**Amador Calaveras Consensus Group Stationary**

ROBIN/CASEY,

Add addresses and cc’s.

*By e-mail transmission*

Re: Cornerstone Business Plan Revision.

The Amador Calaveras Consensus Group is pleased to offer this letter in support for the changes to the Cornerstone Business Plan as proposed by the Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts of Region 4, United States Forest Service. We acknowledge that 10 of 22 performance measures in Cornerstone are unlikely to meet project goals because of unpredictable events that consumed USFS resources including the following:

* The catastrophic Butte Fire in September 2015 that required emergency erosion control and the conversion of selected dozer contingency lines into formal fuel breaks.
* The tree mortality epidemic from 2014 to present caused by drought (incense cedar) and beetle infestations (ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, sugar pine) that continues to consume resources for hazard tree removal on the WUI, along roads and around recreational facilities.
* The freshet of 2017 that caused extensive damage to the forest transportation system. USFS resources are focused on temporary repairs to provide forest access for projects like Cornerstone, timber operations and recreation.
* Closure of biomass facilities in our region.
* The challenges in completing the NEPA triangle that is often constrained by the chronic turn-over of personnel in our ranger districts and the difficulty in reaching consensus among ACCG members concerning controversial issues like the use of herbicides and the management of sensitive species.

The ACCG wants to take this opportunity to present spin-off from Cornerstone that are not recorded elsewhere that more than offsets any shortcomings. The implementation of Cornerstone has brought the diverse membership of the ACCG together for monthly meetings that facilitated networking and focused community expertise on the management of our forest landscape. Here are some examples of spin-off:

* Calaveras Healthy Impact Products Solutions (CHIPS) was founded in 2004 to put our economically depressed communities back to work in forest restoration. Through networking in the ACCG, CHIPS added stewardship agreements with the USFS and other agencies to its normal business in the private sector. By 2017, CHIPS expanded its work force to 40 men and half of them come from the tribal communities. Currently, CHIPS is working on Cornerstone projects.
* Fire protection in Amador, Calaveras and Alpine depends on the collaboration between the private and public sectors to plan, fund, build and maintain linear and landscape fuel breaks across All Lands including Cornerstone projects. The ACCG has facilitated collaboration between the USFS, BLM, Sierra Pacific Industries, Calaveras Big Trees State Park, CAL FIRE, Fire Districts, and homeowner associations. The ACCG monthly meetings provide a forum for these stakeholders to coordinate fire protection plans. Cornerstone funds have enabled our local Ranger Districts to install and maintain their WUI fuel breaks and Steven’s funds are being pursued to extend these breaks onto adjoining private land.
* ACCG meetings include lectures by foresters and biologists that often include site visits to Cornerstone projects. Armed with this new knowledge and skills, our non-professional members are supporting their neighborhoods by creating Community Wildfire Protection Plans, providing information on tree mortality mitigation, and writing grants to fund fuels reduction. These volunteers are extending USFS programs in the high country to the foothill communities on All Lands.
* Of paramount major importance is continued financing of our Forest Restoration and Maintenance projects after Cornerstone. We are pleased to report that the ACCG has mediated an agreement between the Upper Mokelumne Watershed Authority and the Stanislaus National Forest to secure funding from the State of California.

The ACCG stresses that that Cornerstone shortcomings are not the fault of our USFS staff! In fact, our Cornerstone achievements stem from the creativity, leadership, diligence and persistence of Kendal Young, Teresa McClung and Ray Cablayan, Calaveras Ranger District, and Rick Hopson and Chuck Loffland, Amador Ranger District! To them and their teams of professionals we owe deep gratitude.

Sincerely,

Jill Micheau

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