

# Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

Arnold Avery Special Meeting, March 6, 2019, Hathaway Pines, CA

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

## Meeting Brief

### Introduction

Jason Kuiken, Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor underscored the importance of collaboration with the ACCG to ensure the best possible outcomes on the ground. He stated that **Arnold Avery's dual purpose is to protect communities from fire while maintaining good habitat**. He acknowledged that there has been some disagreement about how to achieve this balance. The Arnold Avery Project was developed using Categorical Exemptions (CEs), a streamlined NEPA process that requires collaboration.

### Arnold Avery Project Overview

Alaina Osimowitz gave an overview of the project including: The Forest Service (USFS) anticipates: 900 acres timber removal; 2,000 acres salvage of dead trees; biomass component and prescribed burning. 350 acres are in the Home Range Core Area (HRCA) and 70 acres in California spotted owl (CSPO) Protected Activity Centers (PACs), although the USFS anticipates a reduction of acreage for commercial harvest activities based on further field reconnaissance activities. The project proposes 50% canopy cover in the CSPO PACs with up to 24" diameter tree removal in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and 40% canopy cover in the HRCA. One of the objectives of the project is to maintain the Butte Dozer Line for fire safety which would be achieved with prescribed burning with possible pre-treatment activities.

### Key Questions to Address in order to Achieve Conflict Resolution

**Guiding Question:** How to balance the objectives of fire safety within the WUI and preserve CSPO habitat in PACs and the HRCAs? The following reflects **key questions** raised by participants during the special meeting. The primary concern described by Ben Solvesky, Sierra Forest Legacy, is the project's stated intent to reduce canopy cover to 40% in HRCAs.

1. Is it possible to achieve 50% canopy cover overall? Can there be off-sets or trade-offs in other areas that allow for below 50% canopy cover in some areas while achieving 50% overall canopy cover within treatment units?
2. Does the best available science reflect a consensus that 50% canopy cover for CSPO habitat is critical to avoid negative impacts to the species? (*Sierra Forest Legacy cited the Tempel 2016 study (attached) as support for their stated concern*).
3. What specifically needs to change (what treatments should occur) on the ground to achieve the stated objectives of fire safety and habitat preservation?
4. Since the USFS anticipates a reduction in the total number of acres for commercial timber harvest in the project, what specific treatment activities are proposed in the following stands? Sierra Forest Legacy suggested that it may be difficult to resolve issues without completion of field review in all relevant stands.
  - a. Stands 201/202/211 (in Defense Zone)
  - b. Stands 501/502 (field reconnaissance activities have yet to be completed)
  - c. Stand 100 (field assessment complete)
  - d. Stand 103 (expected reduction of commercial timber harvest activities)
5. Overarching question (It may not be productive to address this question directly within the context of Arnold Avery): What constitutes a justifiable "limited situation" under Standard 7 in

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the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2004)?

This question pertains directly to the following:

- a. **Within California spotted owl Home Range Core Areas:** *Where existing vegetative conditions permit, design projects to retain a least 50% canopy cover within the treatment unit. Exceptions are allowed in **limited situations** where additional trees must be removed to adequately **reduce ladder fuels**, provide sufficient **spacing for equipment** operations, or **minimize re-entry** (Where 50% canopy cover retention cannot be met for reasons described above, retain at least 40% canopy cover averaged within the treatment unit.)*

## Next Steps

Participants agreed to an all-day Arnold Avery field trip. Details are as follows:

- **When:** April 30, 2019 at 9:00 AM (check-in the week before to determine if field sites are accessible).
- **Where:** Meet at the Calaveras Ranger District in Hathaway Pines and after an initial orientation to an updated unit map, etc., visit as many of the following stands as possible: 201, 202, 211, 501, 502.
- **Who:** Sierra Forest Legacy, Foothill Conservancy, Sierra Pacific Industries, Cal AM, Robert Smith, and the Stanislaus NF USFS Team.
- **Note:** If conflict cannot be resolved, in keeping with the ACCG’s MOA, the Planning Work Group will conduct a review and report back to the full ACCG to capture lessons learned for future projects.

## Meeting Participants

| Name             | Name                       |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Jason Kuiken     | Jerry Jensen               |
| Jacob Baker      | Jeb Brooks                 |
| Alaina Osimowitz | Terry Woodrow              |
| Scott Cones      | Tony Valdes                |
| Marty Gmelin     | Robert Smith               |
| Sue Holper       | Tania Carlone, Facilitator |
| Heidi Beswick    |                            |
| Pete Padelfor    |                            |
| Crispin Holland  |                            |
| Jon Lucas        |                            |
| Emily Graham     |                            |
| Merita Callaway  |                            |
| Don Stump        |                            |
| Matt Hilden      |                            |
| Liz Gregg        |                            |
| Ben Solvesky     |                            |
| Sue Britting     |                            |
| Scott Tangenberg |                            |
| Steve Wilensky   |                            |