

# Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

*Planning Work Group Meeting Summary, June 24, 2020, On-line Meeting*

*Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)*

## Meeting Brief

- The Planning Work Group (WG) confirmed Dr. Malcolm North as the speaker for the July ACCG general meeting and are in the process of confirming future speakers.
- The Amador Ranger District (RD) and Calaveras RD gave project and staffing updates to the WG.
- UMRWA sought WG feedback on a staff proposal for UMRWA to support NEPA in the Mokelumne. The WG, including both the Amador and Calaveras Ranger Districts (RDs), expressed support and a willingness to commit staff to engage with UMRWA to clarify goals and roles and responsibilities.
- Megan Layhee, project consultant, gave an update on the ACCG's draft Fuels Reduction Project Mapper and Prioritization Framework, informing the WG that the Strategic Landscape Assessment Work Group (SLAWG) will begin to work on components 2 and 3 of the framework.
- The WG continued to refine the draft community and economic benefits checklist (recommended by the ad hoc group) in the ACCG Project Submission Form and identified next steps to refine the document and seek full ACCG input.
- The WG added a draft Preamble, refined the purpose statement, and renamed the categories in the Forest Treatment Guidance document as they continue discussions to improve the project development process. The WG will bring recommended refinements to the full ACCG for input and feedback in the coming months.

## Action Items

Actions	Point Person(s)
Follow up with Dr. Malcolm North and copy Tania and Regine Miller and they will work with Dr. North on logistics for his general meeting presentation on July 15 <sup>th</sup> .	Rich Farrington
Coordinate with the Community and Economic Benefits Ad hoc group regarding review and discussion of relevant components of the Sierra Institute for Community and the Environment ACCG Socioeconomic Monitoring Report.	Tania Carlone
Follow up with Becky Estes regarding the status of LIDAR for the Eldorado National Forest.	Rick Hopson
Email map illustrating the status of LIDAR to Tania for distribution to the Planning WG.	Ben Solvesky
Follow up with Steve Wilensky and Regine Miller regarding how CHIPS defines living wages, "local" contractors, and follow up with Steve, Regine and Miranda Gavalis regarding sensitivity to Native American cultural sites to inform the revision of the Project Submission Form revision. Prepare clean copy of form for the Ad hoc group's review before sharing with the full ACCG for input.	Tania Carlone

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## Summary

### Agenda Review and May Meeting Summary Approval

The Planning WG (WG) met via Zoom video-conference. There weren't any adjustments to the agenda or the May meeting summary which will be finalized and posted to the ACCG website.

### 2020 General Meeting Speaker Schedule

Rich confirmed presenter Dr. Malcolm North for the July general meeting. The Planning WG (WG) discussed the importance of allocating as much time as possible to the presenters, suggesting that it would be ideal to reserve 90 minutes for Dr. North's presentation and discussion with the ACCG. They also suggested sending a save the date notification for Dr. North's presentation to encourage those on the ACCG participant list to invite any other interested parties to attend Dr. North's presentation at the July 15<sup>th</sup> ACCG general meeting. Rich Farrington will follow up with Dr. Scott Stephens to confirm him as a speaker for the August general meeting. If Dr. Stephens is not available, the WG discussed inviting Dr. LeRoy Westerling to speak to the ACCG. Rich said he would reach out to Dr. Westerling to gauge his interest and availability. Once confirmed, Tania and Regine Miller will coordinate logistics with speakers.

The WG also discussed the importance of applying the science and knowledge presented in the ACCG's speaker series. WG members suggested possibly holding periodic conferences to highlight what the ACCG has learned and how it is working to apply science. As a first step, the WG agreed to include a standing item on its agendas to debrief the takeaways from speaker presentations. At the July meeting, the WG will debrief Dr. Malcolm North's presentation.

The WG also discussed whether it would be valuable to invite the Sierra Institute for Community and the Environment (Sierra Institute) to make a follow up presentation on the final ACCG Socioeconomic Monitoring Report that was published in February 2020. The Sierra Institute presented the draft report to the ACCG in the fall of 2019. Some WG members suggested the conversation about the report is incomplete. Other WG members wondered if there was anything in the report that the Socioeconomic Ad hoc committee should consider in order to assess the relevancy of the study as it relates to the ACCG's interest in increasing community and economic benefits in project activities. The WG agreed to review the report and meet to discuss its relevancy and to report back to the Planning WG any possible recommendations.

### Forest Service Updates

- **Amador Ranger District:** The Amador Ranger District (RD) informed that WG of the status of timber sales noting timber sales in Copy Cat, Scottiago and Panther. Additionally, Rick Hopson informed the group that roadside hazard tree removal is occurring at Silver Lake. The RD is also doing some herbicide work in the Power Fire area and Panther fuel breaks. The RD is working with CHIPS on the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) grant and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grants which

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are in a pre-work stage and include the UMRWA culvert replacement project. Foster Meadow restoration work will begin after Labor Day and the Request for Proposals (RFP) for 3 Meadows is going out and a bid tour is being organized for July. Greg Suba asked if LIDAR had been flown and whether it has been processed and is available for the Eldorado National Forest as a part of the Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) planning work. Rick Hopson will follow up regarding the availability of LIDAR. Ben Solvesky indicated that he has a map illustrating the status of LIDAR and will send to Tania for distribution to the Planning WG.

In terms of staffing, Robin Wall has returned from her detail and there is a new Forest Supervisor on the Eldorado, Jeff Marsolais. Chuck Loffland has finished his time on the Covid response team and is likely to be more available to engage with the ACCG.

- **Calaveras Ranger District:** The Calaveras RD reported that Ray Cablayan is back from his detail. Joe Aragon is leaving the Forest Service for a position with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in eastern Oregon. His last day will be July 1, 2020. Carinna Robertson is currently on detail on the Miwok Summit RD. She should be back on the Calaveras on July 13<sup>th</sup> and will serve as the interim CFLR coordinator until the position is filled permanently. In the fuels shop, Matt Hilden is retiring. His last day is July 31<sup>st</sup>. Kellin Brown is replacing Matt. Becca Sands will be joining the RD in July as a Fuels Tech and is coming from the Groveland RD.

The RD informed the WG of project activities including: Arnold Avery with partners Mule Deer, CHIPS, and UMRWA. There are lots of Hemlock project activities including Cabbage, Thompson, and UMRWA fuels work in Cabbage and Black Springs. The Black Springs Campground is under construction. A local contractor from Jackson is doing the work. The pre-bid for West Calaveras is currently being coordinated.

The Calaveras RD is seeing an increase in fire activity and is currently in PL3 and the RD is currently in Phase 1 of COVID reopening.

John Buckley expressed concern about limited timber staff, given the priority to increase pace and scale of treatments. He stated that it can be a problem when there is limited experience in timber sale administration because it can result in less than optimal outcomes. He suggested that at some point, there needs to be follow up and communications with the Regional Office and the Forest Supervisor's Office regarding the challenges of RDs losing staff. Ray Cablayan explained that these conversations have been occurring. One of the challenges has been a small pool of candidates and few applicants. The Forest Service is trying to grow their own through the Pathways Program as well.

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- **UMRWA Update:** WMRWA is interested in increasing pace and scale. The staff is thinking of approaching the UMRWA board asking if they would support leading NEPA in the Mokelumne. The request of the board would be asking for funds to be allocated for this purpose. In this role, UMRWA would coordinate with the ACCG and the Forest Service. They are thinking of possibly entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify goals as well as roles and responsibilities. Through this suggestion, UMRWA staff is acknowledging that the ACCG is important and UMRWA wants to be supportive. Last fall, the ACCG identified the NEPA bottleneck as an obstacle and UMRWA would like to help provide resources to address this issue. UMRWA would like to work with the ACCG on developing a 5-year plan for project implementation that's linked to the ACCG mapping effort currently underway. John Buckley expressed that UMRWA's generous offer to bring resources to bear could help speed up NEPA. Joe Aragon suggested that the only concern is helping people gain comfort working with external partners. Rick Hopson said that UMRWA's offer seems to fit well with ACCG's response to Bernie Gyant and it is a logical, possible next step after CFLR funds sunset. Rick said the Amador RD can make staff available to support the effort. Ray Cablayan also voiced his support, noting that UMRWA's proposal is in line with the Forest Service's new way of doing business. He said the Forest Service is utilizing external partners as best as they can and already has external partners doing this kind of work. He also stated that UMRWA works well with the Forest Service. Rich stated that with the Planning WG's support, UMRWA staff member, Richard Sykes, would initiate discussions with the Forest Service. Rich further noted that the people who benefit from drinking water from headwaters areas need to protect the source. EBMUD has begun to educate people about that need and this partnership provides an opportunity for downstream beneficiaries to contribute to restoration activities in the headwaters.

### Mapping Tool Development & Next Steps

- **Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) Grant:** Megan Layhee, project consultant, gave a brief update on the progress developing ACCG's draft Fuels Reduction Project Mapper. Megan noted that the full ACCG confirmed the ACCG Fuels Reduction Mapper and Landscape Prioritization Tool Framework at the June general meeting. She informed the group that the Strategic Landscape Assessment Work Group (SLAWG) will be meeting twice a month and are currently rescheduling their recurring meeting schedule. Megan expressed that it's helpful that the SLAWG is meeting more frequently. She clarified that the SLAWG is currently refining the mapping tool by working through the framework diagram. At the next meeting, the SLAWG will begin talking about components 2 and 3 in the framework. She reminded the WG that the product must be completed by December 2020. She is also beginning to work on options/approaches for prioritization. The SLAWG will also be discussing how to use LIDAR and whether we'll have the Eldorado National Forest LIDAR to incorporate into the tool this year. Megan also confirmed that there has been broad and consistent participation on the SLAWG

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from a diverse mix of ACCG members and the Amador and Calaveras RDs. Megan reiterated that she would inform the ACCG of the updated SLAWG meeting schedule, once confirmed.

## Project Development & Approval Process

- **Project Submission Forum Revision:** The WG reviewed the revised Project Submission Form which incorporated comments from the May WG meeting related to the inclusion of the community and economic benefits checklist. Specifically, the WG discussed the following:
  - Under Project Details letter “c,” the WF suggested adding a succinct statement giving context to what it means to check the boxes for community and economic benefits.
  - The WG confirmed the inclusion of the Living Wage Calculator as a resource for project proponents.
  - The WG added a definition of local and regional stating that, “local generally refers to those areas within and adjacent (ie, El Dorado, Alpine, Tuolumne, San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Stanislaus counties) to Amador and Calaveras counties. Regional refers to the broader Sierra Nevada and foothills.
  - The WG suggested examples illustrating the meaning of the checklist item, “uses regional networks and markets to optimize local benefits.”
  - The WG suggested refinements to the cultural resources checklist item and encouraged the facilitator to follow up with both Steve Wilensky and Miranda Gavalis for their input.

The WG agreed that Tania would conduct the necessary follow up, refine the project submission form and send to the Ad hoc before sharing a clean copy with the full ACCG for input at an upcoming ACCG general meeting.

- **Forest Treatment Guidance Document:** In an attempt to engage in an ongoing, iterative discussion about recommended refinements to the Forest Treatment Guidance Document, The WG included a draft “Preamble” to the Forest Treatment Guidance Document to clarify the intent of the document. The refined Preamble reads as follows:

### PREAMBLE

The intent of the project development process is to foster constructive dialogue and partnerships among ACCG members to get more work done on the ground and to do so in a manner consistent with the ACCG’s [mission](#) and [Principles and Policies to Guide Operations](#). The Principles and Policies are designed to assist the ACCG achieve triple bottom-line environmental, community, and economic benefits. The process further strives to overcome obstacles (such as, lack of funding and limited capacity for NEPA/CEQA, among others) in order to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. As one of the integral components of the ACCG’s project

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development process, the Forest Treatment Guidance document's intention is to support forest restoration activities within the ACCG project boundary that strive to achieve the following goals:

- Adapt to **Climate Change**, particularly the increasing threat of **Mega Fires and Drought Mortality** consistent with GTR 220 & GTR 237 which recommend **creating forest heterogeneity** to provide ecological flexibility to withstand environmental stresses.
- Reestablish the **natural fire regime** where possible.
- Maintain and **create fuel breaks** through **forest thinning and prescribed fire** to help **protect communities** and forest resources.
- **Purpose & Naming of Categories:** In prior discussions with the full ACCG and the Planning WG, there was broad support for removing the word controversial from the purpose statement and naming of categories to reflect a more constructive tone for the guidance document. The WG made the following draft revisions to the purpose statement and category names, as follows:
  - **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this guidance document is to help project proponents anticipate the level of ACCG engagement that may be needed for specific proposed forest management project activities that seek ACCG support and involvement. Understanding the potential level of engagement needed to achieve broad agreement among the ACCG can offer guidance to project proponents in preparing a strategy, timeline, and approach to promote ACCG consensus in as realistic and expedient a manner as possible. This document also outlines the protocols and procedures associated with each category.
  - **Categories and Protocols at a Glance**

<b>Category 1: <i>Mutually Agreeable:</i></b> Project activities are broadly considered agreeable by the ACCG and follow an expedited process.
<b>Category 2: <i>Mostly Agreeable:</i></b> Project activities may require moderate time (i.e., a few months) for ACCG discussion/ engagement to reach agreement.
<b>Category 3: <i>Lacking Consistent Agreement:</i></b> Project activities are likely to require extensive ACCG engagement and time (months to years) in order to design a project agreeable to the diverse interests that make up the ACCG membership.

**NOTE:** The Planning WG's discussion of the project development process is ongoing. The WG will bring to the full ACCG recommended draft changes to the project development components in the coming months.

The next Planning Work Group meeting will be on Wednesday, July 22, 2020. The meeting will take place on-line via Zoom.

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## Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation	Miles (N/A- videoconference)	Hours
Tania Carlone (facilitator)	Consensus Building Institute (CBI)		3
Ray Cablayan	USFS- Calaveras		3
Joe Aragon	USFS- Calaveras		
Shane Dante	Foothill Conservancy		3
Rich Farrington	UMRWA		3
Randy Hanvelt			3
Megan Layhee	GIS Consultant (RFFCP)		3
Rick Hopson	USFS- Amador		3
Chuck Loffland	USFS- Amador		3
Robin Wall	USFS- Amador		3
Ben Solvesky	NRCS		3
Greg Suba	Sierra Forest Legacy		3
John Buckley	CSERC		2
Joe Aragon	USFS- Calaveras		3
Kellin Brown	USFS- Calaveras		3
Matt Hilden	USFS- Calaveras		3