*Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute*

# Meeting Brief

The Planning Work Group (WG):

* discussed the Power Fire Pre-Commercial Thinning project and recommended the project to the full ACCG membership for consensus support.
* conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) analysis for the Arnold Avery project.
* received a preliminary presentation from the Stanislaus National Forest on the large landscape project (Moving Towards Resiliency within the Mokelumne River to Kings River- MOTOR M2K).
* provided comments on the Three Meadows restoration project scoping document and recommended the project to the full ACCG membership for consensus support.
* will review a revised project development process package on a conference call prior to the next general meeting and will present to the ACCG in June.

# Action Items

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| **Actions** | **Point Person(s)** |
| Follow up with Foothill Conservancy regarding any additional concerns related to the Power Fire Pre-Commercial Thinning (PCT) Project. | Ben Solvesky |
| Follow up with Rich Farrington regarding Power Fire PCT “fuels” language in the Proposed Action. | Rick Hopson |
| Prepare Project Support Submission Form and associated documentation for the Power Fire PCT project and submit to Regine Miller, ACCG Administrator, one week prior to the June 19th ACCG general meeting. | Rick Hopson  Marc Young |
| Prepare Project Support Submission Form and associated documentations for the Three Meadows project and submit to Regine one week prior to the June 19th ACCG general meeting. | Gwen Starrett |
| Follow up with Becky Estes and Shana Gross regarding key scientific questions that chronically emerge in project development discussions and how the Monitoring and Planning Work Groups could establish greater collaboration. | Tania Carlone |
| Review the Dinkey Reforestation Strategy as an example of how to create a framework for agreement on high level goals over time. | Tania distribute to the Planning WG |
| Schedule a Planning WG conference call prior to ACCG full meeting in June. | Tania |

# Summary

## Amador Ranger District, El Dorado National Forest, 2019 Power Fire Pre-Commercial Thinning (PCT) Project

**Project Overview & Intent:** Rick Hopson informed the Planning WG that the Forest Service (FS) had follow up conversations since the last Planning WG meeting with Sierra Forest Legacy and Foothill Conservancy to work through language that addressed their concerns about increasing spatial heterogeneity and the use of prescribed fire. Ben Solvesky, Sierra Forest Legacy, indicated that with the changes to the Proposed Action, Sierra Forest Legacy supports the project moving forward to the full ACCG membership to seek consensus support. Since Foothill Conservancy did not have representation at the Planning WG meeting, Ben agreed to follow up with Katherine Evatt and Tony Valdes to ensure that they support the project and, if not, Ben would inform Rick and Tania of any outstanding concerns. Rich Farrington, UMRWA, requested that the Fuels section of the Proposed Action include more specificity similar to the Scottiago Proposed Action. Rick indicated that he would discuss this request internally with his team and would call Rich to follow up. Megan Layhee, CSERC, expressed her appreciation for the Forest Service’s inclusion of the foothill yellow-legged frog in the Aquatic Wildlife section of the Proposed Action. Rick informed the WG that he would initiate public scoping and that the public scoping comment deadline would be June 28th. He expects the Decision would be implementable by July. The Power Fire PCT project will appear on the ACCG general meeting agenda in June for ACCG consideration.

## Arnold Avery Project SWOT Analysis

The WG agreed that, in keeping with the ACCG’s MOA when a project does not receive ACCG consensus support, the Planning WG’s role is to document the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities (SWOT) and report that SWOT analysis to the full ACCG at a general meeting. Planning WG members agreed that the conversation should not re-hash areas of disagreement but should aim to address the following questions:

1. What was the expected outcome of collaboration?
2. In what ways did collaboration break down?
3. What were the issues that prevented the group from reaching consensus?
4. What can we learn from this?
5. What went well?

**Discussion**

* An expected outcome from collaboration was for ACCG members with diverse viewpoints and interests to be engaged in the collaborative and to achieve consensus support from the ACCG
* Rick Hopson noted that sometimes the Forest Service may come into an ACCG project discussion thinking that it’s going to be easy or straight forward. He noted that it’s important to come into these conversations with an open mind, while trying to anticipate concerns, given the interests of different ACCG members.
* The Planning WG identified that these project discussions are usually affected by external pressures, such as:
  + Timeframes set by Forest Service that are not often conducive to collaboration, which takes time, especially among diverse groups.
  + Forest Service staffing is a big, ongoing challenge. There are many staff vacancies, including key positions, which then causes lots of shuffling and a whole host of implications that affect collaborative project development efforts.
  + Conflict could be resolved if we could get all of the specialists together with the ACCG but staffing pressures often make that impractical.
  + Many of the staff vacancies are unlikely to be filled because of budget shortfalls. The reality is the Forest Service is looking at reduced services.
  + The Washington Office targets for fuels are placing significant pressure on the Forests.
  + The way the Forest Service used to do business is not how they do it now. Because of perennial understaffing and limited resources, ranger districts are relying on other districts for support. However, those districts’ staff members do not report directly and are not supervised by the ranger districts receiving their aid. It helps to fill gaps but is challenging.
  + Timing is a huge issue. Collaboration is not a fast process but gaining a better understanding of what we don’t agree on and why could help establish protocols and realistic timelines for the collaborative process.
  + With timeframes as strict as they are, it is critical to start the collaborative process very early in project development, where the ACCG can contribute to the Purpose & Need.
* An ongoing process challenge is what to do when members aren’t able to attend Planning WG meetings, where the WG has achieved a consensus recommendation and then those who didn’t attend, who may still have concerns, are not able to benefit from the group discussion. The WG talked about ways to address this issue, for example: 1) if an ACCG member knows that they have a project concern but can’t attend the meeting, they confer with another WG member with a similar interest before and after the meeting; 2) They email the Planning WG in advance of the meeting, informing the WG that they can’t attend and articulate their concerns that they would like addressed; 3) Hold follow up calls to work through the issues, identifying a point person to lead the engagement (although this can be time-intensive and impractical, at times).
* The Arnold Avery project generated community interest and engagement beyond the ACCG membership.
* The substantive issues that prevented the ACCG from achieving consensus were:
  + Treatment intensity: how many of the sub-dominant trees need to be removed (ie., dbh of 20-30”).
  + The reduction of canopy cover below 50% in HRCA.
  + The differing interpretations of the Forest Plan (Standard 7).
* The key scientific questions that were implicated and would benefit from further exploration to achieve mutual understanding, include:
  + How do you manage forests to make them resilient to wildfire?
  + How does canopy cover relate to fire risk (especially when taking into consideration climate change impacts)?
  + How do we address red fir forest management and the associated issues?
* Action items to advance ACCG discussions on topics where there are disparate views:
  + Develop evaluative tool to better understand differences and how to move towards agreement (“zones of agreement”).
  + Follow up with Becky Estes and Shana Gross regarding the key scientific questions and how the Monitoring and Planning Work Groups could establish greater collaboration.
  + Review the Dinkey Reforestation Strategy as an example of how to create a framework for agreement on high level goals over time.

## Moving Towards Resiliency within the Mokelumne River to Kings River Landscape

Michael Jow, Co-ID Team leader for the large landscape scale project, gave an overview of the project which covers a two million-acre planning area within the Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests (see presentation). Michael reviewed the preliminary purpose and need for the project and the timeline to issue a Final Decision.

* May-August 2019 Public Engagement Meetings and Workshops
* August 2019 Finalize Proposed Action & Initiate Scoping
* October 2019 Finalize Alternatives & Management Requirements
* April 2020 EA or EIS for Public Review (Comment Period)
* April/May 2020 Public Meetings for EA or DEIS
* July 2020 Initiate Objection Period on Draft Decision
* November 2020 Issue Final Decision & Project Implementation

Michael stated that the Forest Service plans to hold public engagement meetings over the next three months to solicit feedback, ideas, and concerns. He also said that there would be briefings at ACCG regular meetings about the project as well as with the other collaboratives within the landscape (Dinkey, YSS).

**Discussion**

* The Planning WG asked how the Potential wildland fire Operational Delineations (PODs) framework is related to MOTOR M2K and voiced interest in having the ACCG play an active role in the development of the PODs framework. Michael responded that PODs show values at risk and conditions on landscape to help clarify the “where” and “how” of prioritizing actions on the landscape. PODs & MOTOR M2K are going to be parallel processes?
* Rich Farrington asked why water quality wasn’t mentioned in the presentation and suggested its inclusion in the Proposed Action.
* Megan Layhee asked if this project will establish a blanket NEPA Analysis for the next 10-15 years. Michael said it would be more specific than that.
* The Planning WG asked how the Stanislaus National Forest planned to engage the ACCG and if the summer engagement meetings/workshops had been scheduled. Michael suggested that the ID Team would provide regular briefings to the ACCG and that the public engagement meetings were in the process of being set.

## Three Meadows Restoration Project

Gwen Starrett presented the draft scoping document for the Three Meadows restoration project. She reminded the Planning WG that the project was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The grant has funded the work of two consultants and the Amador Resource Conservation District (RCD) is the grantee. Gwen explained that public comment on the scoping document would occur in mid-June through July. She went on to present the scoping document and to request Planning WG input.

**Discussion**

* The Planning WG discussed language in the “Range” section of the document that referred to how cattle “may be excluded” from the restoration area. Rick explained that the Forest Service is trying to avoid permanent fencing but is thinking about temporary exclusion. Gwen indicated that the project aims to put up temporary fencing. The WG talked about the challenges of maintaining exclosures and that for the purposes of this project, volunteers could play a role in maintaining these structures. CSERC offered a potential volunteer field trip/work day to help with fencing maintenance.
* The Planning WG suggested that the Proposed Action could include a monitoring component specific to the restoration project to monitor the effectiveness of the treatments. It could be as simple as establishing photo points. Rick and Gwen will follow up to incorporate a broad monitoring statement into the Proposed Action.

With the inclusion of the suggested changes, the Planning WG recommended the Three Meadows restoration project to be considered by the full ACCG for consensus support at the June general meeting.

## ACCG Project Development & Approval Process

As a result of limited time, the Planning WG agreed to review the project development and approval materials over email and to convene for a conference call before the next ACCG meeting to refine the project development and approval process package and transmit it to the ACCG for consideration at the June meeting.

## Roundtable Updates and Information Sharing

**Calaveras Ranger District:** Ray Cablayan noted that the Mattley Meadow project may be an agenda topic at an upcoming Planning WG meeting.  
**Amador Ranger District:** Rick Hopson reminded Planning WG members about the Scottiago field trip scheduled for the June 26th Planning WG meeting. The Planning WG will meet from 9-10 at the Amador Ranger District and then go into the field. Rick anticipates an upcoming field trip in the Power Fire project area. He encouraged Planning WG members to suggest other desired field trips.  
**Strategic Landscape Assessment Work Group (SLAWG):** as the liaison between the SLAWG and the Planning WG, Megan informed the group that the SLAWG is in the process of developing short- and long-term goals. In the short term, the SLAWG plans to develop a mapping tool. The SLAWG would like to hear from the Planning WG about what recommendations the WG would make for the mapping tool and what are the key questions that need to be answered over the long term. The SLAWG has requested a standing agenda topic at Planning WG meetings.

## Future Meetings

The next Planning Work Group meeting will be on June 26, 2019 at the Amador Ranger District in Pioneer. Most of the meeting with be in the field. The Planning WG will hold a conference call on June 18, 2019 from noon -1:30 PM.

# Meeting Participants

(To be filled in before finalizing draft)

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