Flag and avoid for ground disturbing activity. Allowed for fire, hand removal of trees brush removal, burning, etc. Will be treated by site and activity. Site locations are confidential. Consulted with local tribes. <100 acres of sites overall, 1-20 acres.
- ❑ **Civil Engineering:** (Rocio Espinoza) – Transportation report within project boundary – 25 miles of road maintenance for commercial haul units. Considers road access for fire suppression and resources as well. Mostly maintenance and reconstruction. Installs water bars to control drainage, out sloping, aggregate surface, etc. A couple of sites had major issues – slides – need to be stabilized. May be altered now because of storm water impact. Upsizing many culverts, 12 to 24 inches.
- ❑ **Fuels:** (Burns Brimhall) – data goes into a modeling program that provides 4 fuel models alternatives. Canopy base height important to canopy transition to crown.
- ❑ **Hydrology:** (Steve Markman) – Hydrology report written by Sue Norman of Tahoe District. Will **provide link to report**. 12K acres, at top of watershed. 25% in plan. Link to report: http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/93994_FSPLT3_3951234.pdf
- ❑ **Silviculture:** (Marc Young) – forest health is a major driver for this project. High density stands will be treated... thinning, group selection, commercial harvest and removal of sub-merchantable materials. Modeling stand density over time. Goal to keep it level for 20 years. Pine percent to be increased throughout stands. Competition induced mortality

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modeled. Project to remove ~8.5M board feet. Fuel Break doesn't reduce stand density very much. More expensive w/o herbicides because multiple treatments are needed to maintain.

Wildlife Biology: (Chuck Loffland) – no eagles in area. Staying out of riparian areas. Retain habitat for martens, etc. spotted owl and goshawk most complicated.

Questions from the group:

- Pine component increased to what level, given mortality? *A: No threshold at this point. Timber will be marked spring or early summer.*
- Gwen: Owl habitat concern. Do no harm.
- Julia: herbicides on ridgeline. CSERC prefers no herbicide use. *A: Rick heard this concern and it is reflected in proposed action.*
- Owl habitat concerns; road minimization: *A: Rick: did not identify addition or removal of roads.*
- Should road minimization analysis be done later? *A: Too late for this project – need to address during scoping. Working with another partner on roads too. Think about it for future. Apparently John Buckley (CSERC) wrote a letter asking for road analysis... was it addressed?*
- The “no herbicide” alternative costs \$880 more per acre -- how many re-entries were there? *A: 3 in 10 years. Herb treatment is far more effective at keeping brush down. Effect of shade? A: Our models were based on ridgetops... and still get strong brush response, even with 50% canopy cover. Not enough to suppress on a large scale.*
- Pat McGreevy: Arnold East of Blue Lake Springs looks like clear cut at this point. What is incidence of beetle tree mortality, what is predicted? *A: Western bark beetle attacks ponderosas. No clear data on mortality for this area. Est <150 acres total in <10 acre patches. Last year saw other beetles attack other tree species. Expect some but lower incidence of mortality this year. What do we do with dead trees? A: Some salvage, only treat existing areas (fuel breaks, etc.), cut and remove. Beyond that, just leave them to become snags. Expect 1-2 more growing seasons with bark beetles. Should look for mixed conifers in future, not so much pine. Species diversity... how to create? A: Don't know. Focus has been on pine dominated systems.*
- Comment period on EA? *A: Group doesn't need to take a position on this. Will be a 45 day comment period after FS makes decision.*

Next Steps and Action Items:

- Send any/all questions to Paul Leusch Paul will share responses to ACCG Planning group.
- Planning team needs to draft letter to identify areas of concern. FS will respond. Public meeting would be good forum (3/8/17). Maybe have planning telecom next week to talk about preparing for letter? FS attend first part? Rick, Paul, Jen? What should go in letter? Identify areas of agreement and concern. Need letter to have a seat at the table. Next stage is to select which alternative to support.

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- Reuben Childress volunteered to create 1st draft of letter. Get clarification and raise issues, get standing, suggest modifications.
- Set up ACCG conference call. Julia Stephens will do this.

Roundtable Updates and Information Sharing: All passed.

Calaveras Ranger District FS (Ray Cablayan): focusing on storm damage. Hard to access certain areas. Sending patrols out on level 3-5 roads, snowmobiles on others where damage anticipated. May not know full impact until snow melts. Rick: same on Amador side. Could impact several projects. Federal funds for road repair prioritized by need of health and safety, isolated public, commercial users are last. Will prioritize for the region. We may not get funds to repair all our roads, or it may be a few years out.

Meeting Closed 12:00

Scheduled meetings:

Panther Project Public Meeting

March 8, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00, Amador Ranger District

ACCG General Meeting

March 15, 2017, 9:30 – 12:00, 12200 Airport Rd., Sutter Creek, CA 95685

ACCG Planning Meeting

March 22, 2017, 9:00 – 12:00, Amador Ranger District