

Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

Planning Work Group Meeting Summary, September 23, 2020, On-line Meeting

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

Meeting Brief

- The Planning Work Group (WG) discussed the prescribed fire panel scheduled for the January general meeting, specifically clarifying the ideal duration, objectives of the panel, and prospective panelists.
- The WG debriefed the Hemlock project area field trip sharing their perspectives. They expressed a desire to hold a follow up field trip that more broadly explores how the Hemlock project area is implementing GTR 220 to achieve structural heterogeneity and the role that Designation by Prescription (DxP) could play in achieving desired conditions.
- The Amador Ranger District (RD) and Calaveras RD gave project updates to the WG. The Amador RD noted that the Cole Creek project will come to the Planning WG in the coming months for discussion.
- Megan Layhee, project consultant, gave a presentation of the draft project prioritization tool, focusing on assets and fire risk, components 2 and 3 of the approved project framework. Next steps in the process are to continue refining the prioritization tool and instructional manual, to present the suite of tools to the ACCG at the October general meeting, and to hold e-workshops on how to use and maintain the tool.

Action Items

Actions	Point Person(s)
Begin reaching out to prescribed Fire prospective panelists.	Tania Carlone Regine Miller
Rich Farrington send Tania Carlone photos, videos, and captions depicting the Hemlock project area field trip and Tania prepare PowerPoint Presentation for next ACCG Planning WG meeting.	Tania Carlone Rich Farrington

Summary

Agenda Review and May Meeting Summary Approval

The Planning Work Group (WG) met via Zoom video-conference. The WG confirmed the August meeting summary without revision.

2020 General Meeting Speaker Schedule & Field Trip Debrief

Speaker Schedule Update: The WG reviewed the upcoming speaker schedule through the end of the year and focused their discussion on the prescribed fire panel scheduled for the January general meeting.

Prescribed fire panel planning
Proposed Date: January general meeting
Suggested duration: 90-minutes
Objectives:

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- The benefits of using prescribed fire to increase pace and scale of forest treatment consistent with the ACCG's triple bottom line
- Identification of obstacles to the use of prescribed fire within the ACCG landscape
- Possible solutions to overcome those barriers

Prospective Speakers: The WG recommended no more than 4 speakers.

1. Kellin Brown/Jesse Plumber (USFS fire staff from the Calaveras and Amador Ranger Districts for a local perspective)
2. Ken Pimlott (state perspective), former director of Cal Fire and county supervisor
3. Craig Ostergaard (private land perspective, Sierra Pacific Industries)
4. Susie Kocher (if not available Leyna Quinn-Davidson), collaborative burns overcoming barriers for prescribed fire on private lands

Field Trip Debrief: As a result of Covid-19, the WG piloted a “virtual field trip,” where a small group went into the Hemlock Project Area, documented the experience, and reported back to the Planning WG. Field trip participants included: Carinna Robertson, Ben Solvesky, Rich Farrington, and Randy Hanvelt.

Participants described what occurred at the field trip and their perspectives. The field trip focused on general information about logging using Designation by Prescription (DxP). The group received an overview from the contractor and a demonstration on tree removal using DxP and the associated equipment. The field trip was filmed by another organization, [TuCARE](#). While some found the field trip informative, others acknowledged its limitations, particularly because the filming slowed down the field trip and the content was focused on more basic concepts for a less technical audience than most ACCG members. One participant suggested that other organizations should not film at ACCG field trip events. Another WG member suggested that while the filming may have been valuable as an outreach and engagement tool for TuCARE, that it had less value for the ACCG. He noted that the virtual field trip format may not offer that much value since having diverse, larger groups in the field seeing and discussing conditions on the landscape offers the greatest value to the ACCG.

WG members identified some questions for further exploration, including: how to apply learning from the presentations by Dr. Malcolm North and Dr. Scott Stephens, specifically where there are large trees in red fir stands, how can clumps and gaps (ICO) be achieved across the landscape? How can DxP be utilized to help accomplish that goal? For some time, the ACCG has expressed an interest in better understanding how DxP can be used as a tool and its effectiveness in helping implement GTR 220 and specifically how to achieve structural heterogeneity across the landscape and the associated contractor training needs.

Carinna Robertson noted that the focus of this field trip was mostly on logging and DxP. She suggested that ACCG would benefit from a larger field trip focused on how GTR 220 is being applied in the Hemlock project area more broadly. WG members agreed that a follow up field trip would be helpful.

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Rich Farrington shared images documenting the field trip. Rich and Tania will follow up to put images with captions in a PowerPoint presentation format to share with the WG in October.

Forest Service Updates

- **Amador Ranger District:** Robin Wall reported that the Fork Fire is 70% contained. She noted that most of the Amador's teams are working on the Cole Creek project area, where surveys are being conducted. The Amador anticipates bringing the project to the ACCG Planning WG once they have more information. The Amador has a meeting in the first week of October to discuss Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 projects with the intent to bring projects to the ACCG for discussion. She noted that Chuck Loffland is also working with Plumas Corporation on Foster Fir Meadow implementation.
- **Calaveras Ranger District:** Kellin Brown stated that there's not a lot to report since the Calaveras is working with a skeleton crew; much of their personnel is on fires. He noted that they are preparing burn plans and that there are a lot of fuels projects underway. The Arnold Avery project contractor will be on the ground in October.

Mapping Tools Development & Next Steps

- **Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) Grant:** Megan Layhee, project consultant, gave a [presentation](#) providing an overview of the prioritization tools, describing the five high-valued resources and assets (HVRAs), corresponding sub-HVRAs, and the HVRA ranking process. She further described the draft Prioritization Tool output using ArcGIS. The Planning WG offered input and discussed next steps in the process.

Presentation

Megan briefly noted that the Strategic Landscape Assessment Working Group (SLAWG) has reached consensus on the Project Inventory, which is component 1 of the ACCG Fuels Reduction Project Mapper and Landscape Prioritization Tool Framework. They are now working on components 2 ("Assets") and 3 ("Fire Risk") of the approved framework and are on track to use them.

- **Assets (component 2):** The objective of this component is to compile and rank HVRAs within the broad categories of communities, infrastructure, wildlife/ecosystems, economic assets, and watersheds. The effects analysis is consistent with the USFS General Technical Report [GTR 315](#) "A Wildfire Risk Assessment Framework for Land and Resource Management." Megan also noted that the mapping tool is following the HVRAs from USFS Region 5 [Southern Sierra Nevada Risk Assessment](#) as closely as possible. She emphasized that the SLAWG effort is not "reinventing the wheel" and is working to ensure consistency with other risk assessments.
- **Fire Risk (component 3):** The objective of this component is to use flame-length class probability and burn probability estimates (USFS Region 5 FSim outputs) and ranked

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HVRAs to determine where assets are most at risk with the ACCG landscape using the GTR 315 effects analysis. She noted that the Communities (community protection) has been identified by the SLAWG as the most important HVRA. Megan further explained that the SLAWG has not come to definitive decisions about sub-HVRAs.

Megan clarified that the outputs she presented are not final. She is currently working on getting scenarios out to the SLAWG. On ArcGIS, she noted that areas in red correspond to a high likelihood of negative impacts from fire on HVRAs. She clarified that they are still working on refining the tool while, at the same time, developing a user manual for the tool that will be used at e-workshops later this fall, where those who participate will be able to dive more deeply into the tool and how it works. When the workshops occur, Megan will be switching gears to train people on how to use and maintain the tool.

Planning WG Discussion/Input

Planning WG members expressed their appreciation for Megan's work commending her for her ability to balance competing priorities expressed by SLAWG members. Planning WG members indicated that the red areas on the outputs are those areas that need immediate treatment but the tool is not intended to communicate that the areas in green should be left alone. There was further discussion about the importance of not oversimplifying what the red areas communicate as they are directly linked to the HVRAs that have been identified. It is possible to revise and update values in the future that could change the priority areas identified. The middle and upper middle elevations appear red in large part because those areas are where people, life and property are most interacting with fire hazard and the Communities (community safety) HVRA is most heavily weighted. There was some discussion about whether the draft outputs are really showing the highest values noting that GTR 315 urges a "reining in" of HVRAs so that these tools can actually be helpful in pinpointing priority areas. This prompted a more in-depth discussion on the sub-HVRAs and whether they sufficiently follow this guidance or if they may be too broad. Rich Farrington raised some specific questions that will be brought back to the SLAWG included:

- *Why are 6" trees identified as a value if old growth is what we really wish to protect?* Greg Suba offered that immature forest is foraging habitat now for wildlife and that's why smaller trees have been identified as a value.
- *Why aren't we limiting ourselves to wildlife Protected Activity Centers (PACs)?*
- *How can the colors on the map more clearly differentiate (between orange and red) to make the highest priority areas more evident?* Megan indicated that she would adjust the contrast for greater visibility.
- *What is the timeframe we are looking at?* Regarding the question of timeframe, John Buckley communicated that it was his understanding that the SLAWG had reached consensus that we are focusing on the current situation, the "now."

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WG members offered some concluding thoughts noting that this process is intended to identify risks and opportunities and it's helpful that these questions are being raised to help the SLAWG refine the prioritization tool. Some WG members expressed the view that the HVRA process the SLAWG has invested in has adequately "reined in" the effort. Megan thanked the WG for their input and indicated that these questions would be further discussed at the upcoming SLAWG meeting.

Next steps

- Mapping tool presentation at the October general meeting
- E-workshops in late fall
- Final mapping tool presentation to ACCG in January

Next Steps

- The next Planning Work Group meeting will be on Wednesday, October 28, 2020. The meeting will take place on-line via Zoom.

Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation	Miles (N/A-videoconference)	Hours
Tania Carlone (facilitator)	Consensus Building Institute (CBI)		3
Carinna Robertson	USFS- Calaveras		2
Kellin Brown	USFS- Calaveras		3
Shane Dante	Foothill Conservancy		3
Rich Farrington	UMRWA		3
Randy Hanvelt			3
Megan Layhee	GIS Consultant (RFFCP)		3
Robin Wall	USFS- Amador		3
Ben Solvesky	NRCS		3
Greg Suba	Sierra Forest Legacy		3
John Buckley	CSERC		3
Sara Husby	CSERC		3
Please add	CSERC		3