General Meeting Notes, January 20, 2021, by Zoom

Meeting Brief

- > Prescribed Fire Panel including Ken Pimlott, Jesse Plummer, Susie Kocher, Chris Dow.
- ACCG Work Groups and meeting participants provided updates of their activities.

Action Items

Actions	Responsible Parties
Megan Layhee will reach out to John Buckley to get any suggested revisions to the	Megan
Nov. 18 th General Meeting summary	

Summary

Modification and/or approval of agenda and November 2020 Meeting Summary.

Tania noted to Megan Layhee that John Buckley with CSERC communicated that he may have suggested revisions for the November 18th general meeting summary. Megan will reach out to John and work with him to get those suggested edits incorporated, after which the final version will be adopted as final and will be posted on the website.

Tania noted that new to the agenda is a list of the Revised MOA signatories and ACCG member. Tania also notes that later this month, the Planning WG will discuss the 2021 practitioner series, including the Herbicide Panel.

There were no suggested changes to this month's agenda.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Prescribed Fire Panel

There were four guest panelists on the ACCG Prescribed Fire Panel representing a diversity of jurisdictions to discuss Rx fire as a landscape restoration tool in the toolbox to increase pace and scale, and to specifically discuss some barriers to getting Rx fire on the ground and some possible solutions to these barriers. The panelists included 1) Ken Pimlott, retired Director of CAL FIRE, 2) Jesse Plumer, ENF Amador Ranger District Battalion Chief and Fire & Fuels Manager, 3) Chris Dow, Sierra Pacific Industries Southern Sierra Vegetation Management Specialist and RPF, and 4) Susie Kocher, Extension Forester for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra Nevada. Reference materials including reports, articles and other documents related to prescribed fire that were provided by the panelists are included as supplemental material links 4-9 and 18 in the meeting agenda and available on the ACCG website.

Panel Introductory Presentations - Tania briefly introduced the panelists, which was followed by introductory presentations by each of the panelists on their background and expertise with prescribed fire, also touching briefly on some of the barriers experienced implementing prescribed fire and some solutions to the barriers. See details on these presentations below.

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Chief Ken Pimlott was Director of CAL FIRE from 2010-2018, has a degree in Forest Resource Management from HSU, a Registered Professional Forester, and has over 30 years fire service experience. Under his leadership as CAL FIRE Director, battled historic wildfires, an unprecedented bark beetle epidemic, while increasing the pace and scale of forest management and fire prevention. Chief Pimlott presented a PowerPoint presentation that provided foundational information on wildlands in the California, different jurisdictions, and CAL FIRE's responsibility areas. He talked about different CAL FIRE programs, including the Fire Protection Program and the Vegetation Management Program (one program under the Resource Management Program), and noted, displaying a bar graph, that total acres of prescribe fire have significantly declined over the decades- resulting from various factors, including, funding and shift in CAL FIRE focus. He showed a slide listing some barriers to prescribed fire based on his experience including, environmental review, burn windows, social license, liability, longer intense fire season, limited resource capacity and availability, burn complexity, and agency stereotypes. He ended with presenting goals and solutions to the previous list of barriers, including noting the CA Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (agenda supplemental material 4), the CA Vegetation Treatment Program EIR, and partnerships.

Jesse Plummer is with the Eldorado National Forest, Amador RD Battalion Chief in Fire and Fuels. He has a MS and BS in Forestry with emphasis in Fire and Fuels from Humboldt State. Worked on Hot Shot and Hand Crews during and after college, after 10+ years on crews decided it was time to pursue a more non-reactionary approach to fire and fuels management. Jesse then went to the Amador RD to work to get toward that focus on non-reactionary response to wildfires and fire and fuels management.

Susie Kocher is an Extension Forester for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra Nevada, where she has conducted applied research, outreach and education for private, non-industrial forest landowners for 24 years. Currently, she has educational initiatives to increase landowners to build capacity to develop forest plans, leading to implementation and conducting prescribed fires. She is also the co-chair of the Forest Landowner. Susie gave a PowerPoint presentation on her work focused on small family forest landowners, how Rx fire is a tool for private landowners and opportunities for expanding the use of Rx fire as a tool for small private landowners. She noted the various methods for implementation- CAL FIRE VMP, Contractor (not many of them, specialty standards to become a burn boss, shortage of those folks and expensive), Prescribed Burn Association (hire burn boss with volunteers, or low complexity burn with no boss), collaborative groups, or conducting Rx fire solo. Also noted the differences in Rx fire use between CA and FL, as an example of the possibility to expand the use of Rx fire. She also mentioned that she is part of a Forest Stewardship Planning Program online courses and gave an overview on the various Rx Workshop and Webinar Series she co-hosted, and what the take-aways from those series, including how to utilize Rx fire and some challenges associated with it. One noted barrier for small private landowners implementing Rx Fire is the difficulty in acquiring burn permit from CAL FIRE.

Chris Dow is the Southern Sierra Vegetation Management Specialist and Registered Professional Forester with SPI, with a Masters of Forestry degree from UC Berkeley, former president of CA Licensed Foresters Association and current board member. Chris discussed his academic background and early professional career in more depth focused on research, including his thesis on how to incorporate your resource protection constraints (wildlife, green zones) and how to plan effectively and reduce burn

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probability across the landscape, and also looking at silviculture treatment types to modify wildfire behavior. In his role as Vegetation Management Specialist with SPI, he manages and maintains FB and fuels reduction on three SPI districts, which includes several thousand acres and also are installing new FB approximately 2,000 acres a year on fuels reduction. In his role at SPI, he is currently charged with increasing fuels treatments and modification, and long-term maintenance, including meeting that 20% threshold of fuels treatments across the landscape, creating stand resiliency. Also coordinate landscape planning for fuels treatments with public and private ownerships, including FS, CALF FIRE, municipalities, and coordinates VMP burns for AEU and TCU prescribed burn treatments. Chris mentioned that some of the barriers he encounters includes public perception, weather and shorter burn windows, and not being able to use prescribed burn in areas with high tree density areas. He mentioned the importance of conducting pre-Rx fire treatments, mastication and fuel break construction, then get in there and burn and working with landowners that have inholdings within SPI.

Panel Discussion - Following the panelist introductory presentations, the panel further discussed some of the barriers to getting Rx Fire on the landscape and some potential solutions to those barriers. There were also discussions expanding on topics raised in the panelist introductory presentations. See the full list of discussion topics below. These topics happened both in the meeting and in the Zoom meeting chat box.

Is Florida able to successfully burn a large number of prescribed acres because they have more days throughout the year that they can burn due to good weather conditions? A big barrier for CA seems to be that we are having smaller and smaller burn windows. (question from Caitlyn Rich in the chat box to Susie Kocher). Susie responded that, yes, weather is always a factor but there are often burn windows that we are not able to take advantage of on private lands. FL also has a different regulatory structure and different levels of liability (strict liability, simple liability, gross negligence standard). FL gross negligence standard is seen as favorable, as long as you followed the protocols then you are not liable. Also, different culture and different perceptions of prescribed fire in FL than in CA. experts only do vs. this is something we all do. CA needs a cultural shift and work on public perception and acceptance, more education/outreach to general public, and convince the public to let the agencies and the public conduct Rx fire.

Tania asked the broader panel to expand on Susie's comment on how to create a cultural shift, and increase public involvement in Rx fire. Ken reiterated what she said, and agreed that CA has past perceptions that we need to overcome, even CAL FIRE needs to give up a little control and form partnerships. CA needs to think outside of box and give up some control to form partnerships, and also need to engage the public to be part of the process and the tool becomes common place. Tania referenced the barrier list included in Ken's ppt presentation (supplemental material 3).

What is the nature of the challenge to CalFire's CA Vegetation Treatment EIR? (question from Richard Sykes to Ken Pimlott). Ken said original EIR was only focused on chapparal management and rangeland improvement, didn't provide tools for statewide burning, like in forest understory. CAL FIRE revision to EIR broadening the scope, but the challenge was a broad brush extending from Southern CA to Northern CA. This was challenged by a number of groups that slowed it to get approve, was adopted by the state

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recently, still some challenges and push back, but the doc is being utilized which is good to have a doc to make things streamlined to get work done.

Rx Fire barriers and potential solutions on National Forest lands - Jesse Plummer noted that the NF has pretty similar barriers to what the others have mentioned already. Noted that burning is a serious undertaking and takes a lot of preparation. He mentioned that more people burning is a great idea, but need to consider factors like weather. He mentioned some of the barriers to Rx fire on national forests including low staffing, lack of equipment, weather changes (wind events and dry fuels) seen an increase in wind events on dry fuels. He noted that Rx fire is a tool in the fuel reduction toolbox, and it is one of the best and thorough tools, but it has a limited time period of use and no program should be too focused on it. He went on to say that you need to maximize all the tools in the toolbox to get things done. He also noted that prioritization on the ground is key to Rx fire (where to burn on the ground needs to happen). Also, he mentioned that if we increase Rx fire, then most likely increase number of patches with mortality. Fire effects in a planned event might not be what we want (may have more mortality than we want). Most efforts currently are focused on just preparing the land and prepping for summer wildfire season, including road access. Noted that there is deficient on safety zones and put them in as we go during a wildfire response.

Rx fire includes biomass piles, and for some, there is movement away from that. What is the FS stance on piles? (question from Steve Brink to Jesse Plummer). Jesse Plummer noted that moving all hazardous fuels to one location in the unit allows the burn window to be greater, other good mitigations include roads access, staff, fire cameras, low snowpack move equipment and people out. Steve then asked what's the back log on large landing piles on Eldorado (Jesse said - 3-4,000 acres of them last year, not that many large piles left). Jesse said that we need to use all the tools in the toolbox, and the large fuel piles are inexpensive and effective at getting fuels down within the unit. Large landing pile has a large resilience time and fuels laying around it. Steve suggested project design to chip and haul the piles. Jesse then said that's the tradeoff — pay a large bill to remove, or do it cheaply.

Chris Dow mentioned that SPI moved away from pile burning, and are looking for alternatives to get rid of that biomass, but it is a big challenge. Problem is not incentivized to get biomass plants up and running and then the expense is that there is no facility locally (20-30 miles), every ridgeline town needs a biomass plant the state needs to ramp up, and SPI ships biomass as much as they can and even distribute chips across their roadways.

Chuck Loffland (comment in chat) - Part of what is generating those large piles is the harvest and fuel piling to ready the landscape to both use prescribed fire and potentially naturally occurring fire in the future.

Rx fire is a great tool, and we need to use it more. Problem is much of our forested land is not in a condition to take RX fire. We have seen what happens when fires get away from us. How do we make more land ready for Rx fire? We definitely have a lot of area can be maintained with fire. (question in the chat from Randy Hanvelt). Alissa Fogg commented in the chat that she agreed with Randy and asked what are some of the resources to help landowners make their land safe enough to conduct a prescribed burn (information and funding)? Randy responded saying that need to convince

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landowners to invest in protecting their forest. The government cannot do all of this for us. Randy also mentioned in the chat that maintenance has to be a major part of our plans, urgency needs to be part of our nature, and that CARB has to be a cooperative player and also has to understand that the problem will get worse before it gets better, and have to weigh air quality associated with Rx fire with big uncontrolled conditions we experience every year with the massive wildfires.

Tania asked the panelists to address these questions. Chris mentioned that SPI burns in areas that were already prepped (timber treatment, fuels reduction treatment) or already burned (reentry burn), and emphasized the need to treat the landscape first. He suggested starting with utilizing fire safe councils first priority because they know where treatments are, and know where follow up treatments should happen.

Jesse noted that it's a long road to get the land ready for Rx fire. He suggested to pick units and prep them, use the tools we have including piles and mechanical thinning, break up the landscape by ridgetop roadways start there then build out and area treatments, have active timber program, engaged District Ranger, and invested groups like the ACCG campaigning for Rx burning. Two ways to go: prioritize the land closer to WUI vs low hanging fruit areas (easy areas). Low understory burn is easiest, drone vs helicopter (for aerial ignition) and in house (have dozer and own ignitions).

Ray Cablayan added that the Calaveras RD has a small fire crew. Some of the Calaveras RD barriers include low staff, need internal and partners to ramp up Rx fire, burn window is the other major issue FY 2018 during furlough for the spring burn, and COVID-19 in FY 2020 was a big issue for getting burning done.

Kellin Brown added that their doing some pile burning and with the current challenges they aren't getting as much done. He added that strategic values are where you want to start, but comes with risk. Alternatively, going somewhere that is easier (low hanging fruit). Regardless, all areas need to have some form of pre-treatment done before Rx fire can happen, ensure environmental docs allow for burn, favorable burn condition windows, keeping in mind the complexity on the day-of-burn prep (lines ready, problematic snags), and additional staff days of clean-up and monitoring.

Tania asked Susie to weigh in from a private property perspective. Susie mentioned that there are instances where burn can happen without previous treatment, but have to be ok with trees dying. It's all about the weather – winter burns have potential. She added in terms of where to go – lands that have recently burned, re-treat, we need to prioritize, however, pre-treatment is usually needed for small land owner situations before doing Rx burn. John Heissenbuttal replied to Susie in the chat, he mentioned that an example of using a prescribed fire without doing the prework is Big Trees Park, where high tree mortality occurred.

Greg Suba added a comment in the chat that he agrees that in order to restore fire resilience in our forests, all tools in the toolbox must be employed. Greg pointed to the following examples to clarify that the impossibility of intentional, first-entry fire is not an absolute. I'm not trying to invalidate the concerns that have been expressed, rather pointing out that when conditions avail themselves, it can be

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possible. https://northlab.faculty.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/195/2019/10/Kane-et-al-2019-first-entry-fires-can-create-resilient-forest-structures.pdf

What would be one or two top recommendations you would see collaborative groups like ACCG could best achieve this year to foster the application of Rx fire in SN? (question from Greg Suba in the chat). Tania asked panelists to respond to Greg's question. Ken said organize this discussion with members of community where this needs to go, counties need to have plans on how they will engage in fire management. He added that you need to engage people about what the plans are, engage in low hanging fruit projects to bring public into the benefits of them. He also suggested using FSCs and other tools to engage in projects. Fire Adapted 50 as an example to get real work done, need to do this in other areas.

Jesse agreed with what Ken said, those partnerships, especially high-visibility projects, and also supporting using all the tools including maintenance, commercial thinning, herbicide as a tool needs to be in the toolbox.

Chris reiterated what Ken said. He mentioned that he is part of SOFAR, and that SOFAR came together to ensure funding for a lot of projects. Chris recommended to the ACCG to get those grants, mentioned John Heissenbuttal. Also noted that SOFAR has also done a lot on public awareness, property upkeep and awareness that larger landscape treatments need to occur. Education is a huge portion, get people involved.

Susie agreed with what Ken and Chris mentioned, including public involvement and collaborative projects, is there cross-couch burning project? Accomplish a visible collaborative, all-lands burn to show success.

Environmental Review was mentioned as a Barrier by Ken. Is prescribed fire included in all NEPA & CEQA documents for forest treatment projects? (question in chat from Rich Farrington). Ray Cablayan responded and said yes, the FS includes Rx fire in their NEPA analyses. Rick Hopson added that it's the same for the Amador RD as Ray stated. That the Amador RD has done a couple stand-alone fuels reduction NEPA decisions. Randy Hanvelt added in the chat that treatment plans must have a long-term perspective not just initial attack, and when we have a treatment plan, we need to have the re-entry plan as well. Randy suggested that we need a 20-year plan or more and commit to fund those up front.

Tania asked if the panelists were comfortable with folks following up. Panelists agreed.

Susie shared upcoming videos with ACCG, added her contact info sdkocher@ucanr.edu, and mentioned to check out the California Prescribed Burn Association web site calpba.org.

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UPDATES

Administrative Work Group Update

Regine – revisited Collaborative Engagement Strategy, provided spring board to ACCG future facilitation needs. Admin WG had a separate meeting on what facilitation services will look like in 2021 and will bring that back to full Admin WG in February and expect a full recommendation to ACCG at Feb GM for future facilitation needs and use of CFLR funds to support that work. Group discussion about communication engagement plan to full ACCG in Feb. Michael Pickard is stepping down from Admin WG and extended appreciation to Michael. Tania also mentioned that Michael will continue to be involved in FCWG GM and SLAWG very engaged and spread too thin.

John Heissenbuttal addressed an issue he raised at last meeting about members and participants. He suggested revising participants to active and former participants. Regine did discuss this at Dec 2020 meeting, decided to structure how it is on the website and that there is value in listing past participants, felt it informs about the ACCG history. For the record, John H. disagrees with the decision. Tania said he can follow up with Megan or Regine if he'd like.

Planning Work Group Update

Tania mentioned that the PWG will be meeting next week. PWG has not met since October because of e-workshop series from SLAWG. Socioeconomic Ad Hoc group meeting and took opportunity to have conversations for individuals with concerns about draft checklist John H, Randy, Rich and Shane to come to shared recommendation, checklist will be part of discussion next week.

Megan gave an update on the SLAWG GIS Tools and Mapper and also on the SLAWG e-workshop series that occurred in November and December 2020. Also mentioned that the SLAWG will meet on Jan. 21st to address feedback and topics addressed at the workshops. Megan will be providing a presentation on the SLAWG tools during the February General Meeting.

Monitoring Work Group Update

Robin – Last MWG met Jan 13, review current ACCG programs relevant to monitoring, continue to discuss ACCG website and their needs, continue to discuss socio-economic monitoring discussions, ACCG-Point Blue Climate-Smart Meadow Restoration Workshop – February 11th 9-12pm. Contact Megan. Shana Gross leaving MWG, but will be back. Becky Estes will continue to lead MWG. Next meeting Feb. 9th shortened meeting.

Alissa Fogg mentioned the ACCG-Point Blue Climate-Smart Meadow Restoration Workshop. Will put her email in the chat. Workshop is

Chuck Loffland requested 10 min at the upcoming January PWG to talk about re-evaluation of indicators for monitoring.

Funding Coordination Work Group Update

Group had reviewed list of potential ACCG participant projects with possibility of SNC stimulus funding. Tightened and added to list, synergies between list and the project inventory database SLAWG tool.

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With intention match funding sources with priority projects. Next steps getting hold of spatial data and filter those down. Webpage. Rich also reiterated what Michael Pickard about SNC is looking at potential funding through the legislature and if projects are shovel-ready that SNC might start a solicitation effort in March/April. Next meeting Feb 9 3-4p.

Roundtable

Alissa Fogg- put email in chat for meadow workshop. Feb 11th.

Gwen Starrett – Update on Three Meadows project - couple bids, one local bidder. Slight funding shortage, trying to meet that gap with some additional resources. Rich Farrington has been working on that. Underestimated our grant proposal.

John Heissenbuttal – Completing mastication on Mitchell Min FB in next couple of days, several acres of hand work before closeout next years. Began operations on Tiger Creek FB on BLM lands, hope to complete about 120 acres this year before fire season.

Ray Cablayan – Arnold-Avery Project mastication work and 2 contractors are on the ground. District is still doing pile burning last week. Forest-wide assessment of wind damage and was a 220 acres fire on Groveland because of power lines down.

Rick Hopson – Off detail. Excellent presentation today. Proud to announce Amador RD prestigious District award for FY 2020 – COVID response, planning and implementation efforts that ACCG has to do with it. Is being recognized, but a lot of work to do.

Randy Hanvelt – Good presentation. State report – good work went into that, 2 years. Lots of omissions and overarching and no implementation plan in there, and that is discouraging. NF doesn't have enough participation in it, top-down program-worried about that. Its local stakeholders that know, and need to drive the implementation of the report goals.

Regine Miller – CHIPS federal contracts has wound down and West Point crew is working on private jobs. Working with AFSC to do hand thinning. Megan, Thurman and Regine working with Amador and Calaveras RD for three projects and RFPs (A-A, UM Restoration Project, SF Moke Project). Thurman has completed fellowship with SNA and full-time employee with CHIPS. Craig Christensen full-time fellowship with SNA and working as field operations coordinator with CHIPS, new position.

Rueben Childress – private resident in Moke Watershed former ACCG participant, appreciated the panel, interested to learn about the road blocks. Two issues that he identified was NWCG standards for burn bosses and liability issues for getting burning done on both public and private lands, if there is more resources and direction for that.

Rich Farrington – UMRWA board meeting on Friday open to public, info on UMRWA website, 3 of the topics are a presentation by Blue Forest Conservation Forest Resilient bond works, update on forest projects, and consideration of extending watershed stewardship education program.

Robin Wall – max telework for many FS staff. The eyes on the forest is lower, if you see excess garbage, illegal activity let Robin know.

Steve Brink – The he Omnibus Appropriations Bill the FS had only 2-line items for increases, including forest products and hazardous fuels. About 5 million or more to R5 to allow them to achieve their

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timber target increase and increase fuels reduction as well. Roads line item was flat, but Great American Outdoors Act, additional funds for road maintenance - almost 50% increase in national road budget. Issue around fire liability and insurance, should keep an eye on the state legislature.

Thurman Roberts – Regine touched on things that Thurman is doing including the WCB grant and welcomed Craig on board to CHIPS.

Steve Brink – added that President Biden already directed executive offices to review 110 actions, including NEPA regulations. However, FS NEPA regulations and USFWS inter-agency cooperation regulations are not on the list. Steve can send anyone the list.

Tania noted to send any program/presentations suggestions to Megan, Regine and Tania, and work with PWG to make the series. 43 participants today – indicator of relevance and value of the panel, was good participation. Recording from panel will be available and on the ACCG website.

The next General Meeting will take place on February 17th from 9-noon.

Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation	Time Committed to Meeting
Alissa Fogg	Point Blue	3.0
Caitlynn Rich	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	3.0
Carinna Robertson	Calaveras Ranger District	3.0
Chris Dow	Sierra Pacific Industries	3.0
Chuck Beckman	East Bay Municipal Utility District	3.0
Chuck Loffland	Amador Ranger District	3.0
Craig Christensen	Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions	3.0
David Griffith	Alpine County	3.0
Greg Suba	Sierra Forest Legacy	3.0
Gwen Starrett	Amador Resident/Citizen's Climate Lobby, Amador Calaveras Chapter	3.0
Hannah Hepner	Plumas County Fire Safe Council	3.0
Helen Loffland	Institute for Bird Populations	3.0
Jay Francis	Sierra Pacific Industries	3.0
Jesse Plummer	Amador Ranger District	3.0
John Heissenbuttel	Cal Am, Amador Fire Safe Council	3.0
Julie Hart	Sierra Nevada Conservancy	3.0
Kellin Brown	Calaveras Ranger District	3.0
Ken Pimlott	Retired CAL FIRE Director	3.0
Linda Diesem		3.0
Lori Parlin	El Dorado County Supervisor D4	3.0
Marc Young	Amador Ranger District	3.0
Megan Layhee	Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions	3.0
Randy Hanvelt	Association of California Loggers	3.0
Ray Cablayan	Calaveras Ranger District	3.0

Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) General Meeting Notes, January 20, 2021, by Zoom

Regine Miller	Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions	3.0
Reuben Childress	Resident	3.0
Rich Farrington	Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority	3.0
Richard Sykes	Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority	3.0
Rick Hopson	Amador Ranger District	3.0
Robin Wall	Amador Ranger District	3.0
Samuel Masquelier	Greater Valley Conservation Corp	3.0
Sandy Anderson		3.0
Sara Husby	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center	3.0
Scott Cones	Calaveras Ranger District	3.0
Shane Dante	Foothill Conservancy	3.0
Spencer Lachman	Sierra Institute	3.0
sqcannon	?	3.0
Steve Brink	California Forestry Association	3.0
Steve Cannon	ARCD	3.0
Sue Holper	ACCG Member	3.0
Susie Kocher	UC Cooperative Extension	3.0
Tania Carlone	Consensus Building Institute	3.0
Thurman Roberts	Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions	3.0