

February 11, 2020

Barnie Gyant, Deputy Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, CA 94592

Dear Barnie,

The Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) is writing to update you on our progress since the letter we sent on November 21, 2019. As is stated in that letter, the ACCG is committed to collaborate with the Amador Ranger District on the Eldorado National Forest and Calaveras Ranger District on the Stanislaus National Forest to identify priority areas and approaches that represent the least controversial ways to increase pace and scale for the successful implementation of large treatments within the ACCG's boundaries. For your reference, find attached the original letter from the ACCG.

To begin to fulfill this commitment, last November the ACCG identified two important, short-term next steps. We'd like to remind you of those steps and let you know what progress we've made on them thus far.

- 1) **New project development process:** Since the summer of 2019, the ACCG has been developing guidance documents to help clarify its project development process in order to guide collaborative project development between the ACCG and Forest Service and others. One of the guidance tools in the process aims to help identify anticipated levels of controversy associated with a range of proposed forest treatments. Within the context of increasing pace and scale, these tools can be used to initiate discussions between the ACCG and the Forest Service beginning with the least controversial approaches as a starting point.
- 2) **Mapping workshop to identify focal areas:** The ACCG convened its first mapping workshop on December 11, 2019 to begin identifying and mapping focal areas that can then be prioritized. The Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts as well as Cal Fire, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Resource Conservation Districts, the National Resources Conservation Service, the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA), East Bay Municipal Utilities District, Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS), environmental organizations, and other ACCG member organizations and individuals attended.

The diverse workshop participants confirmed the value of the ACCG proceeding with its effort to create a repository of landscape mapping information and they unanimously supported holding future workshops. Some felt that such a mapping repository could serve as a key for collaboration across the ACCG landscape and with adjacent jurisdictions. To accomplish this goal, the ACCG, through UMRWA, has recently received a Sierra Nevada

Conservancy award from the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) for \$50,000 to build-out these mapping tools.

Another important outcome from the mapping workshop was the group's identification of a big picture focal area to create a network of strategic fuel breaks across the landscape. The ACCG in subsequent meetings confirmed its interest in advancing strategic fuel break project discussions with the Forest Service as a starting point.

At the January 22, 2020 ACCG Planning Work Group meeting, participants discussed the importance of communicating to Forest Service leadership how a network of connected fuel breaks across the landscape could increase pace and scale. The following summarizes the group's rationale for the suggested approach.

- A connected fuel break network would create a framework for project activities. Once the "frame" showing connected fuel breaks is established, that allows the Forest Service and adjacent landowners to work with stakeholders to fill-in treatments in the surrounding forest depending on the specific conditions of each section of fuel break and surrounding areas.
- A network of strategic fuel breaks allows everyone to see the big picture.
- By creating this framework and "filling in" surrounding areas, the Forest Service could work with the ACCG to identify possible controversial activities based on site-specific information and create options for how to overcome controversy.
- By creating a connected network of strategic fuel breaks, it allows the Forest Service, adjacent land managers/owners, and the ACCG to cooperate in putting the fuel breaks together and identifying "buffer areas" to extend the benefits of fuel breaks.
- This level of cooperation with adjacent land owners and other stakeholders within the ACCG would present an opportunity to develop multi-benefit/multi-jurisdiction projects, including ongoing maintenance of existing fuel breaks, that would allow partners to leverage resources and funding to overcome obstacles, such as the NEPA bottleneck, and give partners incentive to identify funding avenues and pursue funding opportunities jointly.

### **What's next?**

The ACCG respectfully requests that the Forest Service commit fire staff and other key personnel and resources from the Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts to engage with the ACCG to advance project activities to create a network of strategic fuel breaks across the landscape. Specific next steps may include:

- Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts' fire staff bring maps to the Planning Work Group illustrating existing and best places for fuel breaks.
- Get all relevant entities in the same room to compile information depicting where the fuel breaks are, the opportunities, constraints and associated costs.

- Make a list of all critical resources at risk and where they are spatially located. Use this information to identify priorities in parallel with other data gathering efforts.
- At the same time, ACCG would work with the Forest Service on processes for fuel break maintenance and coordinate to help seek funding for maintenance and re-entry activities.

This focal area supports ACCG's stated commitment to identify priority areas and approaches that represent the **least controversial ways** to increase pace and scale for the successful implementation of large treatments within the ACCG's boundaries.

The ACCG appreciates your ongoing efforts to support Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration activities on National Forest Lands in the ACCG Cornerstone Area and with adjacent jurisdictions. The ACCG looks forward to working with the Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts and the Region to increase pace and scale to achieve greater resiliency on the landscape.

On Behalf of the ACCG,

Regine Miller  
ACCG Administrator