

Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

Planning Work Group Zoom Meeting Summary, 05/25/2022, megan.layhee1@gmail.com

Meeting Brief

- McKays Strategic FB Project: presentation and discussion. **Outcome - consensus recommendation by members in attendance to provide two ACCG LOSs.**
- Forest Projects Plan (FPP) Phase 1: discussion on scoping comments. **Discussion outcome - general agreement that project is on the right track.**
- Work group discussion on take-aways from April and May general meeting guest panel, presentations, including **developing a 1-page ACCG shared vision on importance of tribal engagement.** Rich Farrington, Meredith Sierra and possibly Thurman Roberts, will start drafting that shared vision.
- Work group discussion on upcoming general meetings and topics.
- Participant project-related updates.

Action Items

Actions	Point Person(s)
Post April meeting summary as final to the ACCG website.	Layhee
Have follow up discussions on two CSERC scoping comments: (1) lodgepole pines, and (2) language on project timeline.	FPP team CSERC
Check in on status of ENF 2019 LiDAR derived products, particularly the ladder fuel products from Dr. Kane's lab (UW).	Layhee (ongoing)
Prepare to bring pyrosilviculture shared vision ideas to the kick-off FPP Phase 2 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting (meeting date and time TBD).	Planning WG
Begin drafting ACCG shared vision on tribal engagement.	R. Farrington M. Sierra T. Roberts
Continuing communications with Big Trees SP about (1) fall 2022 field tour at the park to see the burn units, and (2) inquire about park staff coming to a general meeting soon to give an update on the winter/spring Rx burn accomplishments.	Layhee (ongoing)

Agenda Review and May Meeting Summary Approval

The Planning Work Group (WG) met via Zoom video-conference. The WG confirmed the May work group agenda, and the April work group meeting summary.

McKays Strategic FB Project: Presentation, discussion and request for ACCG LOSs

Presenters: Carinna Robertson and Pat McGreevy

Link to presentation materials:

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- Pat McGreevy's slides ([13-McKaysSlidesHx 220524](#)),
- Robertson's slides ([14-McKays Strategic Fuelbreak](#))
- [Draft McKays Decision Memo \(12-\[McKays FB Project Draft DM\] 2022-0209 McKays DecisionMemo DRAFT\)](#)
- ACCG Project Submission Form for McKays: [11-\[McKays FB Project ACCG Project Form\] ACCG-Project-Submission-Form 5 17 22](#)

Project background: The McKays Strategic FB Project is 1,088 acres of hazardous fuels reduction on the USFS lands on the Calaveras Ranger District on the north rim of the NF Stanislaus River. All of the project falls within the WUI. This is a collaborative project between Calaveras County RCD, Cal Am Team and USFS.

Pat McGreevy on the McKay's Strategic FB Project. Pat provided an overview of the larger fuels reduction network along the Highway 4 corridor, called the Hwy 4 Wildfire Defense System, that the McKays Project is part of and stretches from Murphys to Camp Connell. Pat also provided context on the project area in terms of the Darby Fire in 2001 and post-Darby management in the project area.

Carinna provided an overview of the proposed project treatments and the Categorical Exclusion Section 605. Refer to the [draft McKays Decision Memo](#) for more information.

Discussion

Meredith Sierra – FC is supportive of getting fuels reduction (1) what is defined as a hazard tree, weren't able to find the new guidelines and how close to a road.

- Carinna – two definitions of hazard: (1) hazardous fuel – dead standing and freshly dying, and (2) hazard tree – if it were to fall, it would fall onto a road or another infrastructure.
- Follow up question from Meredith – clarification on why there is no dbh limit on hazard trees.
 - USFS hazard tree guidelines that has potential to impact infrastructure
 - Potential infrastructure in project area
- Meredith – will have a follow up conversation with the ED, but shouldn't be a problem supporting the project as proposed.
- Chuck posted USFS Hazard Tree guidelines in the Zoom chat.
- Jan Bray – those hazard trees that impact infrastructure – the FS liability is huge, so one of the project goals is to reduce that liability.
- Chuck – concern about hazard tree removal in PACs does come up in many projects that he has been part of, and usually deal with it, but as the Wildlife Biologist, he never stands in the way of having hazard trees (to general public or operators) removed. Gets more complicated when you get deeper into the PACs.

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Rich Farrington – recently heard Dr. Scott Stephens reference that a large proportion of wildfire threat is related to ground fuels, so concerned about limiting to only 30” dbh on hazard fuels and asked specifically about owls.

- Carinna – pretty sure there are not very many hazardous trees out in the project area that have 30” dbh.
- Chuck Loffland - Most nesting trees (e.g., legacy structures) for CSO and Northern goshawks are those larger 30” dbh live and dead snags, because those larger trees have had enough time to develop cavities and branches for nesting, but typically there are not many in a given area, so if you can retain those and they won’t compromise the fuels reduction goals of the project.

Rich Farrington – asked if there is collaboration with private landowners as part of this project.

- Jan Bray – trying to include the Smith Ranch in the Love Creek Drainage. Just down from the south west there are a number of private landowners that the Cal Am Team is in communications with.
- Rich – this project is an excellent example of multi-landowner

Rich Farrington – referring Pat’s comment about 3.5 years for 1K acres is way too long, and wonders if projects with BLM is quicker than projects on FS lands. And if the projects are decreasing the chance of catastrophic, then there should be a way to excel these projects.

- Pat – the Arnold Wastewater Treatment Plant FR Project (100 acres) was the fastest project, about 6 months. BLM on the SF Moke project is about the same timeframe, 3.5 years. The large unknown with predicting project timelines is when working in PACs (e.g., LOPs) and fire season.
- Jan – agrees with Pat, but added that the NEPA and CEQA processes are slowly these projects down as well.
- Carinna responded to Rich’s last comment that if we can

Manny Eicholz – CSERC was wondering about canopy cover, but Carinna had a side discussion with John B. CSERC and since this project is not focused on green tree removal, and second question is sentence clarification in the draft DM –

- Kellin – currently there are over 100 machine piles in the project area, so they will be burned under current burn plans at the next opportune time. And as far as future maintenance, would include burning any new piles constructed and understory burning

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in the project area. But there is not guarantee that understory burning will actually happen

The revised MOA signatories in attendance at the Planning WG gave consensus recommendation to provide two letters of supports for the project to the full ACCG, with the caveat that Meredith will speak with FC ED about the definition of hazard trees and get back to the Administrator.

[Follow up email from Meredith Sierra and the ACCG Administrator: *As you know, we had some concerns about how hazard trees are defined, so we avoid cutting down mature trees unnecessarily. We completely understand the need to keep firefighters and members of the community safe by clearing hazard trees from roads and other important infrastructure. Although many of these snags are not used for nesting by the CSO, they can still use these snags as hunting perches. Old Growth mature trees are also the hardest trees to replace after they have been cut down. This is why whenever there is a treatment with no dbh limit we get concerned. But we trust the new hazard tree guidelines to understand the value of these mature trees and only cut them down if absolutely necessary. That being said, we can go forward with support of this project because we also know that doing no treatments would threaten the mature trees by increasing the risk for wildfire. I hope this helps give you an idea of our position and why we were slightly hesitant to support the project.*]

Forest Projects Plan (FPP) Phase 1: Discussion on outcomes of public scoping period and moving forward

FPP Phase 1 team came to review the **draft** issues analysis spreadsheet with participants. This issues analysis reviews and responds to each scoping comment. Several comments were highlighted for this meeting discussion:

1. Hand treatments

CSERC and FC raised concerns about whether *hand thinning only* would reduce catastrophic wildfire and suggested minimizing number of acres for hand thinning only.

Team agrees with the commenter, emphasized that they have received additional funding to conduct additional Arch surveys, which will equate to more acres begin eligible for mechanical fuels reduction treatments, but also emphasized that there are some areas where hand thinning will be the most effective treatment (e.g., areas with steep slopes, access issues, rock outcrops) and any fuels treatments is better than doing nothing.

Also noted that roadside chipping, if hand thinning treatment areas are in proximity to roads, will be a follow-up treatment option for hand thinning lop and scatter.

Also added that lop and scatter can be helpful for firefighting suppression, especially on fire flanks. Whereas if no treatments occurred there would be more work for fire fighters on the ground. Pruning is also a treatment that will be occurring in these treatment areas, which will help to separate the canopy fuels from the surface fuels, which will help during fire suppression events.

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There was a follow up question about why not propose hand piles instead of lop and scatter – Jesse Plummer emphasized that there is a large backlog of piles, and doesn't want to commit to building more piles and create more back log. Chuck added that hand piling is more labor intensive and cost prohibitive than lop and scatter, and reminded the group that Phase 2 will be the opportunity to propose the more robust treatments in these areas.

FC voiced appreciation for the team communicating that hand thinning treatments is only a fall back for areas where mechanical treatments are not suitable or where Arch surveys can't be completed (but since more funding is available is most likely a non-issue).

"A goal of 10 years" vs. "will complete this project in 10 years". CSERC will discuss this internally after the meeting. FPP Team will have a follow up conversation with CSERC.

2. Tethered Mastication

CSERC concerns about this treatment type about the extent of its use and its impacts to the environment.

Team is interested in implementing in areas where feasible, but at this point have not identified exact locations within the project area. But this is self-limiting (e.g., expensive, cumbersome) and most likely won't be used in a lot of areas, probably mostly in those areas between Salt Springs Road and the Mokelumne River. But those areas may be more feasibility hand treated. The Team would like to keep it in the planning document, so it is an option. Team hopes to have ACCG come out to the field to observe this treatment. Was noted that PG&E has used tethered mastication on their lands, not sure were though.

Manny (CSERC) will pass along the discussion to John Buckley. Team will have a follow up conversation with CSERC about this proposed treatment type.

3. Project timeframe

Concern about being able to implement this project within 10 years. Team hopes the mechanical treatments will be done in less than 10 years. Implementation funding (about 12% of the work) is already coming in, so the Team is hopeful that implementation funding will continue to come in to complete the project in 10 years.

Chuck reminded the group that these are not "one and done" treatments, so follow up treatments may extend beyond past the 10-year mark. Also added that "aging" NEPA documents (3-7+ years) go through review to assess for changed circumstances that is different than when we did initial analysis that will cause resource impacts. So the UMRWA team has one schedule in mind, but the FS would like this NEPA doc as a tool in the toolbox for at least 10 years to continue to conduct "mutually agreeable" treatments

4. Aspen restoration

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Aspen stand definition refinement: removed large tree removal from this proposed treatment, so this treatment type is no longer any different from the other proposed treatments. So, really a non-issue now.

Outcome of discussion: Planning Work Group verbalized that the project is on the right track, verbal appreciation from participants that the team is analyzing the scoping comments in the manner that they are, and that they have these follow up discussion with the Planning WG.

General Meeting Debrief

April 20th general meeting TEK Panel

Meredith and Rich both spoke with others about the ACCG TEK Panel, including Steve Wilensky. ACCG used to have more tribal involvement and Meredith raised the question of how the ACCG could help tribes feel more comfortable participating in the ACCG and think about how ACCG can more support tribe.

Rich added that ACCG has relied on the government agencies to conduct tribal consultation on projects, but that there is a difference between project cultural monitoring and tribal consultation on management of forest and development of forest health projects. Rich proposed ACCG develop a shared vision statement for tribal engagement. Rich mentioned that he will try and work with Meredith and Thurman on a rough draft and bring it back to the Planning Work Group.

- FPP Phase 1 tribal consultation began when scoping began. Rich added that it would be worth exploring if the traditional tribal consultation is working.
- Chuck also reminded the group of the Power Fire-funded ethnological study of the Mokelumne canyon area traditional uses that included mapping, tribal plant lists, and interviews with tribes. And the idea that when this study is completed it will help inform future projects.

May 18th general meeting

Acknowledgement about the ENF LiDAR derived products and the fact that the products are not becoming available quickly. But we will continue to communicate and hopefully be able to utilize those products soon.

Rich summarized the presentation for the group. Voiced concerns about the intensive analyses that are part of the 10 Pillars of Resilience framework. And suggested that the focus needs to be focused on wildfire threat. But he voiced that he is supportive of the Strategy.

Carinna added that it would be great to connect UMRWA with the ENF Strategy.

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Chuck is looking at the Strategy as the “screen” for all projects and to help define which projects are priority, and that the FPP has been identified as a priority. Part of this is that the FPP is moving forward quicker than the finalization of the Strategy, but that the Strategy is not a barrier to partnership building on the Amador District. Strategy is the ENF’s interpretation of all the things that are going on and the method to prioritize projects – infrastructure bill funding, the regional and state wildfire strategies, etc. Chuck also noted about the 10 Pillars of Resilience comment from Rich, and don’t want this to become a data-cumbersome process, but that having measurable metrics is good to see how we are meeting our objectives, but definitely need to narrow down our list of measurable metrics. Bu that Rich’s input was heard at the general meeting.

Upcoming General Meeting Topics & Work Group Ongoing Action Item List

June 15th general meeting:

- Megan Layhee will be the meeting facilitator, in-person portion will be held at Calaveras RD office.
- *SERAL Project: Update & lessons learned*- John Buckley confirmed that himself and Patrick Koepele (TRT) will attend the meeting in person. Katie Wilkinson (STF, SERAL ID Team Leader) will tentatively attend and co-present. John noted that he provided a mini-version of this presentation to the UMRWA Board at their April meeting.

July 20th general meeting:

- Dr. Malcolm North is confirmed to present on the new paper he coauthored, *Operational resilience in western US frequent-fire forests*. Presentation will be recorded and posted on the ACCG website. There will be a 90-min slot on the agenda for this topic.

Tentative Fall 2022 general meeting – Field Tour at Big Trees SP prescribed burn program and burn units with Ben Jacobs

- Megan got a follow up response from Ben Jacobs (BTSP Burn Boss) that Fall 2022 would be best to have a field tour out at Big Trees.
- Work group asked that Megan in her correspondence with Ben mention that if staff are available, that it would be great to get for someone from BTSP come to a general meeting soon to provide an update on the Rx burns completed this year in the South Grove and the burns done in the NE corner of the park as well.

Discussion on potential general meeting panel later in the year on *How to support local economies through forest health projects* – USFS, UMRWA, Cal-Am Team & CHIPS.

Participant/Project Updates

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Rich Farrington – UMRWA heard about draft guidelines from Dept. of Conservation on multi-year block grants. UMRWA will probably be considering submitting comments. Also had a conversation with the Regional Forester, Jennifer Everline, and asked her about any remaining funding (from Infrastructure Bill) - answer was maybe. Rich is hopeful that FPP may be competitive for FS funding.

Chuck Loffland – Responded to Richs question about additional FS funding from the infrastructure bill - is that what the process is and how much funding remains is not clear right now. But that we should have projects buttoned up and ready to go. With the Sugar Pine Foundation, ENF is planting trees up along the highway along the edge of the Caldor Fire footprint. Three Meadows and Foster Meadows Projects is going to be accessible in the next couple of weeks and will be able to report back on the overwinter conditions.

Next Planning WG meeting is Wed., June 22nd, 2022 9am-12pm.

Meeting Participants

#	Name	Affiliation	Miles (N/A-online)	Hours
1	Megan Layhee	ACCG Administrator (facilitator)	--	3.0
2	Manny Eicholz	CSERC	--	3.0
3	Carinna Robertson	USFS, Calaveras RD	--	3.0
4	Meredith Sierra	FC	--	3.0
5	Chuck Loffland	USFS, Amador RD	--	3.0
6	Rich Farrington	UMRWA Board	--	3.0
7	Kellin Brown	USFS, Calaveras RD	--	1.0
8	Ray Cablayan	USFS, Calaveras RD	--	2.0
9	Pat McGreevy	Cal Am Team	--	1.0
10	Jan Bray	Cal Am Team	--	1.0
11	Marcie Powers	CA Big Trees Association	--	2.0
12	Richard Sykes	UMRWA	--	1.0
13	Karen Quidachay	UMRWA/LE	--	1.0
14	Regine Miller	UMRWA/LE	--	1.0
15	Jesse Plummer	USFS, Amador RD	--	1.0
16	Pat Ferrell	UMRWA/LE	--	1.0
17	Terry Woodrow	Alpine County Bos, CCFSC	--	2.0
18	Jason Smith	TSS Consultants	--	2.0
19	Paul Prescott	CA Big Trees Association	--	1.0
20	Kaylee Dillashaw	Cal Am Team	--	1.0